


<b>Policy Number:</b>	SSA-CW #21-09
<b>Policy Title:</b>	Resource Parent Home Standards
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<b>Approved By:</b>	Denise Conway, LCSW-C  Executive Director Social Services Administration (SSA)
<b>Revision Date (s):</b>	February 28, 2023 Technical enhancement for the IV-E State Plan compliance
<b>Originating Office:</b>	Permanency and Placement Services
<b>Supersedes:</b>	SSA-CW #19-15 Resource Parent Home Standards
<b>Program Affected:</b>	Placement and Permanency - Resource Homes
<b>Related Federal Law</b>	1355.20(a) 472(c)(1)
<b>Related State Laws</b>	Family Law §5-534
<b>COMAR</b>	07.02.25
<b>Title IV-E State Plan Implications?</b>	Yes



## Legal Information & Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to clarify requirements for resource homes in COMAR 07.02.25 and to incorporate additional requirements established by the Children's Bureau's National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards.

The President signed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, Public Law 115-123 into law on February 9, 2018. Public Law 115-123 includes the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) in Division E, Title VII. Section 50731 of the FFPSA directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to "identify reputable model licensing standards with respect to the licensing of foster family homes" (as defined in section 472(c)(1) of the Social Security Act). In response to this directive, the Children's Bureau issued the National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards in February 2019 to go into effect on April 1, 2019.

## Policy

Since 2009, the Department of Human Services, Social Services Administration (DHS/SSA) has utilized the Consortium for Children's Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) as Maryland's chosen home study model. This policy amends and further clarifies the procedures for completing the resource home study process when selecting and studying a family's ability to parent and address the needs of children in placement as it relates to the Children's Bureau's National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards, the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), and the SAFE home study. The resource family home study process, SAFE, provides the Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) with the opportunity to assess a family's potential for resource parenting, while allowing the prospective resource family to assess their own capacity to be resource parents.

For the purposes of this policy the term resource family home (see section 472(c)(1) of the Social Security Act) means the home of an individual or family:

- that is licensed or approved by the State in which it is situated as a resource family home that meets the standards established for the licensing or approval; and
- in which a child in foster care has been placed in the care of an individual, who resides with the child and who has been licensed or approved by the State to be a resource parent that:
  - the State deems capable of adhering to the reasonable and prudent parent standard;
  - provides 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or other caretakers; and
  - provides the care for not more than six children in foster care.

## Procedural Guidance

### Resource Parent Home Eligibility

The below eligibility requirements are set forth by statute, regulation, and federal guidance for the purpose of assessing a resource parent's ability to meet the needs of children in placement. When completing the resource home approval these minimum eligibility requirements must be

documented and verified (See the Documentation and Forms sections of this policy for more information). Several of these requirements are included in the Children's Bureau's National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards. These new requirements are labeled "CB Model Standards" in this policy to highlight new areas the LDSS must now complete as a part of the resource home approval process.

**A. Threshold Requirements**

1. An applicant must be at least 21 years old. **COMAR 07.02.25.04C**. Except in the case of a kinship placement, as defined by **Family Law § 5-534(d)(1)** and **COMAR 07.02.25.02, 07.02.25.10D(2)**, where a relative can be at least 18 years of age.
2. A resource family must have sufficient income and financial stability to provide reasonable living conditions for their own family group without depending upon the reimbursement for basic foster care. **COMAR 07.02.25.04H**. Applicants must have income or resources to make timely payments for shelter, food, utility costs, clothing, and other household expenses prior to the addition of a child or children in foster care. **CB Model Standards**.
3. Applicants must be able to communicate with the child, the LDSS, health care providers, and other service providers. **CB Model Standards; COMAR 07.02.25.05, 07.02.25.08**.
4. At least one applicant in the home must have functional literacy, such as having the ability to read medication labels. **CB Model Standards**.

**B. Physical and Mental Health:** All applicants must have recent (conducted within the prior 12 months) physical exams from a licensed healthcare professional that indicate that the applicants are capable of caring for an additional child or children. **CB Model Standards**.

