

Foster Home Studies Content Guide

§749.2447. What information must I obtain for the foster home screening?

You must obtain, document, and assess the following information about a prospective foster home:

Required Information	Description of Discussion, Assessment and Documentation Requirements	Guidelines to Licensing Staff Reviewing for Compliance
(1) The age of the prospective foster parents. Ages of all other members of the household.	All prospective foster parents must be at least 21 years old. You must document the ages of all household members and include documentation verifying the ages of the foster parents.	Are the ages of all household members included, not just the prospective foster parents? Do the persons included here match other information about the household members?
(2) The educational level of the prospective foster parents.	You must ensure and document that each foster parent is able to comprehend and benefit from training and provide appropriate care and supervision to meet the needs of children, in areas such as health, education, and discipline/behavior management, by doing either or both of the following: (A) Require that foster parents have a high school diploma or a G.E.D. TEA or another public education entity must recognize the high school program or high	If a prospective foster parent does not have a high school diploma or GED, take a closer look at how the agency screened this person according to subsection (B) and determined that this person is competent to care for children. Did the CPA document competency to the level that the prospective foster parent will be able to read and follow medical instructions, understand and follow through on training related to topics such as psychotropic medication or emergency behavior intervention, read and understand a child's service plan, etc.?

	<p>school equivalent program; or</p> <p>(B) Have a screening program that:</p> <p>(i) Ensures that each foster parent is able to be an appropriate role model for children in placement;</p> <p>(ii) Ensures that each foster parent is able to communicate with a child in a child’s own language, or has other means to communicate with a child in a child’s own language; and</p> <p>(iii) Addresses adequately basic competencies that would otherwise be met by a high school diploma or G.E.D. including basic reading, writing, and math.</p>	
<p>(3) Personal characteristics.</p>	<p>You must document information from foster parents that demonstrate:</p> <p>(A) Emotional stability, good character, good health, and adult responsibility; and</p> <p>(B) The ability to provide nurturing care, appropriate supervision, reasonable discipline, and a home-like atmosphere for children.</p>	<p>How has the CPA documented the qualities and abilities listed on the left? Can you assess from the documentation whether or not the prospective foster parents will be able to nurture a child that is not their own and will test their limits (at least initially)? If a prospective foster parent has suffered his/her own traumas, has the CPA sufficiently documented how that person has successfully recovered from those and resolved any related depression or anger? These issues may also be addressed in other areas of the home study, but this section should confirm that each prospective foster parent has the needed personality traits to</p>

		successfully cope with the challenges and stresses of foster parenting.
(4) History of marital relationships including any previous marriages.	You must document information about any previous marriages, divorces, or deaths of former spouses. Foster parents and caregivers must demonstrate the ability to form and sustain adult relationships.	The ability to form and sustain adult relationships is the key here. Has the CPA documented that prospective foster parents have their own network of friends and support? This is especially important for single foster parents, in order to ensure that they are not relying on foster children to get their own emotional needs met.
(5) A history of the prospective foster parents' residence and their citizenship status.	You must document the: (A) Length of time spent at each residence for the past 10 years (street address, city, state); and (B) Citizenship of the prospective foster parents.	If the residence history indicates frequent moves or any other cause for concern, how has the CPA addressed the concern? What citizenship documentation was reviewed by the person conducting the home study? Foster parents do NOT have to be U.S. citizens.
(6) The financial status of the prospective foster family.	Information on the family's income must be verified and documented.	Can the family's income support the family without any foster care reimbursement? If not, how has the CPA ensured that the needs of the children in this home will be met. Foster parents do not have to prove that they can pay their bills without the foster care reimbursement.
(7) The results of criminal history and central registry background checks conducted on the prospective foster	(A) (High) Persons applying to foster children and any person, excluding clients, 14 years of age or older who will regularly or frequently be staying or present at the	Results must be received, and all matches resolved, before the CPA verifies the home. Make sure checks were done on ALL required household members. If there were matches that do not require risk

