

THE HOME STUDY PRACTICE GUIDE

Washington State Department of CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Licensing Division | Approved for distribution by Jeanine Tacchini, Foster Care Senior Administrator, & Ron Effland, Senior Administrator LD CPS/SAM

Washington State Department of CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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BACKGROUND

The Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) Licensing Division (LD) completes home studies for all caregivers caring for children in the custody of DCYF. All caregivers must have an approved home study specific to the type of care they provide. Each type of home study also has the option to add adoption requirements when necessary.

POLICY

5100 Applying as a Foster Parent or Unlicensed Caregiver
5110 Completing the Home Study
5120 Licensing State Foster Homes
5130 Regional Licensing
5180 Foster Parent (Licensed Family Foster Home) Training
1170 Domestic Violence

LAWS

RCW 26.33.180 Preplacement report required before placement with adoptive parent, exception
RCW 26.33.190 Placement report, requirements, fees
RCW 43.20A.205 Denial, suspension, revocation, or modification of license
RCW 74.13 Child Welfare Services Chapter
RCW 74.14A.020 Services for emotionally disturbed and mentally ill children, potentially dependent children, and families in conflict
RCW 74.15 Care of children, expectant mothers, persons with developmental disabilities. § 671 State plan for foster care and adoption assistance
RCW 49.60.030 Freedom from discrimination declaration of civil rights
RCW 74.13.250 Preservice training, foster parents
RCW 74.13.332 Rights of foster parents
RCW 74.413.310 Foster parent training
RCW 741.14B.020 Foster parent training

WAC

110-148

Indicators

Within the sections, indicators[1] have been systematically and intentionally embedded as questions for staff to answer based on the applicant's responses on the application, during

[1] Stevens, Sonya et al., (2020). "Identifying predictive indicators: The state of Washington foster care home study," Children and Youth Services Review, Elsevier, vol. 116(C).

interviews, through collateral contacts, and staff's assessment; they should not be asked directly of the applicants. The questions are designed to be used when assessing if an indicator is present or not. If an indicator is present, the next step is to assess whether it has been mitigated and has promoted resiliency for an individual, or if it is a continued concern that needs further mitigation before the final recommendation can be made. **Due to potential bias limitations, indicators will not be used as a tool to recommend or not recommend placement or permanency.**

Indicators within **this** document are identified with either the phrase "data collection will print" or "data collection will not print" after the question. They are a part of the assessment to collect data and inform future processes for equitable and consistent home studies. These questions and answers may not populate in the final home study report. All narrative that is included regarding the mitigation of the indicators will be included in the final home study report.

If an indicator is present, it may be positive, negative, or both. The list of mitigation tools is not exhaustive. All mitigation sections have an "other" option for staff to describe additional mitigation that may be unique to the applicant. The narrative is where objective documentation should show how an indicator is a strength, concern, and/or an area of improvement. If there is a concern, one or more of the mitigation strategies must be checked. However, checking off every mitigation strategy is not required and is likely unnecessary.

If there is an indicator present that contributes towards resiliency, describe in the narrative box how the mitigation contributes to their strengths. For example, an applicant may have experienced childhood trauma, so the indicator is present. Yet, from that trauma, they've gained insight and awareness that will support how they provide care to children, and the narrative should explain how the indicator was mitigated and how the applicant's experience is now a strength and not a concern.

Considerations

This is the initial new home study guide. Because the new home study is being developed in the Washington Caregiver Application Portal by Binti (WA CAP), the guide may need additional updates after roll-out. In addition, the guide will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

This guide should be used in conjunction with law, Washington Administrative Code, policy, procedure, and practice memos.

While completing the home study, consider how all children and families are unique and meet them where they're at. Your communication should foster inclusion and respect. Refer to the

following resources:

- Racial Equity and Social Justice Framework
  https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/HR_0003.pdf
- National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics
  https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics

Consider each person's uniqueness and culture when moving through these sections. Ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children throughout the assessment; check your bias and realize when you're applying a dominant culture lens.

Many topics covered in the home study are invasive and may have a stigma attached to them (for example, mental health, substance use, etc.).

- Use non-judgmental, inclusive language during interviews and document information objectively.
- Observe and document the applicant's behavior and language when answering interview questions.

Applicant A/B

Intent

To collect demographic information on applicants for the coversheet of the home study.

Documentation Tips

- This part of the home study may repeat for both applicants. Ensure you fill out this section for both Applicant A and B, as needed.
- This information will source automatically from the application, review for accuracy.

Household Demographics

Intent

To gather and access who resides in the home and on the property, and if those individuals will provide care to children in out of home care.

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section, only complete once. This section will reflect both applicants, if applicable.
- If there are multiple household members, select “add another” after completing the information for a household member and complete this section for all household members. Select “remove” on any additional sections in the home study to reflect the number of correct household members.
- If completing multiple interviewers, enter the final date of interview.

Practice Guidance

- An adult household member is any person, 18 years or older, who shares the same address on a full or part-time basis.
- If additional household members are identified and interviewed, enter the final interview date. Interviews will be documented under current relationships, part 5.
- Interview all individuals who reside in the home or on the property that will have ongoing contact with children.

Sample Interview Questions

- For household members:
    - How frequent would you be relied on for support?
    - What is your anticipated involvement with the children, if any?
    - What are the discipline practices in the home, currently?

Resources

- WAC 110-148-1305

Children and Youth Served

Intent

Assess whether the caregiver can meet and support the needs of children in care, including accessing resources. Can the applicant(s) meet the needs of particular children for whom they are completing the home study?

Documentation Tips

- This section has two parts: Child Specific Information and if applicable, Foster Care Assessment.
- This is a shared section and will only be completed once. It should reflect both of the applicants, if applicable.

Practice Guidance

- Culture is everything, and sometimes it is challenging to speak to, but utilize this opportunity to build awareness around cultural sensitivity and humility.
    - **Cultural permanency** is a continuous connection to family, tradition, race, ethnicity, culture, and language. **Relational permanence** is ensuring children and youth have meaningful and enduring connections to a family or other long-term caring adults (Child and Family Services Review).
    - **Cultural and relational permanency must be elevated to achieve overall well-being.** Providers have not always felt supported with building and/or maintaining connections to a child's family.

Resources

- DCYF Office of Tribal Relations

Child Specific Information

Documentation Tips

- **Child Specific:** two required narrative boxes.
    - In the 1st narrative box, describe:
        - Each child's medical history and current needs/issues, including allergies and prescribed medications.
        - Each child's educational needs and current needs/issues, including any individualized educational plans.
        - Each child's mental health needs/issues, including counseling, treatment, service, and case plan.
        - Each child's SAY/PAAY history treatment, service, and case plan.
    - In the 2nd narrative box, describe:

    - How would the applicants support the child's cultural background which includes family traditions, customs, recreational activities, personal interests, and lifestyle.
    - The current case plan and the applicant's ability to follow it as it relates to the birth and/or legal family.
    - How the applicants would maintain those connections if legal permanency were established. How the applicants support and would continue to support family time (siblings, grandparents, other extended family members, and other significant relationships).
- **Child Interview/Observation:** narrative box
    - If the child is non-verbal or does not want to interview, document the observed interactions between the child and caregiver.
    - If the identified child is not yet placed in the home, explain the circumstances why the children were not interviewed or observed.

Practice Guidance

- Review the most recent Child Health and Education Tracking (CHET) and/or Comprehensive Family Evaluation (CFE, previously known as ISSP) screen and case file. The CFE can be found in the family case under the Family Assessment icon in FamLink. Consult with the Child Welfare Social Worker, if possible, for further information. Children under Tribal jurisdiction do not have CHET/CFE's. Consult with the Tribal social worker to obtain child specific information and the information provided will be sufficient to satisfy this section. Written documentation regarding a Tribal child's case history and plan should not be requested by DCYF and information received verbally from the tribe will suffice.
- Child interviews are most credible when done privately. Asses the connection and determine if the child is getting their needs met.
- Based on the age of the child being interviewed, adapt the sample questions to match their understanding level.
- For Tribal children, consult with Tribal social worker and child's caregiver to obtain this information.
- For Tribal children, advise the applicants to visit the website of the child's Tribe to access specific Tribal information and consult with the Tribal social worker and/or the DCYF regional Tribal liaison.
- Be sure to include tribal status/affiliation when discussing culture.

