

Chapter 7

Certification and Management of Applicants and Certified Families/Approval of Potential Adoptive Resources

Overview of Department certified families

- 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 a child or sibling group 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 they must understand that the Department's priority is family reunification. Each applicant must participate in the Oregon SAFE home 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 decide whether 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 applicants and certified families and approval of potential adoptive resources includes:
 1. Assessment of applicants through the Oregon SAFE home study process
 2. Training provided to all applicants and certified families
 3. Using a customer service approach for the retention of certified families
 4. Confirmation of safe environments during all home visits
 5. Providing support to applicants and certified families
 6. If applicable, taking action when problems arise.
- For some certifiers, 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

- The Department is required by Oregon and federal law to give placement preference for a foster care placement to a child's relatives and persons who have a caregiver relationship with the child as described below. The Department must also make diligent efforts to place siblings together.

Relatives are defined in Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) [413-070-0000](#).

NOTE:

When multiple relatives are available as a potential substitute care resource, the caseworker will be making decisions about which relative(s) — kith or kin — will be brought to the attention of the certifier, along with a request to be considered for certification. Policies including Placement Matching [413-070-0600](#) and Search for and Engagement of Relatives [413-070-0060](#) as well as DHS [Child Welfare Procedure Manual](#) chapter 4, sections 2 and 3 highlight some of the considerations made by the caseworker, including but not limited to:

- Talking with the child’s parents, other family members, and when possible, the child, about how to best maintain family ties and to gather their input about the best substitute care resource within the family system. A family meeting is one good way to obtain such input;
 - Utilizing information regarding the child’s unique safety, permanency, and well-being needs, identifying which potential substitute caregiver has the capacities and qualities to meet the child’s needs;
 - Ability to place a child with siblings who are in substitute care, to be with the person who has the closest existing personal relationship with the child when more than one person is requesting to be a placement resource, to allow the child to continue in the same school/educational placement;
 - Gathering information to determine the relative who can and will meet the child’s needs for safety and who can be certified by the Department. When the caseworker can articulate to a child’s relatives the information about the opportunities and requirements associated with being assessed to become a relative caregiver, relatives are better informed about how decisions are made and can give better input to the Department about which relative is most appropriate to be considered as a relative caregiver. The Options for Relatives brochure, form DHS [9360](#), provides some of this important information to relatives.
- Last, the order of preference for certification ends on an unrelated person or foster parent. Sometimes, relatives or other persons 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, the caseworker should follow the placement matching procedures in chapter 4, sections 2 and 3: Match the child’s needs with a certified family’s ability.

D. Working with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

- When children have intellectual or developmental disabilities (I/DD), they may be eligible for services through the Office of Developmental Disability Services (ODDS). As of July 2013, additional services became available via the K Plan to provide supports

to a person with I/DD who is living in home and community settings. The following are considered “in-home” for the purposes of the K Plan: living with a biological parent; placed in a Child Welfare (CW)-paid foster care placement; living with a guardian; or living with an adoptive family.

