

SPECIALIZED FOSTER HOME APPROVAL PROCESS

Policy no.: 4.7**Effective Date:** August 18, 2014**Date Revised:** April 2016, March 28, 2018**Policy Cross References:** Regular Foster Home Approval Process; Relative Significant Other Foster Home Approval Process; Respite Foster Home Approval and Monitoring Process; Basic Foster Care Rate, Level Fee, Block Funding; Respite; Positive Discipline; Medical Consent; A Child or Youth Absent without Permission; A Child or Youth Missing or Abducted**Legislative References:** s.62 (3) Placement considerations; s.3 (1) and s.63 (3) Agreement for service.

PURPOSE: To outline the requirements and process for assessing specialized foster parent applicants.**POLICY:**

1. All foster parents must be approved as Level 2 regular or relative/significant other foster parents prior to being considered for assessment as Level 3 specialized foster parents.
2. Foster parents may be assessed to become specialized foster parents based on the following expectations:
 - a) at least one stay-at-home foster parent that is not employed. This includes part-time employment and working from home;
 - b) completion of PRIDE Pre-service training;
 - c) completion of Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (NVCI)®, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), and Module 1 of the Specialized Foster Parent Training;
 - d) completion of further specialized training in Module 2;
 - e) demonstrates the ability to care for children and youth with highly complex physical, emotional, behavioral and developmental needs;
 - f) demonstrates the ability to work effectively as a member of the *In Care Planning Team* to develop and implement specialized programming for children and youth;
 - g) agrees to participate in self-directed learning (e.g. at home reading, internet research, training in the community, etc.) to supplement training provided by the Department; and
 - h) has a vacancy (or will have a vacancy in 30-60 days) to accommodate a child/youth who is best matched with a specialized foster home.

PROCEDURES:

Application and Screening

1. There are **three avenues** for identifying potential specialized foster parents:
 - a) an approved Level 2 Relative/Significant Other or Regular Foster Parent(s) may self- identify by contacting their social worker and expressing their interest in being assessed as a specialized parent(s); or
 - b) a social worker in consultation with their supervisor, may identify a Level 2 Relative/Significant Other or Regular Foster Parent(s) who they feel present with the knowledge, competencies (skills and abilities) and willingness to meet the expectations of specialized foster parents; or
 - c) a person(s) who is not currently a foster parent with CSSD may express an interest in becoming a Level 3 specialized foster parent, particularly if they have significant training and/or experience that would be an asset as a specialized foster parent(s). In these cases, the applicant must first be approved as a Level 2 regular foster parent(s) before being assessed as a Level 3 foster parent(s).

2. When an approved Regular Level 2 foster parent(s) self identifies or is identified by the social worker as a potential specialized foster parent(s), the social worker shall meet with the foster parent(s) to discuss the following:
 - a) the application and approval process and the requirements for a Level 3 foster parent(s);
 - b) the additional expectations involved in becoming a specialized foster parent(s) and the ability to meet these expectations;
 - c) that the assessment and subsequent approval as a specialized foster parent(s) is based on the competencies of the foster parent(s), not the needs of the child or youth currently or potentially to be placed in their home following approval.
 - d) the foster parent(s) shall receive the Level 3, Level fee for any new child or youth placed in their home once granted conditional or final approval and not for children or youth placed in their home prior to becoming a Level 3 foster parent(s).
 - e) the foster parent(s) will continue to receive the Level fee currently in place for any children and youth in their care prior to obtaining Level 3 approval.

3. A Relative/Significant Other Level 2 foster parent(s) may be identified as a potential specialized foster home for a child or youth with highly complex needs with whom they have a familial or significant relationship. The social worker shall meet with the foster parent(s) to determine their interest, discuss the expectations of becoming a specialized foster parent(s) and explain the application and approval process. In discussing the assessment and approval process the social worker shall advise the foster parent(s) that they will be assessed as a specialized foster parent to care specifically and only for the child or youth with whom they have a relative/significant other relationship. Only if the Relative/Significant Other foster parent(s) indicates a willingness to meet the Level 3 expectations and is assessed as potentially meeting these expectations, shall the social worker proceed to complete Part A of the *Specialized Foster Home Assessment and Approval* form and submit it to the supervisor, who will then make a recommendation to the manager for the approval.

4. A person(s) who is not currently a foster parent with the Department may express an interest in applying to become a Level 3 specialized foster parent(s), particularly if they have significant training and/or experience that would be an asset as a specialized foster parent(s). The social worker shall discuss the eligibility requirements for fostering, the assessment and application process and the expectations of foster parent(s), particularly as it relates to specialized foster care.
5. Given the requirement is for all Level 3 applicant(s) to be approved as a Level 2 foster parent(s) before consideration for Level 3, the *Foster Home Application* form (Level 2) is required for submission, in addition to the *Specialized Foster Home Application*. If deemed appropriate by the social worker, in consultation with the supervisor, both assessments may be completed concurrently. Each application will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Assessment Process

