

## Reference Guide for Licensing Investigations

### What is a complaint?

A complaint is information received from a source indicating/alleging that licensing regulations or law(s) may have been violated.

- If the complaint is alleging child abuse or neglect (NRS 432B), an institutional child protective service investigation will be conducted by an Institutional Investigator.
- If the report is not alleging abuse or neglect, but does allege violations of the licensing regulations (NAC 424), then a Licensing Worker will investigate the allegations.
- There are circumstances that may call for concurrent investigations involving both an Institutional Investigator and Licensing Worker.

### Where does a complaint come from?

- Sources of complaints include, but are not limited to: the community, school personnel, medical providers, therapists, social workers, other foster parents, birth parents, or children.
- Once information/concerns are received, it is reviewed by the licensing authority to determine if an investigation will be conducted.

\*Please understand that the agency has an obligation to investigate complaints as well as to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children in its custody.

### What should you expect during a licensing investigation?

A Licensing Worker will gather information which may include interviewing the foster child/ren in your home or alternate location, conducting unannounced home visit(s), contacting collateral sources or parties, contact via telephone calls, obtaining any necessary medical records, interviewing other children and adults in the licensed home and the Licensing Worker may also conduct body checks on the children. The Licensing Worker will also contact the child's social worker to inform them of the investigation.

The investigation and outcome decision in most cases is concluded within 45 days unless other extenuating circumstances prevent case closure at that time.

### What does the agency expect from you?

- Cooperation with the Licensing Worker
- Allow the Licensing Worker to interview the foster children alone
- Allow the Licensing Worker to inspect the entire home
- Provide necessary records and documentation as requested

### What are possible outcomes of a licensing investigation?

The Licensing Worker will determine if the investigation is substantiated, unsubstantiated or unable to prove or disprove;

**Substantiation:** A violation of the regulations was determined to have occurred.

**Unsubstantiation:** There was no indication that a violation of the regulations occurred; there was sufficient evidence to prove that a violation did not occur; and/or there is insufficient evidence to support that a violation of the regulations occurred.

**Unable to prove or disprove:** Based upon the facts and evidence available, the Licensing Worker is unable to determine if a violation of the regulations occurred; and/or there is insufficient evidence to support substantiation or unsubstantiation.

Please note that the determination will be reviewed with you and a written report will be provided to you once the investigation is completed. If the complaint was found to be substantiated, the following may occur:

- You may be asked to meet with licensing supervisors or others involved.
- A corrective action plan may be implemented in order to mitigate the causes of violation and prevent future violations.
- Your foster care license may be placed on hold from accepting new placements for a period of time.
- Removal of the foster child/ren from your home.
- Your foster care license may be suspended or revoked.

We recognize that this can be a difficult situation for foster parents, so please understand that the agency is here to support you and answer any questions/concerns you may have. If you do have any questions, you may contact your licensing worker, the foster care licensing supervisor or the Supervisor for Recruitment and Training, Mikie Franklin, for assignment of a foster parent mentor.

**Foster Care Licensing Workers:**

Jessica Frank	775-328-3916	jfrank@washoecounty.us
Codi Soap	775-337-4541	csoap@washoecounty.us
Katie Bennett	775-337-4571	kebennett@washoecounty.us
Barbara Jaime	775-785-5671	bjaime@washoecounty.us

**Foster Care Licensing Supervisor:**

Amy Reynolds	775-785-5623	areynolds@washoecounty.us
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**Foster Parent Mentor Contact:**

Please note that a mentor will be assigned to you if you request a mentor. Please contact Supervisor, Mikie Franklin at 775-337-4471 or [mfranklin@washoecounty.us](mailto:mfranklin@washoecounty.us) for more information.

**Main Line for Child Care Services and Licensing:** (775)337-4470



**“Foster parents are essential partners in the Child and Family Team who provide safe, stable, nurturing care and advocate for children in our community. Foster parents provide skilled parenting to children who have experienced trauma and support children and their families during critical times in their lives. Foster parents have an invaluable impact on the course of the lives of both the children and families they work with.”**

## **INSTITUTIONAL INVESTIGATIONS OF FOSTER CARE FACILITIES**

As a licensed foster parent, it is possible that at some point during your partnership with the Washoe County Human Services Agency, you may be investigated for institutional abuse or neglect. These investigations are generated by people such as social workers, relatives or other professionals in the community who are required, by law, to report their concerns to the Agency. Whether these concerns are determined to be valid or not, they often cause understandable feelings of fear, anger, anxiety or resentment among foster parents when an investigation is initiated. It is important to remember that the Agency staff are skilled, trained and experienced in conducting these investigations, and that the majority of the reports are found unsubstantiated. An investigation should not be considered a personal attack or judgment on a foster parent by the Agency, as like you, our first and foremost responsibility to foster children is to ensure that they are safe. Sometimes in order to do so, inquiries must be made.

When a report of child abuse or neglect (per NRS 432B) is received concerning you or a child placed in your home, an institutional investigation is conducted by a case worker who specifically handles these types of investigations. This case worker is referred to as an Institutional Investigator.

An institutional investigation is a fact-finding process in which the assigned investigator responds to a report of a suspected child abuse or neglect in a foster care setting. When a report is received by WCDSS, it is assessed by a supervisor to determine if it rises to the level of child abuse or neglect. If the circumstances in the report do not rise to such a level, it may be coded as an "Information Only" report and placed in the foster care provider's file. Information Only reports may cause your licensing worker to contact you and offer services, but will not result in an intervention by an institutional investigator or place your foster care license at risk.

If the circumstances in a report rise to the level of suspected abuse or neglect, an institutional investigator is assigned to investigate the allegations. An investigation may entail the institutional investigator, your licensing worker and/or law enforcement officers coming to your home, or going to the children's school. They may interview you, your family members, foster children, the foster children's family members and other people/professionals in the community who may have knowledge of the situation. The NRS.432.B specifically states the investigating case workers may interview children "wherever they are found." Photographs of any injuries to children may be obtained as evidence in the investigation process. Just remember, this is a fact-finding process, designed to learn as best we can, what happened and ensure the safety of foster children.

At the conclusion of an institutional abuse/neglect investigation, the Agency will make a finding as to whether the allegations in the report are substantiated (confirmed or proven), or that they are unsubstantiated (unconfirmed or disproved).

Unsubstantiated allegations do not place your license in jeopardy. Those matters are closed, though your licensing worker may find there were violations of the Foster Homes for Children Regulations and Standards and may require you to participate in a corrective action plan to address these concerns.

Substantiated allegations of abuse or neglect in the home of a licensed foster parent have far reaching consequences. Nevada Administrative Code 424 prohibits persons with substantiated history of child abuse or neglect allegations from holding foster care licenses. Should you be found to have abused or neglected a child, you will be sent a notice of the finding and of your

right to appeal that finding, should you choose to do so. Your license to provide foster care will be suspended with intent to revoke pending the appeal process and/or permanently revoked if an appeal is not received. Should the finding be over turned, your license may be taken off of suspension/hold.

Again, while institutional investigations can be upsetting and seem invasive to foster parents and foster care facility staff, it is important to remember that as professionals, part of your responsibility is to cooperate with the investigators so that accurate assessments and resolutions can be reached in order to ensure the safety of our foster children here in Washoe County. We acknowledge your valuable role in the caring for the children of Washoe County and that together, we can ensure their safety while they are in your home or facility.