Sample Questions

- **Child Specific**
    - What is your understanding of the child's or family of origin's culture and how does it differ from your own?
        - Include maternal/paternal cultural differences, if known.
    - How will you continue to support the child's culture?
    - How do you plan on creating a culturally affirming environment?
        - Toy, Books, Community events, Mentors, Music, Food, etc.
    - Are you willing to participate in training and/or access community resources that will support a child's cultural needs?
    - How do you plan to maintain family or community connections?
- **Child Interview/Observation**
    - What do you like about living in this home?
    - Is there anything you don't like at this home?
    - What are some activities you do in the home?
    - Do you have any chores? What are they?
    - Are there any rules in the home? What are they?
    - What happens when you break the rules?
    - What happens when someone else breaks the rules?
    - Tell me about the food here. Are there any rules about food or snacks?
    - Who can you go to when you need help?
    - What makes you feel safe in this home?
    - What makes you feel unsafe in this home?

Foster Care Assessment

Documentation Tips

- Choose the radio button that aligns with the type of home study that is being completed.
- This is for General Licenses Only; if this is a child specific assessment, the radio button selected will not prompt additional questions or narrative and this part is complete.
- Applicant responses will source for reference only. Summarize these responses in the corresponding narrative boxes in your own words.
- **Motivation:** radio button and required narrative box.
- **Maintaining Connections**: required narrative box.
  Describe:

    - Ability of the applicants to follow a case plan as it relates to the birth and/or legal family. Describe how the applicants would maintain those connections if legal permanency were established.
    - How the applicants support and would continue to support family time (siblings, grandparents, other extended family members, and other significant relationships).
- **Limitations:** radio button and narrative box. If limitations are selected, narrative box is required.
    - Include information from the checked radio button and describe:
        - Each applicant's child preference, including age, sex, language, culture, and developmental or physical disabilities.
        - Each applicant's skills and ability to parent a child with a physical or developmental disability.
        - Limitations and mitigation or lack thereof. If two applicants, consider and document how their responses are complementary or may present conflicts related to providing care.

Practice Guidance

Consider the following during the interviews:

- Assess the applicant's expectation regarding placement of children placed in out-of-home care to ensure it is realistic.
- Assess who the applicants see as being the best fit for their family and why.
- Assess the applicant's motivation for providing care to vulnerable children.
- What behaviors would cause the applicants to reassess their commitment to children in out-of-home care?
- Would the applicants be open to accessing supports for the child(ren) and/or themselves?
- What training or experiences have the applicants had to prepare them to parent children placed in out-of-home care?
- What experience do they have with children placed in out-of-home care?

Sample Interview Questions

- Why are you applying for the home study process?
- Are you going through the home study process to care for a specific child or to provide general foster care?
- Is there anything you feel hesitant about in completing the home study process?
- What is your understanding of culture?
- What is your experience with cultures that are different from your own?
- How do you plan on creating a culturally affirming environment?

    - Toy, Books, Community events, Mentors, Music, Food, etc.
- Are you willing to participate in training and/or accessing community resources related to providing culturally affirming care?
- How will you help a child preserve, appreciate, and support their culture, race, and ethnicity?
- How do you plan to maintain family or community connection?
- What behaviors would cause you to re-assess your commitment to children in out-of-home care?
- What training or experiences have you had to prepare you to parent children placed in out-of-home care?
- What experience do you have with children who are placed in out-of-home care?

Background and Family of Origin

Intent

Assess whether the applicant's personal experiences with their family of origin demonstrates self-awareness, insight into relationship building and boundary setting, and an ability to form familial attachments that are healthy for traumatized children. This assessment pertains to family members who are not household members and may have contact with children in care.

Documentation Tips

- Siblings should be named in birth order and discussed as applicable.
- This section is essential but does not need to be lengthy in narration.
- If there was an assessment that impacts care of children, provide a leading sentence before providing the assessment.
- Document the current and/or historical relationships between the applicants and the person(s) who provided care to them as a child.
- Document the historical relationship(s) between the applicant and any siblings, as prompted. Include information on biological, adopted, foster, step, half, and other sibling connections not listed.

Practice Guidance

- When documenting where an applicant was primarily raised or identified as being from, consider how not all persons have one primary place they call home.
- Assess if applicants have healthy boundaries with significant relationships, family, or origin.
- Briefly describe the family of origin, sibling relationships and other significant relationships.
- Behaviors can include anger management, domestic violence, mental health, and substance misuse, among others.

- Identify frequency and duration of contact with children in out of home care, if any, and the applicant's ability to provide supervision during those interactions. Describe the plan to ensure the safety of children in out-of-home care during those interactions.
- If current concerns are not mitigated, provide resources to caregivers if applicable.

Sample Interview Questions

- Who raised you?
- What was your relationship with your primary caregiver?
- What is the current relationship with your primary caregiver growing up?
- Looking back, what are some family strengths that you would want to incorporate into your parenting style?

Resources

Trauma

Intent

Assess whether the applicant's current or historic unresolved trauma may impact care of children. Assess applicable relationships that may pose risk to children.

Documentation Tips

- Information regarding trauma does not need to be repeated in other sections when covered here. It can be referenced as applicable, but not the entirety of the trauma covered more than once.
- This part of the home study will repeat for both applicants, as applicable. Fill out both sections for Applicant A and Applicant B.
- On items where they did not experience trauma, include strengths, knowledge, training, and understanding of these topics.

Practice Guidance

- Introduce the concept of Trauma.
    - Trauma is most easily defined as an emotional or physical reaction to an event that is witnessed or experienced that is scary, intense, and/or disturbing. Trauma can result from a variety of situations including but not limited to:
        - Witnessing violence within the family or community.
        - Loss of loved one due to accident or violence.
        - Being a victim of neglect or abandonment, physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
        - Natural disasters.

  - Systemic trauma means practices and procedures implemented by institutions or their leaders that directly or indirectly cause psychological, emotional, economic, spiritual, physical, or sexual harm to particular individuals or groups of people.
  - RESJ Definition: Trauma resulting from the systemic and maintained practices and procedures that cause direct and indirect harm to communities or specific groups of people in physical, psychological, emotional, economical, educational, and other ways.
    - Examples: racism, disproportionate incarceration, opportunities for home ownership, employment, medical and retirement benefits, lack of cultural competency within one's community, Native American historical trauma such as forced removals and boarding schools.
  - Intergenerational trauma is the transition of trauma or its legacy in the form of a psychological consequence from the generation experiencing the trauma to subsequent generations.
  - RESJ Definition: Trauma that's transmitted from one generation to the next through biological, social, and psychological factors.
    - Examples: generational history, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, substance abuse, suicidality.
- Introduce the concept of Domestic Violence:
  - Social Worker's Practice Guide to Domestic Violence definition: Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners.
- Prior to your interviews, review FamLink history, collateral information, and applicant documents.
- For safety, discussions should be completed during individual interview.
- Trauma discussion should come near the end after rapport is built with the applicant.
- If an individual associated with the applicant's trauma may pose a concern to a child in the home, identify supervision used.

Sample Interview Questions

- Part 1:
  - Childhood Trauma
    - What is your understanding of trauma and abuse?
    - Were you ever a victim of childhood abuse and/or neglect?
    - If yes,
      - Can you describe circumstance of the trauma?
      - Do you feel that you have overcome the trauma, or are you still working on it?

