



SUMMARY OF HB 2705 PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS

Monday, September 19, 2016

5 pm - 7 pm

YWCA

525 N. Bonita Avenue

Tucson, AZ 85745

Christine Chacon, Licensing Specialist
Casa de los Niño's

R21-6-323:

- It is difficult to obtain documents; for example, social security cards and birth certificates, etc.
- Please train caseworkers on this requirement
- This is an audit requirements for us
- Both the agency and the parents need these documents

R21-6-220 and R21-6-326:

- Please be consistent. R21-6-326 says that the foster parent has 24 hours to notify the licensing agency, and in R21-6-220, it gives the licensing agency 48 hours to notify the placing agency.

R21-6-309(C)(1):

- Here it says that a letter from the Director is needed to approve more than eight children, but OLR says this doesn't exist.
- If the steps are not relevant, then please remove.
- Who in Pima County approves this requirement?

R21-6-213:

- Can some training be on-line or does it all have to be in the classroom? Can OLR tell us the breakdown? For example, could it be 50-50?

Joel Gillette, Former Foster Parent

- It's worrisome the number of foster kids in Arizona
- Less and less homes want to foster
- We were foster parents for seven years, but it became too onerous, and we closed our license last year; it was too burdensome

- After the new rules were put into place on January 24th of this year, we found we couldn't do it
- It was little things but they all added up
- Our friends decided to also close their license because of the water well testing requirement; it costs hundreds of dollars to do the test
- The people who make these rules are people without children
- We had to lock-up essential oils, sprays, vitamins, like medications
- We did not have access to case plans; they never came, we would have liked to have known what is beneficial for the kids
- When we have dealt with the police, they were sensitive to the needs of the family; the caseworkers need to be trained in community relations and to the specific needs of the family, instead of us being treated like we are suspected of being guilty
- All of the rules are overwhelming to people, who wants to foster children?

Tuesday, September 20
5 p m- 7 pm
Ability 360 Center
5025 E, Washington St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85024

Myra Lopez, Licensing Specialist
Human Resources Training

- The new rules are harder for kinship families
- 8,516 children are currently in family settings
- The licensing process takes months
- New changes in the system; now take four months to license homes
- Families are frustrated with the delays
- Three recommendations:
 - Ensure all information about the child is available at placement
 - Prioritize the Life Safety Inspection appointments for Kinship placements
 - Expedite the final issue of licenses for Kinship placements
- The forms used must be updated in Spanish, they need to be in both languages
- For example, I have a grievance form from 2006, it has not been updated or translated into Spanish since then
- The Go-To Guide also needs to be updated in Spanish

Del McArtle

- DCS should not seize safe children

- DCS should not remove children without a warrant
- This is against the fourth amendment
- Insert into the rules – no seizing of safe children
- Define impending danger
- Consider who is impacted by the rules, we want to focus on safety and to prevent bad things from happening to the kids
- When kids are shuffled from home to home, due to barriers in place; they need permanency, to thrive and stay in a home, let's cut through the stories of barriers of not licensing a family, these kids deserve a forever home, we need to move toward that end

Bahney Dedolph
Arizona Council of Human Service Providers

- The Council conducted a survey of new and experienced foster parents in February and again in September of 2016, specific to the implementation of the new foster home rules
- 300 responses
- Same questions were asked with each survey
- Over 70% saw a change with the new rules; 18-20% good, 54% worse
- In February, only 20% thought things were going well
- The general theme is that the rules are overreaching and excessive regulations; the time it takes to get licensed and relicensed; and the difficulty of licensing kinship foster homes
- Specific Areas Concerning New Rules:
 - Conflict of Interest Rule
 - First aid kit requirements
 - Excessive paperwork requirements
 - Locking up of certain items (e.g. protein powder)
 - Requirements to care for the medically fragile children
 - Payment delays while awaiting renewal of license
 - Requirements for pool fences and windows
 - Definition and interpretation of "Hazard"
- More and more rules are not needed; use common sense; let us be homes
- Trust the licensing agencies
- This makes it harder for a child in the system to feel normal in what should be a home setting
- The Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Training was not implemented well
- There are training issues, what the foster parents need vs. what they are receiving
- Foster parents want training on:
 - Disruptive Behavior
 - Behavior Management
 - Managing transitions as parents

