



FOSTER CARE LICENSING GUIDE

*Information and Support for
Eligible Foster Parents in North Carolina*

CONTENTS

	Introduction	2
01.	What to Expect When Becoming a Licensed Foster Care Parent	3
	Foster Parent Training	3
	Additional Required Training.....	4
	Home and Office Visits.....	4
	Homework.....	4
	Verification Documents	4
	Vendor Enrollment.....	4
	Family/Home Photos/PowerPoint	4
	Other Considerations.....	5
	COVID-19.....	5
	Time Commitment.....	6
02.	Understanding the Family Assessment.....	7
03.	North Carolina Licensing Requirements	8
04.	Wake County Specific Licensing Requirements.....	10
05.	Post-Licensing Support	13
06.	Environmental Safety for Foster Homes	14
	Kitchen & Bathroom	14
	Around the House	15
	Poison Prevention	15
	Fire Safety	16
	Toy Safety.....	18
	Weapon Safety	19
	Pet Safety	20
	Alcohol in the Home	21
07.	Conclusion.....	22
	Additional Resources.....	22
	Glossary.....	23

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Foster Care Licensing Guide! Thank you for embarking on this journey to support Wake County children and families in need.

There can be many unknowns when taking on the role of foster parent to make room for additional family. This resource guide can help provide guidance and answers to some of the questions you may have in the coming days, weeks, months and years.

This guide is meant to support you throughout the licensing process, while also providing you the information you need to become a successful caregiver in the foster care system. Keep it handy and reference it often during the various stages of your journey.

As you read through this material, please reach out to your licensing agency to help answer any questions you may have.

It is our sincere hope that this guide starts meaningful conversations of support between you, your family, your friends and our agency. Here is where your support system starts coming together to ultimately result in you becoming a fully licensed foster parent.

01.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

Congratulations! If you're reading this, your application to become a foster parent has been reviewed and approved. From here the real adventure and journey begins as you navigate foster parent training and undergo a mutual selection process to become a licensed foster parent.



Before getting started, please make sure you understand that open and honest communication throughout this entire process is imperative to success.

There are many preventable factors that may lead to a potential caregiver not being certified. There is even a very real chance that you may complete your entire training and not receive a certification.

At any time, you can decide not to continue your foster care journey. Wake County also reserves the right to withhold licensing, especially in light of any new information that may ultimately disqualify you from continuing.

Foster Parent Training

All potential foster caregivers are required to undergo a comprehensive training known as TIPS-MAPPS (Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanence - Model Approach to Partnerships in Partnering). We consider this training a key component of the mutual selection process where you get to know the foster care system, we get to know you and together, we determine if you're a good fit to assist families in need by caring for foster children.

Additional Required Training

In addition to the 30 hours of TIPS-MAPP training, each potential foster parent is required to complete CPR & First Aid Certification Training (Infant, Child & Adult) before your home can be licensed.

Training participants are also required to complete Medication Administration and Car Seat Training before being fully licensed. **This training is offered virtually one time per month with the exception of November and December.** Training participants are also required to complete Court Roles and Obligation of Foster Parents online at NC Fostering.

We ask that participants complete CPR and Medication Administration, Car Seat trainings and Court Rules and Obligations of Foster Parent Training no later than the last day of TIPS-MAPP training.

Home Visits & Office Visits

Wake County will need to complete home and office visits (both virtual and in person) with you, household members and your natural supports (people who plan to assist you in caring for a foster child.) Exact dates will be provided in advance to give you time to prepare.

During the licensing process a trainer will regularly track your progress and share that information with a licensing supervisor. If concerns arise regarding whether your family should be licensed, we will set up a meeting to discuss these concerns with you.

Homework

Homework is a very important part of the licensing process. Your homework is reviewed by your trainer to help them understand you and your family. It also helps them determine if and when you may need additional information or support. Homework includes but is not limited to completing detailed profiles for you and your family members.

Verification Documents

Verification documents are required to help Wake County establish the identity of applicants and household members. They also help us corroborate the information you've shared with this agency across various domains. Submitting these documents early prevents delays later in the process.

Vendor Enrollment

Foster parents are considered vendors and must be registered in order to receive board payment for a child placed in your home. Registration also helps you get reimbursed for costs associated with home inspections. You must be enrolled prior to your licensing application being submitted to NCDHHS for final review. If you need assistance with enrollment, let your trainer know.

To enroll, visit <https://www.wakegov.com/departments-government/finance/vendor-enrollment-and-management>.

Family / Home Photos / PowerPoint

Applicants will need to take photos of their family, pets, and home and create a PowerPoint presentation. This presentation helps the Child Placement Staff become acquainted with your family and enables them to make good decisions around placement matches. Once submitted, your PowerPoint presentation is uploaded to your file with Wake County for future reference.