6. When a Level 2 foster parent(s) indicates a willingness to meet the expectations outlined and the social worker, in consultation with a supervisor, assesses the foster parent(s) as potentially meeting these expectations, the social worker shall complete Part A of the *Specialized Foster Home Assessment and Approval* form and submit this form to the supervisor who will then make a recommendation and forward the completed form to the manager for approval. Only when Part A has been approved by the manager, will the social worker meet with the foster parent(s), give them the *Specialized Foster Home Application* and further review the expectations and competencies for specialized foster parent(s) using the *Foster Parent Competencies* form as a guide. If the foster parent(s) is a Relative/Significant Other foster parent, the social worker shall remind the foster parent(s) that they are being assessed as a specialized foster home for the child or youth with which they have a relative/significant other relationship not for other children and youth in care.
7. If Part A is not approved the social worker shall meet with the foster parents(s) to discuss the reason why they were not approved to be assessed as a specialized foster parent(s). The social worker shall also notify the foster parent(s) of this decision in writing, in a timely manner.
8. When the completed *Specialized Foster Home Application* form is received from the foster parent(s) the social worker shall complete the home assessment which is documented using Part B of the *Specialized Foster Home Assessment and Approval* form.
9. The social worker completing the specialized foster home assessment shall conduct at least:
 - a) one interview with each person who resides in the home;
 - b) two interviews with the applicant who will be the stay at home foster parent with primary responsibility for the care of the children and youth placed in the foster home; and
 - c) where applicable, one joint interview with the applicants.
10. The specialized foster home assessment interviews shall include discussion on the following topics, along with other relevant issues that are identified:
 - a) the training, education, skills and experience of the applicant(s) in dealing with the complex needs of children and youth, including the strengths and challenges;

- b) a review of the *PRIDE* competencies and an overview from the applicant(s) perspective, of how they meet the required competencies, and how their skill and experience demonstrates enhanced competencies suitable for specialized foster parent(s);
 - c) the applicant(s) understanding and perception of the role of specialized foster parents and how that role differs from Level 2 foster parents, the philosophy of specialized foster care as it relates to the competency of the foster parent rather than the needs of the child or youth, and the importance of ongoing and self-initiated training for specialized foster parents;
 - d) the willingness of the applicant(s) to complete NVCI, ASIST and other ongoing training related to the complex needs of children and youth;
 - e) the potential impact of becoming a specialized foster parent on family members and the family unit, how each family member feels about the potential impacts, and the strategies and supports the family will avail of in addressing the challenges and the adjustment that may be experienced in becoming a specialized foster parent(s);
 - f) the financial implications for the family of having a stay at home foster parent that is not employed inside or outside the home, and the financial plan for accommodating any gaps in funding from the Department as a result of not having a child or youth placed in the home;
 - g) the views of the applicant(s) about working extensively with biological families and with the In Care Planning Team, and the related skills that the applicant(s) would use to support these working relationships; and
 - h) the support network available to the foster parent(s) and their family and how they will avail of the support network.
11. The social worker shall consult with all available social workers that have worked with the applicant(s), the children and youth in care that are currently residing in the foster home, and any other relevant professionals or collaterals (e.g. teacher, counsellor, behavior management specialist, etc.) to gather information that may assist in assessing the suitability of the applicant(s) for approval as a specialized foster parent(s).
12. The social worker shall review the *Foster Parent Competencies* form with the applicant(s) and explore their existing competencies, goals, and willingness to enhance their existing competencies, knowledge and skills. The applicant(s) must demonstrate an ability and willingness to meet the expectations of a specialized foster parent(s) as outlined in the *Foster Parent Competencies* form.
13. The social worker shall also contact the two collateral references provided in the *Specialized Foster Home Application*. Collateral references must have known the applicant(s) for at least 2 years and be able to speak to the foster parent(s) skills and abilities in caring for children and youth with complex needs.
14. When all information has been gathered, the social worker shall complete Part B of the *Specialized Foster Home Assessment and Approval* form and review the information with the foster parent(s). Part B of the form shall be forwarded to the supervisor for review. The supervisor shall make a recommendation to the manager regarding whether to conditionally approve the applicant(s).

Conditional Approval

15. The final decision regarding conditional approval shall be made by the manager. If the manager is satisfied that the specialized foster parent applicant(s) has demonstrated throughout the assessment process that they meet the eligibility requirements, and have the ability and willingness to meet the expectations of a specialized foster parent(s), the manager may grant conditional approval as a specialized foster parent(s).
16. When a manager grants conditional approval, the applicant(s) shall be notified in writing of the conditional approval and the expectation of satisfactory completion of NVCI, ASIST, and Module 1 of the Specialized Foster Parent training prior to final approval. **The social worker shall work with the applicant(s) to arrange for attendance at NVCI, ASIST, and Module 1 of the Specialized Foster Parent Training.**
17. The social worker shall review and obtain the signature of the specialized foster parent(s) on the *Declaration of Confidentially* form.
18. The social worker shall ensure that the specialized foster parent(s) receive a copy of the policies on *Positive Discipline, Medical Consent, A Child or Youth Absent Without Permission* and *A Child or Youth Missing or Abducted*.
19. The social worker shall ensure that the approved specialized foster parent(s) has the contact information for the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association (NLFFA), the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and the local CSSD office including the on-call number for after hour services.
20. If Part B is not approved, the social worker shall meet with the applicant(s) to discuss the reason why they were not conditionally approved as specialized foster parent(s). This shall not impact their approval as a Level 2 foster home unless the Level 3 assessment indicates that there are concerns that need to be addressed.
21. The social worker shall also notify the foster parent(s) of the reasons why they were not conditionally approved as a specialized foster parent(s) in writing, in a timely manner.

