



Clark County Department of Family Services
Safe children. Healthy Families. Caring Communities.

Dear Licensed Caregiver,

The Clark County Department of Family Services is committed to quality care for children and recognizes foster parents as the greatest resource we have in supporting children and families. As part of that, the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) came to be. All of our many QPI efforts are focused on creating sustainable partnerships and collaborations with our foster parents.

We know that quality care is about all of us working together to do our part in ensuring children are well cared for and safe. As part of QPI, the department helped launch QPINevada.com, which provides resources through the Just in Time Training program. This program offers an extensive training video library from national experts to help answer questions at your convenience.

Another resource we want to provide you with is a brief Frequently Asked Questions document to help support you in better understanding how we do our work. We hope you will find this useful and that you take the time to visit our QPI website.

Your partnership is integral to the work we do. We thank you for your service to children and families,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Ruiz-Lee".

Lisa Ruiz-Lee, Director
Clark County Department of Family Services



DFS Frequently Asked Questions for Foster Parents – September 2013

What's a home visit?

As foster parents, you are probably most familiar with permanency workers performing scheduled visits at your home or at other venues in the community. The time we visit with children is dedicated to assessing their safety, progress made to achieving permanency, and how well their medical and mental health and educational needs are being met. We often see children at scheduled visits because they are convenient for you and us. We are encouraging our workers to see children at unscheduled times as well.

We know that children navigate the homes they live in freely (sometimes whether we know it or not). So, it's our job to ensure that our children are safe in their living environments. An unannounced, or unscheduled, home visit allows us to ensure that, and we want to partner with you in that effort.

Do you have a right to inspect my home?

Our primary mission is to ensure child safety, permanency, and well-being. Your home is their home, and foster parents are one of our greatest resources in fulfilling that mission. Federal and state statutes govern much of the work we do and outline how we review and approve both licensed and unlicensed caregivers. DFS staff serve as representatives of the department as the licensing authority. As such, they are expected to visit your home and to work collaboratively with you to ensure quality care for children.

Nevada Revised Statute and Administrative Code provide us with much direction on how, when, and under what conditions we license a home. In particular, NAC 424.120 outlines our obligation to ensure licensing standards are met both prior to and after issuing a license:

- **424.120 NAC Investigation of applicant; visits by licensing authority representatives; reports ([NRS 424.020](#), [424.040](#))**

A licensing authority representative shall conduct a fair and impartial investigation of each foster home after receipt of an application for the licensing of the home, and shall investigate the home to determine whether the licensing requirements are met and the maximum capacity and range of ages of children for which the home may be licensed. The licensing authority representative shall gather direct and collateral data to complete the licensing study. A licensing authority representative may visit the foster home at any time, announced or unannounced, to determine compliance with licensing requirements and must be available for consultation as appropriate....”

How often are workers supposed to see children?

How often workers visit and see children depends on the needs of the children and our foster parents. We want to be available to support them as often as their needs require. However, we must visit with children a minimum of once every 30 days.

Why is there a need to change the way workers do home visits?

We are not changing the way our permanency workers do home visits. We are, however, emphasizing the need for all of us to uphold existing policies, procedures, and practices.

Why do you need pictures of our home?

We routinely take pictures of homes as part of our licensing processes. We are asking our permanency workers to do the same. Taking pictures helps our supervisors to review cases with workers and to visualize where our children live.

Our intent is not to make this an invasive process; rather we will simply be taking pictures of every room in the house and the outside areas.

Having pictures of your home also is helpful to you as a foster parent. It offers a level of protection for you. We will have on record pictures of your home at various times throughout the year that can be used as reference in case there is ever an issue, question, or concern regarding a child placed in your home.

Do I have to let staff take pictures of all the rooms in my home?

Yes, you do need to allow our staff to take pictures of all rooms in your home. We will not be opening cabinets, drawers, or refrigerators unless there are specific concerns related to medication security, food provision, etc. Our intent is to capture the general layout and contents of your home.

As a licensed caregiver, the license is issued for your entire home. That means that rules and regulations apply to every room and/or space in your home. The pictures allow supervisors to address any concerns they may have with you directly.