<p>parents and any non-client person 14 years of age or older who regularly or frequently stays or is present in the home.</p>	<p>home, must obtain a criminal history and central registry background check. See Chapter 745, Subchapter F of this title (relating to Background Checks). The specific results of those checks must be documented and assessed in the foster home screening and the foster home record. Any assessments of other parts of a home screening must include and assess relevant background check result information. For example, the paragraphs (3) and (6) regarding a foster family's personal characteristics and financial status should consider and assess a misdemeanor theft by check, even though this crime is not a bar to becoming a foster parent.</p> <p>(B) With respect to law enforcement service call information, you must do the following:</p> <p>(i) Obtain service call information from the appropriate law enforcement agency for each of the prospective foster parents' addresses over the past two years. Discuss with the prospective foster parents any service call information that you obtain from a law enforcement agency and the</p>	<p>evaluation, how did the CPA address these in the home study? Did the CPA ask the foster parents about any domestic violence calls to their home in the last 12 months? If any were disclosed, did the CPA follow-up with the law enforcement entity that responded to the call? How is this documented and addressed in the home study?</p>
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	<p>facts surrounding the incident.</p> <p>(ii) Whether results were found or not, ask the prospective foster parents whether any law enforcement agency has responded to any of their residences in the past two years. If you obtain additional information from the prospective foster parents, request background information from each law enforcement agency that responded. Discuss the incident and any additional background information that you obtain with the prospective foster parents.</p> <p>(iii) Assess and document information obtained from law enforcement and any discussion with the prospective foster parents in the foster home screening.</p>	
<p>(8) The prospective foster parents' motivation to provide foster care.</p>	<p>Assess and document the prospective foster parents' motivation to provide foster care.</p>	<p>Possible motivations that could require additional documentation to address any concerns include: financial motives, providing foster care to get their own emotional needs met, and religious reasons. For example, if a prospective foster parent cited religious reasons for wanting to foster, the agency would need to document here or in the section on religion how the prospective foster parent's religious beliefs might impact how effectively he/she could</p>

		cope with a foster child's challenging issues and behaviors (e.g., children who masturbate, refuse to attend church, steal, lie, etc.)?
(9) Health status of all persons living in the home.	Document information about the physical and mental health status (including substance abuse history) of all persons living in the home in relation to the family's ability to provide foster care. You must observe these persons for any indication of problems and follow up, where indicated, with a professional evaluation. Document the information obtained through your observations.	Does the home study address both physical and mental health? If there is a history of substance abuse, has the CPA explored and documented the person's recovery process? If one of the foster parents has a significant medical problem, ensure that the home study does not minimize the problem, its effect on that person, or its effect on the household. For example, will a potential foster parent's kidney trouble prevent him/her from being able to keep up with the physical demands of parenting? Or is the other spouse heavily involved in taking this person to medical appointments?
(10) The quality of marital and family relationships.	Describe, address, and document the quality of marital and family relationships in relation to the family's ability to provide foster care. You must discuss and assess the stability of a couple's relationship, the strengths and problems of the relationship, and how those issues will relate to foster children placed in the home. You must discuss and assess the quality of the relationships between prospective foster parents	Did the CPA document the challenges in the marital and/or family relationships, or did it only document the strengths? The home study should not gloss over this area or make the family sound perfect. The CPA needs to know about the family's challenges and issues in order to work with them successfully.

	and their biological children, living in or out of the home, strengths and problems of those relationships, and how those issues will relate to foster children placed in the home.	
(11) The prospective foster parents' feelings about their childhoods and parents.	Discuss, assess, and document the prospective foster parents' feelings about their childhoods and parents, including any history of abuse or neglect and their resolution of those experiences.	Did the home study adequately document each prospective foster parent's relationship with each of their parents, including discipline practices and any abuse/neglect or domestic violence? If a prospective foster parent has experienced significant trauma or loss, did the CPA adequately document the person's resolution of those experiences? If the prospective foster parent has not healed from his/her own childhood traumas, it will be difficult for that person to successfully parent abused/neglected children.
(12) The prospective foster parents' attitudes about a foster child's or his biological family's religion.	Evaluate & document prospective foster parents on: (A) Their willingness to respect and encourage a child's religious affiliation, if any; (B) Their willingness to provide a child opportunity for religious/ spiritual development, if desired; and (C) The health protection they plan to give a child if the foster parents religious beliefs prohibit certain medical treatment.	If the prospective foster parents have strong religious beliefs, has the CPA documented how the prospective foster parents would support an older foster child who has a strong religious affiliation that does not match their own, including a child who does not want to participate in religious activities? Do the prospective foster parents' religious beliefs impact daily living in the home? If so, has the CPA documented how the family will make a child feel at home and accepted if the child comes from a different faith? This