You should aim to complete your presentation by the last day of training and submit it to licensingdocuments@wakegov.com



Other Considerations

COVID-19

In the last few years, Wake County has modified its training process to help minimize the spread of COVID-19; at which time many of our services transitioned to a virtual platform.

The Wake County Manager has lifted the restrictions for County Departments for in-person meetings and training in county office space. As we move forward to transitioning to our new normal, a hybrid training plan has been developed for TIPS-MAPP training sessions.

If portions of your identified training session are offered virtually, the training will be interactive and include virtual breakout rooms to enhance learning and fellowship opportunities with other prospective foster parents.

In-Person Requirements:

- TIPS-MAPP Manual will be provided for use in each class
- Classes may be adjusted to accommodate the scheduling needs of the group
- You are expected to be in class each session on time and in its entirety
- Group engagement is optimal in in-person sessions, and it is expected that each licensing candidate optimizes their learning through full participation.

Virtual Requirements:

- Visual aids will be provided via PowerPoint and each family will receive a TIPS-MAPP Manual.
- You are expected to have access to a computer with a camera and use it during training.
- Your camera must be turned on at all times during virtual training.





While Wake County has lifted many restrictions, it remains vital to the planning and direct interaction, that staff follows COVID-19 screening guidelines which may be subject to change during your licensing journey. Updates will be shared with you as they become available. The following guidelines are in place at this time:

- Wake County staff and visitors are encouraged to wear a face covering, practice social distancing and use recommended hand hygiene when participating in large groups inside County buildings.
- While on county business, Wake County staff must follow all safety guidelines during home visits, meetings, and while transporting children, youth, etc.
- Wake County staff is required to conduct COVID-19 screenings prior to in-person visits and meetings to ensure safety for all participants. The Trainer will call you prior to a visit to ask screening questions.
- Wake County expects you to inform us if you or someone in your household is sick or if you know that you or someone in your household has been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 so that our staff can cancel the appointment and reschedule for another time.
- If licensed, you will be expected to accept placement of a child that may have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19.
- Children in foster care are not automatically tested for COVID-19 prior to placement; only if exhibiting symptoms or are directly exposed to someone who tested positive.
- Consider ahead of time what an appropriate plan of care looks like if a foster child placed in your home tests positive for COVID-19.
- If licensed, you will be expected to support the child placed in your home with court-ordered visits with their parents and siblings if the status of all parties has been determined to be safe [via screening questions] to proceed. You will not have the option to withhold a child from court-ordered visits based on the risk of exposure.
- If licensed, you will be expected to help create and implement a learning plan that supports the needs of a child if there are health concerns. This may include virtual or in-person learning or a combination of the two. We ask that you think about your work schedule and any flexibility that you may have to ensure adequate care, supervision, and educational support. You will also need to consider ways in which your natural supports can assist.



Time Commitment

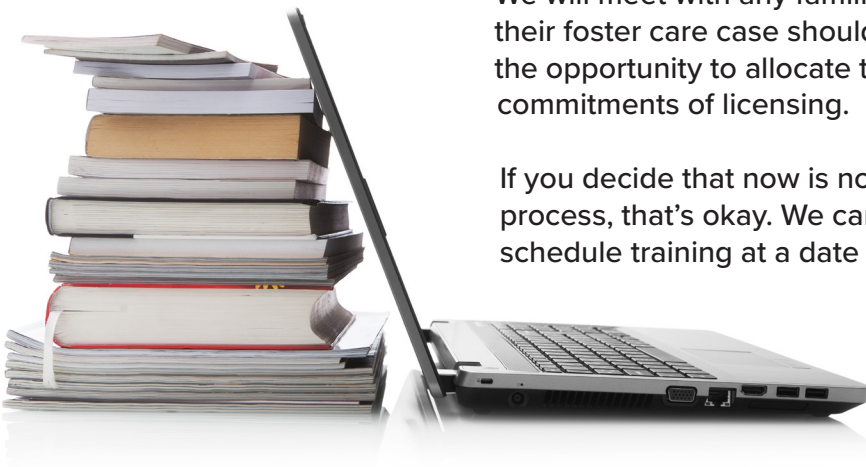
Before embarking on your licensing journey, we ask that you carefully consider your schedule and commitments. Be sure to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have the time to attend all training sessions?
- Do I have the time to complete and return assigned homework by the timeline provided?
- Do I have time for a social worker to complete interviews with me, my household members and my natural supports?

Due to our overwhelming need for licensed foster homes in Wake County, we ask that each family who accepts an invitation to begin this process make attending all training sessions a priority. Families who participate in virtual training but do not complete and provide all required homework will not receive certification. Same goes for those who are unable to complete interviews in a timely manner.