What's an Out of Home Safety Checklist?

An Out of Home Safety Checklist is a tool we use to help ensure that children placed out of home are safe and well cared for in their temporary new home.

Our permanency workers should complete the checklist while visiting your home at certain milestones in the case. But, it should be completed a minimum of once every 90 days.

It's a very short, concise tool and will involve your participation as we solicit information from you about the child, his/her needs, your home, and your ability to care for the child. This tool has been part of our routine practice and policy since 2009. We are asking that workers use the completion of this tool as an opportunity to take pictures of your home so that we may add them to the child's case record as well.

What happens if there are concerns about my home?

We understand that life happens, and that busy family homes will look "lived" in. However, ensuring the safety of children is our top priority. As a licensed caregiver, you are also required to meet the licensing standards and regulations under Nevada Revised Statutes and Administrative Code 424. If your home is safe and you are meeting the licensing standards we will not have any issues or concerns about your home.

If the permanency worker who visits your home has any concerns, he or she will talk with you and his or her supervisor openly about any issues. We know it takes all of us working together to keep children safe, healthy, and happy.

Why do you have to see children in my home? You see children at school, Court, and a variety of other venues.

We often see children outside of their home environments. But federal regulations require the majority of our visits with children to be in the home. This means we cannot solely see children at the Visitation Center, Court, or schools.

We will be meeting with you and seeing our children in care a variety of ways and places. We look forward to the opportunities we will have to partner with you in providing them with exceptional parenting and care.

Why can't you just schedule appointments to see children in my home?

We can and will schedule appointments to see children in your home. We will also stop by during some of our monthly visits unannounced.

We know that sometimes it's helpful to see children in their homes at times that aren't predictable or scheduled. We want to see how our children live at all times, and not just when we have it scheduled. Our workers are not looking to find things wrong, but they are looking to see that our children are well cared for and safe.

There are rules that exist that don't make sense to me. Why do I have to follow them?

Licensing rules and regulations can at times feel overwhelming, invasive, and cumbersome. But, for each regulation we have our licensing staff can give you concrete examples of why they exist and their usefulness in protecting children.

Children are children. They will forever be doing the things we least expect of them. The licensing rules and regulations take into consideration many of the tragic and traumatic events we have seen that impact the lives of families. We will work with you to ensure that you are both complying with the licensing regulations and providing quality care to our children.

What if I have multiple caseworkers assigned to me and the children in my home?

We know that many of our foster parents have multiple caseworkers who visit their homes to see children. Case assignments for our staff are largely determined by where a family lives at the time we receive the initial report of abuse and neglect. Assigning cases this way allows for our staff to be more closely located to biological parents and helps to facilitate and meet their transportation needs. It also helps us to ensure that we can get to children in our initial investigative responses quickly.

As a result of this though, foster families often have multiple case workers who visit their homes. Each case worker is responsible for complying with policies and procedures for every child in their care. So, there may be times different workers come to visit your home. Each of these workers will focus on the particular child or children assigned to them, however. We know this may feel repetitive to you, but we ask for your support.

When we meet with and train our case workers we emphasize the need for partnership, dialogue, and communication to minimize the repetitive events that may occur in your home. But we must meet the individual and unique needs of every child in our system.

What does this have to do with my license and will that process change too?

Licensing processes will not change. Licensing workers will continue to visit your home according to your renewal process and schedule. Licensing workers have been tasked with taking photographs of your home and will continue to do that as part of the licensing process.

If any DFS workers have concerns about your home or your ability to meet the licensing regulations, they will have those conversations openly with you.

What else can I expect?

We want to know what you think and how you feel about the way we support you in caring for children. We have asked our supervisors to routinely call the foster parents who interact with their workers to confirm worker visits and progress. So, there may be a few random phone calls you receive from our supervisors who are genuinely interested in how our workers are supporting you. We ask that you be open and honest with them.

I would like to speak with someone at the department. Who do I contact?

Every worker who visits your home has a supervisor and manager. We encourage you to let us know how we are doing. If you are not sure who your worker's supervisor or manager is, please call our main line at (702) 455-5444.