1. All household members 18 years old or older must undergo an initial physical exam and reexamination at least every 2 years. The initial exam must include analysis of tuberculosis tests or X-rays. A positive purified protein derivative (PPD) test, or X-rays, or both, indicating active tuberculosis requires denial of resource home approval until the household member is certified by the Maryland Department of Health as no longer communicable. Subsequent tuberculosis tests must be conducted in accordance with Maryland Department of Health policy. **COMAR 07.02.25.04D(3)**.
2. All household members must disclose current mental health and/or substance abuse issues and provide information on their physical and mental health history, including any history of drug or alcohol abuse or treatment. **CB Model Standards; COMAR 07.02.25.04D**. The SAFE home study questionnaires and interview process require the applicants to disclose this information.
3. The LDSS may require additional evaluation or documentation of a household

member's physical or mental health to determine the suitability of a home. If a household member has symptoms or a history of physical or mental health problems that may prevent a foster child from receiving proper care or that might be communicable or injurious to the physical or emotional health of a foster child, the LDSS must require the individual to (a) undergo additional medical examinations as specified by the LDSS and (b) provide a written document by the health care professional stating that the health problems pose no threat to the foster child. **COMAR 07.02.25.04D(4).**

4. All children who are household members must be up to date on immunizations consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (ACIP), and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), unless the immunization is contrary to the child's health as documented by a licensed healthcare professional. **CB Model Standards.**
5. All household members who will be caregivers of infants must have an up-to-date pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed healthcare professional. All household members who will be caregivers of infants and children with special medical needs must have an up-to-date annual influenza vaccine consistent with the recommendations of the ACIP, unless the immunization is contrary to the individual's health as documented by a licensed healthcare professional. **CB Model Standards.**

### C. Background Checks

1. As outlined in SSA Policy #11-07, the applicant must agree to and clear the following Maryland State clearances: Judiciary Case Search, Child Support, Maryland Sex Offender Registry, and Motor Vehicle Administration Driving Record report.
2. Before a resource home may be approved, the applicants and all household members 18 years old or older must apply for a State and federal criminal background investigation (including fingerprint-based checks of national crime information databases). **COMAR 07.02.25.04E(1).**
3. Once the resource home is approved, if any new members 18 years old or older join the household, or if any household members become 18 years old, they must apply for a criminal background check within 30 days of their 18th birthday or of moving into the household. **COMAR 07.02.25.04E(2).**
4. The LDSS may not approve or continue to approve as a resource home any home in which an adult in the household:
  - a.) Has a felony conviction for: (i.)  
Child abuse or neglect; (ii.)  
Spousal abuse;
  - (iii.) A crime against a child or children including child pornography; (iv.)  
A crime of violence including rape, sexual assault, or homicide,

but not including other physical assault or battery; or (v.)  
Human trafficking; or

- b.) In the 5 years before the date of the application, has a felony conviction involving:
  - (i.) Physical assault;
  - (ii.) Battery; or
  - (iii.) A drug-related offense. **COMAR 07.02.25.04E(3).**
5. The local director must review charges, investigations, convictions, or findings related to any other crimes of any household member, to determine:
  - a.) The possible effect on the applicant's ability to execute the responsibilities of a resource parent;
  - b.) The ability of the LDSS to achieve its goals in providing services to children in care; and
  - c.) The possible effect on or the safety of children in care.

The LDSS director has the authority to deny, suspend, or revoke resource home approval based on this review. **COMAR 07.02.25.04E(4).**

6. Before a resource home is approved, the LDSS must request information from the state-maintained child abuse and neglect registry of Maryland and any other state in which an applicant or another household member has lived within the last 5 years. For more information about how to check other states' abuse and neglect registries, see the following link:  
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/ChildProtective/AdamWalsh.pdf>.
7. If the review of the records reveals a pending child protective services investigation, a decision may not be made as to the use of the home until the investigation is complete. **COMAR 07.02.25.04E(5).**
8. The LDSS may not approve or continue to approve as a resource home any home in which an individual has an indicated child abuse or neglect finding. An exception may not be made unless approval is given in writing by the local director. **COMAR 07.02.25.04E(6).**

