

Policy: Assessment and Approval by contracted agencies	
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Policy Statement: Assessment and Approval by contracted agencies

Approvals of caregivers for children in care under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) are based on the required assessments and checks, which occur before a child is placed in a caregiver's home.

Outcomes

- Children and youth are safe.
- Children and youth are cared for by capable caregivers.
- Children and youth are in stable community based placements.
- Caregivers have the capacity and commitment to meet children/youth's needs and respect their rights under s.70 of the *CFCSA*.
- Contracted agencies know what steps must occur in assessing and approving prospective staff who will care for children and youth in the "director's" care (MCFD or DAA).
- Contractors use a consistent approach to assessing and approving caregivers.

Standards

1.1 Prospective caregivers are screened and assessed before they are approved to provide care to a child as a foster home and before placing a child in their care.

1.2 The screening and assessment must include:

- Confirmation of being 19 years of age or older;
- The completion of criminal record checks for the prospective caregiver(s);
- The completion of criminal record checks for anyone 18 years of age or older residing in the home, and anyone 18 years of age and over who has significant and unsupervised time with a child placed in the home;
- A thorough assessment via questionnaires and interviews to assess the suitability of the prospective caregiver;
- Visits to the prospective caregiver's home and completion of a home study (home visits are only required for individuals seeking to act as caregivers in their own home);

- A medical assessment on the prospective caregiver(s) to ensure they are medically fit to care for children; and
- Three reference checks on the prospective caregiver(s) including one from a previous employer and one from a relative or extended family member. The employer reference must be from the individual's most recent place of employment, this includes providing employer references from other jurisdictions, if the individual was previously employed outside of British Columbia.

1.3 Prospective caregivers who have resided outside of Canada after the age of 18 must provide a verified criminal record check from the jurisdiction in which the individual was previously residing.

1.4 Anyone 18 years of age or older residing in the home or who has significant and unsupervised time with a child placed in the home who has resided outside of Canada after the age of 18, must provide a verified criminal record check from the jurisdiction in which the individual previously resided.

1.5 Criminal record checks must be renewed regularly. All criminal record checks conducted by a local police detachment must be completed every three years. *Criminal Record Review Act* checks must be completed every five years.

1.6 Based on the information gathered through screening and assessment a decision is made whether or not to approve the prospective caregiver. This decision is documented.

Procedures

Screening and Assessment

Collecting criminal record information

- Ask the prospective caregiver(s) to voluntarily disclose if he or she has committed a criminal offence and/or has received a pardon.
- Ask for voluntary disclosure from anyone 18 years or older living in the home or with significant and unsupervised access to children in the home.
- Ask the prospective caregiver(s) to request a criminal record check through his or her local police detachment, including a vulnerable sector search, and to authorize a *Criminal Record Review Act* check by the Criminal Record Review Program. Ask the prospective caregiver to provide the criminal record checks to the agency, once they have been received.
- Ensure that everyone in the home 18 years of age and over who has significant and unsupervised* time with a child placed in the home requests the completion

of a criminal record check through the local police detachment.

- The criminal record check through the local police detachment should include a check for records of criminal convictions (for which a pardon has not been granted), outstanding criminal charges, conditional or absolute discharges and police information located on police computer systems. The vulnerable sector check will search for a record of criminal convictions for sexual offences for which a pardon has been granted.
- If there are children under the age of 18 living in the prospective caregiver's home, ask the prospective caregiver(s) whether any child has been involved with the police, has been involved in any criminal activities, or has exhibited or currently exhibits behaviour that could pose a risk to children placed in the home.
- If the prospective caregiver has resided outside of Canada after the age of 18, a verified criminal record check must be obtained from the jurisdiction in which he or she previously resided.
- If there is anyone else 18 years of age and over residing in the home, or who has significant and unsupervised time with a child, and who has resided outside of Canada after the age of 18, a verified criminal record check must be obtained from the jurisdiction in which he or she previously resided.
- Review the results of the criminal record check by the local police detachment (and/or from the other jurisdiction, if applicable) once they have been received to ensure the prospective caregiver or relevant individual 18 years or older does not pose a risk to children placed in the home.
- Once a caregiver has been assessed and approved, request the *Criminal Record Review Act* check by the Criminal Record Review Program. The results of the check must be received and reviewed before any children are placed in the home and before a contract is signed with the caregiver.
- If at any time, the agency becomes aware that a person who was previously approved has an outstanding charge for, or has been convicted of, a crime that might affect the person's ability or suitability to care for children, the agency conducts a new criminal record check through the local police detachment and through the Criminal Record Review Program.
- Refer to the 'Criminal Record Check Procedures for Contracted Agencies' for further details, including a description of the types of criminal record checks, how to proceed if a criminal record exists, and the timeframes for renewing criminal record checks.

