



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Protocol for Departmental Resource Home Eligibility (D-RHET)

Supplemental to DCS Policies: 16.4 Resource Home Approval and 16.8 Responsibilities of Resource Homes

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Regional Administrators will solely be held responsible for the development, maintenance and accuracy of their regional resource eligibility documentation. Each region shall establish a Department of Children's Services Resource Home Eligibility Team (D-RHET). The team will be responsible for processing and managing all resource home eligibility documentation in accordance with the D-RHET protocol and DCS Policy.

Regions will be held entirely responsible for ensuring compliance with all policy and procedures related to resource homes eligibility and the accuracy, and timely processing of all D-RHET documents and as further described herein.

Section I: Background

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) is subject to the rules and requirements set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 672 and 45 CFR §1356.71. Known as Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA), this statute sets forth standards for Federal payments for foster care and adoption assistance (sections 470-479a of the SSA). Failure to comply with these standards can result in the loss of federal funding for a limited period of time or for the duration of the foster care placement.

The Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review Guide (Guide), available on the Administration for Children and Families website (www.acf.hhs.gov), provides a consistent and uniform approach for Federal and State staff to use as a resource in complying with requirements of the Title IV-E program. The Guide contains policy and procedural guidance on adherence to all facets of Title IV-E compliance. It is intended to complement, not supplant, applicable statutory and regulatory provisions. In the event of conflict or inconsistency between the Guide and the statute or regulations, the latter govern.

In response to these Federal requirements, and to serve as a more effective steward of public funds, DCS has chosen to develop an internal infrastructure that will provide oversight for the eligibility of all Departmental Resource Home files. The following protocol will guide this process.

Section II: Overview

In accordance with DCS policy, regional Resource Parent Support (RPS) staff within each region's Placement Services Division (PSD) has full responsibility for ensuring the approval and continued

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eligibility of their respective Resource Homes. Regions must also adhere to all other applicable DCS policies outlining professional best practice. A DCS Resource Home is not considered approved and eligible to receive children for placement until **all** these State and Federal requirements are met.

In addition to the approval requirements mandated by both Tennessee Code Annotated as well as DCS policy and procedure, Resource Homes must also meet all applicable Federal requirements for eligibility. DCS has implemented an initiative to address this issue internally, the **Departmental Resource Home Eligibility Team (D-RHET)**. This initiative will allow the Department the ability to maintain all documents relating to the IV-E eligibility of DCS Resource Homes in accordance with Federal statute surrounding the State's draw-down of IV-E funding. Adhering to the Federal guidelines outlined in the IV-E Plan allows the Department to assure DCS Resource Parents continued payment for services rendered.

Each regional RPS D-RHET Team will be responsible for reviewing and maintaining IV-E eligibility documents of each Resource Home both initially (new homes) and annually through the assessment process.

D-RHET will consist of designated staff within each region's RPS unit. The RPS Team Leader will supervise this process on an ongoing basis. The designated team members within the RPS unit shall gather the required eligibility documentation for each initial and annually re-assessed resource home. Central Office D-RHET will provide oversight and **confirmation** of DCS Resource Home eligibility.

Section III: Resource Home Web Application

The current child welfare information system, **TFACTS**, will be used in this process. The Department's Office of Information Systems (OIS) group will be required to make some adjustments to the current system that would allow the following operations:

1. Initial Approval of New Resource Homes:

- A. The Initial Resource Home assessment process will be in accordance with DCS Policy [16.4 Resource Home Approval](#) and as policy is amended from time-to-time. RPS staff will be responsible for entering information into **TFACTS** regarding a new DCS Resource Home. After this information has been entered into the system, the home will then be classified as "Approved". The home is then considered eligible to receive children.

Note: RPS Team Leaders shall not approve Resource Homes in the system until all pertinent DCS and Federal requirements for placement eligibility (all applicable background checks, etc.) have been met. Failure to meet all requirements will result in ineligible placement of children and possible financial implications.

- B. Background checks submitted for new Resource Home approval must not be dated before the begin date recorded in **TFACTS**.