Specialized Foster Parent Training

22. The social worker shall arrange for the stay-at-home foster parent to attend Module 1 of the specialized foster parent training, NVCI and ASIST. If a couple has applied to become specialized foster parents both will be encouraged to attend the training, however it is a requirement for the stay-at-home foster parent. If the foster parent who is not identified as the stay-at-home parent is unable to attend training, it is expected that they review all training materials provided, and participate in self-directed learning.
23. Following the completion of NVCI, ASIST and Module 1 of the Specialized Foster Parent training, the social worker shall meet with the foster parent(s) to:
 - a) discuss the applicant's learning and understanding of the training material and how the applicant will integrate the material in their existing competencies and practices to improve the care provided to a child or youth;
 - b) address any concerns or challenges stemming from the new information; and,

- c) identify future learning goals for the foster parent(s) that would assist in the further development and enhancement of their knowledge and skills.
24. The social worker shall contact the training facilitators and document feedback related to the foster parent(s) participation and progress in the training, any concerns or challenges identified during the training sessions, and the learning goals that may be relevant for the applicant(s).

Approval

25. When the applicant(s) has completed NVCI, ASIST, and Module 1 of the Specialized Foster Parent training and the social worker has completed an assessment regarding the participation, progress and suitability of the applicant(s) for final approval (Part B of the assessment process), the social worker shall complete Part C of the *Specialized Foster Home Assessment and Approval* form. Part C outlines the social worker's assessment of the applicant(s) learning and integration of the training material based on discussion with the applicant(s) and the training facilitators. The supervisor shall make a recommendation regarding the final approval on Part C of the Specialized Foster Home Assessment and Approval form and forward the completed Part C to the manager for final approval.
26. If it is confirmed that the applicant(s) has completed NVCI, ASIST, and Module 1 of the Specialized Foster Parent training in a satisfactory manner, the manager may approve the applicant(s) as a Level 3 specialized foster parent(s).
27. When a manager grants final approval of the applicant(s) as a Level 3 specialized foster parent(s), the manager shall notify the applicant(s) of the final approval in writing in a timely manner.
28. When final approval is granted, the social worker shall ensure that the *Foster Home Agreement (Level 3)* is signed and the foster parent(s) has a copy of the policies on ***Positive Discipline, Medical Consent, A Child or Youth Absent Without Permission*** and ***A Child or Youth Missing or Abducted***.
29. Completion of Module 2 training is not required to grant final approval of the foster parent(s) as a Level 3 parent(s). However, the social worker shall discuss the availability of Module 2 and provide them with a list of the training topics. The social worker shall encourage the foster parent(s) to engage in ongoing training and education through the Department, in the community and through self-directed learning.
30. When an applicant(s) receives final approval as a specialized foster parent(s), the social worker shall forward the name(s) of the approved foster parent(s) to NLFFA on the *NLFFA Registration* form. If there is more than one approved foster parent, both names are required on the form.
31. The social worker shall provide the approved foster parent(s) with the contact information for the NLFFA, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and their local CSSD office, including the number for after hour services.
32. If the applicant(s) is not approved, the social worker shall meet with the family in a timely

manner to discuss the reasons for the decision. The applicant(s) shall also be advised in writing, as soon as possible after the meeting with the social worker.

EXCEPTIONS TO POLICY:

1. If a specialized foster parent applicant(s) has already completed any of the training required for final approval as a specialized foster parent(s) (i.e. NVCI, ASIST, Module 1 of the Specialized Foster Parent Training), and if the training is still valid, the manager may exempt the applicant(s) from having to complete the training. If the applicant(s) has previously completed all required training, the manager may grant final approval without having to first grant conditional approval.
2. Where an existing Level 2 foster home does not have a current vacancy and is providing care for a child or youth, that is in the continuous custody of a manager, and the child or youth has highly complex needs requiring a level of service consistent with the competencies and expectations of a Level 3 foster parent(s) **and** the current foster parent(s) demonstrate the willingness and ability to meet the competencies and expectations of a Level 3 foster parent(s), Part A of the Specialized Foster Home Assessment may be submitted to a manager for consideration.

If this exceptional circumstance is approved by a manager, Level 3 funding would **only** apply to the child or youth identified with highly complex needs requiring the skills and competencies of a Level 3 foster parent(s) and **only** when conditional or final approval is granted by the manager.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS:

- *Foster Home Application* form
- *Specialized Foster Parent Application* form
- *Specialized Foster Home Assessment and Approval form*
- *Foster Parent Competencies Chart*
- *Declaration of Confidentiality* form
- *Foster Parent Agreement (Level 3)*
- *NLFFA Registration* form