**D. Home Study:** Applicants must complete an agency home study, which is a written comprehensive family assessment which includes information about: foster care, home visits, training, and the assessment. **COMAR 07.02.25.06A-E.**

1. The home study must provide in-depth information about foster care and adoption to prospective resource parents, including the definition and goals of foster care and adoption; differences between foster parenting, parenting one's own child, and adoption of a child; eligibility requirements for resource parents and resource homes; and other matters specified in the regulations. **See COMAR 07.02.25.06D(1)-(18).**
2. The resource home worker must conduct at least three visits at the home of the prospective resource parent. One of the home visits must include a meeting with each resource parent individually, and other visits shall include: the entire family, a discussion of training, and a tour of the home to ensure that it meets applicable safety and other standards. **COMAR 07.02.25.06E(4)(a).**

3. The applicant must provide three personal references that will attest to the capability of the applicant to care for the child. One of the references must be from a relative while the other two must be obtained from a non-relative. The LDSS must conduct a personal interview of two of the references. In addition, if the prospective resource family includes a school-aged child, references from school personnel must be requested. **COMAR 07.02.25.06E(4)(b); CB Model Standards.**
4. The SAFE home study practitioners should utilize SAFE Desk Guide and training knowledge to appropriately evaluate and communicate with the family issues related to their readiness to provide foster care. It is also expected that supervisors provide support and approval of the practitioner's work. Once LDSS Resource Staff have been trained they will be given access to the Consortium for Children's website for up-to-date tools and training ([Consortium for Children](#)).
5. An LDSS must provide written notice to a resource parent applicant of the LDSS's decision to approve or deny the application within 120 days of the date the LDSS accepts the resource parent application. **COMAR 07.02.25.06F(1).**
6. A prospective resource parent aggrieved by the LDSS's decision may file an appeal under COMAR 07.02.25.19.
7. A home study that is referred from another state under the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) must be:
  - a.) Forwarded to the appropriate LDSS within 5 calendar days of receipt at the Maryland ICPC Office;
  - b.) Completed by the LDSS and returned to the Maryland ICPC Office within 45 calendar days of receipt; and
  - c.) Forwarded to the requesting state within 60 calendar days from the date of receipt of the request at the Maryland ICPC Office. **COMAR 07.02.25.06F(3).**

**E. Home Health and Safety—Living Space:** The home must be a house, mobile home, housing unit or apartment occupied by an individual or a family. The home must have: an adequate supply of safe drinking water; a properly operating kitchen with a sink, refrigerator, stove, and oven; at least one toilet, sink, and tub or shower in operating condition; heating and/or cooling as required by the geographic area, consistent with accepted community standards and in safe operating condition; and a working phone or access to a working phone in close walking proximity. **COMAR 07.02.25.04G; CB Model Standards.**

**F. Home Health and Safety—Condition of the Home:** The applicant's home, grounds, and all structures on the grounds of the property must be properly maintained in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition and in a reasonable state of repair within community standards. The interior and exterior must be free from dangerous objects and conditions, and from hazardous materials. The home must meet the following requirements **COMAR 07.02.25.04G; CB Model Standards:**

1. The home must have adequate lighting, ventilation, and proper trash and recycling disposal, if recycling is available.
2. The home must be free from rodents and insect infestation.