We will meet with any families struggling to commit to determine if their foster care case should be closed. We do this to give trainers the opportunity to allocate time to families who are able to meet the commitments of licensing.

If you decide that now is not the best time to complete the licensing process, that's okay. We can always review your referral letter and schedule training at a date that better aligns with your schedule.



02.

UNDERSTANDING THE FAMILY ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the family assessment, also known as the Home Study, is for the Trainer and the applicant to mutually determine the appropriateness and readiness of your family to foster.

The goals of the family assessment are to:

- Educate the family about the differences between foster care and adoption
- Help the family explore their values, expectations, and motivations
- Help the family identify and highlight their strengths and limitations
- Provide the Trainer with the opportunity to determine if the applicants have experienced trauma in their life and what is the potential impact of that trauma on their ability to be foster parents or adoptive parents
- Provide the family with the agency's philosophy and values regarding foster care and adoption
- Prepare the family for the challenges of fostering
- Initiate the mutual-selection process for the applicant
- Develop a working relationship between the family and the Trainer as well as between the family and the agency

Agencies use a variety of assessment opportunities including:

- Individual and family interviews
- Observation of the applicant at Preservice Training and other group sessions
- Criminal record checks, fingerprint clearances, personal and employment references, and physical and mental health clearances
- The Trainer's own experience with the family
- Statewide Central Registry Database search for Child Protective Services Involvement



03.

NORTH CAROLINA LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

Licensing requirements in the state of NC:

- are the same across all 100 counties.
- cannot be waived or changed at the county level.
- are the same for Kinship and non-Kinship families with minor exceptions.
- for ICPC Referrals (children in the custody of another State) require the state that holds custody to send an ICPC Referral to the ICPC State Office in NC. ICPC Referral for licensing cannot be made directly by states or families to local DSS agencies.
- are the same for regular family foster homes regardless of the type of care you wish to provide (e.g., short-term emergency, respite, etc.). It is up to each agency to decide if they choose to license families to provide specific types of care. This decision is based on the needs of each agency.

Licensing Requirements for Regular Family Foster Homes:

- ☐ Must be 21 years of age or older
- ☐ Must live in Wake County (unless you are a Kinship Family)
- ☐ Must have a stable home environment
- ☐ Must be financially stable and secure
- ☐ Must participate in a Mutual Selection Process which entails:
 - *application review*
 - *criminal background review*
 - *interviews with everyone who lives in the home (applicants, all adults (including roommates), and minor children (who are able to verbally communicate))*
 - *interviews with adults who do not live in the home but who plan to assist in caring for the child*
 - *interviews with references*
 - *follow up conversations to clarify information*



- Must complete 30 hours of TIPS-MAPP, Deciding Together or Caring for Our Own Training
 - *Each adult in the home 18 or older who plans to help care for the child must actively participate in and complete this training.*
 - *Each applicant and training participant must demonstrate proficiency in the 12 skills of fostering:*
 - Know their Own Family
 - Communicate Effectively
 - Know the Children
 - Build on Strengths and Needs of Child
 - Work in Partnership
 - Be Loss & Attachment Experts
 - Manage Behaviors
 - Build Connections
 - Build Self Esteem
 - Ensure Health & Safety
 - Assess Impact on Own Family
 - Make an Informed Decision
- Must pass a criminal background check (includes a fingerprint check through the SBI & FBI)
 - *Each adult 18 or older who lives in the home must pass a fingerprint clearance.*
 - *If any adult household member has resided in a state(s) other than North Carolina during the past five years they must provide a Child abuse/neglect clearance letter(s) from each state in which they lived.*
- Must pass a medical clearance
 - *Each applicant must be cleared by their medical provider to be a foster parent. The physical must have happened within the last 12 months.*
 - *Each adult and child household member must be cleared by their medical provider to be a part of a licensed foster home.*
 - *Each adult who does not live in the home but who plans to assist the foster parent in caring for a child must be cleared by their medical provider.*
 - *Each applicant, adult, and child household member must complete a Medical History Form.*
- Must pass an environmental condition inspection
 - *Each home and surrounding property*
 - *must pass an Environmental Conditions Check*
 - *must pass a Fire Inspection*
 - *have adequate space in the home for the entire family and a foster child (dining, living, bathroom, space to play, etc.)*
 - *have adequate bedroom space with a bed for each child in the home (no bed sharing; no temporary bedding such as futons, trundles, fold away beds - no unfinished attics as bedrooms)*
 - *This includes passing a Water Safety Hazard Inspection.*
 - *Each foster family must create, submit and follow a Water Safety Plan.*
 - *If you have any firearms they must be locked up. Ammunition must be stored and locked away separately from firearms.*