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- C. It is recommended that the period between the begin date and the approval date be no more than six (6) months to ensure that the most current background information is available at the time of approval.
- D. RPS D-RHET staff shall gather the required eligibility documentation for review by the TL. Once approved by the TL and entered into **TFACTS**, the RPS staff should notify their Central Office D-RHET contact via high priority e-mail (coded red) that the home is now ready for confirmation in the system.
- E. The Central Office D-RHET contact will have three (3) working days to review the documentation entered into **TFACTS** by RPS and confirm the eligibility of the home in **TFACTS**. If the region needs to expedite the approval of the resource home because of an emergency placement, the region must contact the Central Office RHET/D-RHET Program Manger for assistance.

No placement of children in an initial DCS resource home shall occur prior to the Central Office D-RHET confirmation.
- F. Only after confirmation by Central Office D-RHET will the resource home be eligible to receive children.
- G. Central Office D-RHET staff will “freeze” the Resource Home if their review of the required documentation signifies the home is not an eligible home. At this time, the Resource Home would be considered ineligible for the placement of children. Notification of this freeze action will then be forwarded electronically to that region’s PSD, as well as regional upper management (Regional Administrator, Deputy Regional Administrator, etc.).
- H. At this point, and if the situation warrants, the Regional PSD may then transition any and all children placed in the ineligible home based on the guidance derived from a CFTM convened to address this transition. All appropriate Departmental placement requirements must be followed as this transition takes place.
- I. The RPS worker will complete form [CS-0781, Resource Home IV-E Eligibility Checklist](#) and include it with the eligibility documentation. RPS D-RHET staff will maintain all Resource Home eligibility documentation electronically using a standardized format for identifying each home (Resource Home name, date, etc.) when up-loading the information into **TFACTS**.

2. Re-assessment Process for Resource Homes

- A. The annual Resource Home re-assessment process will be in accordance with DCS Policy [16.8 Responsibilities of Approved Resource Homes](#) and as policy is amended from time-to-time. RPS D-RHET staff shall gather the required eligibility documentation for review by the TL. Once approved by the TL, the assessment is to be entered into **TFACTS**. RPS staff should notify their Central Office D-RHET contact via regular e-mail notifying them that the home is now ready for confirmation in the system.
- B. The RPS worker will complete form [CS-0781, Resource Home IV-E Eligibility Checklist](#) and include it with the eligibility documentation. RPS D-RHET staff will

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maintain all Resource Home eligibility documentation electronically using a standardized format for identifying each home (Resource Home name, date, etc.) when up-loading the information into **TFACTS**.

- C. Background checks identified in DCS Policy [**16.8 Responsibilities of Approved Resource Homes**](#) as being required for the annual Resource Home re-assessment must not be dated more than **45 calendar days** prior to the Resource Home's 12th month approval anniversary date.

Example: If the home is due for annual re-approval on July 15, 2009, the applicable background checks must not be dated prior to June 1, 2009 (45 days prior to the annual re-approval date). The **45 calendar days** corresponds with the alert period described in Item B.2 above. Background checks that are dated more than 45 days prior to the re-approval due date will not be considered valid as support documentation for the Resource Home's annual re-assessment and new background checks will be required.

- D. Central Office D-RHET staff will "freeze" the Resource Home if their review of the required documentation signifies the home is not an eligible home. At this time, the Resource Home would be considered ineligible for the placement of children. Notification of this freeze action will then be forwarded electronically to that region's PSD, as well as regional upper management (Regional Administrator, Deputy Regional Administrator, etc.).
- E. At this point, and if the situation warrants, the Regional PSD may then transition any and all children placed in the ineligible home based on the guidance derived from a CFTM convened to address this transition. All appropriate Departmental placement requirements must be followed as this transition takes place.

3. Shared Home Agreements and Classification Process

Shared Home Agreements are agreements between a DCS region and a Private Provider for a specific child placement for a specific period of time. Per DCS Policy [**16.11 Shared Resource Homes**](#) and CPPP/Private Provider Manual, Section II, Shared Home Agreements may be executed by TN DCS with a Private Provider to facilitate the placement of a specific child/youth in the custody/guardianship of another State or another state agency pursuant to a referral under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

For re-classification of a DCS or Private Provider home to Shared Home status, Central Office CPPP staff must be notified by submission of a DCS Shared Home Agreement.

If the home was initially a DCS Resource Home and will remain as such after the agreement is ended, then DCS RPS staff is responsible for up-loading eligibility documentation into TFACTS. If the home in question was originally a Private Provider home, and will remain as such after the agreement has ended, then the Private Provider staff will be responsible for up-loading eligibility documentation into TFACTS.

