



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.3

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| Subject: | Desired Characteristics of Resource Parents |
| Authority: | TCA 37-5-105(3), 37-5-106, 37-4-201 et seq., 36-1-201 et seq. P.L. 109-239, Adoption and Safe Families Act, Safe and Timely Interstate Placement Act of Children in Foster Care Act of 2006 - P.L. 109-239, and the Social Security Act. |
| Standards: | DCS: 3-201, 3-204, 6-102, 6-505B, 6-509C, 6-510C, 6-512C, 10-100, 12-105, 12-201, 12-400, 12-401, 12-402, 12-403, 12-805. COA: PA-CPS 10.01, PA-CPS 10.02, PA-CPS 11.03; PA-FC 6.01- 6.05, PA-FC 16.03-16.07, PA-FC-17.01-17.06; PA-KC 3.01, PA-KC 6.02-6.06, PA-KC-6.08-6.09, PA-KC 12.06; PA-BSM 2; PA-CR 1, 2, 3, 4. |
| Application: | All DCS Foster Care and Supervisory Staff and Private Provider Agencies Staff |

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services (DCS), Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and DCS Provider Agencies, shall identify desired characteristics of resource parents to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children/youth served. DCS shall also set standards of approval for its resource parents to increase the likelihood of their success in meeting the needs of the children/youth placed in their homes.

Purpose:

Serving as a resource parent for children in Tennessee is a privilege, and becoming a resource parent in Tennessee is not considered to be a right of persons making application. DCS has an obligation to seek parents who can provide children with safety, permanency and well being and has identified the following characteristics as the minimum areas of assessment to help ensure the needs are met for the children/youth in its care. The procedures in this policy are for use as a guide to staff in recruiting perspective resource parents and to inform prospective resource parents of some of the expectations DCS has of its families, but is not an exhaustive list of requirements.

- Procedures:**
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| A. Family composition | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Married or single persons may apply to become resource parents. All prospective resource parents shall be approved based on their ability to meet the special needs of children in foster care. 2. Potential resource parent's birth and adoptive children shall be interviewed and involved in the mutual selection process. Their needs and strengths will be considered during the approval process of the family. The support of children residing in the home is very important to the success of the child/youth that might be placed in the home. 3. Any other household members shall also be interviewed and involved in the mutual selection process in terms of how they might be affected by or have |
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| | <p>an effect upon the child/youth that might be placed in the home.</p> |
| <p>B. Age and health requirements</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The resource parents must be at least 21 years of age and must be both physically and emotionally healthy enough to carry out the duties of a resource parent (Relatives age 18 or older may be considered to become resource parents for a sibling or other blood relative). 2. The age and/or health of potential resource parents shall be considered primarily as it affects his/her physical energy, emotional capability, maturity, flexibility and ability to care for and provide permanency for a specific child. 3. Form CS-0678, Resource Parent Medical Report must be completed to verify applicants are healthy enough to carry out the duties of a resource parent. |
| <p>C. Smoking and health quality issues</p> | <p>It is the Department's recommendation that resource parents not smoke in a home where children are placed. There is evidence to support that children who reside with smokers have more upper respiratory infections than children who do not. Smoking and the use of tobacco products is prohibited in any vehicle in which children receiving care in the home are transported. Children who are medically fragile, or who experience asthma or other breathing-related medical conditions, are not placed into homes with resource parents who smoke.</p> |
| <p>D. Quality of relationships</p> | <p>Potential resource parents must have demonstrated the ability to build trusting and stable relationships with other persons including spouse, significant others, children, extended family members or friends. In the home study process, the quality of past and current significant relationships will be assessed.</p> |
| <p>E. Stability</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The prospective resource family's income must be stable and sufficient enough to meet their family's needs. Expenditures cannot be such that there is a reliance on Foster Care payment to sustain the household. 2. Form CS-0431, Monthly Family Income and Expenditures, must be completed to demonstrate income stability and applicants must provide verification of all reported income. 3. Resource parents are strongly encouraged to work outside the home however there must be suitable plans for the care and supervision of the child after school and during the summer while they are at work. 4. The family residence must appear structurally sound and the family should have maintained a stable address without frequent unjustified moves. |
| <p>F. Transportation</p> | <p>Routine travel is included in the daily resource home board payment and is an expectation of being a resource parent. Routine travel will include a variety of trips including school meetings, Child and Family Team Meetings, family visits, doctor's appointments, family visitation, court and Foster Care review etc., and will be influenced by the individual needs and activities of the child/youth in the home.</p> |