		includes supporting children who practice a completely different religion, not just a different denomination/sect of the same religion.
(13) The prospective foster parents' values, feelings, and practices in regard to child care and discipline.	Discuss, assess, and document the applicants' knowledge of child development and their child-care experience. Discuss and assess the ways the applicants were disciplined as children and their reactions to the discipline they received. Discuss and assess the prospective foster parents' discipline styles, techniques, and their ability to recognize and respect differences in children and use discipline methods that suit the individual child. If their current discipline methods are different than those that you approve, discuss and assess how they would change their child-care practices to conform to your approved methods.	Has the CPA ensured that the prospective foster parents will use discipline that is appropriate for the child's age and developmental level and will individualize discipline techniques based on what works best with each child? Do the prospective foster parents have realistic expectations of children based on their age, developmental level, and trauma history? If the prospective foster parents have strong opinions about discipline methods that may interfere with their ability to do what is best for each individual child, how has the CPA addressed this?
(14) The prospective foster parents' sensitivity to and feelings about children who may have been subjected to abuse or neglect.	Discuss, assess, and document the prospective foster parents' understanding of the dynamics of child abuse and neglect. Discuss and assess their understanding of how these issues and experiences will affect them, their families, and foster children in their	Has the CPA ensured that the prospective foster parents understand that abused/neglected children will have emotions and behaviors (irrational fears, sexual acting out) that they will need to manage (or help the child manage)? Do they have the ability to hear and respond appropriately to children talking about their

	<p>care. Discuss and assess the prospective foster parent's ability to help children who have been abused or neglected. If the prospective foster parent experienced abuse or neglect as a child, assess his handling of those experiences and the impact of those experiences on the applicant's ability to help children deal with their own experiences. Assess the availability of family and community resources to meet the needs of the children in the family's care.</p>	<p>abuse/neglect histories? Has the CPA ensured that the prospective foster parents understand the stress related to helping these children heal? If a prospective foster parent has been a victim of abuse/neglect, has the CPA sufficiently documented that person's healing process and current emotional stability? Regarding available resources, has the CPA documented that the family can access adequate medical care, therapy, or other services needed by the children for whom they intend to provide care?</p>
<p>(15) The prospective foster parents' sensitivity to and feelings about children's experiences of separation from or loss of their biological families.</p>	<p>Discuss, assess, and document the prospective foster parents' understanding of the dynamics of separation and loss and the effects of these experiences on children. Discuss and assess their personal experiences with separation and loss and their processing of those experiences. Assess the potential foster parents' acceptance of the process of grief and loss for children and assess their ability to help a child through the grieving process.</p>	<p>The home study should specify how the prospective foster parents cope with loss, particularly as the foster care system will create a lot of loss for them over the long term. Has the CPA documented the prospective foster parents' understanding of how children express grief differently? Do the prospective foster parents have the patience and emotional availability to support children experiencing grief and loss?</p>
<p>(16) The prospective foster parents' sensitivity to, and feelings about, a child's biological family.</p>	<p>Discuss, assess, and document the prospective foster parents' feelings about the child's parents, including those parents who abused or</p>	<p>Has the CPA documented that the prospective foster parents have an understanding and acceptance of how abused/neglected children usually still love and miss their</p>