Note: Re-assessments of all Shared Homes are the responsibility of the provider agency. It is also the provider's responsibility to forward all re-assessment

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documentation to the partnering region in a timely manner. All re-assessment documentation should be maintained on file in hard-copy form by the partnering region.

4. Documentation of ICPC Resource Homes

RPS staff will be responsible for entering information regarding Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) resource homes into **TFACTS**. ICPC resource homes types may include DCS Resource Homes, Private Provider Resource Homes or Shared Resource Homes.

- A. The FSW, court liaison or other sending agent will complete and submit the ICPC referral packet, including form ICPC 100-A, to the ICPC State Office regarding the potential placement of a Tennessee child to a receiving state. In completing form ICPC 100-A, the FSW should request that the home be supervised.
- B. In conjunction with the child's FSW, the RPS worker will enter the ICPC resource home into **TFACTS** as a pending inquiry with the resource home type "DCS Resource Home" and sub-type "ICPC".

NOTE: The RPS worker will follow the necessary steps for approving the ICPC resource home in **TFACTS**.

- C. Approval documentation received from the receiving state will be stored in **TFACTS** attached to the resource home's assessment. The approval date on form [ICPC 100-A](#) is to be entered as the approval date into the current child welfare information system for the ICPC resource home.
- D. Upon notice that the ICPC resource home has met compliance requirements and approved, PSD staff will enter the date of the child's placement. The placement date must correspond with the placement date on form ICPC 100-B.
- E. In conjunction with the FSW, the RSP worker is required to request re-assessment annually through the ICPC State Office. This request is to be made 45 days prior to the resource home's re-assessment due date.
- F. The RPS worker will be responsible for documenting the approval and re-approval of the ICPC resource home in **TFACTS**. For In-coming placements only, the RPS worker will complete form [CS-0781, Resource Home IV-E Eligibility Checklist](#) and include it with the eligibility documentation submitted by the receiving state. Documentation is not required for Out-going ICPC resource home.

5. Resource Home Data Maintenance Process

This section clearly defines the responsibilities of the regional RPS D-RHET Team and the Field Systems Administrators (FSAs) related to **TFACTS** functions and data clean up. Involvement by Central Office D-RHET representatives will be confined to only those resource homes that have a clear connection to a Private Provider resource home. The FSAs and regional RPS D-RHET Team will address all issues pertaining to DCS homes that have no link to a provider agency.

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The regional FSA will be responsible for providing the following support to the regional RPS D-RHET Team regarding the Resource Home Maintenance Data and private contract provider resource homes:

- A. Data clean-up functions within **TFACTS** involving the correction of names, SSNs, addresses, duplicate entries, assistance with the entry and approval of household members, and other corrective actions necessary to ensure accuracy of the database;
- B. All other issues related to **TFACTS**.
- c. Only resource homes that have a direct connection to provider agencies will be resolved through Central Office D-RHET staff.

6. Resource Homes Management

- A. Regional RPS D-RHET staff will enter into **TFACTS** the reason(s) for the termination of homes within their respective regions.
- B. Regional RPS D-RHET staff will also enter into **TFACTS** the reason(s) for requesting the closure of the Resource Home.

7. Corrective Action

- A. Due to the critical nature of the information involved, the gathering and maintenance of D-RHET Resource Home safety documentation is expected to be performed in a timely and efficient manner. An office's inability to consistently meet the database maintenance guidelines set forth in this protocol will be considered an indication of the need for additional training for that office. It is also possible that this consistent inability to meet D-RHET guidelines could result in increased Central Office monitoring as well as increased and more stringent instances of Internal Audit for the affected office.
- B. Repeated failure to adhere to the above-outlined protocol may also result in progressive individual corrective action for those responsible. If no other avenue for change proves effective in addressing the situation, regional management may utilize individual one-on-one conferences and other corrective means to address the situation. Any action of this type must conform to current and recognized DCS Policy and Procedure.
- C. Regional management may also employ more rigid disciplinary actions in cases where individuals display chronic instances of non-compliance. Any actions of this type must also follow the progressive steps outlined in the Rules of the Tennessee Department of Personnel Chapter 1120-10 "Disciplinary Action". These steps may include, but are not limited to, oral as well as written warnings.
- D. When payment is made to homes found to be in non-compliance after D-RHET review, the Department is subject to full restitution of those payments to the federal government. After these payments made in error have been identified, the amount to be returned will be calculated and returned to the federal government by the DCS Office of Finance and Program Support. This information will also be forwarded to

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each respective Regional Administrator for review and possible disciplinary action for those responsible.