04. WAKE COUNTY SPECIFIC LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

Licensing Process Steps for Wake County

1. Attend a Wake County Foster Parent Information Meeting
2. Complete a Wake County Foster Parent Application and sign consents
3. Participant in screening interview
4. Provide candid information on licensing barriers
 - ☐ *Criminal background history including current pending charges*
 - ☐ *Currently working on plan to expand your own family (through pregnancy, fertility, or adoption)*
 - ☐ *Home is undergoing renovations*
 - ☐ *Household is impacted by houseguests (impacting household composition and bedroom space for foster child)*
 - ☐ *Family/Household is going through transition:*
 - Impending marriage, separation, or divorce
 - People planning to move in or out of the home
 - Adjustment issues with your own children
 - Loss of employment/income
 - Planning to move or relocate within Wake County or to another county
 - Increasing demands on your time and availability
 - Newly emerging health challenges
5. If approved:
 - ☐ *Prior to training provide ALL required Verification Documents*
 - Documents must be scanned
 - ☐ *Attend TIPS-MAPP, Deciding Together or Caring for Our Own Training as agreed*
 - ☐ *Adults in the same home are expected to attend training together so that the trainer can assess how you work together as a family unit.*





List of Verification Documents

- ☐ Photocopy of NC Driver's License (front & back)
- ☐ Copy of vehicle registration for all vehicles used to transport children
- ☐ Copy of car insurance policy for all vehicles used to transport children
- ☐ Copy of renter's insurance/homeowner's insurance
- ☐ Copy of birth certificate for each member in the household
- ☐ Copy of Social Security Card for each member in the household
- ☐ Copy of two most recent checks stubs from current employer
- ☐ Copy of Disability Approval certificate, stating the reason for eligibility (if applicable)
- ☐ If applicant or household member was in the military, provide copy of the DD214 or other discharge paperwork
- ☐ Copies of educational diplomas, certificates, degrees
- ☐ Resume for each adult household member that covers employment and education from the time applicant graduated high school to present.
- ☐ Marriage certificate for each marriage
- ☐ Divorce decree for each divorce (if applicable)
- ☐ Death certificate if you are widowed (if applicable)
- ☐ Copy of adoption decree for all adopted children (if applicable)
- ☐ Custody/Court orders for your children (if applicable)
- ☐ Rabies/Vaccination records for each animal in the home
- ☐ If your pet has been evaluated by a trainer, provide proof
- ☐ Vendor Set Up Verification (licensing packet WILL NOT be submitted to the Licensing Authority until foster family has a vendor number)

Virtual Training Expectations

- Stationary location – no driving in the car or walking around.
- Participants should demonstrate professional virtual etiquette.
- Location should be quiet with minimal distractions.
- Show up on time and on the date scheduled. If you cannot attend notify your trainer prior to class time.
- Have your computer, Internet access, and camera turned on.
- Be prepared and complete reading and written assignments prior to each class. If you are not prepared to hold a meaningful training session, your trainer will ask you to reschedule.
- Choose a private location to complete training. No one should be able to overhear your conversations with the trainer due to the personal and sensitive subject matter being shared. Consider having another adult care for children in the home while you are in training.
- Light snacking is okay if already prepared. There should be no cooking or meal prep during training.
- Participants should be fully dressed in appropriate attire. No nightwear or revealing clothing.
- If at any time you change your mind along the way about becoming licensed, notify your trainer right away
- If anything changes in your family or your situation, notify your trainer right away (e.g., changes in household, employment, medical condition (physical or mental), marital/relationship status., etc.)
- Make sure that you have submitted ALL required documentation to the trainer.
- Resolve any environmental condition concerns in a timely manner.
- Review your completed licensing application provided by your trainer. If anything is inaccurate, let your trainer know right away.
- Once your entire licensing packet is ready, your trainer will schedule your office visit.
- Attend your office visit to meet with your trainer and your newly assigned Re-licensing Social Worker. At this visit you will review and/or sign:
 - The Wake County Discipline Agreement
 - The Wake County Agency Agreement
 - The Wake County General Supervision Form
 - The Foster Family Facility Form
 - Sign the Licensing Application

Expedite the Licensing Timeline

- Submit all required written work to the trainer by the timeline provided.
- Participate in interviews including follow up conversations, emails, telephone calls to clarify information.

Following Your Office Visit

- Your trainer will send your Licensing Application to the State.
- The State will review and make a final decision as to if your home will be licensed.
- The trainer will notify your family that you have been licensed.
- You will receive a copy of the license in the mail.

05.