        - What has helped you overcome your trauma experience?
        - Are there any situations or behaviors that trigger a trauma response?
        - Are others aware of the trauma you experienced?
    - What supports do you have to help you manage your trauma experience?
  - **Systemic and Intergenerational Trauma**
    - What is your role in the generational cycle?
- **Part 2**
  - **Adult trauma**
    - Have you experienced trauma as an adult?
    - Have you gone through significant loss as an adult?
    - What current supports do you have to help you manage your trauma experience?
    - What has helped you overcome/process your trauma experience?
  - **Domestic Violence**
    - Were you ever a witness to domestic violence growing up?
    - Has DV ever been a part of a personal relationship?
    - How does your partner treat you?
    - Any DV issues within the family that may pose a risk to children in the home?
    - Have you ever been named in a civil action, such as a protection and/or no contact order?

Resources

- Social Worker's Practice Guide to Domestic Violence

Caregiver Health and Wellbeing

Intent

Assess how medical, mental health and/or drug and alcohol use may impact an applicant's ability to parent. Assess historical and current conditions and assess if any of them may pose a risk to children.

Documentation Tips

- The home study document may not require narrative in every box based on the radio-button selected, but narrative boxes are intended to support the worker's assessment of each category.
- It is not necessary to list medications; focus on what the medication is treating/managing as medications often change and this information is not static.
- If a radio button selected requires mitigation, a list of mitigating factors will populate. Select all applicable mitigations. These will not appear in the home study.

- Items that could be discussed in narrative essay format:
    - **Medical:** Medical conditions, management of conditions, medication and side effects, impact to functioning/care of children, mitigating factors, if applicable.
    - **Mental Health:** mental health condition, management of condition, medical and side effects, impact to functioning and/or care to children, mitigating factors, if applicable.
    - **Drug/Alcohol:** drug/alcohol use including frequency/quantity, if substance abuse has negatively impacted their life, triggers for use, mitigating factors, if applicable.

Practice Guidance

- This section is divided into three categories for response: Medical, Mental Health and Drug/Alcohol (current and historical).
- Applicant responses will automatically source to provide information regarding the Applicant Medical Self Report 13-001A and Personal Information 09-653 forms. They will not appear in the home study document.
- Summarize information automatically sourced and any additional information obtained in interviews and assessments throughout the home study process in your own words.
- Do any of the topics discussed pose a concern to a child placed in the applicant's home?
- Cultural Considerations:
    - Be aware of personal or professional biases related to medical, mental health and substance history and use.
    - Recognize the impact of systemic and intergenerational trauma related to these topics. One on one therapeutic model of Western culture is not a widely trusted tool for many families. Infringing on their participation may increase future resistance to healthy engagement.
- **Medical**
    - Review the Applicant Medical Self Report, Medical report, if applicable, and discuss with the applicant how any conditions may impact their daily functioning and/or ability to care for children.
    - If information obtained during interviews or assessment indicates medical conditions that may impact the care of children, an Applicant Medical Report completed by a medical provider may be requested.
    - If the applicant is seeking adoption, the Applicant Medical Report is required.
- **Mental Health**
    - Questions may need to be asked in a variety of ways to assess mental health with families. These topics are sensitive in nature and mental health concepts may need to be introduced.
    - Indicate how concerns have been mitigated if there is a history of mental health conditions.

  - The Applicant Mental Health Report should be sought only if there is concerning information disclosed, collateral records or contacts warrant further assessment, or the applicant is court ordered.
- **Drug/Alcohol**
  - Review the questions from the Personal Information form:
    - Have you ever attended or completed drug and/or alcohol treatment?
    - Have you ever used illegal drugs, sold illegal drugs, or abused alcohol or other legal drugs?
    - Have you ever been told you have a problem with any of the following…
  - Is the applicant's past or present use or misuse of drugs/alcohol, regardless of frequency, impacting the care of children?
  - If an applicant reports using substances, how do they provide supervision?
  - Is there any criminal history related to substance use by the applicants?
  - Describe how the applicant's drug and/or alcohol use may impact their ability to provide care to children.

Sample Interview Questions

- How do you manage your physical health?
- How do you support your own health and wellbeing?
- How does your physical health impact how you parent?
- What is your understanding of mental health?
- How do you manage your mental health?
- How does your mental health impact how you parent?
- What prompted your engagement in mental health therapy?
- How long did you engage in therapy/counseling/services?
- What prompted your ending of therapy/counseling/services?
- Have you ever had any thoughts of harming yourself or others?
- Do you currently use alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or illegal drugs? If so, how often?
- Do you use other medications in a manner other than prescribed? If so, how often?
- Has anyone ever told you that you have an issue with alcohol or drugs?
- Have you ever attended or completed drug and alcohol treatment?
- What triggers you to use drugs and/or alcohol?
- How does substance use impact your parenting?
- What is your awareness regarding how substance use could impact a child who is maintaining sobriety or experienced trauma related to substances?

Resources

- DCYF Office of Tribal Relations
- Jimmy Vallembois, SUD Expert, DCYF Staff, james.vallembois@dcyf.wa.gov

Historical Intimate Partner and Supportive Relationships

Intent

Assess how past significant relationships have played a role in the applicant's ability to form attachments with others and/or what the applicant learned from those relationships.

Documentation Tips

- This section is completed for both Applicant A and B, as applicable.
- There are three parts to this section: Historical legal and significant intimate relationships, Historical unstable relationships, and Supportive relationships.
- Each part has a required radio button. If there are concerning patterns and behaviors, describe them as well as any mitigating factors in narrative format. The list will not print on the home study report.
- Describe applicant's significant relationships and/or marital history.
- If no longer together, describe circumstances surrounding the ending of the relationship. If applicable, describe the applicant's present relationship with ex-partners.
- If the applicant does not identify supportive relationships, document any caregiver resources provided during the assessment.

Practice Guidance

- Assess if the applicant can recognize unhealthy patterns within their relationships and how those might impact the care of children.
- Consider the applicant's strengths related to the specific situation.
- Consult with supervisor if it has been determined the applicant's prior significant relationships will impact the care of children.

Sample Interview Questions

- What are your past intimate relationships?
- How did you meet and how long were you together?
- Do you have any children from this relationship?
- How would you describe your relationship?
- What led to the end of your relationship?
- Do you still have contact with one another? What does this look like?
- If co-parenting, what is your visitation plan? Is this an informal or formal agreement?
- For blended families, how do you work together?
- Who do you use for support?
- Who do you call/text if you need parenting advice?
- Who do you call/text if you need to vent?
- How do you maintain these relationships?

Resources

- Social Worker's Practice Guide to Domestic Violence

Current Relationships

Intent

Assess whether the applicant has a stable relationship, if applicable, and whether conflicts or unresolved interpersonal issues may negatively impact children in care.

Assess the family, how children are parented and supported as well as how children in the family might impact children in care. Assess what the children tell us about the applicant's ability to parent children who have experienced trauma and loss.

Documentation Tips

- For each selected response, document supporting narrative and any mitigating factors in essay format.
- Briefly tell the story of how they met, connected, and grew their relationship, addressing each applicable topic. Include stress points and the couple's practices and plans to address these.
- If the applicant is not in a relationship/partnership, include language identifying their relationship status (single, divorced, widowed, not dating).
- You do not need to repeat information that was shared in the Domestic Violence section, Trauma section or Discipline section.
- Add a new section for each child, regardless of when the applicant parented the child, for how long, the residence and age of the child. The section needs to include ALL children (bio, adopted, step, estranged, guardianship, non-custodial, minor, adult). Deceased children are covered in the subsection of Grief and Loss of a Child.

Practice Guidance

- This section is divided into five parts:
    - Describe 1) all current marriages/civil unions/domestic partnerships/intimate partnerships 2) significant information about those relationship(s) or 3) how the applicant(s) would handle beginning a relationship.
    - Describe how the applicants make decisions and handle differences in their current relationship.
    - Family Violence
    - Children
    - Describe any existing boundaries in relationships. Describe how the applicant has managed evolving relationships within the family.