- The wait for licensing is too long, we need high quality, yet something's not working – the time needed to schedule a Life Safety Inspection; families are waiting for these inspections in order to renew their licenses; one that was due in May is still waiting
- People are failing the Life Safety Inspections, we need to focus on the actual safety issues and the spirit of the law, rather than over one-inch of fencing; licensing staff feel like they are not doing their job if they are not failing them
- As a potential foster parent, I would not pass the Life Safety Inspection, my home was built in the 30's and I have one electrical outlet in each room; extension cords are not allowed in the rules
- We need a three-legged stool: The foster family, the Foster Home Licensing Agencies, and OLR; we need to repair the relationship or this will destroy the system,
- We need to clarify and interpret the rules, change the implementation without changing the rules
- You can't look at the implementation of the rules without looking at the impact and numerous changes to the checklists since then. We need the final version of these documents.
- We advocated for more inspection staff in the last legislative session; you should use the additional administrative staff spots you received this session

***Nancy Williams, Licensed Foster Parent
Board Member of the Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents***

- Foster parent for 20 years; 50 individual children, adopted seven
- Rule of a maximum of eight children; bad for large families, with no licensing issues against them; this is prejudice against large families
- Home inspections every two years vs. three years; a hardship, waiting four months for renewals meanwhile no income for foster parents
- Physician statements every two years vs. three years; licensing workers who go into the homes should be trusted; there is a charge by doctors for this documentation; should be reimbursed to foster parents
- Why are CPR and First-aid excluded from counting as minimum training requirements?
- Car seats at time of placement; cannot stock a car seat for every age of child
- Unusual Incident Reports (UIR) for example, a change in medication; results in too many reports; if they are ill enough to go to the hospital, do a report then
- Foster parents are held to a higher standard than the bio parents are; upon the return of the children
- Trust the licensing agencies, they are trained social workers; are the OLR workers trained in social work? They do not understand our large families
- Who are you employing to get feedback from foster parents or social workers?
- More families are leaving the system
- Why are you placing three-year olds at Canyon State Academy?

***Brian Peterson, Treasurer
(Jacob's Law)***

- Has a four foot pool fence; the regulation is five feet
- Now it's up to the judge to decide on this issue
- We need to revisit this requirement
- When the rule changes occurred, there was limited discussion
- Attorneys who did this that have no knowledge of foster care

Jaime Grange, Licensed Foster Parent

- Foster parent for 10 years
- The maximum of eight children rule has been hard on our home
- Obtaining an amendment is difficult
- The mother of the children is still having kids; we cannot get an open spot
- Two are in Group Homes, we want them back; we still have their beds and clothes; this is disruptive to the children
- Define the word "hazard" in the rules and exactly what a hazard is, I lock my knives up, but do I really have to lock up my vitamin C?

Diane Downing, Licensed Foster Parent

- Single, eight children, five adopted
- Visits regularly with another foster child; wants her to also be in her home
- She has two additional caregivers; there are no issues of unmet needs
- Feels for families that have been shut down
- There is an explicit exception to the maximum of eight children in the law; OLR should provide for this
- No cases of non-siblings over eight children known; eight is arbitrary and should be done away with
- We need to trust the licensing agencies, let them evaluate the homes and use their judgement
- Some families can handle four, others eight.
- Why do we allow a playroom next to a pool, but not a master bedroom near a pool?

***Anika Robinson, Licensed Foster Parent
(Jacob's Law)***

- There are daily barriers for foster parents
- Not enough staff to do the foster home licensing renewals
- For foster parents wanting more than eight children, the licensing agency should decide

- First-aid kit requirements
- Car Seats; sends them to the child's new home; should be able to purchase car seats (upon need)
- Reporting medical instances; medically complex kids require this frequently; we should be able to bring a spreadsheet of the medical information and provide it at their monthly appointment
- Kinship placements: no one to do the home inspections; families have to wait
- The bio parents should have the same home safety requirements as a foster parent
- If there have been no changes in a foster home, we should not have to wait for renewals
- Get more input from the foster parents
- DCS needs better external communication, an announcement for this meeting was not in a memo or newsletter to the foster parents and the licensing agency did not forward the information
- DCS should also notify adoptive parents too, not just post on your website
- I used social media, I shouldn't have to do that