POST-LICENSING SUPPORT

Your Re-Licensing Social Worker will:

- welcome and provide support to you as a new Wake County Professional Resource/foster family
- visit you regularly in your home
- introduce you to other foster families who can provide peer to peer support
- support you through your first placement and beyond
- follow up to make sure you are receiving your board payment once you have a placement
- link you to community resources for foster families
- invite you to fun, foster family events
- make sure that you receive the 20 hours of training required to relicense your family
- remind you when it is time to complete the relicensing process and make sure you receive your relicensing packet
- process your relicensing paperwork and send to the State
- make sure you receive a copy of your renewed license



06. ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY TIPS FOR FOSTER HOMES

Children placed in foster care may be more at risk of accidents in and around the home as they will be joining a new and possibly unfamiliar household and/or require particular needs that make them more vulnerable to accidents. While accidents can happen, risks should be minimized which is why an Environmental Safety Check is completed for all prospective and approved foster parents.

Here are some safety tips to help you ensure a safe home for your future foster children.

The Kitchen & Bathroom

- Install safety latches on cabinets and drawers to keep children from potentially poisonous household products.
- Store medicines and other products in their original containers.
- Install toilet locks to keep toilet lids closed. Children are more top-heavy than adults and can lean and fall into a toilet easily. They also can drown in just one inch of water.
- Install anti-scalding devices on faucets and shower heads to prevent burns. Also set the water heater thermostat to 120 degrees. It takes just three seconds for a child to sustain a third-degree burn from water at 140 degrees.
- Unplug hair dryers and electric rollers after use to prevent electrocution from contact with water in the bathroom. Also keep them away from curious children to prevent burns.
- Cover unused electrical outlets with outlet protectors or safety caps. Make sure outlets in the bathroom and kitchen — or near any water source — are updated with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), which turn off electricity if appliances fall into water.



Around The House

- Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs and in the doorways of rooms with hazards. Gates with expanding pressure bars should not be used for the top of staircases. Use gates hardware-mounted to the door frame instead.
- Use doorknob covers to keep children away from rooms and other areas with hazards, such as swimming pools. Make sure that these devices are easy for adults to use in case of emergency.
- Put corner and edge bumpers on furniture and other items like a fireplace hearth to protect against injury.
- Place furniture away from high windows so children won't climb onto windowsills. Screens aren't strong enough to keep children from falling through windows.
- Make sure window blinds do not have looped cords — they can be strangulation hazards for children. Blinds, shades, and draperies purchased before 2001 should be repaired or replaced. Also, always lock blinds into position whether they are all the way up or down.
- Remove free-falling lids from toy chests, which should have lids that stays open or very light, removable ones.
- Prevent furniture from tipping by securing bookcases, shelving, and heavy furniture to walls with brackets and anchors. When storing items, put heavier items on bottom shelves and in bottom drawers.
- Remember that childproofing your home can never be 100% effective against injury. Supervise children placed in your care at all times.

Prevent Poisoning in the Home

Poison control centers across the country get more than two million calls a year about potential exposure to poisons. **Almost all of these exposures occur in the home and 80% of all poisonings are in children between the ages of 1 and 4.** Follow these guidelines to prevent poisoning in the home.

- Install safety locks/childproof latches on all cabinets to restrict access to children.
- Store potential poisons including detergents, medications, and chemical products (like pesticides and drain cleaners) out of reach and out of sight of children — inside the house as well as in the garage or shed. In addition, it's always best to lock them up. Never underestimate your child's ability to climb.
- Store potential poisons in their original containers. Do not transfer them to food containers like milk jugs, coffee cans, or soda bottles.
- Keep food and potential poisons separate; store them in different cabinets. Children can mistake the identity of products that look alike to them.
- Return all products to storage immediately after use. Keep the products and your children in sight during use.
- Safely discard — into a sealed, outdoor trash receptacle — all household products and medications that are old or aren't used regularly.
- Never mix products; dangerous fumes could result.
- Make sure medications are in child-resistant containers. Vitamins and supplements also should be out of reach of children. Be especially alert at grandma's house. Older people with hand arthritis may get medication bottles that are not childproof. They're also more likely to leave medicine out in the open.

- Keep indoor plants out of reach; some may be poisonous.
- Stay away from areas that have been sprayed recently with pesticides or fertilizer.

Learn the signs of potential poisoning in children, which can include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty speaking
- Dizziness
- Unconsciousness
- Foaming or burning of the mouth
- Cramps
- Nausea
- Vomiting

If someone has been exposed to poison, call your local Poison Control or the **National Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-222-1222**.

Fire Safety Measures

Fires are the leading causes of home injury and death. This checklist can help you spot fire hazards in your home. It will also help you prepare your family to quickly escape a fire.

Smoke Detectors

- Put smoke alarms/detectors in strategic locations in your home, such as the kitchen, near bedrooms, and near fireplaces or stoves. Install at least one smoke alarm on every floor of your home, including the basement.
- Replace batteries in smoke detectors once a year. Check your alarm twice a year. A good way to remember – when daylight savings and standard time change each spring and fall.
- For people with hearing impairments, special smoke alarms with strobes and/or vibration

are available. You can buy these online and through local fire equipment distributors.