3. The home must have proper water heater temperature, which should be less than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
4. Weapons and ammunition (separately) must be stored, locked, unloaded, and inaccessible to children.
5. Pets must be vaccinated in accordance with State, tribal and/or local law.  
**COMAR 07.02.25.04K.**
6. The home must have conditions that prevent the child's access, as appropriate for his or her age and development, to all medications, poisonous materials, cleaning supplies, dangerous household supplies, tools, and any other hazardous items or materials, and alcoholic beverages. **COMAR 07.02.25.04G(3)(c).**
7. If the home is a pre-1950 residential rental property, the home must maintain, and the applicant must provide the LDSS a current certificate of compliance with the lead full risk reduction or lead free standard. If the home was constructed before 1978 and has not been certified lead free under Environmental Article § 6- 804(a)(2)(i), upon initial application, reconsideration, and after any renovation that disturbs painted surfaces in the interior or exterior of the home, the applicant must comply with the additional requirements in COMAR 07.02.25.04G(2)(c)-(f). **See COMAR 07.02.25.04G(2).**
8. Window coverings installed before October 1, 2010, may not have exposed or unsecured cords, bead ropes, or strings. Window coverings installed on or after October 1, 2010, must be cordless. **COMAR 07.02.25.04G(4).**
9. Swimming pools, hot tubs, and spas must meet the following requirements to ensure they are safe and hazard free (and additionally must meet all State, tribal and/or local safety requirements) **COMAR 07.02.25.04M; CB Model Standards:**
  - a.) Swimming pools must have a barrier on all sides, and methods of access through the barrier must be equipped with a safety device, such as a bolt lock. **CB Model Standards.**
  - b.) For in-ground swimming pools, the pool area must be completely enclosed by a fence at least 4 feet high, and the fence gate must be locked when the pool is not in use. **COMAR 07.02.25.04M(4).**
  - c.) For above-ground swimming pools or hot tubs, the pool or fencing around the pool must be at least 4 feet high around the pool or hot tub at all points. Retractable or removable ladders must be locked or stored away from the pool when not in use. Permanent steps must have a locked gate. Doors and gates that access the pool must have locks. The pool, hot tub, or spa must not have climbable objects on the exterior. **COMAR 07.02.25.04M(5).**
  - d.) Swimming pools must be equipped with a life saving device, such as a ring buoy. **CB Model Standards.**

- e.) If the swimming pool cannot be emptied after each use, the pool must have a working pump and filtering system. **CB Model Standards.**
  - f.) Hot tubs and spas must have safety covers that are locked when not in use. **COMAR 07.02.25.04M(5)(g).**
10. If there is waterfront property, a fish or duck pond, or similar body of water at or near the home, the LDSS may require that the body of water or the home be fenced with a locked gate. Factors to consider in requiring a fence and locked gate include:
- a.) Proximity and location of body of water to the resource family's residence;
  - b.) Age, special needs, and swimming ability of the foster children residing with the resource family; and
  - c.) Size of the body of water. **COMAR 07.02.25.04M(6).**
11. A resource parent must have at least one person currently certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) present in the resource home's swimming pool and water recreation area when being used by a foster child. **COMAR 07.02.25.04M(7).**
12. An exception to the swimming pool and water safety requirements may not be made unless the local director gives approval, in writing. For additional information, see **COMAR 07.02.25.04M(8).**

**G. Resource Home Capacity**

The total number of children in foster care in a resource family home must not exceed six, including those of the resource parent, consistent with section 472(c)(1)(A)(ii)(III) of the Social Security Act. The number of foster children cared for in a resource family home may exceed this numerical limitation at the option of the LDSS to allow for:

- 1. A parenting youth in foster care to remain with the child of the parenting youth;
- 2. Siblings to remain together;
- 3. A child with an established meaningful relationship with the family to remain with the family;
- 4. A family with special training or skills to provide care to a child who has a severe disability; **472(c)(1)(B) of the Act**
- 5. A dually approved resource/day care home to care for a sibling group in foster care or daycare; **COMAR 07.02.25.13C (STATE ONLY);** and
- 6. The care of a sibling group or for a short-term (60 to 90 days) emergency placement of a child. However, if there is an infant in the home, or if three of the children are younger than 6 years old, there may not be more than six children in the home. **COMAR 07.02.25.13D. (STATE ONLY)**



