

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 12: Foster Family Home Licensing	Effective Date: April 1, 2013
	Section 32: Physical Environment	Version: 1

POLICY

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will ensure that all foster family homes meet the minimum requirements for the physical environment as required by Indiana law.

Foster parents are required to report to DCS or the licensed child placing agency (LCPA) any change within the foster family home impacting the health, safety, or general well-being of the child, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. The physical location or mailing address of the foster family home, the telephone number of the foster parents, or both; and
2. The physical condition of the foster family home or the use of bedrooms in the foster family home as it relates to the child, or both.

Note: The foster family shall fully disclose all business conducted on the premises of the foster family home. Commercial activities that adversely affect the welfare of children are prohibited.

The foster family home must be in compliance with Indiana Administrative Code regarding the physical facilities of foster family homes (see [465 IAC 2-1.5-8](#) through [465 IAC 2-1.5-12](#)).

The foster family home must contain a clean interior, which is free from dangerous or hazardous conditions (such as exposed wiring or chipping paint).

The exterior premises of the foster family home must be clean and free from dangerous or hazardous conditions.

The foster family must have access to a working telephone.

The living area must be safe, comfortable, and accessible.

Areas not commonly used for sleeping shall not be used for a bedroom. These areas include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Living area;
2. Dining;
3. Hall; and
4. Basement.

All foster family homes must provide:

1. A bed for each foster child;

Note: The foster family shall have sufficient bedroom space to allow at least 50 usable square feet for each child. Every bedroom must have two (2) exits.

2. Adequate space for storage space for personal belongings;
3. Eating, recreation, bathroom, and bathing facilities; and

Note: The foster family home must have a functioning bathroom.

4. Adequate healthcare and food.

The foster family home shall have working utilities at all times except for temporary interruptions as may be necessary for repairs or natural disasters.

All household chemicals must be out of the reach of children. These chemicals include but are not limited, to the following:

1. Poisons;
2. Cleaners;
3. Detergents; and
4. Medications.

Unloaded firearms and ammunition are stored in separate, locked places.

Note: Foster parents must be in compliance with state and local laws with regard to firearms. Firearms, including BB guns and air guns, shall be unloaded, locked, and secured to prevent unauthorized use. Ammunition and projectiles, such as arrows, or other items which can be used to make a weapon operable, shall be locked separately from the weapon.

Foster children shall not be given access to firearms or other weapons unless approved by DCS.

Foster parents shall maintain current documentation verifying that household pets have had vaccinations required by law.

Note: A household pet with a known history of being vicious or infected with any disease transmittable to humans may not be kept by the foster parents.

The foster family home shall have one (1) smoke detector that is within 10 feet of each bedroom door. At least one (1) smoke detector in operating condition shall be on each level of the home. The home must have at least one (1) two and one-half (2 ½) pounds or greater A-B-C type fire extinguisher in operating condition on each floor of the home.

A carbon monoxide detector shall be required in the foster family home unless only electricity is used for cooking and heating the home.

The furnace, stove, heater, and other equipment requiring ventilation must be properly ventilated and operational.

Cooking and refrigeration equipment of the foster family home must be clean and sanitary both inside and outside.

The foster family must have access to reliable transportation.

Note: The foster parent must provide a valid copy of his/her driver's license, registration, and automotive insurance, if applicable. Additionally, appropriate car seats must be used, if applicable.

The foster home shall be connected to a public or private water supply. A private water supply shall be tested annually for safety, and the cost of testing will be covered by the foster family.

Note: Well water analysis must be completed, if applicable; or bottled water must be used for cooking and drinking.

The foster parents or another responsible person must be physically present at the swimming pool, hot tub, or body of water, to supervise children at all times. All in-ground or above-ground swimming pools or hot tubs accessible to children must be:

1. In compliance with all state and local laws and zoning ordinances;
2. Maintained in a clean and safe condition; and
3. Secured in an appropriate manner to prevent children from entering the area unsupervised.

If the foster family home is a mobile home, the following conditions must be met:

1. There shall be two (2) exits, located at least 20 feet apart. One (1) exit must be within 35 feet of each bedroom door; and
2. The mobile home shall be skirted and securely anchored.

