



Office of Children and Family Services

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Administrative Directive

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To:	Local Departments of Social Services Commissioners Voluntary Authorized Agencies Executive Directors
Issuing Division/Office:	Division of Child Welfare and Community Services
Date:	R1: June 10, 2024. Original publication date: April 16, 2018
Subject:	Foster/Adoptive Home Certification or Approval Process
Suggested Distribution:	Social Services Directors Child Welfare Supervisors Foster Care Supervisors Foster Care Home Finders CONNECTIONS Implementation Coordinators
Contact Person(s):	Section VI.
Attachments:	<i>Certification/Approval Process for Foster/Adoptive Parent(s) (OCFS-5183) Foster-Adoptive Parent Certification-Approval Process (Pub-5183i)</i> <i>Clearance Chart for Certified or Approved Foster Homes (Pub-5183ii)</i> <i>Self-Assessment (OCFS-5183A)</i> <i>Foster-Adoptive Parent Application (OCFS-5183B)</i> <i>Application to Adopt (OCFS-5183C)</i> <i>Foster-Adoptive Applicant Medical Report (OCFS-5183D)</i> <i>Safety Review Form (OCFS-5183E)</i> <i>Household Composition and Relationships (OCFS-5183F)</i> <i>Sample Genogram Template (OCFS-5183G)</i> <i>Personal References (OCFS-5183H)</i> <i>Resource Characteristics (OCFS-5183I)</i> <i>Foster Parent Agreement With Authorized Agency (OCFS-5183J)</i>

Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	NYS Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
17-OCFS-ADM-05		18 NYCRR Part 443 18 NYCRR 443.2(c)(8)	Section 378-a of the SSL	CONNECTIONS Step-by-Step Guide: Training for FAD Caseworkers The Modernization of the CONNECTIONS Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD) Stage Job Aid Home Finding Practice Guide	

R1: This Administrative Directive (ADM) is being revised and reissued on June 10, 2024, to:

- align with regulatory changes effective January 24, 2024, amending 18 NYCRR 443.2, which allows the use of information contained in prior approved adoptive home studies to assist with the subsequent certification or approval of foster parents;
- list the current regulatory exceptions that apply to certified and approved foster homes;
- reflect that National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents (NTDC) will be the required foster parent training curriculum, effective January 1, 2025; and,
- reflect that the *Final Assessment and Determination* (OCFS-5183K) is now in CONNECTIONS.

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Directive (ADM) is to release and outline the new tools that must be used to support the foster/adoptive home certification and approval process. In New York State, an applicant(s) can be certified or approved as a foster parent.¹ An applicant(s) may also be a concurrently certified or approved foster parent and an approved adoptive parent.² For purposes of this ADM, the term “foster home” and “foster parent” refers to both options. This ADM also reminds local departments of social services (LDSSs) and voluntary authorized agencies (VAs)³ of the regulatory requirements regarding certifying and approving foster homes.

II. Background

New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations outline the requirements for LDSSs and VAs that operate family foster boarding home programs, as well as the process a person(s) must follow when becoming a certified or approved foster parent.⁴ In response to a request from LDSSs

¹ 18 NYCRR 443.2.

² 18 NYCRR 443.9.

³ Throughout this ADM, the terms LDSS and/or VA refer to the agency that is certifying or approving the foster home.

⁴ 18 NYCRR Part 443.

and VAs for a standardized statewide foster home certification and approval process, OCFS convened a workgroup of multiple stakeholders to obtain their perspectives on the process, identify potential barriers, and gather ideas for creating a thorough and standardized process. During this workgroup, several tools were developed to assist LDSSs and VAs in the certification and approval of foster homes.

III. Program Implications

The tools created to support foster home certification and approval have been incorporated into the existing foster home certification and approval process and will be required within specific time frames. This section will provide general information about each step in the foster home certification and approval process and will also discuss the purpose of each tool. Section IV of this release will provide specific dates, times, and documentation requirements for each step in the foster home certification and approval process.

