Office of Children and Family Services

CONNECTIONS Bulletin

September 30, 2019

How to Properly Document a Foster/ Adoptive Home Closure and Access the Closure Report

A foster home may close at any point throughout the life cycle of the home. Home closure reasons vary, but often occur at key points when the home and its applicants are being assessed/reassessed, such as the applicant stage or during recertification/re-approval. When opening a foster home the prior closure reports for that home must be viewed.

There are several common home closure reasons, including the following:

- The prospective or certified/approved foster parents choose to discontinue the application process or to close an approved/certified home due to personal reasons.
- An application expires (at 6 months).
- The Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) Database Check, Staff Exclusion List (SEL), Criminal History Records Check (CHRC) (Finger Prints) or Medical results make the foster parent ineligible to be a foster parent or are of concern for the person's ability to care for or keep a foster child safe.
- The Authorizing Agency determines that there is no further need for the foster home.
- The Agency is closing.

Your decision to close a foster home must be based on OCFS policies and regulations. The reasons must be clearly documented in your contact notes and in the Closure Report.

Closure Circumstances

Revocation of a Certificate or Approval Letter

For a revocation of a Certificate or Approval Letter, your decision to close the foster home must be based upon New York State regulations and must be documented clearly in the External Foster Home Closure Report.

The authorizing agency must advise the foster parents before the expiration date of the certificate or letter of approval that the agency does not plan to renew the certificate or approval. The certificate or letter of approval can be revoked prior to the expiration date if a situation arises. A notification letter expressing the intent to close the home must be sent to the foster or adoptive parents at least twenty (20) days prior to closing the home. A letter indicating the decision to remove foster children from the home must be sent at least ten (10) days prior to closing the home (18 NYCRR §433.11). The only exception is in situations where the immediate health and safety of a foster child is at risk. In these circumstances no advance notice is required to remove the child. Each agency must generate and print its own letters of notification. *These tasks are not supported by CONNECTIONS.*

Let's take a closer look at two home closure circumstances that commonly occur when a home is in **Applicant** status, but could happen at any point in the life cycle of a foster home:

- Home Closure due to the results of the SCR Database Check; and
- Home Closure due to CHRC and/or "Search and Retain" Results.

Home Closure Due to the Results of the SCR Database Check

An SCR Database Check must be conducted when you initially prepare a foster home for certification or approval, and when any person age 18 and over moves into the home (e.g., a parent of a foster parent or an adult child).

The SCR Database Check may reveal that a person has been an indicated subject in a report of abuse or maltreatment. If this happens, you need to follow regulatory procedures to revoke a certification or approval letter, or deny an application.

Home Closure Due to CHRC Results

The CHRC or "Search and Retain" function may reveal that a prospective or certified/approved foster parent has been convicted of one or more felony crimes.

An authorizing agency must use the information it receives from OCFS to determine whether or not to certify or approve a foster home, or whether or not revoke a certificate or approval letter.

If an authorizing agency decides to revoke a certification or approval letter due to the results of a CHRC or "Search and Retain," certain procedures need to be followed. The family must be given written statement identifying the charge or conviction and stating the reason(s) for home closure. The agency must send the letter within seven days of learning of the charge or conviction (18 NYCRR §443.8(c)).

As the caseworker responsible for the supervision of a foster home in this situation, you must conduct a safety assessment of the conditions in the household that determines:

- whether or not the subject of the charge or conviction resides in the household;
- the extent of that person's contact with the foster children; and
- the status, date and nature of the criminal charge or conviction [18 NYCRR §443.8 (g)(1)].

Document the Safety Assessment in the FRS using the **Household Member Detail** tab. Based upon the results of the safety assessment, take all appropriate steps necessary to protect the health and safety of the foster child or children in the home. This includes removal, when appropriate. Remaining actions should be documented in External Foster Home Closure Report and in your contact notes and the Closure Report (in CONNECTIONS). If removal of the foster child from the certificate or approval letter does occur, the foster child(ren) must be removed [18 NYCRR §443.8(g)(2)(3)].

FAD Denial/Revocation Letter

Full certification and approval of foster and adoptive homes can be denied when the results of the CHRC indicate that placement in the home is not in the best interest of a foster child (see 18 NYCRR 443.8 and 9OCFS ADM 4 for further clarification).

If a home certification/approval or recertification/re-approval is denied due to the results of the CHRC, the caseworker needs to provide notification of the denial in writing to the applicant(s).

The **FAD Denial/Revocation Letter** (available in English and Spanish) is used to notify prospective or existing foster or adoptive parents whose home review has indicated a criminal history record. The letter states the reason(s) for denial and the process available for the review and/or challenge of the criminal history records.