8. Internal Audit & Technical Assistance (TA)

- A. On a quarterly basis, Central Office D-RHET will audit a random sample (10-25%) of all resource homes that were new (initial) or re-assessed during the previous month;
- B. The audit will consist of verification of D-RHET entry of all DCS resource homes initially or annually re-assessed during the quarter under review.
- C. If inconsistencies are found by the designee, these will be brought to the attention of the region's RPS Team Leader and the Central Office D-RHET reviewer within 24 hours. The Executive Director of Regional Support, the Regional Administrator, and the affected Team Coordinator are to be copied on this information. The regional D-RHET reviewer assigned to that particular home will then be responsible for the reconciliation of those inconsistencies within ten (10) business days;
- D. Central Office D-RHET will track the resolution of the non-compliant finding and notify the RA if not reconciled by the date identified above;
- E. A quarterly audit report will be developed and specific findings of non-compliance will be disseminated to Central Office senior management, Regional Administrators and Executive Directors of Regional Support;
- F. All non-compliant findings will be reported to the Office of Finance and Program Support (OFPS);
- G. Central Office D-RHET will provide limited technical assistance (TA) only after regions have exhausted all avenues within the region in resolving issues related to resource homes and includes the following:
 - Training and re-training of staff on a limited basis upon request from the RA or Executive Director of Regional Support. Training will be limited to the IV-E resource home eligibility process;
 - Explanation of the quarterly report findings.
- H. Notification of changes in policy that affects resource home eligibility requirements. Notwithstanding the above, the RA will be solely responsible for ensuring that staff is fully trained and has implemented all changes to policy affecting the eligibility of resource homes.

Section VI: Required Documentation

All resource home electronic files maintained by D-RHET must include the following documents:

Studies & Forms:

- Home Study (Initial assessments; Follow Re-activation or Re-classification of Resource Homes Protocol for re-activated homes);
- DCS Form [**CS-0690, Resource Family Home Study and Family Update Checklist**](#)

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- DCS Form [CS-0692, Resource Home Mutual Re-Assessment, Re-Activation or Re-Classification](#)
- DCS Form [CS-0773, Resource Home Addendum](#)
- DCS Form [CS-0781, Resource Home Eligibility Checklist](#)

Background Checks:

Note: Searches must be conducted taking into account current, maiden and any other previous legal names for initial assessments. Searches for re-assessments are to be conducted using current legal name.

- Local Law Enforcement Check

Note: Local background checks for initial assessments must include the applicant's last six (6) months of residence. Any charges identified from this search for which there is no disposition must be clarified by obtaining additional documentation from the court of jurisdiction.

- National Sex Offender Registry Check: <http://www.nsopw.gov/>
- Abuse Registry Check: <http://health.state.tn.us/AbuseRegistry/default.aspx>
- DCS Database Search (CPS Person Search) to include Social Services Management System (SSMS) (Initial assessments; Follow Re-activation or Re-classification of Resource Homes Protocol for re-activated homes) and,
- TBI & FBI Fingerprint Check Results for all household members 18 years of age and older (Initial assessments; Follow Re-activation or Re-classification of Resource Homes Protocol for re-activated homes).

NOTE: The above sites are the official sites that are to be used when conducting background checks.

Waivers:

- Each type of waiver requires review and approval by specific programmatic staff. Refer to instructions for form [CS-0921, Waiver of Criminal Convictions, PATH Training Modifications, Non-Safety Issues and CPS Indications](#) regarding these requirements.

Training:

- PATH Completion Certificate- (Initial assessments and re-activated homes; refer to DCS [Policy 16.4, Resource Home Approval](#), regarding certificate expirations).

Signature Page

My signature below affirms that I have read and that I understand the D-RHET Protocol:

Regional Administrator

Date

PSD Team Coordinator

Date

RPS Team Leader

Date