



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

KODY H. KINSLEY • Secretary

LISA TUCKER CAULEY • Division Director, Human Services

December 31, 2024

DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS
LICENSED CHILD PLACING AGENCIES**

SUBJECT: FINGERPRINT PROCESS

REQUIRED ACTION: Information Only Time Sensitive Immediate

This Dear County Director Letter (DCDL) is a follow up to the previous DCDL CWS -86-2024 regarding the new fingerprint process.

NCDHHS Division of Social Services (NCDHHS DSS) is committed to ensuring all foster parents have the required fingerprint clearances as required under the Adam Walsh Act. In consultation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), it was determined that North Carolina was required to update the foster parent fingerprint process to be in compliance with Federal and State laws.

Effective **February 3, 2025**, the fingerprint process for all prospective foster parents in North Carolina will change to comply with Federal and State laws. The new process is as follows:

1. The fingerprint process begins with securing consent from the applicant to conduct the criminal records check based upon fingerprints. The Notice to Foster Home of Mandatory Criminal History Check (DSS-5280) must be read and signed by each applicant and by all adults aged 18 or older living in the home. This form gives the details of the criminal records search as well as what the person may do if the search reveals information with which the person disagrees. Each person must sign his or her own form.
2. Applicants and adult household members may have their fingerprints taken using ink fingerprint cards or they can be electronically fingerprinted by an approved law enforcement agency. The supervising agency can obtain fingerprint cards and bubble sheets from:

NC Department of Health and Human Services
Criminal Record Check Unit | DSS
MSC 2201
Raleigh, NC 27699-2201

3. The fingerprint card or electronic fingerprint form and a bubble sheet need to be completed for each applicant and all adult household members. The supervising agency will mail one fingerprint

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603

MAILING ADDRESS: 2401 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2401

www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-855-6335 • FAX: 919-334-1018

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card or electronic fingerprint form and the bubble sheet to the NC DHHS Criminal Record Check Unit address listed above.

4. The Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) will process the documents then forward them to the SBI for the state check. If the fingerprints are of sufficient print quality, the SBI will process and forward them to the FBI for the national check. Criminal history is returned to the SBI then to the DCDEE.
5. Sometimes there are issues with insufficient print quality, which results in the fingerprint card or electronic submission and a letter being returned to the supervising agency informing them the prints are unclassifiable. The applicant will need to complete another set of fingerprints. If after the third attempt of completing fingerprints are returned, the DCDEE automatically resubmits to the SBI asking for "name search only".
6. Once the DCDEE reviews the fingerprint background checks, they will send a letter to all applicants, including adult household members stating either: No criminal history was found, or only minor traffic offense(s) was found; or criminal history was found.
7. If an applicant's letter from DCDEE indicates that the applicant has no criminal history or only minor traffic infractions, the applicant must submit the letter to their licensing agency and the letter must be submitted to the licensing authority as part of foster home licensure packet.
8. If criminal history is found, the DCDEE will send the applicant a letter that states criminal history was found and letter for Right to Review. If the applicant wants to continue with the licensure process, the applicant must request a Right to Review packet from the NC State Bureau of Investigation and the National Fingerprint based check completed by the FBI. The instructions for the Right to Review packet are in the letter that the applicant will receive from DCDEE. Once the applicant receives both fingerprint-based criminal checks, the applicant must submit the fingerprint based criminal checks and the letter from DCDEE to their licensing agency.
9. Once the criminal histories are received by the licensing agency, the agency must review the criminal history to determine if the applicant had convictions that would prohibit the applicant from being a foster parent based on NCGS § 131D-10.3A. If the applicant's convictions are not prohibitive, the agency would provide a written explanation for all convictions and a letter of support from the agency, signed by the director. The licensing agency will submit the DCDEE letter, both fingerprint-based criminal checks, the written explanation for each conviction, and the letter of support with the licensure application.
10. A foster home application packet must be submitted within 180 days of the first signed form for the packet or 90 days from the date the applicant receives the criminal history from the SBI and FBI, whichever is later.
11. After the licensing authority receives and reviews the entire licensure packet, the applicant will receive a letter that indicates if the applicant meets or does not meet the criteria to be a foster parent. The licensing authority will provide a copy of the license of approved foster parents to the licensing agency. The licensing authority will not pre-staff criminal histories prior to the submission of a completed licensure application.

Attached is a flowchart that illustrates the new process. In addition, NCDSS will host two webinars to review the upcoming changes to the fingerprint process. The webinars will be held on January 13, 2025: 10:30am-11:30am and January 15, 2025: 11:00am-12:00pm. Please register at one of the links below for one of the webinar sessions. Registration can occur up to the day of the webinar.

January 13th 10:30am-11:30 am at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2819585863181739352>
or
January 15th 11:00am-12:00pm at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3558627001838371419>

DSS and private agencies that are **missing** any applicant SBI fingerprint letters processed in the last year must contact the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) by **January 15, 2025**, to request a copy. After **January 15, 2025**, previous SBI fingerprints letters will no longer be available, and the applicant will have to go through the new fingerprint process. Please only request the SBI fingerprint letters that are missing from your records.

If you have any questions, please contact Jenny Millsaps, Foster Home Licensing Manager, at jenny.millsaps@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

Kimaree Sanders

Kimaree Sanders, MSW, MPA
Section Chief for Regulatory and Licensing
Division of Social Services, Child Welfare
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

cc: Lisa T. Cauley, Division Director, Human Services, Child, Family and Adult Regional Support
Adrian Daye, Deputy Director for Child Welfare Practice
Donna Fayko, Interim Deputy Director for County Operations
Kathy Stone, Section Chief for Safety and Prevention
Peter West, Section Chief for County Operations
Heather McAllister, Section Chief for Child and Family Services

Attachment: Criminal History Flowchart – New Process

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