All LDSSs and VAs must follow the process and utilize the tools released with this ADM for all applicant(s) who express interest in becoming a foster parent(s) after the issuance of this ADM. All applicant(s) whose homes were in inquiry status prior to the issuance of this ADM were allowed to continue in the LDSSs or VAs existing certification or approval process until the end of July 2018. The process for completing recertifications and reapprovals (known as “reauthorization” in CONNECTIONS) has not been changed.

Response to Applicant’s Inquiry⁵

Upon receiving an inquiry from a person(s) who is interested in becoming a foster parent, the LDSS or VA must respond in writing to the inquiring person within 10 days of the initial contact and offer an individual appointment to the person(s) or invite them to a group orientation session on becoming a certified or approved foster parent.

Initial Interview or Orientation⁶

At the initial interview or orientation, the LDSS or VA must provide the person(s) interested in becoming a foster parent(s) with information about the certification or approval⁷ process. This includes providing an overview of the process of children coming into foster care, the role of the LDSS or VA in the process, the categories of children that are served, and the requirements of the certification or approval process.

The LDSS or VA must explain to the person(s) that each applicant(s) and each person(s) 18 years of age or older who resides in the home of the applicant(s) must have the following:

- Fingerprinting for the purposes of a national (FBI) and a New York State criminal history records check.^{8,9}
- New York Statewide Central Register (SCR) database check.
- Where applicable, a check of the child abuse and maltreatment registry of any other state where the applicant(s) or other adult(s) who reside in the applicant’s home have resided within the last five years prior to the application for certification or approval.

⁵ 18 NYCRR 443.2 (b).

⁶ 18 NYCRR 443.2 (b).

⁷ 18 NYCRR 443.1 (i): Only relatives within the second or third degree to the parent(s) or stepparent(s) of the foster child through blood or marriage can become approved foster parents.

⁸ This includes a check of the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). See 16-OCFS-ADM-20.

⁹ See Pub-5183 Clearance Chart for Certified or Approved Foster Homes.

- Staff Exclusion List (SEL) Check

Self-Assessment (OCFS-5183A)

The *Self-Assessment* form (OCFS-5183A) includes a series of questions designed to have applicants and their families, if applicable, consider why they want to become foster parents, stimulate conversation about the various aspects of the process, and provide an opportunity for the family to assess the potential impact that becoming foster parents would have on their lives. The applicants and any children in the home (dependent on the child's age and developmental appropriateness) should complete the *Self-Assessment* form together as a family. *Note: It is unlikely that every person in the family will answer each question the same way, so multiple answers can be listed for each question. If the question is not applicable to the applicant(s) and their family, "N/A" may be written in the space provided.*

After the applicant(s) complete the *Self-Assessment* form, the home finder and the family should discuss and identify together which level of readiness the family is at, and what needs to be done to help support the family.

There are three levels of family readiness:

1. Early Stages
The family has some understanding about what fostering and/or adopting is but needs more information and discussion about the impact on their family.
2. Minimal Supports Needed
The family needs some support and/or more information from the LDSS or VA on what the experience of fostering and/or adopting a child will be like and the impact on their family. The family is willing and able to learn.
3. Acceptable
The family is prepared and knowledgeable about the experience of fostering and/or adopting a child and the impact on their family.

The *Self-Assessment* form should be completed at least once in the process after the applicant(s) have attended the initial interview or orientation. However, it is recommended that it be completed as needed throughout the process as the applicant's family circumstances and understanding of being a foster parent(s) evolve. Each time the *Self-Assessment* form is reviewed, and the level of family readiness is assessed, the applicant(s), the home finder, and the home finder's supervisor must sign the completed form.

