

1. Overview of Department Certified Homes

A child is placed in substitute care to manage child safety, health and well-being and to promote an environment and circumstances where the child's birth family can stabilize, access resources to strengthen parental protective capacities, and in most cases, allow a child to return home. In cases when child or sibling groups are not able to remain in their family home, substitute care provides a safe and nurturing environment while waiting to return home or an alternate permanent plan has been implemented.

Every certified family and each approved potential adoptive resource must understand and demonstrate the characteristics and ability to provide a safe and protective environment, and must understand that the Department's first priority is family reunification. Each applicant must participate in the full Oregon SAFE study process.

In addition potential adoptive resources must also understand the importance of and demonstrate the ability and willingness to sustain parenting responsibilities for a child until the child reaches adulthood. A person who approaches the Department to adopt a child is referred to as a "potential adoptive resource." The applicant completes a home study process, and, at the completion of that process Department staff made a decision whether or not to approve the applicant as a potential adoptive resource. The person becomes certified when he or she is selected as an adoptive resource for a child, prior to the time the child is placed in the home, and remains certified until the adoption is finalized.

A. Certification/Adoption Worker Activities

Certification and management of foster homes and relative homes and approval of potential adoptive resources includes:

- Recruitment of potential providers, including relative search and engagement.
- Assessment of applicants through the Oregon SAFE home study process.
- Training provided to all applicants.
- Retention of foster parents.
- Confirmation of safe environments through ongoing assessment of the providers.
- Providing support to safe, nurturing and caring substitute care givers.
- When appropriate, issuing certification actions.

- For some adoption workers, supervision of a child's placement in an adoptive home is required. The person responsible for this function is determined by the local district and/or branch office.

B. Preferences for Certification

When it is determined, that a child or sibling group are unsafe in their own home, there are a number of placement options that are certified by the Department.

The Department is required by Oregon and federal law to give preference to a child's relatives, and required by administrative rule to give preference:

- First to relatives, as defined in Oregon Administrative Rules. There are four categories in which a person might be defined as a relative: A person related to the child or young adult through a parent, including a putative father. This includes:
 1. Blood relatives that have prefixes of grand, great, or great-great.
 2. Half blood relatives with prefixes of grand, great, or great-great
 3. Siblings, including siblings that are related through a putative father
 4. Aunts/Uncles
 5. Nieces/nephews
 6. First Cousins and First Cousins once-removed (a parent's cousin)
 7. The spouses of any of the above-listed relatives
 8. The ex-spouses of any of the those persons listed in 1. – 6. if the child or young adult had a relationship with the child PRIOR to entering substitute care.
- A person related to the child but not always through the child's parent. This includes:
 1. A person defined as a relative by the child's tribe if the child is an Indian child under the ICWA or is in the legal custody of the tribe.
 2. A person defined as a relative of a refugee child.
 3. A child's step parent or former step parent if the child had a relationship to the former stepparent prior to coming into substitute care.
 4. The registered domestic partner or former registered domestic partner of the child's parent if the child had a relationship with the former registered domestic partner prior to coming into substitute care.
 5. The adoptive parent of a child's sibling.
 6. The unrelated legal or biological parent of a child's half sibling if that half sibling is living with the unrelated parent.

- Kin, or distantly related persons. This includes those persons who the family or child identifies, or the person self-identifies, as being related to the child by blood, adoption, or marriage but to a degree other than specified in the first bullet.
- Kith, or a person not related to the child by blood or through legal means but are identified by the child or the family and are considered by the child or child's family as a relative. These people must have an emotionally significant relationship with the child or the family and are identified by the child or the family. There is no comprehensive list of such persons but may include Godparents, neighbors, close family friends, spiritual advisors, or congregation members, and others identified by the child or family. These are the people who by the family's, parent's, or child's value system, culture, and beliefs are identified as family members.
- Then to a person who has a caregiver relationship with the child. Persons with a caregiver relationship are defined by Oregon Revised Statute. These are persons who:
 1. Have had physical custody of the child
 2. The child must have depended upon the relationship to meet the child's needs.
 3. Lived in the same household as the child for specific periods of time listed below.
 4. This relationship must have existed:
 - a. For at least 12 months immediately preceding the initiation of a dependency proceeding;
 - b. For at least 6 months during a dependency proceeding, if that person is a relative or;
 - c. For half the child's life if the child is less than 6 months of age.
 5. This may include an unrelated foster parent only when the relationship has continued for at least 12 months.
- Then to an unrelated person or foster parent.
- Sometimes relatives or other people who are known to the child are not available or appropriate and cannot be certified by the department.
- It is important to recruit, train, certify and retain a pool of qualified foster parents to provide safe and protective care for children who are placed in the department's care and custody.

C. Placement Matching

- Regardless of the order of preference in the selection of a placement resource, ensuring that the child's needs for safety, health, well-being, and permanency are met while in substitute care takes priority. When determining whether a particular certified family can meet these needs, follow the placement matching procedures in Chapter 4, Section 2D: Match the child's needs with a substitute caregiver's ability.

D. Working with Developmental Disabilities

- When the needs of a child/young adult a developmental disability exceeds the level of care provided in regular foster homes, consider whether other types of placement would be appropriate.
 1. Child DD homes that are licensed by Developmental Disability Services can be used when:
 - a. The child receives DD services through DDS and is placed in a DDS-licensed child foster home or child group home in conjunction with the DDS caseworker.
 - b. The child does not receive DD services through DDS but a DDS-licensed home has agreed to accept placement of the child along with the Child Welfare payment and an inter-program placement approval form has been completed and signed by both the DDS representative and Child Welfare representative. See Chapter 9, Section 4 for the agreement.
 2. Adult DD homes that are licensed by Developmental Disability Services can be used when:
 - a. The young adult is 18 years of age or older and is receiving Adult DD services through DDS and is placed in a DDS-licensed foster home or group home by the adult DD case worker.
 - b. A child who will be eligible for Adult DD services on his/her 18th birthday, whose placement needs will best be met by the Child Welfare-certified foster home that she/he is currently in, and whose placement will be determined and paid for by Adult DD services can remain in the Child Welfare-certified home. This requires a Child Welfare Program Manager approval and Adult DD licensing approval of a variance if the certified provider intends to continue providing foster care to children in the Department's custody while also providing an Adult DD placement for the young adult. Steps to initiate this process should be taken well in advance of the child's 18th birthday.