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 is 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?

---

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:
  o Conflict of Interest Rule
  o First aid kit requirements
  o Excessive paperwork requirements
  o Locking up of certain items (e.g. protein powder)
  o Requirements to care for the medically fragile children
  o Payment delays while awaiting renewal of license
  o Requirements for pool fences and windows
  o 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:
  o Disruptive Behavior
  o Behavior Management
  o 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 Rosenburg  
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.