The letter contains the following fields, which are pre-filled when the letter is generated:

- **Date** (system date on which the letter was generated)
- **Name** (the foster parents who are being denied)
- **Re:** (person found with the criminal record)
- **DOB** (birth date of the individual in the **Re:** field)
- **NYSID No**. (NYS Identification number from DCJS)
- **Supervisor**
- **Agency Representative** (Primary Worker)
- **Telephone** (Primary Worker's telephone number)

Closure Reasons in CONNECTIONS

Closure Reasons in CONNECTIONS

- Agency Closing
- Applicant Does Not Permit Adoption Home Study
- Applicant Physically or Emotionally incapable of caring for a Adopted Child(ren)
- Approval not in Best Interest of Child(ren) Awaiting Adoption
- Criminal History - Discretionary Disqualifier
- Criminal History - Presumptive Disqualifier
- Family Violence
- Health & Safety
- Home No Longer meets Child's Needs
- Non-Compliance with Non-Licensing Regulations
- Type of Home Not Needed
- Unacceptable Medical Report
- Adoption Disruption
- Adoption Finalized
- Death
- Difference Over Policy/ Procedures/Roles
- Difference Over Reimbursement Rates
- Family Circumstances/Marital Problems
- Family Illness/Health Problems
- Family Moved
- Family Request
- Foster Child Behavior
- Foster Child Physical/Mental Disabilities
- Insufficient Services for Foster Child(ren)
- Insufficient Support for Foster Family
- Problems with Caseworker or Agency
- Problems with Foster Child's Family
- Relative Assumed Custody/Guardianship
- Duplicate Home
- Merger
- Other
- Transferred to Another Licensing Agency

[1] If a Criminal History closure reason is selected, the Closure Type field is set automatically to "Involuntary" and the Recommend Reopening field defaults to "Do Not Recommend". Both fields can be manually altered, if necessary. Also, upon Saving and Submitting these specific closure reasons, a message box displays reminding you that a "Notice of Denial/Revocation of certification/approval due to fingerprinting results" must be sent to the foster parents.

[2] These closure reasons do not apply to Foster Homes and should not be used at the time.

[3] If a Duplicate Reason closure reason is selected, the Closure Type field is system populated with "Involuntary" and the Recommend Reopening field defaults to "Do Not Recommend". Both fields are non-modifiable.

The Close Home Task in CONNECTIONS

The *Task* List of every foster home contains the **Close Home** task. This task may be used at any point in the life cycle of the foster home, from the applicant to adoptive home to document a home closure in CONNECTIONS. A home closed in CONNECTIONS cannot reopen in the next business day.

Selecting the **Close Home** task and clicking on the **New** button, opens the *Close Home* window. This window must be completed and then **Saved and Submitted** for supervisory approval.

Closure Type

In the *Close Home* window you must select a **Closure Type** of either "Voluntary" or "Involuntary" to categorize why the foster home is closing. *Involuntary* closure indicates that the home is being closed at the initiation of the authorizing agency. *Voluntary* closure indicates that the foster or adoptive parents are initiating the home closing.

Recommend Re-Opening

This field has two options. You may choose **Recommend** or **Do Not Recommend**. This decision should be made in advance of completing this window, and with the support of your supervisor. **The new home study needs to reflect how the "do not recommend" situation that caused the closure has been resolved.**

Accessing the Closure Report in CONNECTIONS

Office of Children and Family Services

CONNECTIONS Tip Sheet
Accessing the FAD Closure Report June 2019

When a worker closes a Foster and Adoptive (FAD) Home, they complete a Closure Report as part of the closing process. This report contains valuable information which must be reviewed if the family again applies to become Foster Parents. The path for accessing information on a closed home differs, depending on whether the home is applying to the same or different district or agency. This tip sheet provides home finders information on accessing the FAD Closure Report in CONNECTIONS.

There are a number of reasons why a closed foster home may need to be reopened:

- An individual who inquires about becoming a foster parent lives in a home with a history of providing foster care in the past. Then:
- A foster parent in your agency has taken a hiatus due to family circumstances and is ready to provide care again. The foster home/agw was closed by CONNECTIONS when the certification or approval period expired.
- A foster home was closed in CONNECTIONS due to system error or administrative reasons.

Regulations require that a closed home be reopened in accordance with NYS regulatory requirements [18 NYCRR 443.2(b,1(9) and 443.10(b)] which require all reopenings of foster homes that have ceased to be treated as requests for a new certification or approval. A new application, home study, and training are required prior to reopening the home has been closed. The only exception to this is when a reopening occurs for administrative reasons. I.e., when the home should not have been closed initially but because it was, a reopening is necessary.

Finding Information on a Closed Home

Finding information on a closed foster home begins with a Foster/Adoptive Home Search.

1. From the Search/Maintain menu, select **F/A Home**.
2. On the resulting F/A Home Search window, click the **Clear** button to clear the Agency ID field and perform a statewide search.

Leaving the Agency ID field pre-filled will search only your own agency/district.

Search/Maintain
Foster Home Search
Agency ID
Clear
Search
F/A Home
Foster Home Search
Adoptive Home Search
Foster Home Search
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