Application (OCFS-5183B)¹⁰

The *Foster-Adoptive Parent Application* (OCFS-5183B) was created to provide a uniform application that is used by all LDSSs and VAs throughout New York State. OCFS-5183B replaces any existing applications used by LDSSs and VAs for certification or approval of foster homes. Each applicant is required to independently complete the OCFS-5183B.

The OCFS-5183B is used to elicit information about the applicant(s), including the following.

- Basic demographic information
- Current and past employment information
- Household composition
- Foster/Adoptive parenting experience
- Transportation
- References
- Education history

¹⁰ 18 NYCRR 443.2(b)(11&12).

- Financial information

The OCFS-5183B also includes a section requiring each applicant(s) to submit a sworn statement indicating whether, to the best of the applicant's knowledge, the applicant or any other person over the age of 18 currently residing in the home has ever been convicted of a crime in New York State or in any other jurisdiction.¹¹

If the applicant is applying for foster care and adoption, the applicant must also complete the *Application to Adopt* (OCFS-5183C). The *Application to Adopt* is a list of characteristics of children that a family is willing and able to adopt.

As part of the application process, the LDSS and VA must also collect information on the applicant's health, physical functioning, and physical facilities of the prospective foster home. This information is collected in the *Foster-Adoptive Medical Report* (OCFS-5183D) and the *Safety Review* form (OCFS-5183E).

The *Foster-Adoptive Applicant Medical Report* (OCFS-5183D) is an attestation of the applicant's medical status that is filled out by a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner or other licensed and qualified health care practitioner.¹² One medical report must be completed for each applicant.

The *Safety Review Form* (OCFS-5183E) is a form that is completed by the LDSS or VA during an inspection of the applicant's physical residence. This form must also be completed if there is a significant structural or physical change to the home and/or the applicant moves.

Verification of the applicant's employment references is also done as part of the application. This is done by contacting the applicant's employment references listed on the applicant's application.

The LDSS or VA must accept or deny an application for home study. If the LDSS or VA denies the application, the LDSS or VA must provide the applicant with a written statement setting forth its reason(s) for the denial, including a statement indicating whether the denial was based in whole or in part on the existence of an indicated report. If the denial is based in whole or in part on the existence of an indicated CPS report that names the applicant as a subject, the notice of denial must also inform the applicant of their fair hearing rights as set forth in 18 NYCRR 443.2(b)(9).

Home Study^{13,14}

LDSSs and VAs must complete a home study within four months after acceptance of an application unless delays occur as a result of circumstances beyond the control of the agency or unless the schedule for interviews with the applicant is changed by mutual consent of the applicant and the agency representative.¹⁵ The home study consists of multiple components, which are detailed in this section. The home study is completed concurrently with an OCFS-approved training program. Effective January 1, 2025, the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents (NTDC) must be used in place of Group Preparation and Selection II/Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (GPS II/MAPP) and associated curriculums. The expectation is that all agencies have at least one staff member trained in NTDC prior to January 1, 2025, to adhere to the deadline. Authorized agencies must begin preparing for this transition in time for foster parents taking MAPP training to have

¹¹ 18 NYCRR 443.2(b)(13)(iv).

¹² 18 NYCRR 443.2(c)(1)(ii).

¹³ 18 NYCRR 443.2(c).

¹⁴ Note: All hard copies of the home study and related background check materials must be kept in the applicant's file.

¹⁵ 18 NYCRR 443.2(c).

completed such training prior to January 1, 2025. MAPP will be replaced and not accepted as a method of foster parent training after this date.