Ron Adelson
AASK

- Foster parent for three years
- One year ago we worked on the rules and the intent was the safety of the kids
- As far as implementation, we tell kinship placements they will be licensed, but when they are not, licensed because of the rules, then we end up leaving them (without support).
- What is the difference of having a cold compress and a bag of peas?
- Compare these rules with the Group Home rules
- We want reasonable and prudent lifestyles; it's not representative here; the lifestyles we are asking them to do
- The implementation is inconsistent
- Now we don't allow foster parents to teach PS-MAPP, but if you provide respite, you don't have to transfer agencies

Brandis Goodman, Licensed Foster Parent

- Was a non-relative kinship foster parent previously; no background as a foster parent; no support from anyone; there were no responses from the caseworkers
- The most frustrating thing is the long wait for home inspections
- It took me two to three months to finish the paperwork; the total licensing wait time was eight months
- We deserve more support
- The eight-maximum number of children rule is a subjective decision and should be made by the licensing agencies

Carol McDermott

- Was an emergency receiving foster parent previously; but there were no services back then
- It is taking too long to license
- More people need to be hired to be trained as inspectors, more resources

Kim Vehon, Licensed Foster Parent

- Cannot take any more children under five years because of the rule, needed to become a kinship family to foster two more siblings
- Two adults must be present with the kids at all times to become a foster home
- Please support kinship foster families and let them have more kids
- Why do respite homes not require a fingerprint clearance card for all people in the house over 18 years old, and a foster home does? Respite homes should have the same requirement
- The social history and other records for a child in care should be made available immediately, at the time of placement, 30 days is too long

Rich Taylor, Former Foster Parent

- Accountability for the licensing agencies is needed, the children cannot just go to a home anywhere
- Why do some foster beds stay empty?
- The licensing workers changed the age range of my license and I did not know
- We feel worthless, why were we not considered?

Annette Haffner, Licensed Foster Parent

- You need to consider the financial implications when rules are changed.
- We modified our pool fence and bought a new first aid kit
- We gladly did it, but you need to look at the financial implications when placing rules upon us

Kellie Cordoza

- Due to the failing of inspections, we have lost hundreds of foster parents
- The number of medically fragile children allowed in a home dropped from five to three; one of the children in my home is a diabetic, and is stable;
- There is no training available for the additional six hours to care for medically fragile children
- My house is in order; this is hurting the kids, and people who want to foster

Deanne Richardson, Licensed Foster Parent

- A foster parent for 22 years
- My home is a CDH, we are in the DDD system now
- We had a child age-out and I have an opening, this is a waste of resources, we can take more
- This decision needs to be on a case by case basis

Lew Spear, Licensed Foster Parent

- New to fostering one-year ago
- Thought we could help; there are so many kids in the system
- I have heard from many former foster parents, never again will we do this
- We like our case manager, but the licensing agency is a bully; they keep on asking us to take more children
- I had to go to a meeting at DCS because I wouldn't take on more children
- I don't need you, you need me, no one wants to do this
- The \$700.00 foster parents receive is a joke, compared to the \$3,500 for group homes,
- There needs to be some accountability with the licensing agencies; the agencies say that DCS doesn't know what it is doing; if the two entities could get together, they could work together

***Diane Downing
(Jacob's Law)***

- The training I received for Jacob's Law was relevant and informative
- The material needs to be heard by all DCS employees and foster parents in their first year of licensing
- The laws and policies of Jacob's Law are not being implemented; the caseworkers are saying they don't have the time; and are told not to worry about it
- When the authority doesn't follow the law, it is hard to stand up for children
- They don't look at the previous case they call the placement center first, not the previous bed, unless there's a problem, then they call us

Laura Lopez, Licensed Foster Parent

- Drove from Yuma
- The State needs to look at the kids and rules as a whole, especially in the rural areas
- You can't be a DDD home or CDH in Yuma, there are no benefits that the Phoenix area gets
- I travel to Phoenix often to get to the medical appointments
- There is mileage reimbursement, but no other consideration of costs, such as taking a day off from work and the time needed

- In Yuma we were not aware of the numbers and need for homes, there are so many openings, for adoption; these homes do not know about available children
- A family wanting an amendment to take more than eight children, has been waiting four months to take an additional sibling

Beth Rosenberg
Children's Action Alliance

- A last chance to review the rules did not occur
- We are treating kinship care families more like kinship homes than family foster homes
- Why can't we waive for non-safety standards?
- Provisional licensing should be done
- We should certify staff in the licensing agencies to do the Life Safety Inspections
- There is Federal legislation moving for states to adopt more flexible standards
- We need to come back together before the report is issued and communicate again on the recommendations.