- H. Resource Home Sleeping Arrangements:** Applicants must provide a safe sleeping space including sleeping supplies, such as a mattress and linens, for each individual child, as appropriate for the child's needs and age and similar to other household members. Foster parents must not co-sleep or bed-share with infants. **CB Model Standards.**
1. The family living quarters must be adequate to provide space for foster children without disrupting the usual sleeping and living arrangements of the family group. A foster child's sleeping and living quarters must provide for privacy, study at home, and storage of clothes, toys, and personal possessions. **COMAR 07.02.25.04J(1).**
  2. Each child must have an individual bed that may not be stacked in vertical bunk bed formation. The bed must have sufficient cover to protect the occupant from cold conditions. **COMAR 07.02.25.04J(2).**
  3. A responsible adult must sleep within call of each foster child in the home. **COMAR 07.02.25.04J(3).**
  4. Except for children younger than 2 years old, boys and girls may not sleep in the same room. A teenage parent may share a bedroom with their child until the child reaches 2 years old. A child 2 years old or older may not share a bedroom with an adult unless approved by the LDSS. A child may not share a bed with an adult or another child at any time. A child under 2 years old must sleep in a crib or other secure bed which will ensure the child's safety. **COMAR 07.02.25.04J(4).**

- I. Emergency Preparedness, Fire Safety, and Evacuation Plans:** All resource homes must have emergency preparedness, fire safety, and evaluation plans and items in place as appropriate for the home's geographic location. **COMAR 07.02.25.04I; CB Model Standards.**

The applicant's home must meet the following fire safety and emergency planning requirements:

1. The LDSS must have the written approval of the local or State fire officials or an authorized individual, agency, or private organization that a resource home meets the fire safety requirements of the local fire department and any other applicable State or local requirement before approving the resource home.
2. The annual fire safety inspection may be done using a fire safety survey form approved by the local director and provided to the resource parent by the resource home worker.
3. The resource home must have at least one smoke detector and one carbon monoxide detector on each level of occupancy of the home and at least one of each near all sleeping areas. Combination smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are acceptable.
4. The resource home must have at least one operable fire extinguisher that is readily accessible.
5. The resource home must be free of obvious fire hazards, such as defective heating

- equipment or improperly stored flammable materials.
6. The resource home must have a written emergency evacuation plan to be reviewed with the foster child and posted in a prominent place in the home; and maintain a comprehensive list of emergency telephone numbers, including poison control, and post those numbers in a prominent place in the home.
  7. The resource home must maintain first aid supplies. (For information about recommended supplies, see the following link: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/anatomy-of-a-first-aid-kit.html>.)

**J. Transportation:** Applicants must ensure that the family has reliable, legal, and safe transportation. **COMAR 07.02.25.04L; CB Model Standards.**

Reliable transportation includes a properly maintained vehicle or access to reliable public transportation. If a privately-owned vehicle owned by the applicant or the applicant's family or friends is used to transport the child in foster care, legal transportation includes having a valid driving license, insurance, and registration; and safe transportation includes safety restraints as appropriate for the child.

**K. Alternative Supervision:** Resource parents must comply with the requirements for plans for alternative supervision of foster children. **COMAR 07.02.25.05C.**

1. An LDSS may approve a plan for other adult supervision of a foster child while the resource parent is employed or in school. The plan must include: (1) a childcare provider licensed by the Maryland Office of Child Care or by another agency whose licensing standards are in accordance with the Maryland Office of Child Care's regulations or equivalent, and (2) a criminal background check and a child protective services background check of the adult supervisor(s).
2. An LDSS may approve a plan for other adult supervision of a foster child for any other reason (i.e., other than because the resource parent is employed or in school). The resource parent must provide the LDSS with a written plan for such other adult supervision when the resource parent must be absent from the home.
3. Any plan for supervision by someone under 18 years old while the resource parent is away from the home must be approved by the LDSS before the plan is implemented. The plan must be consistent with COMAR 13A.15.08.01.