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| <p>G. Motivation</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families who are approved as resource parents experience joy and challenges and must be prepared for delayed gratification and to experience loss, so it will be important for families to have altruistic motivation when beginning this level of service to children. 2. The motivation to become resource parents will be assessed through the interview process, home visits, PATH training interactions and observations. 3. Approved resource parents must continue to demonstrate the motivation to achieve a child’s permanency goal and work cooperatively with a child’s birth family and DCS in order to retain their approved status. |
| <p>H. Parenting ability</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential resource parents shall possess personal qualities and skills conducive to good parenting. These qualities must be demonstrated through training and/or past parenting experiences. Additionally, these persons should have an awareness of their own resources and deficits related to caring for children. 2. Capacity to integrate a child into the resource family environment with a recognition that the child will likely be suffering debilitating loss and trauma associated with his or her removal from his or her parents and subsequent placement into state custody. The potential resource parent must be able to understand that, typically, a child’s need for state custody is temporary. 3. Ability to preserve the continuity of the child’s racial, ethnic, religious and cultural identity in a positive manner. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The applicants must evaluate their own racial prejudices and ability to cope with racial inequities. b) They must consider other children, extended family and the community and the impact this will have on the child. c) The applicant must have a plan to integrate the child into this dual heritage environment while embracing and valuing the child’s racial identity. d) The applicant must provide opportunities for the child to participate in cultural experiences related to his/her ethnic background and interests. e) The applicant must have the ability to preserve the cultural identity of the child and maintain existing family and community relationships. 4. Ability to accept and care for a child’s emotional, physical, psychological, and behavioral needs. 5. Ability to balance the needs of all of the persons in the home, along with those of the foster, adoptive, and kinship care children. 6. Ability to protect a foster child from parental abuse or neglect and support safe interactions or involvement with his/her parents. 7. The resource family must have the ability to request, accept, and receive support needed to maintain a child within their family as long as the child remains in state custody. |
| <p>I. Ability to work with</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to accept and support a child’s relationship with his/her birth parent(s), guardian, or other relative filling a parental role. |

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| <p>birth families</p> | <p>2. Ability to help a child and his/her birth family attain the goals of the permanency plan. Resource parents should have the willingness and ability to mentor the child's birth family to achieve the goals outlined in the permanency plan. Additionally, the resource family should have the willingness and ability to support a child exiting state custody through reunification or adoption.</p> |
| <p>J. Ability to work with DCS</p> | <p>Prospective resource parent(s) must be willing to work with the department as demonstrated by their ability to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work constructively within the Department's framework and directly with departmental staff in developing plans to meet the needs of the child and the child's family. 2. Adhere to the departmental policies regarding confidentiality and respect any child/youth or birth family social history information that might be learned or shared with the resource parent. 3. Accept and utilize professional consultation including mental health, medical, and educational assistance that will benefit the child in their care. 4. Provide input to the Department regarding the needs of a child in care. 5. Work in partnership with the Department to make key decisions related to the placement of children and termination of parental rights. 6. Work in partnership with the Department to achieve an appropriate and timely permanency for the child. |
| <p>K. Trauma reduction</p> | <p>Resource parents must understand the impact of trauma on children and strive to reduce future traumatic events. This includes disrupting children from their siblings or the resource home without adhering to DCS Policy and following proper procedure.</p> |

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| <p>Forms:</p> | <p><u>CS-0431 Monthly Family Income and Expenditures</u> <u>CS-0678 Resource Parent Medical Report</u> <u>Note: Private Provider Agencies may use equivalent forms, provided the content of the forms capture the content of the forms listed above.</u></p> |
| <p>Collateral documents:</p> | <p>None</p> |