- Install new smoke alarms when they are 10 years old or older (sooner if one is damaged or not working).

Fire Prevention Strategy

- Keep a fire extinguisher near the kitchen and have it checked yearly. Learn how to use it. Put out food or grease fires in a pan with a lid or another pot.
- Teach children safety rules for matches, fires, electrical outlets, electrical cords, stoves, and chemicals. Keep matches and flames, such as candles or lanterns, out of the reach of children.
- Buy children's sleepwear made of flame-retardant fabric. Dress children in flame- and fire-retardant clothing. Older adults need to be careful about wearing clothing with loose material that could catch on fire.

Family Fire Drills

- Know the emergency number for your fire department. 9-1-1 is in place in most communities, but not all. Remember to get out first if there is a fire, then call for help once safely outside.
- Teach children old enough to understand to stop, drop, and roll if their clothing catches on fire so they can help put out the flames and avoid serious burns.
- Let children help plan a fire escape route. Choose a meeting place outside the home where everyone will gather and be sure they know never to go back inside a burning building.
- Teach children to always keep stairways and exits clear of furniture, toys and other obstructions that could slow your escape.
- Practice using your escape route in family fire drills at least twice a year. Make sure babysitters know the route, too.



- Practice what it would be like to escape through smoke by getting down on hands and knees and crawling below the smoke to the nearest exit. Cooler air will be near the floor.
- Once kids have mastered the plan, hold a drill while everyone is sleeping. This will let you know if they will wake up or sleep through the smoke alarm.

Potential Fire Hazards

Cooking Equipment

- Keep an eye on anything you're cooking if the setting is higher than "warm."
- Keep potholders, plastic utensils, towels or other non-cooking equipment away from the stove. These items can catch fire.
- Roll up or fasten long, loose sleeves while cooking.
- Store candy or cookies away from the stove so kids won't be tempted to climb on it to get to the treats.

Cigarettes, Lighters and Matches

- Keep lighters and matches in a locked cabinet out of sight and reach of children, and remind children that they are tools for adults, not toys.
- Make sure that cigarette butts are fully extinguished before emptying ashtrays. Never place a cigarette butt directly into a trashcan without dousing it with water first.

Furnaces, Fireplaces and Space Heaters

- Furnaces should be inspected annually. Keep boxes, paper, and other flammables away from the furnace. An outdoor shed is better.
- Fireplaces should be protected with screens or tempered glass doors. Keep kindling at least three feet away from the fireplace. Have the chimney inspected yearly and cleaned if necessary.
- When purchasing an electric space heater, look for the UL mark. Keep at least three feet between the heater and anything that can burn. Turn the heater off before falling asleep or leaving the area you are heating.

Wood-Burning Stoves

- Remember that wood and coal stoves get very hot. If you have young children living in or visiting your home, supervise them carefully and consider installing a temporary stove guard to help prevent burns.
- Follow stove instructions and cleaning and maintenance requirements.
- Have chimneys inspected each year and cleaned, if necessary, by a professional chimney sweep to avoid dangerous creosote buildup.
- Use an approved stone board under your wood or coal stove to protect the floor from heat and stray embers.

Kerosene Heaters

- Learn local and state codes and regulations about the use of kerosene heaters. These heaters are illegal for home use in some areas.
- Use kerosene only. Never use gasoline in your heater. Gasoline is highly volatile, greatly increasing the risk of fire. Refill kerosene heaters outside after they have cooled down.
- If a flare-up occurs, activate the manual shut-off switch and call your fire department.
- Place the heater at least three feet away from anything that can burn and in a low traffic area so it will not be knocked over or trap you in the event of a fire.
- Keep the room ventilated (a door open, or a window ajar) to prevent an indoor air pollution problem.

Gas-Fired Space Heaters

- These heaters should not be used in small, enclosed areas — especially bedrooms — because there is potential for explosion or carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for lighting the pilot. Otherwise, gas vapors can accumulate and ignite, burning your hand or face.
- Light a match to ignite the pilot before you turn on the gas; it will prevent gas buildup. Keep flammable materials away from gas-fired appliances.
- Do not use a propane heater (LP) with a gas cylinder.

Other Hazards

- Use proper fuses in electrical boxes, do not overload outlets, and use insulated and grounded electrical cords.
- Keep trash cleaned up in attics, basements, and garages.

- Be careful with gas equipment such as lawn mowers, snow blowers, and chain saws.
- Think of safety first when dealing with fireworks and reconsider your use of them.

