



CONNECTICUT
Children & Families

2025 Foster Care Licensing
Practice Report
C.G.S section 17a-114g

Joint Standing Committee Report
17a-114g Foster Care Licensing Practice
October 2024– September 2025

Per C.G.S. section 17a-114g, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is submitting the annual report to the Committee on Children regarding foster care licensing practices.

The statute requires the report shall include:

- (1) Methods of ensuring that it complies with statutory and regulatory foster care licensing requirements;
- (2) Methods of assessing the needs of children and youths in foster care and providing support for foster parents to enable such parents to meet the needs of such children and youths;
- (3) Safeguards employed when licensing a relative caregiver with a history of child abuse or neglect or psychiatric illness or a criminal record;
- (4) The process for reversing a substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect or a child abuse and neglect registry finding with respect to a prospective relative caregiver;
- (5) The number of reports of child abuse or neglect made within the previous twelve months regarding children and youths residing in licensed foster homes and the number of such reports that were substantiated;
- (6) The number of foster home licenses revoked and foster home license applications denied in the previous twelve months;
- (7) The results of random audits of its licensing practices; and
- (8) Information regarding the number and type of safety concerns identified with respect to licensed foster home placements through assessment of regulatory compliance system and any corresponding corrective actions taken.

The items are addressed in the following report.

1. Ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory foster care licensing requirements

DCF ensures compliance with statutory and regulatory licensing requirements through its policy and practice guides, which are posted and accessible to all via internet and can be found here:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/CTFosterAdopt/Foster-Care>.

DCF's Foster Care Division is responsible for ensuring the promulgation of statutes, regulations and federal guidelines. It sets the standards and expectations and provides oversight and monitoring. Tools and procedures are developed and implemented to ensure compliance.

2. Methods to assess the needs of children in foster care and provide support for the foster parent to enable them to meet the child's needs

The assessment of needs and identification of services and support is an ongoing effort and process requiring engagement of family, the child(ren), collateral contacts, and providers. DCF utilizes clinical, academic, medical, and legal consultation, as needed, to inform its assessment and service provision. It also utilizes tools such as the Structured Decision Making (SDM) instrument and documents the findings and plan in the Case Plan, which is available for review. There are ongoing conversations and partnerships amongst the Foster Care Division, Licensed Caregivers, and the Child Protection Services Teams (CPS), and others to ensure the needs of children are identified and met.

The Foster Care Division receives early notification of potential removals and typically participates in Considered Removal family team meetings (CR meetings), which provide initial information regarding the child and their family. When the decision leads to a child entering care, the CPS teams initiate a request for placement. The Foster Care Division receives the request, conducts a preliminary review of the record (narratives, Case Plans, medical, academic, and placement history) and obtains needed information in conversation from the assigned CPS team. This information is

shared with the identified caregiver and the caregiver's foster care support team.

Through ongoing contact, foster care support workers provide support and liaison between the assigned CPS worker and the caregiver. When the caregiver self-identifies or DCF identifies a training or coaching need, the Foster Care Division works with the Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families (CAFAF, 1 liaison in every office), DCF's Academy for Workforce Development, Foster Care Support Groups, community-based organizations, and providers to address the need.

3. Safeguards employed when seeking to license relative caregivers with a history of CPS, Criminal and Mental Health

Regulation and policy require a child protective service history, registry, and criminal background check for prospective licensing candidates and household members over the age of 16. The DCF-005 Background Searches document serves as a checklist to ensure necessary checks are completed. Both the CPS and Foster Care leadership teams review the DCF-005 form.

Foster Care Division Responsibility

The Foster Care Division is the licensing agent with expertise in applying licensing regulations (and background checks) to inform the decisions to recommend or deny licensing.

- C.G.S. section 17a-114 (b)(1) - "...no child in custody of the Commissioner shall be placed in foster care with any unless such person is licensed..."

The division applies the same standard to non-urgent or emergency home assessments to determine if the candidate meets the preliminary licensing standards for placement.

- C.G.S. section 17a-114(3) (c) - "...the Commissioner may place a child with a relative or kin who has not been issued a license or approval...provided a satisfactory home visit is conducted; a basic assessment of the family is completed."

The Foster Care Division is the primary **owner of the assessment**; CPS is a contributor and partner in decision-making.

In general, the Foster Care Division:

- **Reviews** the **signed** DCF-005 Background Searches Form.
 - Foster Care Division is available to discuss the background check results prior to discounting a candidate.
- **Discusses**, preliminarily, with CPS barriers or concerns (includes needs of the child, parents etc...).
- **Reviews** any concerns or barriers (at home assessment) with the candidate regarding any mental health concerns and to understand the circumstances leading to the criminal or CPS history (“tell their story”).
 - This may determine the need to consult with the Regional Office Clinical Team (RRG) for substance use or mental health concerns. The recommendations from the consultation determine the next steps which could be identification of a needed service or referral for evaluation.
- **Discusses** findings with CPS and, **as a team**, decide to support (or not) moving forward with approval for placement and/or licensing.
- A Commissioner level approval is required if the candidate for licensure:
 - Has **been convicted** of **injury or risk of injury to minor** or other similar offenses against a minor.
 - Has **been convicted** of **impairing the morals of a minor** or other similar offenses against a minor.
 - Has **been convicted** of **violent crime against a person** or other similar offenses.
 - Has **been convicted** of the **possession, use, or sale** of controlled substances **within the past five (5) years.**
 - Has **been convicted** of **illegal use of a firearm** or other similar offenses.
 - Has ever had an allegation of child **abuse or neglect substantiated.**

→ Has had a **minor removed from their care** because of child abuse or neglect.