- Assess the applicant's current relationship. Assess how the applicant would incorporate a future relationship into their life and home dynamic.
- Describe with whom the family violence pertains to. Describe how it may or may not impact the care of children.
- Discuss and assess how the applicants describe the child's strengths, behaviors, needs/disabilities (developmental and intellectual), substance use, mental health, medical health/needs, legal involvement.
- Assess the child(ren)'s understanding and level of acceptance of additional children in the home. Describe how the children get along with each other.
- Interview (if possible) adult children and complete the Adult Child Reference Questionnaire if using an adult child as one of the two required references. Information does not need to be repeated from the Reference section.
- Grief and loss can be any separation from a child, including loss of custody, death, infertility, estrangement, miscarriage, etc. Describe any challenges the applicants faced related to grief and loss and how this impacted their relationship and their parenting (if applicable).
- Discuss boundaries that have been or that need to be established to ensure the safety of the children in the home. Discuss how boundaries with family have changed over time and could change in the future.
- Describe with whom the applicants experience stress – how does it manifest? Describe any coping skills and the applicants understanding of support and resources available to manage their stress.
- Interview all adults that live in the home or on the property. Discuss and describe their involvement in providing care for children in the home.
- Assess and discuss how the applicant manages negative/unhealthy relationships in their life. Assess the applicant's understanding of what unhealthy versus healthy relationships look like in their life. Information from the Family section does not need to be repeated.

Sample Interview Questions

- How did you meet?
    - When?
    - How long ago?
- How did you introduce he/her/them to your kids, or blend families?
    - How do you manage co-parenting with former partners?
- How did your relationship evolve?
- How do you solve problems/make decisions?
    - What problems/decisions do you solve/make most often?
- Have there been any separations?
    - Why?

    - How did you solve this?
    - What did you learn?
        - How do you do things differently?
- What do you do as a couple for fun?
    - How will this change with kids? (for those with no kids in the home or now MORE kids in the home)
- Who do you lean on for help?

Caregiving/Parenting Experience

Intent

Assess how the applicant's personal experience and/or training will help them meet the needs of children in out-of-home care.

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section and will only be completed once. This section should reflect both applicants, if applicable.
- This section is broken up into seven parts.
    - **Parenting Experience:** Required narrative box.
    - **Child Welfare Experience:** Radio button and narrative box.
    - **Parenting Style:** Required narrative box.
    - **Parenting Roles and Responsibilities:** Required narrative box.
    - **Parenting Challenges:** Required narrative box.
        - Describe any resources or training provided.
    - **Training:** Radio button and narrative box.
        - The selected answer should match with the type of home study assessment being completed for the family. List and describe the applicant's training.
    - **Prudent Parenting:** Radio button and narrative box.

Practice Guidance

Consider the following during interviews:

- **Parenting Experience:**
    - If the applicants have or have not parented.
    - Any experience caring for the child of a friend, neighbor, or relative and how the applicant believes that experience might be different if they were the child's parent.
- **Child Welfare Experience:**
    - What is the applicant's knowledge of, or experience with (or lack

thereof) foster care, guardianship, or adoption? If any concerns, how are they mitigated?
    - Describe any education and training provided through the home study process.
    - Ensure the applicants have the flexibility to understand that children have different needs and not all children are the same.
- **Parenting Style:**
    - Different people parent their children in different ways. Some parents are more authoritative, while other parents are more permissive.
    - If more than one applicant, do the applicants have the same or different parenting approach? If it is different, how will they complement each other?
    - Discuss whether the applicants are prepared to adapt parenting styles that have been successful in the past or expand their parenting skills to meet the specific needs or developmental challenges of foster children.
    - Include any experience with blended families and co-parenting.
    - Can the applicants recognize and evolve rules and discipline techniques for each child to match the child's age and/or development while treating all children in the home fairly?
    - Assess the applicant's capacity to integrate additional children into their home in a way that meets their specific needs but does not isolate them.
    - Does the applicant have any cultural considerations in their parenting approach?
- **Parenting Roles and Responsibilities:**
    - If the applicants live in a blended family, describe any co-parenting with each other and any former partners they may have.
    - Describe how the applicants share parenting responsibilities, if applicable.
- **Parenting Challenges:**
    - Describe experiences or anticipated experiences the applicant(s) have had with children and how those experiences may be different for children in out of home care.
    - Can the applicants recognize any experiences that may be difficult for them to parent and what is their plan to address those difficulties?
- **Training:**
    - Were any additional trainings required?
    - What did the applicants learn from the training?
    - What future trainings are the applicants interested in?

  - Are the applicants willing to participate in additional training as recommended by their licensor or case worker?
- **Prudent Parenting:**
  - Ensure any concerns have mitigating factors including, but not limited to, training, education, reviewing the case plan, experience, etc.

Sample Interview Questions

- What training or experiences have prepared you to parent children placed in out-of-home care (if any)?
- Have you had to extensively care for the child of a friend, neighbor, or relative? How would that be different if you were the child's parent?
- How would you integrate a child into your home and/or help a child feel comfortable in your home?
- Describe how you parent. What works for you? How is your parenting now than when you first parented?
- How do you parent with your partner? Does this change when there is only one parent around?
- How will the ways you were parented impact how you parent or will parent children?
- What does/will parenting look like in your day-to-day life?
- How do you manage daily responsibilities in your household and how will additional child(ren) impact that?
- How will you adjust your current routine to allow for ongoing child welfare requirements?
- How do you handle situations outside of your routine and what would be your plan if an emergency came up with a child in care?
- What challenges do you anticipate, or have you experienced while parenting?
- How have you addressed those challenges, or how do you plan to address those challenges?
- Do you anticipate different challenges with children who are placed in out-of-home care?

Resources

- The Alliance for Professional Development, Training, and Caregiver Excellence
- Child Placing Agencies
- Coordinated Care
- National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)
- Other community trainings

Child Development and Expectations

Intent

Identify and assess the applicant's knowledge of child development throughout all ages and stages. Assess the applicant's understanding of how a child's development may be impacted by trauma. Assess the applicant's willingness and ability to support a child's case plan.

Documentation Tips

- For each selected response, document supporting narrative and any mitigating factors in essay format.
- Name the specific stage of development in each narrative box as discussed; the report does not connect each stage to the narrative provided.
- **Stages of Development - For General Foster Care License:**
    - All sections must be completed for general foster care license applicants in case of future modifications.
    - Ensure each development stage is named within each narrative box.
- **Stages of Development - For Kinship Care/License:**
    - Complete all stages of development starting from the child's age and older until all consecutive developmental stages are addressed.
    - Use the following template statement for every stage of development prior to the child's age when not applicable:
        - This Child-Specific home study does not include an assessment for the [insert stage of development].

Practice Guidance

- This section is divided into three categories for response: Demonstrated Knowledge, Services and Stages of Development.
- Applicant responses will automatically source to provide information regarding the Stages of Development category. They will not appear in the home study document.
- During the interviews, assess:
    - Is the applicant's understanding of child development realistic and does the applicant understand the impact trauma has on child development?
    - Does the applicant have the necessary skills and knowledge to bridge any gap in a child's development?
    - What information was provided during the assessment process to better equip the applicant regarding healthy trauma-informed child development?
    - What is the applicant's willingness and ability to support the child and overcome barriers (e.g. transportation, schedules, time commitment)?
    - Does the applicant demonstrate an ability to reexamine their expectations of a child?
    - What are the cultural considerations to meeting a child's needs and is the applicant willing and able to support the case plan?

Sample Interview Questions

- What is your understanding of child development?
- What is your expectation regarding children in each developmental stage?
- What do you do when a child is not meeting your expectations?
- What do you do when a child is not meeting their developmental milestones?
- What is your understanding around how trauma impacts child development?
- What is your experience or knowledge with children whose development may be delayed?
- What do you understand regarding a person's SOGIE and its impact on child development?
- How will you meet the cultural needs of a child regarding their services or development?
- How will you approach having difficult conversations with school-age children? For example, media, peer relationships, bullying, sexuality, and substance abuse, etc.
- What services or resources are you aware of in your community to meet the needs of the child? E.g., counseling, physical therapy, occupational therapy, tutors, extracurriculars, Coordinated Care, etc.