- For children with I/DD who require the use of foster care, the general expectation starting November 2014 is that caseworkers utilize Child Welfare-paid foster placements, rather than ODDS-paid foster care placements, when a child who is eligible for I/DD services first enters substitute care or when a child who was already in substitute care is newly determined eligible for I/DD services through ODDS. For other children, whose current placement is already being paid for by ODDS, the caseworker, foster parent, and Community Developmental Disability Program (CDDP) service coordinator may discuss the child’s best interests, and consider whether changing to CW-paid placement may be preferable, based on the individual child’s needs and circumstances. Utilizing Child Welfare-paid placements may increase the chance of achieving legal permanency and allows for some in-home supports to be provided by the ODDS system, via the K-Plan. Collaboration between the CW caseworker and the CDDP service coordinator is necessary to determine the least restrictive placement that is in the best interest of the child. Refer to Procedure Manual [chapter 4, section 14 for additional information](#).
- The Inter-Program Placement Agreement between CW and ODDS provides the guidelines and practices for Inter-Program use of CW-certified foster homes and ODDS-certified child foster homes. There is one certificate and one certifying program for the foster home. Collaboration and communication regarding use of the other program’s home must occur in advance of utilizing a home certified by another program. For more information, refer to procedure manual [chapter 9, section 4](#).
- When the program paying for the placement differs from the program certifying the placement, the Inter-Division Foster Care Placement form MSC [5031](#) must be utilized. For example, if utilizing an ODDS-certified child foster home for a child whose placement will be a child welfare-paid placement, form [5031](#) must be used. Likewise, if ODDS is seeking use of a child welfare-certified home for placement of an ODDS-paid foster placement, form [5031](#) must be used.
- Adult DD foster homes, adult DD group homes or adult DD facilities licensed by the Office of Developmental Disability Services can be used when:
 1. The young adult is 18 years of age or older and is receiving adult I/DD services through ODDS and is placed in an ODDS-licensed adult foster home, adult group home, or adult facility, by the adult DD case worker.
 2. 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’s 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.
 3. If CW is paying for the placement in an adult DD foster home, the local CW branch must certify the home prior to placement. There is no inter-program

agreement allowing for DHS to honor the license/certificate that is issued by the adult DD system.

- Provider Entry into OR-Kids:
 1. When a child/youth in Child Welfare custody is placed into a foster home or residential facility that is licensed by DD services, Central Office will open/update and maintain DD providers and complete annual renewals in OR-Kids.
- Child Welfare caseworkers placing children with DD licensed providers must send an email to [CW DD Placements](#) with notification to request that a DD provider be created (or updated) in OR-Kids. Include in the email:
 1. Child/youth name, OR-Kids case number and person number;
 2. Date of placement;
 3. Provider's full name (include both provider's name if more than one);
 4. Provider's full address; and
 5. Provider's date of birth, Social Security number or any other identifying information you have (for both providers if more than one).
- The assigned Central Office worker will send an email to the Child Welfare case worker to confirm the provider has been opened/updated, so the child's placement may be input into OR-Kids.
- Central Office CW staff open and maintains:
 1. Child DD group homes and child DD facilities.
 2. Adult DD foster homes when placement is paid by DD.
 3. Adult DD group homes or facilities.
- The branch should email the DD group homes dedicated email address at: DDGroup.Homes@dhsola.state.or.us, providing the following information:
 1. For Adult DD Foster Home:
 - a. Provider(s) full name, DOB, and marital status.
 - b. Provider address. (If physical address and mailing address differ, provide both.)
 - c. Provider's phone number.
 - d. Date of placement.
 - e. Name and DOB of child/young adult being placed.
 - f. Branch from which child is being placed.
 2. For child DD group home/facility and for adult DD group home/facility:
 - a. Name of agency that licensed the group home.
 - b. Name of group home (if there is one).
 - c. Address of group home. (If physical address and mailing address differ, note that and provide both.)
 - d. Group home/facility phone number.
 - e. Date of placement.
 - f. Name and DOB of child/young adult being placed.
 - g. Branch from which child is being placed.

NOTE:

Prior to May 2017, local branch offices were holding DD “mock files” in OR-Kids for those foster homes licensed by ODDS. Currently, Central Office staff maintain these providers.

CW certifiers with DD providers assigned to their workload must change the designated branch to Central Office and send an email to [CW DD Placements](#) with notification that the provider has been designated to Central Office.

Below are the steps to change the branch designation:

1. The certifier is assigned to the provider. (*Ensure all work is complete before taking this step as it will end the user's ability to complete.*)
2. Navigate to Provider Work > Maintain Physical Address.
3. Select Central Office from the "Designated Branch" dropdown menu and save.

After the certifier has changed the branch designation to Central Office, send an email to [CW DD Placements](#) notifying Central Office of the change. Please include the following information:

- Provider number
- Provider’s full name (include both providers’ names if more than one)
- Name and DOB of all children/youth placed in the home at the time of reassignment.

From that point forward, all annual renewals and licensing actions will be completed by Central Office/CW DD placement staff. The physical file that the branch was keeping may be destroyed.