- The **CPS team** informs the Foster Care Division of their reasoning that the identified family can offer a **safe** and **nurturing** environment and their **relationship** with the child can **meet** the child's **needs** and is in the child's **best interest** ('suitability').
- Disagreements are brought to the attention of the Office Director and Foster Care Director.
- If there is agreement, the Foster Care Division will draft the DCF-009 Foster Care Licensing Placement Waiver Request Form that is reviewed at the local level (Program Supervisors).
- The Foster Care Director reviews and submits the DCF-009 form to the Commissioner for final approval.
- In emergencies, the Foster Care Director has authority to provide a provisional waiver; however, a written document is needed for the Commissioner's approval within 24 to 48 hours.

4. The process to reverse substantiations

The Legal Division acts as the Commissioner's designee for purposes of internally reviewing all substantiations of child abuse or neglect, or Central Registry findings, pursuant to C.G.S. section 17a-101k(c). The spirit and intent of the internal review process is to ensure fidelity to the statutory requirements.

In August 2021, DCF promulgated Policy 22-5-1, *Elimination of Barriers to Licensure, Placement, Family Arrangements and Limitations of Access*. The policy supports the elimination of child protection and criminal histories as barriers to licensure, placement, family arrangements and limitations of access whenever safe and appropriate to do so. Requests for internal review are sent via email to the DCF-Legal Division email box, DCF.APPEALS@ct.gov. The assigned attorney or paralegal conducts the internal review and sends notice to the requestor of the determination to reverse or maintain the finding within the timeframe mandated by statute. If the decision is made to

uphold or reverse, the DCF Legal Division sends out the required notice to the appellant.

DCF Staff sends emergency request related to a substantiation and/or registry decisions for prospective kinship caregiver placement to the e-mail, dcf.emergencyplacements@ct.gov. The review process is the same; however, the DCF legal team makes every effort to expedite the review.

5. Special Investigations

During the period under review, DCF received **617** reports of child abuse or neglect regarding children residing with licensed caregivers. Of the reports received, 37% met the statutory threshold for investigation by the Special Investigations Unit (SIU). Of the reports investigated, **8%** resulted in a substantiation of abuse or neglect.

SIU	#	%
# Reports Received	617	
# Reports Accepted for Investigation	229	37%
# Completed Investigation	229	
# Substantiated (DRS completed)	18	8%

6. The number of licenses revoked, and application denied

During the period under review, approximately **626** prospective caregivers were withdrawn or denied. The reasons for denials were due to the family not following through with the licensing process or having a child protective services or criminal history. Those licenses withdrawn were primarily due to not meeting the regulatory standards for a foster home. Additionally, some of the prospective foster families did not follow through, did not attend an information session or were unresponsive to outreach.

The table below reflects the data for denials and withdrawn families listed per DCF region:

Region	Denials	Withdrawn
1	2	118
2		116
3		94
4		107
5		118
6		73
Statewide	2	624

It is noted that in 2025, DCF transitioned from its legacy Child Welfare Information System (LINK) to the new CT-KIND system. As a result of this transition, some of the data regarding foster home closings and denials is not currently available in the CT-KIND system, but there are currently manual logs and systems in place to ensure that this data is being collected and maintained until it can be captured in CT-KIND.

7. Results of random audits of licensing process

The Joint Standing Committee Report seeks results of random audits of DCF's licensing practices. In 2025, the Foster Care Division Quality Improvement Program Supervisor along with the Foster Care CQI team continued the partnership with University of Chicago Chapin Hall to develop a Foster Care Division Continuous Quality Improvement Plan and Measurement Framework. This work was completed successfully in March 2026, and the QI Plan and Measurement Framework included a process for ongoing internal auditing of the foster care licensing process.

Currently, DCF has an internal audit process to track and review the licensing process and paperwork required for licensure. This audit includes collaboration with the Title IV-E fiscal staff to ensure that documentation, paperwork and deadlines are received and completed as required. This

internal audit process was impacted by the transition to the new CT-KIND system and was temporarily halted, but has resumed. Additionally, in August 2026 the DCF Foster Care Division will be participating in a federal audit of the licensing process.

The Foster Care Division just completed a review of current licensing standards to increase efficiency and increase the number of foster homes being licensed per year without sacrificing child safety. This review was aimed at eliminating redundancy, providing technical support for prospective caregivers and better equipping caregivers to meet the needs of children in care.

8. The number and type of safety and regulatory concerns identified, and corrective action taken

For the period under review, DCF issued approximately 53 Assessment for Regulatory Complaints (ARC). The ARC is used to address caregivers not meeting regulatory standards; caregivers who were unable or unwilling to meet the needs of children entrusted to their care; and caregivers who were under investigation. The Foster Care Division has recently implemented a tracking log for all issued ARCs to track the issuance of the ARC, and to track the progress on completion of the recommended action steps to address the regulatory or caregiving issue. The action steps may include such activities as the foster parent(s) attending a training, or updating required paperwork. The reason for the ARC and the required action steps to address the issue are being tracked monthly via this log.