Toy Safety Measures

Follow these tips for choosing safe and appropriate toys for children:

- Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills, and interest level of the intended child.
- Toys too advanced for your child's age and developmental level may pose safety hazards to younger children.
- For infants, toddlers, and all children who still mouth objects, avoid toys with small parts, which could pose a fatal choking hazard. Never give young children small balls or balloons. How small is too small? If a toy or part can fit inside a toilet paper tube, it's too small.
- Look for sturdy construction on plush toys, such as tightly secured eyes, noses, and other potential small parts.
- Avoid toys that have sharp edges and points, especially for children under age 8.
- Avoid toys with strings, straps, or cords longer than seven inches. They could wrap around a child's neck.
- Do not purchase electric toys with heating elements for children under age 8.



- Check toys that make loud noises, which may damage young ears. If it sounds too loud to an adult, it's too loud for a child.
- Look for labels on toys that give age and safety recommendations and use that information as a guide. Check instructions for clarity.
- If you buy bicycles, scooters, skateboards, or inline skates, don't forget to include appropriate safety gear, such as helmets and pads. Make sure your child is of an appropriate age to use these vehicles. Riding toys, such as tricycles and nonpowered scooters, are the leading cause of toy-related injuries.
- Throw away plastic wrappings on toys as soon as they're opened. Follow instructions carefully when assembling toys. Also, dispose of any small objects that may have been present for packing purposes.
- It is also important to monitor the toys your children play with. Make sure they are not broken or coming apart. Also make sure the paint isn't cracked or peeling off. Repair or discard damaged toys.

Weapon Safety Measures

- Firearms must be kept securely locked.
- If the owner wishes to enhance the security of the firearm by using a trigger lock, this is commendable.
- The minimum requirement is that the firearm, with or without a trigger guard, be locked up.
- Ammunition for the firearm must be locked up and stored separately from the firearm.
- If a gun cabinet is used to store both firearm and ammunition, the cabinet must have separate locked areas for the firearm and the ammunition.
- It is recommended that foster families not keep firearms in the home.

If you have a gun in the home, be sure to:

- Keep the gun unloaded and locked up in a cabinet, safe, gun vault, or storage case.
- Lock the bullets in a place separate from the gun.
- Hide the keys to the locked storage.

Proper gun storage is important for several reasons. Young children are curious. If they come across a loaded gun, they can accidentally hurt or kill themselves or someone else.

Teens can be emotional and may act without thinking. If they have depression or are feeling down, they may see a gun as an easy way out. Teens should never be able to get to a gun and bullets without an adult being there.

People of any age who are depressed are at increased risk of suicide. If someone in the family has depression, or has had thoughts of suicide, all guns should be removed from the home. If the guns cannot be removed, it is even more important to store the gun unloaded and locked up with the bullets stored separately and keys hidden.

Guns in the Homes of Family and Friends

If your child is going to someone's house, it's important to know if there are guns in the home. It may feel awkward to ask, but most people will understand that you're trying to protect your child.

Consider raising the subject by asking:

- "My child is pretty curious. Is there a gun or anything else dangerous he might get into?"
- "Is there a gun in your home?"
- "Our doctor recommended that I check to make sure there are no guns where my child plays. Do you have any guns at home?"

It is safest to keep your child away from homes where there is a gun. If you do let your child play in a home where there is a gun, be sure that:

- The gun is stored unloaded and locked up.
- The bullets are locked up and stored separately.
- All keys to the locks are hidden.

Be sure to talk to your kids about guns, even if you do not have guns in your home. Kids need to know that guns are very dangerous. Teach them to follow these rules if they see a gun:

- Stop what they're doing.
- Do not touch the gun, even if it looks like a toy.
- Leave the area where the gun is.
- Tell an adult right away.

If you allow your child or teen to use a gun for recreation, it is very important that you:

- Store the gun unloaded and locked up. Lock up the bullets separately and hide all keys.
- Make sure that your child or teen understands that it is never OK to handle a gun without a responsible adult there.
- Teach your child or teen to assume a gun is loaded and never to point a gun at someone.
- Set a good example with your own safe gun handling practices.

Pet Safety

- All household pets must be vaccinated against rabies as recommended by a licensed veterinarian. North Carolina law requires dogs and cats to be vaccinated.
- Documentation that household pets have been vaccinated for rabies must be maintained by foster parents.

- It is recommended that dogs be declared safe around children by a licensed veterinarian or recognized canine trainer. Small dogs may be just as vicious as large dogs but will have less potential for serious harm.
- It is recommended that any exotic pet be inspected by a licensed veterinarian and certified not to be hazardous to children.
- Farm animals that a child may come into contact with should be vaccinated against rabies if they are susceptible to rabies; a veterinarian can provide a list of animals that can contract rabies.
- Foster children may be afraid of animals and may have had no training in how to treat an animal so that their addition to the home may affect the usual behavior of the pet.
- The licensing social worker should discuss with the family that the history of the child in relation to animals will probably be unknown and close supervision will be needed.
- When the safety of pets is assessed, the licensing social worker should work closely with the foster family to safeguard foster children and to help the family assess the risk themselves.
- The licensing social worker should consider as a part of the assessment how many pets the family has, how large they are and what their potential for causing harm may be. The risk of harm goes up with the number of animals.
- The family should have a plan acceptable to the licensing social worker and the agency for the introduction of the pet to a child and the continued supervision of their interaction.