Resources

- Infants, Children and Teens Links and Services | Washington State Department of Health
- Child Development Basics | CDC
- ECEAP & Head Start
- Child Care/Early Learning

Behavior Management

Intent

- Assess how the applicant's discipline practices and rules may impact individual child safety and well-being and their understanding of trauma-informed care.

Documentation Tips

- This section has five parts: Discipline as a Child, Past and Current Discipline, Summarize Collaterals, Rules and Expectations and Discipline Assessment.
- This is a shared section and will only be completed once. It should reflect both applicants, if applicable.
- Applicant responses will source for reference and should be summarized in your own words in the corresponding narrative boxes.
- Each section has a required narrative box and Discipline Assessment has a radio button and required narrative box.
- Include the applicant's willingness to follow the Department's expectations about discipline, specifically about children in out-of-home care (and any difference between

their children).

Practice Guidance

- Discipline includes, but is not limited to re-direction, giving choices, time out, positive reinforcement, spanking, cursing, yelling, threatening, food restriction, locked areas/rooms, ignoring the behavior, silent treatment, group punishment, and physical exercise.
- Discuss information collected from adult children, the children in the home, and references. You may also find additional information connected to the applicant(s) in previous intakes. Describe how children reported being disciplined or rewarded in child interviews, if applicable. To maintain confidentiality, summarize the collateral information without identifying from whom the information was given by.
- Discuss the rules established in the caregiver's home. Discuss with the caregiver(s) their expectations for their children and their expectations for children in out-of-home care. Assess if these expectations are realistic and if the caregiver's understanding of childhood development supports these expectations.
- Inform families that food cannot be used as a form of discipline (withholding or making a child eat more than they want, etc.) and the reasons why physical discipline is prohibited for all children in out-of-home care.
- The use of physical restraints cannot be used as a form of discipline and is prohibited for all children in out-of-home care. Physical restraints must only occur if there is a risk of harm to the child, another person, or property. The regular use of physical restraints must only occur after the applicant(s) receive proper training, have an approved plan from the youth's social worker and LD, and each use of a restraint is documented and reported.

Sample Interview Questions

- What do you hope to achieve when you use discipline?
- What did you learn from how you were disciplined?
- What are some behaviors that a child may need to be disciplined for? How would you discipline them?
- What are your expectations for behavior in the home?
- How have your discipline practices changed over time?
- How does a child know the rules and expectations in your home?
- Are any of those rules non-negotiable?
- What will you do if your current discipline methods do not work with foster children?

Resources

- Alliance for Professional Development, Training, and Caregiver Excellence
- National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Intent

Describe the caregiver's culture. Assess whether the caregiver can meet and support the cultural needs of children in care, including accessing resources. Assess whether the family can be respectful of spiritual practices different than their own. Assess how a family will support a child's (sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual identity. (LGBTQIA+)

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section and will only be completed once. This section should reflect both applicants, if applicable.
- Name the specific topic in each narrative box as discussed; the report does not connect each stage to the narrative provided.
- This is a required section and should be assessed regardless of the preferred age, for general foster care, and child specific age, for kinship.

Practice Guidance

- **Culture:**
    - Explain cultural background, including traditions, holidays, foods, time, and being members of different communities, such as the LGBTQIA+ or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color) communities and Tribal Nations. If the family identifies as Native American, include that information; however, do not always call out "family does not identify as Native American."
- **Racism:**
    - Assess the applicant's ability to normalize childhood experiences based on the child's identified race or culture.
- **Religious/Spiritual Practices**
    - Assess whether the applicants can be respectful of spiritual practices different than their own and how the family's religious/spiritual practices, or absence of, may impact the care of children. Assess whether the applicants can respect a child in care who does not identify with a specific religion/spiritual practice. **Include religion if they include it but do not directly ask about religion.**
- **SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression)**
    - Assess whether the applicants can support the case plan for a child who identifies as LGBTQIA+.

  - SOGIE and LGBTQIA+ should be a fluid conversation when discussing with caregivers.
  - Gender is defined by the child, despite their outward appearance or perceived gender. Whether the child's or youth's SOGIE is known at that time, it is vital to discuss how to appropriately support those who may identify as LGBTQIA+, therefore supporting children and youth.
  - Most children and youth question their identity over time, which is normal. For some, exploring their identity may be a lifelong process. Often, LGBTQIA+ children and youth understandably fear negative reactions that often come from revealing this aspect of their identity and carefully hide that they are LGBTQIA+.
  - Some may have been abused or neglected by their families of origin or thrown out after sharing their identity; this trauma creates distrust, which elevates their reluctance to risk further harassment and rejection.
- **LGBTQIA+ (LGBTQIA+ is an acronym to recognize Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual, with "+" respectfully acknowledging the identities of individuals not explicitly named, such as Two-Spirit, Pansexual, Gender Non-Conforming).**
  - Regardless of a child's age or the age range the applicants wish to be licensed for, they must be willing to support all children and their LGBTQIA+ identity. Some children may know or begin to explore their LGBTQIA+ identity at a very young age. A child's LGBTQIA+ identity is often fluid and develops over time. How a child identifies may change, especially as a child is growing and given the space to explore their identity. Assess whether the applicants can support the case plan for a child who identifies as LGBTQIA+.
  - Whether the child's or youth's SOGIE is known at that time, it is vital to discuss how to appropriately support those who may identify as LGBTQIA+, therefore supporting children and youth. Information about best supporting foster children or youth and LGBTQIA+ considerations should be included and addressed with educational and supportive LGBTQIA+ resource information provided to prospective caregivers.
  - Examples of engagement practices:
    - Use chosen names and pronouns.
    - Display Pride flags or similar indicators.
    - Have LGBTQIA+ authors, musicians, and artists in your collections.
    - Always ask permission before sharing or disclosing a child or youth's LGBTQIA+ identity.
- **Ability to Parent:**
  - These are radio buttons.

- Describe any mitigating factors, including education provided and training provided. Are the applicants willing to continue expanding their knowledge on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

Sample Interview Questions

- **Culture:**
  - What are some of your family's traditions?
  - Is there anyone in your community or culture that you look to as a leader or seek guidance from?
  - How does your identified culture approach timelines?
  - What is your concept of personal space? What is considered appropriate touch between people of various relationships?
  - Do you self-identify as Native American? If so, are you enrolled?
  - Do you have a tribal affiliation?
  - What does culture mean to you?
  - How would you support the child's customs, traditions, and values, including accessing resources and helping them appreciate their culture?
  - Do you have any experience working with Tribal Nations? Do you know how to support a child who may identify with a tribe?
  - What is the primary language spoken in the home?
  - What is the primary language spoken by the children in care?
- **Racism:**
  - How would you parent a child in care that is a different race from you?
  - How do you currently, or plan, to talk about diversity and racism with a child in care?
  - Do you have any experience with different ethnic groups than your own?
- **Religious/Spiritual Practices**
  - What is the plan to allow a child to actively participate in their identified religion/spiritual practices?
  - How would you be willing to adjust your personal commitments to provide a child the opportunity to participate in their religious/spiritual practices?
  - How will you support the family of origin's preferred religion/spiritual practice for a child in care when it differs from your own?
  - Are you willing to receive education/additional resources regarding a child's preferred religion/spiritual practices to better support the child?
- **SOGIE/LGBTQIA+**
  - How will you create a welcoming and affirming home for all children and youth? How will these steps specifically impact LGBTQIA+ children and youth?

- How will you respond when a child or youth shares their LGBTQIA+ identity with you?
- How will you adapt to the request to call a child or youth by their chosen name and pronouns?
- How will you assess and support the mental and emotional needs of an LGBTQIA+ child or youth?
- How will you actively support a child or youth to become or remain engaged in their LGBTQIA+ related activities and community?
- How will you seek supportive and affirming medical care for the child or youth in your care?
- How will you apply consistent expectations for all youth in your home around age-appropriate adolescent romantic behavior?
- How will you seek positive and affirming positive supports to help yourself and your family's assimilation process and learn supportive language or strategies?
- How will you support a child exploring their gender identity or expression? Would you support a child dressing in opposite-gender clothing, playing with opposite-gender toys, etc.?

