

FOSTER CARE HOME INSPECTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE:

Individuals or families applying to become foster parents, or to adopt a child, must have their home(s) inspected as part of the requirements in order to gain approval from the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Home inspections assess whether the home meets health and safety standards.

ROLE OF THE HEALTH OFFICER:

Complete a health inspection of the family home, using forms provided by the DHHS, to ensure that local health ordinances for single or multi-family dwellings, and the minimum standards set by the Division for Children Youth and Families (DCYF) for foster and adoptive homes, are met.

BACKGROUND OF FOSTER CARE:

Foster family care is a protective service for children and youth who must be removed from their parent or guardian due to abuse, neglect, delinquency or a "child in need of supervision" (CHINS) petition to the district court.

According to NH statute 170 E, individuals may not provide "regular" care and supervision to children who are unrelated to the adult caregiver. These individuals must apply for and satisfactorily obtain a foster family care license. Persons seeking to adopt in NH, or who receive children whose adoption is not legally finalized, must also obtain a foster home license.

The licensing process is carried out by DCYF and private agencies licensed by DCYF. These private child-placing agencies are required to study and approve families according to Administrative Rules, 6446, Foster Family Care Licensing Requirements.

Applicants are required to submit an application package that includes identifying information, permission to perform a criminal record check, FBI Live Scan fingerprints, and a check of the central registry of child abusers. Home health and fire inspections are required by the local fire dept and health officer. The home must first meet the local standard, and minimally meet the state standard as noted in the forms for these inspections. Applicants submit medical health statements for all household members, five references, and must attend twenty-one hours of training prior to receiving a license. A minimum of two home visits by a social worker and a home study is completed with all household members. A license is issued for no more than two years, and is renewable. The license is specific to the number, age and gender of children that may be served. Two parent households may serve no more than six children total, while a single parent may serve no more than four children.

The home health inspection is required only at initial licensure. The inspection forms for the health officer to complete are obtained from the applicant at time of the inspection.