**L. Pets**

A resource parent who maintains a pet in the home shall ensure that: (1) the foster child is, when age appropriate, educated regarding the care and grooming of the pet; (2) a responsible adult is always present when infants are near a pet potentially dangerous to the infant; (3) the LDSS is notified of any manifestations of allergies that occur during a child placement so that appropriate action can be taken; and (4) as required by State or local ordinance, the pet is appropriately licensed or registered, vaccinated, and leashed. **COMAR 07.02.025.04K.**

**M. Training:** Applicants must complete pre-service training requirements (27 hours) and in-

service training requirements (10 hours per year). **COMAR 07.02.25.14.**

All prospective resource parent applicants must complete a 27-hour PRIDE pre-service training. The initial information meeting may be counted toward the required 27 hours of pre-service training. The PRIDE pre-service training is designed to prepare resource parents to manage such things as the impact of childhood trauma, building positive relationships with the birth family, assisting with visitation, assisting with medical, dental and psychological care, and providing clothing and toiletry needs. The prospective resource parent will develop the competency and skill to problem solve, become a member of a professional team, and practice legal and ethical standards; understand the rights, roles, responsibilities, and expectations of resource parents; and learn about agency structure, policies, and services, as well as relevant laws and regulations. Training must also consist of first aid (including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR, in- person, as recommended by The American Red Cross Association/American Heart Association) and medication administration as offered by the Child Welfare Academy. Attendance is mandatory.

Resource parents must participate in ongoing training to receive instructions to support their parental roles and ensure the parent is up to date with agency requirements. The in- service hour requirement is 10 hours per reconsideration year. Two hours of in-service behavioral management training are to be completed every other year. CPR and First Aid training must be renewed as required. Training must also consist of medication administration as offered by the Child Welfare Academy.

- N. Resource Parent Assurances:** Applicants must agree to comply with their roles and responsibilities as discussed with the LDSS during the home study and training process and once a child is placed in their care. The LDSS must require assurances including:
1. Applicants will not use corporal punishment (including physical hitting or any type of physical punishment inflicted in any manner upon the body) or degrading punishment (including verbal remarks which belittle or ridicule a child or a child's family). Other prohibited punishments include: (a) physical exercises, such as running laps or performing pushups; (b) requiring or using force to require a child to take an uncomfortable position such as squatting, bending, or repeated physical movements; (c) denial of essential program services, such as LDSS planned educational, psychiatric, or psychological services; (d) denial of meals, clothing, bedding, sleep, mail, or visits with a child's family; (e) threatening a child with the loss of the child's placement in the home; (f) bodily shaking; (g) placement in a locked room; and (h) use of mechanical or chemical restraints. **COMAR 07.02.25.20D.**
  2. Applicants will not use any illegal substances, abuse alcohol by consuming it in excess amounts, or abuse legal prescription and/or nonprescription drugs by

consuming them in excess amounts or using them contrary to as indicated. **CB Model Standards.**

3. Applicants and their guests will not smoke in the resource home, in any vehicle used to transport the child, or in the presence of the child in foster care. **COMAR 07.02.25.08.A(16).**
4. Applicants will adhere to the reasonable and prudent parent standard per section 472(c)(1)(A)(ii)(I) of the Social Security Act. **SSA Policy #16-17 Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.**

#### **Alignment with Practice Model and Desired Outcomes**

This policy aligns with the DHS/SSA Integrated Practice Model in that it guides the LDSS to practice using a thorough and thoughtful process that values placing children in family homes that are safe and can nurture the child's well-being and assist with timely and lasting permanency. Resource home staff are provided with the tools they need for direct and clear communication with prospective resource families as they consider the families for resource home approval.

#### **Documentation**

The below forms provide a verification that the home study assessment, eligibility requirements, and communication with prospective resource parents around their assurances have been followed and completed. This information should be documented in CJAMS and, where applicable, supporting documentation should be uploaded into the system.

#### **Forms (Located on DHS Knowledge Base)**

- SAFE Home Study:
  - [SAFE Questionnaire I \(single applicant\)](#)
  - [SAFE Questionnaire II \(couple applicant\)](#)
  - [SAFE Questionnaire II](#)
  - [SAFE home study narrative](#)
- [Adults Medical Form](#)
- [Child's Medical Form](#)
- [Home/Health Inspection](#)
- [Resource Parent Agreement](#)

#### **Related Information**

Children's Bureau, National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards (Feb. 4, 2019), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/im1901.pdf>.