Resources

- DCYF Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training Resources
- Cherry, K. (2020). What Does LGBTQ+ Mean?
- Review WAC 110-148-1475, regarding bedroom sharing, with the applicants and ensure they are willing to comply with the requirements outlined.
- Gender Unicorn
- RESJ 0001 Supporting LGBTQIA+
- LGBTQIA Resources - All Documents (wa.lcl).

Education

Intent

Assess whether the applicant(s) is prepared to advocate for and guide children with a variety of educational needs. Assess the applicant's personal values regarding the importance of education.

Documentation Tips

- Listing education (institutions, year of graduation, etc.) is not required unless it is pertinent to your overall assessment.
- If an issue requires mitigation, ensure you describe in your narrative the mitigating factors as checked boxes will not print in the final home study report.

- Describe any education, training, or resources provided to the applicants and the applicant's willingness to follow up with additional resources.

Practice Guidance

- Education encompasses a wide range of definitions and should not default to formal education as the primary benchmark (e.g. apprenticeships, trade schools or family business/trade): ensure you encourage and allow applicant(s) to define types of education for themselves, and to define what success means to them.
- Be aware that questions about a non-successful experience/traumatic educational experience by the caregiver could be triggering. You may need to explore how that would affect their treatment/advocacy of a child in their care.
- Be prepared to educate the applicant on what IEP, IFSP, and 504B plans are, McKinney-Vento Act, as well as other educational resources. Note they cannot home-school a dependent child without a court order.

Sample Interview Questions

- How did/didn't your educational experience prepare you for adult life?
- Did you experience any educational barriers growing up? If yes, if you have a child in your care who experiences similar challenges, what would you do to help them?
- Are you doing now what you thought you'd be doing career-wise?
- What resources and supports are in your community or accessible to you to help a child in your care?
- Can you make time to meet during the work week/school hours to attend educational meetings? Do you have work/transportation/other obligations that you need resources to overcome to attend school meetings?

Resources

- Student Success | OSPI

Resources

Intent

Assess if the applicants have available community and family supports.

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section and will only be completed once. This section should reflect both applicants, if applicable.
- The chosen statement will print on the home study report, and your narrative should support the statement selected.

- Include concerns and mitigation if applicable in narrative format. Describe any education, training, or resources provided to the applicants and the applicant's willingness to follow up with the additional resources.
- Financial resources should be documented in the Occupation and Finances section.

Practice Guidance

- Consider what support is available and how the family accesses that support. For example, a family member who lives locally could provide occasional babysitting, or an out-of-state friend could provide emotional support.
- Assess if the applicants have any natural support, such as immediate and extended family, friends, or community.
- Assess if the applicants have any system supports for themselves, such as a foster parent support group and system supports for a child, such as WISE, counseling services, extra-curricular activities, etc.
- Are community resources available to meet the child's specific needs and support the current service plan?
- What is the applicant willing to do if there are limited community resources to meet the child's current case/treatment plan?
- Consider what support is available and how the family accesses that support.
- Consider military or immigrant families and what this may look like for the family.
- Is the applicant aware of the supports and resources available through DCYF? If they are not, share education and resources (caregiver support groups, how to access respite, local community supports or discounts for caregivers).
- If needed, brainstorm with the family to identify additional extended community supports.

Sample Interview Questions

- Who can provide respite for you?
- Who/what are your family's natural supports?
- Who do you call in an emergency? Or who could you call in case of an emergency?
- How will your community support the placement of a child?

Resources

- Prudent Parenting Guide
- Home - Alliance CaRES

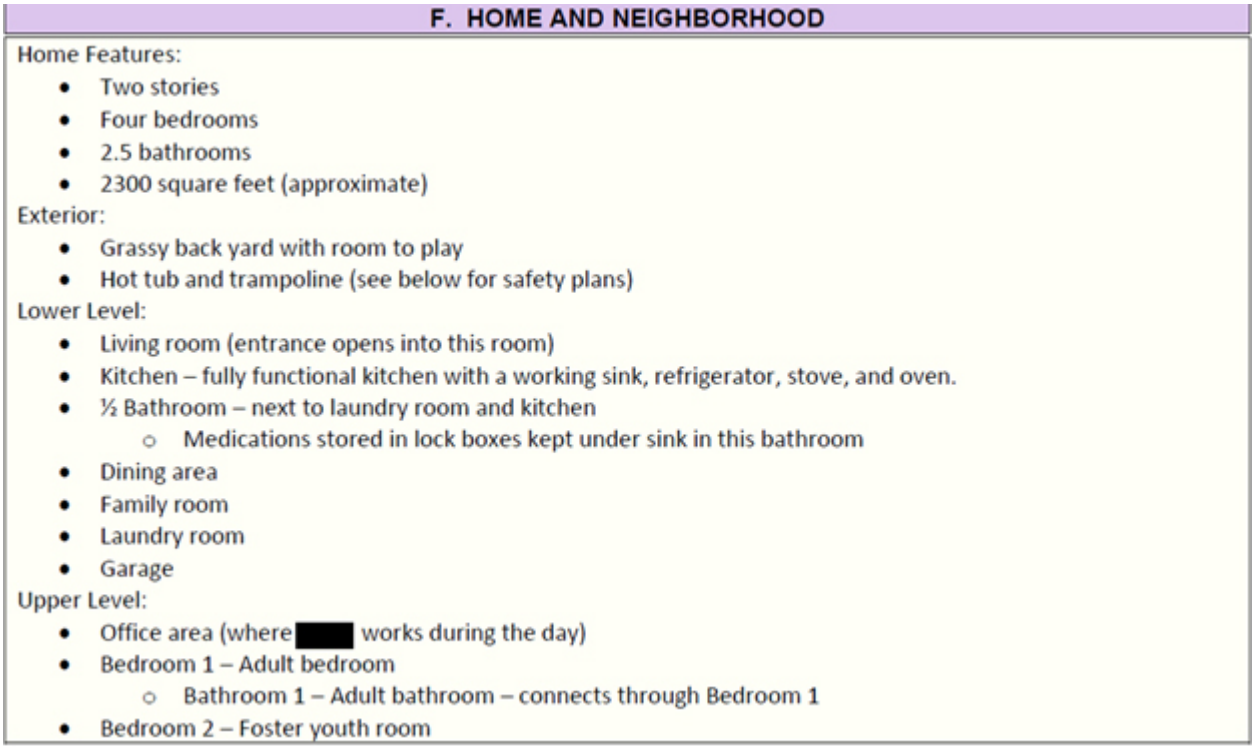
Home Environment

Intent

Assess whether the home (inside and outside) is safe and sanitary for children.

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section and will only be completed once. This section should reflect both applicants, if applicable.
- This section is broken into 5 separate parts with multiple questions and narrative boxes in each part.
    - Part 1: Describe the home, sleeping arrangement and address safe sleep.
        - Describe the home does not need to be completed in a narrative format: Use the format in the sample provided.



F. HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD

Home Features:
- Two stories
- Four bedrooms
- 2.5 bathrooms
- 2300 square feet (approximate)

Exterior:
- Grassy back yard with room to play
- Hot tub and trampoline (see below for safety plans)

Lower Level:
- Living room (entrance opens into this room)
- Kitchen – fully functional kitchen with a working sink, refrigerator, stove, and oven.
- ½ Bathroom – next to laundry room and kitchen
    - Medications stored in lock boxes kept under sink in this bathroom
- Dining area
- Family room
- Laundry room
- Garage

Upper Level:
- Office area (where [redacted] works during the day)
- Bedroom 1 – Adult bedroom
    - Bathroom 1 – Adult bathroom – connects through Bedroom 1
- Bedroom 2 – Foster youth room

        - Describe the sleeping arrangements: each bedroom, types of beds (both occupied and available) and who sleeps where including the applicant's plan if they sleep on a different floor than the children.
    - Part 2: Weapons, Toxic Materials, Alcohol/nicotine/marijuana
        - It is not necessary to list all the weapons in the home or on the property.
        - Describe how weapons and ammunition are safely stored and any concerns that were mitigated during the home study process.
        - Describe how toxic materials are safely stored and any concerns that were mitigated during the home study process.