- The *Household Composition and Relationships* form (OCFS-5183F) is divided into five sections, and it is to be completed by the home finder with the applicant(s) as addressed below:
 - Partner Relationship: completed by home finder individually with each adult applicant.
 - Family: completed by the home finder with each household.
 - Parenting: completed separately by the home finder with each applicant individually.
 - Child Interview: one form completed for each household member under the age of 18, depending on the child’s developmental stage. The family, home finder, and supervisor will determine whether the child will participate and whether the applicant(s) should be present. If a decision is made for a child not to participate, the reason must be explained on the form.
 - Psychosocial Interview: to be completed by home finder with each adult applicant.
 - The purpose of the psychosocial interview is to explore the applicant’s history and current psychological/social factors and their impact on the capacity, willingness, and readiness to safely care for a child in foster care, and to develop support plans where applicable.
 - The psychosocial interview is divided into three sections: “Personal History,” “Coping Skills and Stress Management,” and “Behavioral Health.” The form provides sample questions and guidance to lead the conversations; however, the home finder needs to use their engagement and assessment skills to explore each section with the applicant(s) independently.
- A genogram should also be completed during the psychosocial interview. A genogram is a multigenerational diagram of the applicant’s family and social network. Symbols are linked with lines to depict relationships. A *Sample Genogram Template* (OCFS- 5183G) is provided with this ADM for home finders to use as a reference; however, any genogram template can be used for this process.
- *Personal References* (OCFS-5183H)¹⁶: A form is sent to each of the applicant’s three personal references to fill out. The forms must be returned directly to the home finder.
- SCR, out-of-state SCR (where applicable), SEL, and FBI and New York State criminal history record check results for the applicant(s) and any person(s) 18 years of age or older residing in the home of the applicant(s).¹⁷

Resource Characteristics (OCFS-5183I)

The fully certified or approved foster parent(s) must complete the OCFS-5183I, *Resource Characteristics*. The OCFS-5183I is a list of characteristics of children who may need a foster care/adoption placement. Each family must complete one by checking “yes” or “no” by each child characteristic that their family is willing and able to accommodate.

¹⁶ 18 NYCRR 443.2(c)(1)(v).

¹⁷ See Pub.5183, *Clearance Chart for Certified or Approved Foster Homes*.

Foster Parent Agreement With Authorized Agency (OCFS-5183J)¹⁸

Once applicant(s) successfully complete all necessary requirements to become certified or approved foster parent(s), the LDSS or VA must review the components in OCFS-5183J, *Foster Parent Agreement*, with the applicant(s). Only when the applicant(s) have agreed to the components, and signed OCFS-5183J, can they be fully certified or approved.

Final Assessment and Determination (OCFS-5183K)

At the completion of the applicant's home study, the LDSSs and VAs must complete a *Final Assessment and Determination* (OCFS-5183K). The purpose of the *Final Assessment and Determination* is for the worker to apply their critical thinking skills to assess all the information they have received and to summarize and synthesize where the applicant has strengths and needs.

The *Final Assessment and Determination* is divided into five sections as follows:

- Section I contains a list of regulatory requirements that must be completed during the home study process for each applicant. The home finder must select "yes" if the requirement is satisfied or "no" if it is not. There is also a space for the home finder to explain the decision. The regulatory requirements listed in the Section I only list the regulatory requirements needed for the home study process and do not list every regulatory requirement that must be satisfied in order for the home to be certified or approved.
- Section II is an assessment of the home study components. The home finder takes the information gathered in the *Household Composition and Relationships* form (OCFS-5183F) and summarizes each area assessed as it impacts the applicant(s) ability for foster and/or adopt. The home finder must list strengths, considerations, and supports needed for each section.
- Section III is only completed if there are changes made to an existing foster parents' certification or approval prior to the annual recertification or reapproval of the home. This is referred to as an "Interim Home Study" in CONNECTIONS.
- Section IV is the space where the agency records the determination on whether to approve or not approve the application. The home finder must consider all regulatory standards set forth in 18 NYCRR Part 443 necessary to approve an application when making a final decision on whether the home can be certified or approved, which also include all components of the application and home study process. This is a decision that must be made by the home finder and the home finder's supervisor.
 - If an LDSS or VA decides to discontinue a home study or denies certification or approval upon completion of the home study, it must advise the applicant in writing of the reasons for the agency's decision and must offer an interview to discuss the decision.^[1]
- The *Final Assessment and Determination* (OCFS-5183K) must be completed in CONNECTIONS. The home finder must print out the OCFS-5183K and provide the family the opportunity to comment, if they choose, within Section V. The applicant(s), home finder and supervisor must also sign and date the *Final Assessment and Determination*. The signed copy must be maintained in the foster parents file and a copy must be provided to the foster parent.

