

COVID-19 Foster Care FAQs

General licensing questions

1. Can licensing forms requiring signatures, including but not limited to 3324, home study assessments, home safety checklist, be signed electronically or not at all?

The electronic signature function on the 3324 form has been removed. Licensors now just need to type their name in the field for their signature. All fields outlined in red must be completed in order to be able to submit the form.

The home study assessment and assessment update must be signed by the home study preparer. The form is in PDF format, and the signature section is non-fillable. The date section is fillable and should be completed. Both the preparer and the supervisor names can be filled in on the first page.

The home study assessment and assessment update must still be approved by the supervisor prior to completing the child foster care license. For now, if the supervisor is unable to sign the assessment, you can document the approval of the supervisor via email and keep a copy in the agency file. When things are back to normal, both the preparer and the supervisor may sign the assessment after the fact.

The home safety checklist is a non-fillable PDF form. As always, you will need to have a print version of the form. If it is completed via remote technology, it must be signed and dated by the licensing worker, and a note should be added directly on the checklist that it was completed with the applicant/license holder via remote technology. The date on the checklist will provide verification that it was completed during the peacetime emergency.

In general, complete and sign any required forms as best as you can. At the Rule 13 review for your agency, we will take the current situation into consideration when determining any concerns or possible citations.

2. What should we do about licenses that are expiring at the end of May, June and July?

We have implemented an automated process to issue a three month extension to all Family Systems programs where the license expires at the end of May, June, and July 2020. This automated process will also include licenses with an expiration date of June 1st, July 1st, and August 1st.

License renewals may be submitted to DHS per usual procedures as licensors are able to complete them. Any licenses that were automatically extended at the end of March and April will again be automatically extended for three additional months if a renewal is not submitted before the first extended expiration date.

3. Many fingerprint sites are closing around the state. How are we supposed to proceed with licensing without a background study?

DHS Background studies issued temporary modifications of DHS background study requirements - [Emergency Background Studies - NetStudy 2.0](#). Please review this website for FAQs and user instructions.

4. Will there be a fee for child foster care emergency background studies?

As always, there is no fee for a child foster care background study. The \$9.10 fee is for the fingerprint cost. Because the emergency studies do not require fingerprints, there will not be a charge. When normal background studies resume, the fingerprint fee will again be required.

5. Do I need to enter background studies at this time or can I hold off until everything is back up and running?

You should submit a background study for any new applicants/individuals on or after April 6, 2020, in order for a name and DOB study to be completed.

6. Can we place with non-relative child foster care providers prior to getting a background study? Can we place with non-relative providers prior to having a license?

No, all required background studies needs to be completed and cleared, and a license issued before non-relative homes may accept a placement. Refer to the information in [response #23](#) in the background studies Q & A regarding studies that have already been submitted.

For new applicants/individuals on or after April 6, 2020, new studies need to be submitted in order to complete a name and DOB background study.

7. For a background study that was previously submitted and the fingerprint timeline expired, will the extensions for fingerprint deadlines be retroactive?

If you are not seeing a pending or existing study in NetStudy 2.0 for a study that was previously submitted, you should submit new studies for all required individuals in order for a name and DOB study to be completed. Extensions will not be provided for those studies that had already expired prior to the current extensions being put in place.

Child foster care

1. We have foster parents that are concerned about facilitating visitation between foster children and their birth parents and/or taking foster children to visitation centers due to potential exposure. Can these visits be done using remote technology, such as Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, etc.?

Child Safety and Permanency has issued [Bulletin 20-68-11 Monthly Caseworker Visits Modified to Permit Videoconferencing](#) as well as [interim guidance on prioritizing child safety and conducting visits during](#)

[COVID-19 pandemic](#). In addition, we encourage licensors and/or license holders to consult with the placing worker.

2. We have foster parents that want to travel out of state with foster children. What should we tell them?

Foster parents are required to report to the placing agency any plans to take the child out of state. We would encourage the foster parents to consult with the placing agency and follow the travel guidance on the MDH COVID-19 website.

3. Visits to the home: We have many families that are in the application process. Can we do things like the home safety checklist and home study interviews using remote technology, such as Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, etc.? What about off-year visits and the annual visit required for relatives during their first two years of licensure?

DHS Licensing wants to remain as flexible as possible during this pandemic. The home safety checklist is paramount to ensuring the physical plant is safe. Whenever possible, we would recommend that the home safety checklist be completed in-person. If that is not possible, and time is critical, you may consider using remote technologies such as Skype, FaceTime, or Zoom to complete the checklist with applicants and license holders.

In-person interviews required for all adult household members for adult and child foster care may be conducted virtually using remote technology.

The annual home visit that is required for the 2-year relative license is a DHS policy – due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the requirement to complete this visit in-person is waived; you may consider doing this visit using remote technologies such as Skype, FaceTime, or Zoom.

4. What if foster parents do not have access to remote technology or videoconference capability?

We encourage you to contact Family Systems Foster Care triage at dhs.fostercarelicensing@state.mn.us to discuss these unique situations.

5. CARS training: Most classes around the state are being cancelled. What do we do if:

- **this is the only thing left before issuing a license**
- **their training will now expire while they are providing care**
- **the check-ups are cancelled for the variance**

Child Passenger Restraint Training has been extended for currently licensed child foster care programs. The in-person child passenger restraint systems training for new applicants is waived. Instead, during the peacetime emergency, license holders, staff persons, and caregivers that transport a child under eight years old in a motor vehicle must review online information on the federal National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website (<https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#install-instructions>) and watch the “how to choose the right seat” video, as well as car seat installation instruction videos for each type of car seat they will be using based on the age and size of the child/children they are

transporting. Relative applicants that would have sought a variance under 245A.18, Subd. 2(e) may also review this information and these videos in order to satisfy the training requirement.

