

1.0 CREDIT SELF-STUDY

Licensed foster parents can read the following article and earn foster parent training credit by filling out the quiz and returning it to the Alaska Center for Resource Families, 815 Second AVE STE 202, Fairbanks AK, 99701 or FAX to 1-907-479-9666.

“New Foster Care Regulations” Effective July 1, 2022

NOTE: ACRF has added the newly updated Understanding the Regulation Series on our website, we encourage you to go to <https://www.acrf.org/self-study/self-study-resources/written-courses> to learn more about the new Individual Training Plan (ITP). There are 10 units worth 1.0 training credit each.

In the past eight years, efforts have been made to update and consolidate the State of Alaska regulations guiding foster care licensing. These regulations were approved and went into effect on July 1 for all newly licensed foster homes. Foster homes with licenses issued before July 1, 2022 fall under the previous regulations until renewal or conversion.

One big change is that the foster care regulations are now all in a section by themselves (Section 67) and that makes it easier to figure out what applies. The highlights below are not the only changes in the regulations, but certainly are the ones that impact foster homes the most.

1. **CHANGES IN TRAINING REQUIREMENT** (Reference 7AAC 67.130) Instead of a set number of hours each year required for training, each foster home will develop an Individual Training Plan (ITP) with their licensing worker and caseworker at the time of initial licensure or renewal. This will be developed to strengthen the foster parent's ability to meet the needs of each child placed in the foster home. The ITP will be approved by the regional licensing supervisor and families can obtain training either through the Alaska Center for Resource Families or other identified sources. All training, regardless of where obtained, must be related to the training needs identified on the ITP and must be reported to ACRF to meet the training requirement. Remember, if you were licensed before July 1, 2022, you would still need 10 to 15 hours of training for your household for your current license year until your renewal. At that time, you will develop an ITP based on the needs of the children in your home.
2. **FOSTER HOME CAPACITY** (Reference 7AAC 67.210) Responding to Federal legislation that restricts the use of foster group homes, new regulations limit a foster home's capacity to six children, this includes the foster parent's own children. The foster home may only exceed six children in certain circumstances and a general variance will be required. These include: (1) a parenting youth needs to remain with the youth's child; (2) siblings are to stay together; (3) a child with a meaningful relationship with a family wants to stay with that family.
3. **ALTERNATE CAREGIVER** (Reference 7AAC 67.120) Do you need respite? Or are you using someone to watch your children while on vacation? That is now referred to as an ALTERNATE CAREGIVER and here is what you need to know. Foster parents should designate an alternate caregiver when the foster parent will be away from the foster home for more than 24 hours and must provide notice and contact information to the licensing specialist and the child's caseworker. The use of an alternate caregiver may not exceed 48 hours in a calendar week unless approved by the department and a foster parent may not designate an alternate caregiver for longer than 14 days. An alternate caregiver must be at least 18 years of age to care for children younger than 15 years of age and must be at least 21 years of age to care for children at least 15 years of age and under 18 years of age. Here's the biggest change. An alternate caregiver must have a valid background check. Other foster parents have that check, but an unlicensed alternate caregiver needs to have a valid background check, so plan ahead and find out from your social worker about how to get those background checks completed.

4. **BABYSITTERS** (Reference 7 AAC 67.120) Babysitters do not require a background check. A foster parent may utilize a babysitter for short-term, intermittent care. A babysitter is not required to have a background check, but must meet the following conditions: (1) be at least 16 years of age and, (2) provide only short-term or intermittent care; which means no longer than six consecutive hours without the permission of OCS.
 5. **NOTICE IN ADVANCE** (Reference 7AAC 67.150) Foster parents must provide notice to the child's caseworker at least 14 calendar days in advance when requesting placement change of a child. In circumstances where the health or safety of a household member would be endangered by the child's continued residence at the foster home, or in the event of an emergency affecting the foster home, a 14-calendar-day notice is not required. If the department must relocate a child to another placement setting, the licensee shall cooperate with the department throughout the relocation process.
 6. **CRITICAL INCIDENT** (Reference 7AAC 67.180) Foster parents should report critical incidents immediately or as soon as reasonably possible to the licensing specialist and to the child's caseworker, during normal work hours; or the department staff who are responsible for after-office hours intake and on-call services. Critical incidents refer to two kinds of situations: those that involve the child (severe injury, need for medical treatment, pregnancy, runaway, need to use physical restraint, physical assaults against family members, property damage by child, etc.) and those that involve your licensing (adding a new family member, moving, change in address or phone, applying to be a child care home, etc.) The situations involving the child usually are reported to the caseworker and the situations with your licensure are usually to your licensing worker. You can always report after hours to Central Intake (1 -800-478-4444). ■
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