¹⁸ 18 NYCRR 443.3(b).

Certificate or Letter of Approval¹⁹

Upon the successful completion of the certification or approval process, the LDSS or VA prints out a certificate or letter of approval from CONNECTIONS and provides it to the applicant(s).

Foster Parent Applicants With Prior Approved Adoptive Home Studies

To increase efficiency, reduce duplication, and improve comprehensiveness, the LDSS or VA may use timely and relevant information from a prior approved adoptive home study to complete the foster care home study. Information from a prior adoptive home study does not automatically satisfy the requirements for a foster family boarding home study. OCFS regulation 18 NYCRR 443.2(c)(8) requires that LDSSs and VAs that use information from a prior approved adoptive home study must do so by taking the following steps:

- Review the information about the family obtained in the previous adoptive home study that is available to the LDSS or VA staff conducting the foster family boarding home study.
- Identify any information that does not meet the standards for certification or approval of the foster parent applicant.
- Identify information that is lacking or that is no longer accurate.
- Identify areas of family functioning that need further exploration or strengthening.
- Clarify for the applicant the differences between adoption and foster care including those related to subsidies.
- Not repeat information gathering activities regarding information already available.
- Conduct a foster family boarding home study process that focuses on areas needing further exploration or strengthening.

Additionally, as part of the foster home study process the LDSS or VA must obtain additional or updated information. This includes taking the following steps, for the applicant and each person aged 18 and over who resides in the home of the applicant:

- Conduct a check of the New York Statewide Central Register (SCR) database.
- If the applicant or other person over the age of 18 who resides in the home of the applicant resided in another state at any time during the five years preceding the application made pursuant to 18 NYCRR 443.2, inquire of the applicable child welfare agency in each such state for child abuse and maltreatment information maintained by that state's child abuse and maltreatment registry.
- Inquire of the Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs whether an applicant or other person over the age of 18 who resides in the home of the applicant is listed on the register of substantiated category one cases of abuse or neglect maintained by the Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs.

The LDSS or VA must conduct a state criminal history record check through the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) as follows:

- Where an applicant applies for certification or approval as a foster parent to the **same** LDSS or VA that previously approved the applicant as an adoptive parent

¹⁹ 18 NYCRR 443.3(f).

- the LDSS or VA must review the state criminal history clearance results regarding the applicant and any other adult residing in the home of the applicant that was completed as part of the prior adoptive approval application, and any notice of subsequent arrests received from OCFS or DCJS based on search and retain status; and,
- the LDSS or VA must conduct a state criminal history clearance for any other adult residing in the home of the applicant for certification or approval as a foster parent who did not previously have a state criminal history record check completed where the results were sent to the LDSS or VA.
- Where the applicant for certification or approval as a foster parent applies to a LDSS or VA **other** than the LDSS or VA that approved the applicant as an adoptive parent, a new state criminal history record check must be completed through DCJS for the applicant and any other adult residing in the home of the applicant.
- National criminal history record checks performed through the FBI are not on a search and retain basis; therefore, the LDSS or VA must require that the applicant and all other adults residing in the home of the applicant have a new FBI criminal history record check.

The LDSS or VA must complete all OCFS-5183 templates to certify or approve the foster parent. This is the case even if the prior adoptive home study was completed on OCFS-5183 templates, OCFS-5200²⁰ templates, or documented in another way. The information in the prior adoptive home study should be used to help with this process, after reviewing such information with the applicant and verifying accuracy including through the collection of supporting documentation.