Here are some general safety tips to consider:

- Never leave a young child unsupervised with an animal. Accidents happen even with the most trustworthy children and pets.
- Never approach any animal, even your own, when he or she is eating, sleeping, chewing on a toy, in its crate or caring for its young.
- Always pet an animal gently, with no pulling or tugging, and never from behind.
- Don't make loud noises or sudden moves when approaching an animal.
- Always ask before approaching an animal you don't know.
- If a pet is stated to be friendly, reach out your hand with the palm facing up and gently move it toward the pet's nose for sniffing. Do not touch the animal's eyes, ears, nose, mouth or genitals.
- Avoid contact with a dog or cat's waste, which can transfer disease.
- Don't let your child touch a dog or stand near him during times of heightened excitement e.g., while the dog is eating, when someone comes to the door or when the dog is barking at a squirrel in the yard or at someone through the window.
- And remember, make sure your children understand that a pet is a living creature to be cared for and respected.

Alcohol in the Home

It's important for parents to monitor what alcohol they have in their home and keep them stored where children can't get to them. When fostering, the expectation is that alcohol be stored and locked away out of reach of children.

Make it clear what the rules of your house are and make sure that your child knows the consequences for not following them.

Here's a possible framework for your set of rules:

- No drinking, under any circumstances, until age 21. It's illegal.
- The place where alcohol is kept in the house is off-limits to kids.
- If wine or other alcohol is kept in the refrigerator, it's meant only to be handled by adults.
- Older siblings will not give younger brothers or sisters alcohol or encourage them to drink.
- Kids are not allowed to attend parties where there is alcohol.
- Set up a system for your child to bail from a peer pressure situation. If your child is at a friend's house where kids are drinking, they can text you a signal like "X," and you'll know to call to say they have to come home asap. That way they have an "out" ("sorry, my mom says I have to come home") without having to confront the alcohol issue or peer pressure directly.
- At family events where alcohol is present, kids are not to sip or consume any of the alcohol. If someone offers them a taste, they should tell you.

Sources

<https://www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/childproof-home#1>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/gun-safety.html>

<https://policies.ncdhhs.gov/divisional/social-services/child-welfare/policy-manuals/modified-manual-1/fhlicensing.pdf>

<https://www.animalleague.org/blog/tips/life-with-pets/kids-and-pet-safety-rules/>

<https://knowwhentohow.org/parental-responsibility/alcohol-in-the-home/>

07

CONCLUSION

Final Note on this Guide

Our hope is that this resource guide will be a great help in successfully guiding you through the various stages of the licensing process to become a foster parent. Remember to lean on your team of professionals and family members when you need to. Don't hesitate to ask questions or speak up for yourself and your loved ones.

This guide was created using state and local laws and ordinances germane to the foster care system. The advice provided is based on professional experiences in the field and the experiences of foster care givers just like you. While the tips and strategies shared here can help any foster parent, remember that each caregiver is different, and each family has its own set of circumstances.

Thank you again for your willingness to do what is necessary to ensure that Wake County children have a safe and secure support system and receive the nurturing and love they so rightly deserve. Thank you for raising hope, fostering dreams and making room for family of all kinds.

“Becoming a foster parent not only changes your life in the most positive way, but also the lives of children and families in need.”

Additional Resources

Foster Care (Permanency Planning) – How To Foster A Child

<https://www.wakegov.com/departments-government/health-human-services/children-and-family-services/foster-care-permanency-planning-adoption-services/how-foster-child>

Shared Parenting

<https://www.wakegov.com/departments-government/health-human-services/children-and-family-services/foster-care-permanency-planning-adoption-services/shared-parenting>



GLOSSARY

Family Assessment – also known as the Home Study is how a trainer and an applicant mutually determine the appropriateness and readiness of the family to foster.

Foster Care (Permanency Planning) – is the temporary care of children who were found to be abused or neglected, with plans to return home when it is safe to do so.

Foster Parents – play a vital role in helping and nurturing a child in need and supporting families during a difficult time.

Mutual Selection Process – where you get to know the foster care system, we get know you and together, we determine if you're a good fit to care for children and assist families in need.

Natural Supports – people who plan to assist you in caring for a foster child.

TIPPS-MAPP Training – Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanence – Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting training is where you will learn more about fostering and Wake County will assess your families' strengths and needs.

Vendors – Foster parents are considered vendors and must be registered in order to receive board payment for a child placed in your home and/or inspection reimbursements.