	<p>neglected the child. Discuss and assess their sensitivity and reactions to the biological parents. Discuss and assess their sensitivity to and acceptance of a child's feelings about his parents and assess their ability to help the child deal with those feelings. Discuss and assess the potential foster parents' sensitivity to and acceptance of the child's relationships with his siblings. Discuss and assess their willingness to support the child's relationships with parents, siblings, and extended family including their support for contacts between the child and his family.</p>	<p>abusive parents? Can the prospective foster parents help children reconcile their feelings about the abuse with their love and longing for their parents? Has the CPA documented what the prospective foster parents are willing to do in order to support children's ongoing contact and relationships with family members?</p>
<p>(17) The attitude of other household members about the prospective foster parents' plan to provide foster care.</p>	<p>Discuss, assess, and document the attitudes of other household members toward the plan to provide foster care. Discuss and assess their involvement in the care of children, their attitudes toward foster children, and their acceptance of the verification as a foster family.</p>	<p>If there are other adults or older children in the home, has the CPA documented what their role will be in relation to the foster children and how they feel about having foster children in the home? Has the CPA documented that these household members will be able to accept foster children and treat them appropriately?</p>
<p>(18) The attitude of the prospective foster parents' extended family regarding foster care.</p>	<p>Discuss, assess, and document the extended family's attitude toward foster care and foster children and the involvement the extended family will have with foster children. Discuss and assess</p>	<p>If the prospective foster family has routine or regular contact with extended family members, how does the extended family feel about having foster children as part of the family? Has the CPA documented that these extended family</p>

	<p>the impact the extended family's attitudes will have on the family's ability to provide foster care and whether the extended family will serve as a support system for the foster family and for foster children.</p>	<p>members will be able to accept foster children and treat them appropriately?</p>
<p>(19) Support systems available to prospective foster parents.</p>	<p>Discuss, assess, and document the support systems available to each foster parent and the support the family may receive from these resources. You must ask each prospective foster parent for information about any person who may provide support as a caregiver during an unexpected event or crisis situation, such as an illness or disability of a foster parent, loss of transportation, or the death of an immediate family member. Verify and document identifying information and availability of each person that will provide support as a caregiver. Any of these persons will need a fingerprint-based criminal history check before acting as a caregiver. Unless the person will be a caregiver immediately after you verify the home, the background check on the person does not have to be completed before you verify the home.</p>	<p>Has the CPA documented that the prospective foster parents have a support system that will provide them with the resources needed to provide foster care, especially the emotional support needed to cope with the stress of fostering?</p>

<p>(20) The prospective foster parents' expectations of and plans for foster children.</p>	<p>Discuss, assess, and document the prospective foster parents' expectations of the child and the flexibility of their expectations in relation to the child's actual needs and abilities. Discuss and assess their capacities to recognize and emphasize the strengths and achievements of the child and their capacities to adjust their expectations according to the abilities of the child.</p>	<p>Has the CPA documented that the prospective foster parent's expectations of foster children are appropriate considering the children's ages, developmental stages, and trauma history (e.g., expectations related to chores, hygiene, school performance, behavior, etc.)? Are the prospective foster parents able to individualize rules and expectations based on each child?</p>
<p>(21) The language(s) spoken by the prospective foster parents.</p>	<p>Document the language(s) spoken by each prospective foster parent.</p>	<p>If one of the foster parents speaks another language, does the documentation indicate to what extent are they fluent? For foster parents who do not speak English or speak English as a second language, does the documentation indicate how they will communicate with others outside the home in order to meet the child's needs (doctor, therapist, school, etc.)?</p>
<p>(22) Prospective foster parent's ability to work with specific kinds of behaviors and backgrounds.</p>	<p>Discuss, assess, and document the prospective foster family's ability to work with specific behaviors, backgrounds, special needs and/or disabilities, and other characteristics of foster children.</p>	<p>This needs to be specific and realistic. This should be based on what the family is actually willing and able to do (based on their stated preference and on the agency's assessment of them), rather than being based solely on the foster home's stated wishes or solely on what the agency needs/wants the family to do. Also, be aware of what characteristics/behaviors the foster home is NOT willing to accept</p>

		regarding a foster child. Are these expectations realistic given the types of children that the CPA admits and the type of children likely to be placed in the foster home?
(23) Background information from other child-placing agencies.	Request and assess the following background information (if provided) from any child-placing agency that previously conducted a foster screening, pre-adoptive home screening, post placement adoptive report, or home study: (A) The screening, report, home study, and related documentation; (B) Documentation of supervisory visits and evaluations; (C) Any record of deficiencies and their resolutions; and (D) The most current fire and health inspections.	Check to see if the home has previously been verified by another agency. If so, did this CPA know about it? Did they request the records from the other agency? What evidence is there that the agency considered those records in verifying this family?