IV. Required Actions

All LDSSs and VAs must follow the process and utilize the tools released with this ADM for all applicant(s) who express interest in becoming a foster parent(s) after the issuance of this ADM.

At this time, the process for completing recertifications and reapprovals (“reauthorizations”) has not been changed.

1. Response to an Applicant’s Inquiry

Upon receiving an inquiry from an individual who is interested in becoming a foster/adoptive parent, the LDSS or VA must respond in writing within 10 days of the initial contact and offer an individual appointment or invite the applicant to a group orientation session on becoming a certified or approved foster parent.²¹

After responding to an applicant’s inquiry, the LDSS or VA must

- open the “Foster and Adoption Development (FAD) home” in “Inquiry Status” in CONNECTIONS,
- review the CONNECTIONS history to determine if applicant(s) previously had foster home certification or approval,²² and

²⁰ 21-OCFS-ADM-13.

²¹ 18 NYCRR 443.2(b).

²² 17-OCFS-ADM-05 - Use of the “Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD) Stage” in CONNECTIONS.

- record corresponding dates in the FAD “Checklist.”

2. **Orientation or Individual Appointment**

At the orientation or individual interview, the LDSS or VA must provide the prospective foster/adoptive parent applicant with information on becoming a foster parent, including the following forms:

- *Foster-Adoptive Parent Application* (OCFS-5183B): one form per applicant
- *Foster-Adoptive Applicant Medical Report* (OCFS-5183C): one form per applicant
- *Request for NYS Fingerprinting Services* (OCFS-4930ASFA): one form per person 18 years of age or older
- *Statewide Central Register Database Check* (LDSS-3370): one form per person 18 years of age or older

After the orientation or individual interview, the LDSS or VA must

- record corresponding dates in the FAD “Checklist.”

3. **Self-Assessment (OCFS-5183A)**

The applicant(s) should be provided with the OCFS-5183A at the initial interview or orientation, and the family should complete the form together to determine their readiness to be a foster/adoptive family.

- The home finder should meet with the family to review the assessment and to complete the initial assessment of the family’s readiness, at least once during the certification or approval process. However, it is recommended that it be reviewed as needed throughout the process, as the applicant’s family circumstances and understanding of the certification or approval process evolve.
 - Each time the OCFS-5183A is discussed by the home finder and the applicant(s), the assessment of family readiness listed on the bottom of the form must be completed by the home finder with input from the family, and it must be signed by the applicant(s) and home finder.
 - The home finder must meet with their supervisor after discussing the OCFS-5183A with the family. The supervisor must also sign the OCFS-5183A.
 - The OCFS-5183A hard copy must be maintained in the foster home file.

4. **Application (OCFS-5183B)**

- The applicant(s) must complete the *Foster/Adoptive Parent Application* (OCFS-5183B). If the applicant(s) apply for foster care and adoption, they must also complete the *Application to Adopt* (OCFS-5183C).
- *Foster-Adoptive Applicant Medical Report* (OCFS-5183D) must be completed by a physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, or other licensed and qualified health care practitioner for each applicant(s).
- The applicant(s) must submit the completed OCFS-5183B, OCFS-5183C (if applicable), and OCFS-5183D to the home finder.
- *Safety Review Form* (OCFS-5183E) must be completed by the home finder during an inspection of the applicant’s physical residence. This form must be completed any time there is a significant physical or structural change to the home and/or the applicant’s move.
- The LDSS or VA must verify the applicant’s employment references listed on the

OCFS-5183B.

- Within 10 days of receiving the completed application, the LDSS or VA must accept or deny an application for home study.
- If the LDSS or VA denies the application, it must provide the applicant with a written statement setting for its reason(s) for the denial as set forth in 18 NYCRR 443.2(b)(9).
- The home finder enters the demographic information recorded on the OCFS-5183B into the FAD home in CONNECTIONS.
- The home finder enters corresponding dates into the FAD “Checklist.”
- All hard copies of forms must be maintained in the applicant’s file.