Code References

1. [465 IAC 2-1.5: Licensing of Foster Family Homes for Children](#)
2. [465 IAC 2-1.5-8: Physical facilities of the foster family home; general](#)
3. [465 IAC 2-1.5-9: Physical facilities of the foster family home; bedrooms and bathrooms](#)
4. [465 IAC 2-1.5-10: Physical facilities of the foster family home; safety; general](#)
5. [465 IAC 2-1.5-11: Physical facilities of the foster family home; safety; fire and safety hazards](#)
6. [465 IAC 2-1.5-12: Physical facilities of the foster family home; safety; cleanliness and sanitation](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM), Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS), and/or the LCPA worker will:

1. Conduct a visit to the home of the foster family;
2. Complete the [Resource Family Home Physical Environment Checklist \(SF53186\)](#) and Residential Pool Requirements and Body of Water Safety Plan, if applicable;
3. Obtain copies of required documents; and
4. Discuss safe sleep expectations, including crib compliance. See Safe Sleep Practice Guidance #2.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Physical Environment Requirements

Discuss the physical environment requirements with the family, such as having access to a working telephone and transportation.

Smoking in Resource Homes

It is important to ensure that children under DCS care and supervision are not exposed to second-hand smoke. Smoking should not occur in the immediate living area of the foster parent's home or in the presence of children under DCS care and supervision. Smoking is prohibited in the child's sleeping area(s). Foster parents must refrain from smoking in vehicles while transporting children in DCS care and supervision.

Foster parents must not purchase tobacco products for any child under DCS care and supervision, as it is illegal for children under 18 to have cigarettes. If a foster parent discovers a child under DCS care and supervision in possession of tobacco products, then they should take control of the tobacco product and contact the child's FCM as soon as possible.

Safe Sleeping

1. Always place babies under the age of 12 months on their backs to sleep. The back sleep position is the safest;
2. In December 2010, the Consumer Product Safety Commission banned the further manufacture of drop-side cribs (e.g. cribs that allow for the sides to be lowered and raised). These types of cribs are not permitted for children under DCS care and supervision. See the following link for a picture of the new crib:
<http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/cribs/>;
3. Place babies on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet. Never place babies to sleep on pillows, bean bags, quilts, sheepskins or other soft surfaces;
4. Keep soft objects and toys, and loose bedding, out of babies' sleep area. Do not use pillows, blankets, quilts, or pillow like crib bumpers in the sleep area and keep any other items away from the baby's face;
5. Keep babies' sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep. Babies should not sleep in a bed, on a couch, or armchair with adults or other children. They can sleep in the same room as you;
6. Think about using a clean, dry pacifier when placing the infant down to sleep, but do not force the baby to take it;
7. Dress babies in light sleep clothing and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult; and
8. Reduce the chance that flat spots will develop on a baby's head by providing "tummy time" when the baby is awake and someone is watching, changing the direction that the baby lies in the crib from one week to the next, and avoiding too much time in car seats, carriers and bouncers.

More information can be found through:

1. [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#);
2. [Healthy Children.org](#);
3. [The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development](#);
- and
4. [The DCS Website](#).

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Resource Family Home Physical Environment Checklist \(SF53186\)](#)
2. [Residential Pool Requirements/Body of Water Safety Plan \(SF54609\)](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

A-B-C Extinguisher

The A-B-C extinguisher is a multi-purpose fire extinguisher that can be used on two or more types of fires. Class A extinguishers put out fires in ordinary combustible materials such as cloth, wood, rubber, paper, and many plastics. Class B extinguishers are used on fires involving flammable liquids, such as grease, gasoline, oil, and oil-based paints. Class C extinguishers are suitable for use on fires involving appliances, tools, or other equipment that is electrically energized or plugged in. For more information please visit the [U.S. Fire Administration](#).

Foster Care Liability Insurance

Foster Care Liability Insurance is protection and coverage provided to foster parents upon request; the insurance covers certain risks associated with caring for children under the DCS care and supervision. The coverage includes damages to the home or property of the foster parents, harm done by the child to another party, and claims made against foster parents as agents of the State of Indiana.