        - Describe how alcohol/nicotine/marijuana are properly stored and inaccessible to children and any concerns that were mitigated during the home study process.
    - Part 3: Medication storage, Pets/Animals, Sanitation/safety concern
        - If medication is lifesaving (e.g., epinephrine pen, insulin, inhaler, etc.), describe the plan to ensure it is accessible to the caregiver, but not the children unless the child can self-administer the medication. Do not include any child-specific or case plan information in the narrative as this is subject to change.
        - Briefly describe the number and type of all animals/pets in the home or on the property. Describe how they interact with children.
        - Pet vaccinations do not need to be captured in the home study.
        - If a behavior assessment has been completed or is needed, document any mitigation efforts and safety plans related to the animal.
        - Describe the plan to introduce children in out-of-home care to the pets/animals and the plan to accommodate different comfort levels around animals for different children.
        - Mitigating factors will not print regarding sanitation; narrative must include all concerns and mitigation factors selected.
    - Part 4: Outbuildings/Potential Hazards
        - List and describe the outbuildings.
        - Describe how children will be kept safe around potentially dangerous items or structures.
        - If the Supervision Plan for Site Specific Conditions was completed in WA CAP, do not restate the information here; list the potential hazard and indicate the plan is in WA CAP.
    - Part 5: Access to services and resources
        - Select the applicable radio button and document any plans to access necessary resources.
        - Describe any information provided to the applicants regarding resources available in their community.

Practice Guidance

- **For Kinship Caregivers:** use support funds to purchase concrete goods to assist the family in meeting home and safety requirements.

- Be mindful of the language used when describing areas of the home. Use language such as “Primary Bedroom,” “Primary Bathroom,” “Child’s Bedroom,” “Secondary Bedroom” in place of language that is now considered outdated, insensitive, or racist.
- Are the applicants willing to be flexible with bedroom assignments (i.e., to accommodate an infant who needs to be close to the primary bedroom, to support special supervision needs, to support different ages of children, etc. including LGBTQIA+/SOGIE).
- Assess safe sleep environment and educate families on safe sleep practices when applicable.
- Assist caregivers in achieving a safe sleep environment through education and document whether the family was resistant to recommendations around safe sleep. Was their compliance immediate, or are they resistant to recommendations on this issue, showing a pattern of noncompliance with Safe Sleep?
- Consider including conversations around sleeping on couches, chairs, car seats, swings etc.
- Consider discussing cradle boards, or other culturally relevant considerations for safe sleep practices.
- Ensure all weapons are properly stored and inaccessible to children. If applicable, ensure keys to weapons/ammunition storage are inaccessible to children.
- Toxic materials are not required to be locked up but must be inaccessible to vulnerable children. Discuss what inaccessible looks like depending on the age/development of a child.
- Alcohol/nicotine/marijuana are not required to be locked up but must be inaccessible. Consider all forms of substances: edibles, prescriptions, etc.
- Medication storage for **Kinship License** and **Foster Care** License must be locked and must be inaccessible to children at all times in **Kinship Care.**
- Sanitation must be directly related to impacting children’s health, hygiene, or safety.
- View all outbuildings on the property (including attached and detached storage or dwellings, RVs, and other structures) to ensure they do not pose a risk to children.
- Potential hazards include trampolines, fire pits, pools, or anything else that is not an immediate hazard. Complete a Supervision Plan for Site Specific Conditions (DCYF 10-419) to outline any mitigation measures.
- Staff any home environment concerns with your supervisor. The following items must be verified prior to the approval of the home study:
    - Individual, appropriate beds for each child in out-of-home care.
    - A safe sleep environment is in place, if applicable.
    - Weapons and ammunition are safely stored.

- Toxic materials are inaccessible to children if there is a concern about inappropriate/unsafe access.
- Alcohol/nicotine/marijuana is inaccessible to children.
- Medication is safely stored (locked or inaccessible based on track).
- Any animals in the home or property interact safely with children in out-of-home care.
- Any outbuilding/potential hazards in the home or on the property are identified and any mitigation is described including supervision plans.

Resources

- Infant Safety Education and Intervention: DCYF Policy 1135.
- Healthy Native Babies Project
- Healthy Native Babies Workbook and Toolkit
- Concrete Goods: DCYF Policy 4519
- 362 Safety Barrier Guidelines for Pools.pdf (cpsc.gov)

Occupation and Finances

Intent

Assess how an applicant's work schedules and finances impact the care of children.

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section that will reflect both applicants' information and will only be completed once.
- Note the applicant's current place of employment and schedule. Listing employment history (Place of employment, duration, etc.) is not required unless it is pertinent to your overall assessment.
  - Part 1 Occupation and Work Schedule
    - Summarize their employment stability.
    - Does their schedule allow for flexibility.
  - Part 2 Military
    - Assess if the applicant(s) has military experience and if that experience will impact their care for children.
  - Part 3 Income
    - Assess how the applicant(s) can meet their household needs.
    - Including the applicant's income amount is not required. The assessment should be a holistic picture of the family's financial situation.

Practice Guidance

- This section should be written with a focus on intent, not a description of the applicant or applicant's work history.
    - Part 1 Occupation and Work Schedule
        - It is not necessary to list places of employment or positions, but instead look for gainful employment.
    - Part 2 Military
        - No practice guidance for this section.
    - Part 3 Income
        - General FC and Adoption HS: Review collateral documents including financial worksheet and applicable documents.
        - Kinship: The financial worksheet is not required. Assess how the family meets their financial needs if they do not have sufficient income flow.
        - Resources may include but are not limited to:
            - Food bank
            - Church community
            - Government assistance
            - Other family, friends, or co-workers
        - Other sources of income may include but are not limited to:
            - Paychecks
            - Government assistance
            - Child support and/or alimony
            - Retirement, pensions, social security
        - If the applicants are receiving SSI or death benefits on behalf of the child, staff it with your supervisor.
        - A TRADS* search may be used for bankruptcy documents.

Sample Interview Questions

- Part 1 Occupation and Work Schedule
    - What is your childcare plan?
    - If there was an emergency and you could not take the child with you, what would the plan be?
- Part 2 Military
    - Have you ever served in the military?
    - What branch and for how long?
    - Were you involved in active combat?
    - If on active duty, are there considerations for deployment and/or relocation?
    - If no longer active, what were the circumstances around your discharge?
- Part 3 Income
    - General Homes

- Do you have any financial concerns around adding child(ren) to your home?
- Do you have any history of filing for bankruptcy?
    - What were the circumstances?
    - Is it resolved?
- Do you feel prepared to handle any unexpected expenses that may come up?
- What additional financial support can you access if needed?
- Kinship Homes (additional questions)
    - Do you receive any financial supports for the child, such as SSI and/or survivor benefits?

Resources

- TRADS – federal database search. Ask your supervisor for your regional contact.

References

Intent

Assess whether the applicant's references support their care of children or additional children.

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section and will only be completed once. This section should reflect both applicants, if applicable.
- References are confidential and will not be disclosed unless required by law or court order; do not use direct quotes or names.
- If a reference notes or voices a concern, describe how that concern is mitigated.
- General Care: 1 related and 1 unrelated reference that have known the applicant(s) for 2 or more years.
- Kinship: 2 references, relation and length of time do not have requirements.

Practice Guidance

- This section will include additional collateral contacts, including the case worker.

Clearances

Intent

Ensure the background and FamLink checks have been completed and are accurately documented in WA CAP.

Documentation Tips

- This section is a shared section and will only be completed once. This section should reflect both applicants and household members, if applicable.