5. **Home Study**

- LDSSs and VAs must complete a home study within four months after acceptance of an application unless delays occur as a result of circumstances beyond the control of the agency or unless the schedule for interviews with the applicant is changed by mutual consent of the applicant and the agency representative.
- The applicant(s) must participate in NTDC²³ or other OCFS-approved foster/adoption training program.
- The home finder must use all information gathered from the applicant’s participation in the training program, through home visits, and all interviews to complete all five sections of the *Household Composition and Relationships* form OCFS-5183F.
 - A genogram should be completed with each applicant during the psychosocial portion of the OCFS-5183F. A *Sample Genogram Template* (OCFS-5183G) is included with this ADM.
- *Personal References* (OCFS-5183H) must be sent to each of the applicant’s three personal references to fill out.
- SCR, out-of-state SCR (where applicable), SEL, and FBI and New York State criminal history record checks must be completed on the applicant(s) and any person(s) 18 years of age or older residing in the home of the applicant(s).
- The home finder must enter SEL, SCR, out-of-state SCR and fingerprint results into FAD.
- The home finder enters corresponding dates into the FAD “Checklist.”

Note: All hard copies of the home study and related background check materials must be kept in the applicant’s hard copy file.

6. **Resource Characteristics (OCFS-5183I)**

- One form must be completed by each family.

7. **Foster Parent Agreement with Authorized Agency (OCFS-5183J)**

- The home finder must review the OCFS-5183J form with the applicant(s).
- The applicant(s) and home finder must sign the OCFS-5183J.
- A copy of the OCFS-5183J must be kept in the foster home record, and a copy given to the foster parent(s).
- The home finder must enter corresponding dates into the FAD “Checklist.”

²³ Effective January 1, 2025.

8. **Final Assessment and Determination**

- At the completion of the applicant's home study, the LDSSs and VAs must complete a *Final Assessment and Determination* (OCFS-5183K).
 - Section I contains a list of regulatory requirements that must be completed during the home study process for each applicant. The home finder must select "yes" if the requirement is satisfied or "no" if it is not. There is also a space for the home finder to explain the decision. The regulatory requirements listed in Section I only list the regulatory requirements needed for the home study process and do not list every regulatory requirement that must be satisfied in order for the home to be certified or approved. ALL regulatory requirements must be satisfied for the home to be certified or approved.
 - Section II is an assessment of the home study components. The home finder must take the information gathered in the *Household Composition and Relationships* form (OCFS-5183F) and summarize each area assessed as it impacts the applicant's ability to foster and/or adopt. The home finder must list strengths, considerations, and supports needed for each section.

If an exception²⁴ is requested, an *Exception/Waiver Request Form* in FAD must be completed and submitted for supervisory approval. The home finder must indicate in Section II whether such request has been approved. Such exceptions are as follows:

- Are there six or more children including children in foster care of any age and children not in foster care under the age of 13 currently residing in the prospective foster home?

*Exception may be allowed for up to two additional children if such children are siblings or are siblings of a child living in the home, are children freed for adoption and placed for adoption with the person(s) who has been certified or approved as foster parents, or are minor parents who are children in foster care and minor parents' children.*²⁵

*Another exception is where a child(ren) is returning to foster care following an interruption in care or is returning to a foster home following placement in a foster care facility and an LDSS or VA determines that it is in the best interests of the child(ren) to be placed in the foster home in which the child(ren) was last placed.*²⁶

- Are more than three persons occupying any bedroom where children in foster care will sleep?

*Exception may be allowed if the children are siblings or half-siblings, and the occupancy is consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of each of the siblings or half-siblings and is necessary to keep the siblings or half-siblings placed together in the same foster home.*²⁷

- Does the prospective foster home care for more than two infants under 2 years of age, including the foster parent's own children?

²⁴ The term "exception" is equivalent to a variance for Title IV-E purposes.