Assessment using questionnaires and interviews

- Conduct an assessment of the prospective caregiver's ability to care for children through a series of questionnaires, interviews, and visits to the prospective caregiver's home to complete a home study.
- Home visits are not required for caregivers hired to provide care to children in

staffed residential resources or caregivers who only provide respite/relief services in the child's home. An assessment of the individual's ability to care for children through the use of interviews and questionnaires is still required.

- If a relief/respite caregiver who only cares for children in the child's home or a caregiver working in a staffed residential resource expresses interest in providing care to children in their own home, home visits and an evaluation of the individual's home would be required to be completed and placed on file.
- If the agency worker completing the assessment has received training in using the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) assessment framework, then the agency worker assesses the prospective caregiver's ability to care for a child based on this framework, which includes an assessment of the prospective caregiver's children, and any other person residing in the caregiver's home.
- If the individual completing the assessment has not received training in SAFE, use the following topic areas to guide and complete an assessment of the prospective caregiver's ability to care for children:
 - personal history (including childhood) and life changes
 - family relationships and history (e.g., extended family, current and/or ex-spouse, children)
 - family dynamics (e.g., parenting styles, communication patterns, discipline, difficulties with applicant's children)
 - resilience and ability to manage transitions
 - emotional and psychological health
 - education and employment history
 - history of any type of violence, abuse and criminal activity
 - health, mental health and addictions
 - finances and housing history
 - physical and social environment
 - social supports and community involvement
 - motivation for care giving and availability
 - knowledge of and attitudes to cultural and social diversity, and
 - previous care giving experience.

Medical Assessment

- Obtain and review the medical assessment of the prospective caregiver(s). If any health-related concerns arise, ensure as much as possible that the caregiver is healthy enough to care for children, before approving the caregiver.

References

- Ask the prospective caregiver to provide you with three reference letters from three separate individuals. One of the reference letters must be from a previous employer, and one must be from a relative or extended family member.
- If the prospective caregiver has recently moved to British Columbia, ask the prospective caregiver to provide a previous employer reference from the jurisdiction in which he or she was previously residing.

Written Home Study Report

- Prepare a written home study report documenting all of the information acquired, including the results of the reference checks, criminal record checks, medical assessment, home visits, and interviews.

Approval

- Review the information gathered and determine whether to approve the caregiver(s). Document the reasons for the decision.
- Advise the caregiver as soon as possible both verbally and in writing about the decision to approve.

Information

- Provide the caregiver(s) with information about sources of support, including the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations, and the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents.

Non-approval

- If the prospective caregiver is not approved, advise him or her as soon as possible both verbally and in writing of the reasons for the decision.

Notes:

- *Significant and unsupervised applies to:
 - individuals aged 18 years of age and over who are visiting/staying overnight for more than 30 consecutive days in the home where the child lives, and
 - anyone in an intimate partner relationship with the prospective and or approved caregiver who regularly visits and/or stays in the home where the child lives.
- For legal and ethical reasons MCFD staff are unable to conduct Prior Contact Checks for prospective caregivers of contracted agencies.