Licensors should ask providers to confirm the date they complete their review of the online information and document this in the licensing file. Please note that any recently licensed child foster care providers who were unable to complete Child Passenger Restraint Training (or a variance for relative providers) should now be asked to review the above online information as soon as possible.

6. Licensing investigations: Can these be completed over the phone, or using remote technologies such as Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, etc.?

There is nothing in the rule that requires complaint investigations to be completed in person. We would encourage you to work collaboratively with Child Protection, if they are involved in the investigation. If not, your agency can use discretion on how best to investigate the complaint. This may be done via phone calls, the request of photos, the use of remote technology, etc.

7. What do we do if a caregiver in the home becomes ill?

If a caregiver in the home becomes ill, follow the guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) on the [MDH coronavirus website](#). If a license holder, household member, or other caregiver is ill or has tested positive for COVID-19 and you need licensing technical assistance, please contact Family Systems Foster Care triage at dhs.fostercarelicensing@state.mn.us.

8. What do we do if a foster child becomes ill?

If a foster child becomes ill, the provider should follow the guidance and recommendations provided by the Minnesota Department of Health. In addition, the license holder should work with the placing worker(s) of children placed in the home to determine how to best manage the situation. If a foster child is ill or has tested positive for COVID-19 and you need licensing technical assistance, please contact Family Systems Foster Care triage.

9. Do you know if foster parents are considered emergency personnel in regards to the free child care through the school?

Please refer to the Minnesota Department of Education for this question, as they are regularly updating their guidance. Here is a link to their webpage: <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/covid19/>.

Adult foster care/community residential settings

1. We are starting to get questions now from adult foster care (AFC) providers about “what ifs?” Most corporate homes are short staffed already. What should they do if staff/family/license holder are ill? What about if clients become ill? Do people need to relocate?

It’s very difficult to respond to “what if” questions because each program has their own unique situations. If any of your programs has these situations, please contact triage to discuss. Answers below are general guidance:

- What to do if license holders or staff become ill:
Follow the guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health on the [MDH coronavirus website](#). In addition, if a license holder becomes ill, they should contact their county licenser and case managers for persons served by the program to determine next steps. If a license holder, staff, or household members are ill or have tested positive for COVID-19 and licensing technical assistance is needed, please contact Family Systems Foster Care triage at dhs.fostercarelicensing@state.mn.us. For staffing questions regarding programs that also have a 245D license, please contact the 245D help desk: 651-431-6624.
- What to do if clients become ill:
If a person served by the program becomes ill, the program should follow the recommendations provided by the Minnesota Department of Health and work with case managers, and possibly family members, to determine if anyone living in the home may need to be relocated. If a person served is ill or has tested positive for COVID-19 and you need licensing technical assistance, please contact Family Systems Foster Care triage.

2. Can a variance be granted to waive the three hour orientation for new family adult foster care providers?

During the peacetime emergency, orientation may be condensed to less than three hours. At a minimum, training on the requirements of the Vulnerable Adults Act must be provided.

3. If someone is requesting a variance, we still go through DHS, correct? There is no "fast pass" for this situation? I'm thinking we may receive emails that providers have already taken the measures they see as most appropriate and make the request after the fact.

As always, for adult foster care variance requests that require DHS approval, contact or submit the request to Family Systems Foster Care triage at dhs.fostercarelicensing@state.mn.us. Community residential setting variance requests that require DHS approval should be submitted to dhs.licensingcrs@state.mn.us.

4. Do we need to be prepared to grant temporary variances for a number of things such as over-capacity (not moratorium capacity)? I'm thinking of scenarios where one or two people become ill, and they transfer healthy folks into another one of their homes (for the bigger corporations).

As always, emergency capacity variances to allow **UP TO** a capacity of five are still being processed on an individual basis. Send these requests for adult foster care to Family Systems Foster Care triage at dhs.fostercarelicensing@state.mn.us; and for community residential settings send variance requests to dhs.licensingcrs@state.mn.us.

5. A corporate AFC/CRS provider with a 245D license, is proposing to have their staff take persons receiving services into their personal homes to provide services. Is this acceptable?

This would need to be discussed with the individual's team and decisions made about what services the person would receive under this scenario. For staffing questions regarding programs that also have a 245D

license, please contact the 245D help desk: 651-431-6624. A staff person assuming care of individuals in their own home may need to obtain an adult foster care license.

6. Are fire marshal inspections required before a new AFC or CRS license is issued?

Yes, a fire marshal inspection is required before you can submit a recommendation of a license for a new AFC or CRS home. The State Fire Marshal office is still conducting fire inspections. If a local inspector is not able to inspect the home of a new applicant, make a referral to the State Fire Marshal. If you have any difficulties with getting an inspection completed for AFC, please contact triage at dhs.fostercarelicensing@state.mn.us. For CRS, please contact dhs.licensingcrs@state.mn.us.

7. Do new applications for AFC or CRS still require notarized signatures?

Yes, new applicants for AFC and CRS are still required to get their signature notarized on the application. Remote notaries may be available. If a new applicant cannot get a notarized signature and has completed all other licensing requirements, please contact the respective foster care or CRS triage email to discuss next steps.

8. Can an AFC resident be involuntarily discharged from the program during the peacetime emergency?

No, Governor Walz's [Emergency Executive Order 20-14](#), suspended evictions to allow households to remain sheltered during the peacetime emergency. Therefore, an AFC resident may not be involuntarily discharged from the program during this time.