- Document the date of all FamLink checks for all household members and minor children (not children in out-of-home care) in narrative form in this section of the home study.
- Document date of last fingerprint-based background check for all adult household members and include date of most recent in-state background check, if applicable.
- Summarize any history with the Department by documenting years of involvement and the type of concerns addressed. Do not list each intake by number or result.

Practice Guidance

- Note discussions regarding past child abuse or neglect concerns can be distressing and overwhelming to some families. Remind families that these discussions occur with all caregivers.
- Obtain family's perspective of past involvement with Department.
- Focus on the family's strengths and what supports they have today/what has changed.

Same Interview Questions

- What has changed for your family since the last time CPS was involved?
- What have you learned?
- What supports do you have today?
- Have you taken any trainings related to the past concern?

Resources

Legal Permanency

Intent

Determine if the assessment on the home includes a recommendation for legal permanency which may include adoption, guardianship, or another approved permanent plan.

Documentation Tips

- Select the answer reflecting the type of home study assessment being completed.
- There are four options to choose from:
    - **Denied:** This assessment does not include a recommendation for legal permanency: denied.
    - **Placement Only**, no form of permanency assessed: This assessment is for placement purposes.
    - **Guardianship, including Tribal Jurisdiction:** It was assessed that the applicant is capable of caring for children, without the support of a case plan, once permanency is achieved. The applicant is committed to caring for children in a safe, nurturing, and affirming way. The applicant(s) is capable and wiling to address the financial, educational, health, and specific needs of the children. This assessment does not include adoption requirements.

    - **Adoption:** It was assessed that the applicant is capable of caring for children, without the support of a case plan, once permanency is achieved. The applicant is committed to caring for children in a safe, nurturing, and affirming way. The applicant is capable and willing to address the financial, educational, health, and specific needs of the children. This assessment is for the purpose of adoption.
- Denied and placement only home study radio button will not populate a narrative box.

Practice Guidance

- Provide the Permanency Planning Matrix to the family and discuss different types of permanency, benefits, limitations, reunification as the primary goal, and concurrent planning. When this publication is provided, explanation of the matrix will prompt natural opportunities for discussion.
- **If the selection populates a narrative box**, describe items such as: contingency plans, discussion around developing a contingency plan, and how the applicants feel about providing permanency to a child. What form of permanency will be the best fit for the applicant's family?
- **If the assessment includes adoption,** have the applicants thought about what an open communication agreement might look like?

Resources

- Indian Child Welfare Policies and Procedures
- Permanency Planning Matrix
- Adoption Support program

Sources of Information for Adoption

Intent

Any home study including adoption requirements must list the sources of information per RCW 26.33.190.

Documentation Tips

- There are two options for this response:
    - Not applicable for this assessment (any home study that is not for adoption)
    - The following sources of information were used in this home study assessment: A list of forms will populate. Select all boxes that apply.

Core Concepts of Adoption

Intent

- Discuss the six Core Concepts of Adoption with prospective adoption applicants as required per RCW 26.33.190.

Documentation Tips

- There are two options for this response:
    - Not applicable for this assessment.
    - The following Core Concepts of Adoption were discussed with the applicant(s). Check the boxes that apply verifying the required conversations occurred.
- There is no narrative for this section. Any relevant narrative related to adoption concepts should be covered in the Legal Permanency section.

Evaluation

Intent

Provide an overall assessment of the applicant's appropriateness to care for children in out-of-home placement, considering the totality of the information gathered through applicant's responses on the application, interviews, collateral contacts, and staff's assessment.

Documentation Tips

- Narrative should be specific to each section.
- This section is broken into six parts:
    - **Engagement:** radio button and narrative box. Applicable check boxes and narrative must be completed if applicant was challenging to engage and/or uncooperative. Include any applicable mitigating factors.
    - **Motivation:** required narrative box.
        - Review and summarize the information from the Children and Youth Served section.
    - **Strengths, Skills, and Commitment:** required narrative box.
        - Describe the applicant's strengths as it relates to their ability to provide care for additional children.
        - Include information about their willingness to provide culturally affirming care, and address the financial, educational, mental health and specific needs of children.
        - Include an assessment of their ability to support reunification, permanency (if applicable), short term care and other transitions if indicated.
        - May include applicant's understanding of trauma, grief, and loss or resiliency factors the applicant has demonstrated related to their life experience.
    - **Insight and/or Awareness:** radio button and narrative box. Applicable check boxes and narrative must be completed if challenges/lack of insight are identified. Include any applicable mitigating factors.
    - **Concerns or Limitations:** required narrative box.
        - Include the concerns or limitations, education/training offered, and if the applicants were able to demonstrate different skills to support children.

        - If training or service needs are recommended (partially completed), list them in this section.
        - If concerns were not mitigated, explain efforts to provide education/services and the outcome of those efforts.
    - **Summarize the Outcome:** required narrative box.
        - **Foster License including Foster/Adopt Approvals:** state the approval is "within the home's licensed capacity." Do not include actual number or ages as this may change throughout the life of the license.
        - **Kinship Approvals** (unlicensed, kinship license, adoption, and ICPC): state the child(ren)'s names for the child-specific home study.
        - **Withdrawn or Partially Completed:** briefly describe a recommendation cannot be made at this time.
        - **Not Approved/Denied:** state the decision to deny is based on the information contained throughout the home study.

Practice Guidance

- Summarize the significant finding made during the home study process. Identify strengths and areas of improvement and how those areas may affect the ability to parent.
- **Consider the following:**
    - The applicant's belief about birth parent connections.
    - The applicant's understanding of trauma-impacted care and safety.
    - The applicant's ability to provide care on a short-term and a long-term basis.
    - How the applicants are:
        - Capable and interested in caring for the child/youth without the support of a social worker if permanency is achieved.
        - Capable and willing to address the financial, educational, health, mental health, and specific needs of the child/youth.

Home Study Information

Intent

Identify whether the home study assessment is approved or not approved.

Documentation Tips

    - Select the answer reflecting the outcome and type of home study assessment being completed.
    - Verify the option selected matches the correct track in WA CAP and is consistent with the narrative in the outcome/recommendation section.
- **Home Study Type**
    - **Foster License:** select this option for applicants on the Foster Care License Track who are applying to provide general foster care.

  - **Kinship Care:** select this option for applicants on the Kinship Care Track who are applying for an unlicensed home study.
  - **Kinship License:** select this option for the applicants on the Kinship License Track who are applying for a child-specific license under WAC 110-148-1326.
- **Home Study Outcome**
  - **Not approved, application withdrawn:** select this option if the applicants started the process, and the application was subsequently withdrawn.
  - **Not approved, application withdrawn. Notice of Inability to Recommend Placement (DCYF 09-025) completed:** select this option if the family did not engage after logging into WA CAP and there is a child placed in the home. For CPA applications, check with your Regional Licensor before selecting this option.
  - **Not approved, home study partially completed.** Select this option if significant information was gathered (including interviews), but a recommendation cannot be made. Reasons should be outlined in the Concerns and Limitations narrative. For CPA applications, this is not applicable.
  - **Not approved, home study denied:** select this option when the home study is denied.
  - **Recommended for placement:** select this option when the home study is for unlicensed kinship placement only.
  - **Recommended for placement and adoption:** select this option if the home study is for unlicensed kinship and includes the recommendation and requirements for adoption purposes.
  - **Recommended for placement and foster license:** select this option if the home study is approved for a general foster license (not adoption).
  - **Recommended for placement, foster license, and adoption:** select this option if the home study is approved for a general foster care license and includes the recommendation and requirements for adoption purposes.
  - **Recommended for placement and kinship license:** select this option if the home study is approved for a Child-Specific License purpose (not adoption).
  - **Recommended for placement, kinship license, and adoption:** select this option if the home study is approved for a Child-Specific License and includes the recommendation and requirements for adoption purposes.
- **For ICPC Only** (if this is not an ICPC, select not been requested)**:**
  - Select the answer consistent with the narrative in the outcome recommendation section.
  - Enter the name of the specific children(ren). List multiple children on the same line.
  - There are four options for an ICPC. The option selected must match the request type of the ICPC referral packet.