²⁵ 18 NYCRR 443.1(i).

²⁶ 18 NYCRR 443.6.

²⁷ 18 NYCRR 443.3(a)(5).

Exception may be allowed as permitted by the appropriate LDSS or VA where the foster parents have demonstrated the capacity to do so, and a sibling group would otherwise be separated.²⁸

- Does the prospective foster parent(s) rent rooms to lodgers or boarders or receive and care for maternity cases, except as part of the foster care program, or receive or care for convalescent cases or conduct any business on the premises that might adversely affect the welfare of children?

Exception may be allowed if permitted by the LDSS or VA that certified or approved the home.²⁹

- Section III is only completed if there are changes made to an existing foster parent's certification or approval prior to the annual recertification or reapproval of the home. This is referred to as an "Interim Home Study" in CONNECTIONS.
- Section IV is the space where the agency records the determination on whether to approve or not approve the application. The home finder must consider all regulatory standards set forth in 18 NYCRR Part 443 necessary to approve an application when making a final decision on whether the home can be certified or approved, which also include all components of the application and home study process. This is a decision that must be made by the home finder and the home finder's supervisor.
 - If an LDSS or VA decides to discontinue a home study or denies certification or approval upon completion of the home study, it must advise the applicant in writing of the reasons for the agency's decision and must offer an interview to discuss the decision.²³
- After completing the *Final Assessment and Determination* (OCFS-5183K), the home finder must enter the completed form into the Home Study Narrative section of the Home Study window in CONNECTIONS. **Please see Section V of this ADM for more information on how to complete this process in CONNECTIONS.**
- The home finder must print out the report and give the family the opportunity to provide comments, if they choose, within Section V.
- The applicant(s), home finder, and supervisor must sign and date the *Final Assessment and Determination*. The signed copy must be maintained in the foster parent's file and a copy must be provided to the foster parent.

9. Certificate or Letter of Approval

- The home finder generates the certificate or letter of approval from CONNECTIONS.
- The home finder provides a copy of the certificate or letter of approval to the applicant(s).

V. Systems Implications

The information in the *Final Assessment and Determination* (OCFS-5183K) must be entered into the FAD section of CONNECTIONS. The user may then save and submit the Home Study for supervisory approval.

²⁸ 18 NYCRR 443.3(b).

²⁹ 18 NYCRR 443.3(a)(14).

VI. Contacts

Any questions concerning this release should be directed to the appropriate regional office in the OCFS Division of Child Welfare and Community Services:

Buffalo Regional Office - Amanda Darling (716) 847-3145

Amanda.Darling@ocfs.ny.gov

Rochester Regional Office - Chris Bruno (585) 238-8201

Christopher.Bruno@ocfs.ny.gov

Syracuse Regional Office - Sara Simon (315) 423-1200

Sara.Simon@ocfs.ny.gov

Albany Regional Office - John Lockwood (518) 486-7078

John.Lockwood@ocfs.ny.gov

Westchester Regional Office - Sheletha Chang (845) 708-2498 Sheletha.Chang@ocfs.ny.gov

New York City Regional Office - Ronni Fuchs (212) 383-4873

Ronni.Fuchs@ocfs.ny.gov

Native American Services - Heather LaForme (716) 847-3123 Heather.LaForme@ocfs.ny.gov

Close to Home & Detention - Donte Blackwell (212) 383-7261 Donte.Blackwell@ocfs.ny.gov

Questions regarding the CONNECTIONS changes can be directed to the appropriate CONNECTIONS implementations specialists.

For a full listing of CONNECTIONS, please visit <https://ocfs.ny.gov/connect/contact.asp>.

VII. Effective Date

This policy directive is effective immediately.

/s/ Gail Geohagen-Pratt

Issued by:

Name: Gail Geohagen-Pratt

Title: Deputy Commissioner

Division/Office: Division of Child Welfare and Community Services