The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall perform a comprehensive review of the overall quality and functioning of each approved DFCS foster every year. This review must be completed no later than the last calendar day of the 12th consecutive calendar month following the initial approval date or expiration of the current foster home approval (e.g., the re-evaluation for a foster home approved 01/01/2012 is due by 12/31/2013).

DFCS shall initiate a re-evaluation of approved caregivers whenever there are significant changes in the household that impact the caregiver's ability to meet the Safety and Quality Standards (SQS) and the issues of concern cannot be adequately addressed through an addendum to the Family Evaluation.

DFCS shall utilize only qualified personnel to complete home re-evaluations. (See Policy 14.5 Initial Family Assessment Requirements for assessor qualifications).

DFCS shall conduct Child Protective Services (CPS) screening and online background checks during each annual re-evaluation (See Practice Guidance).

DFCS shall re-evaluate foster homes that wish to be re-opened after being voluntarily closed for a period of less than three (3) years.

DFCS shall obtain input from caregivers and allow them an opportunity to formally share perceived strengths/needs, concerns, their evaluation of the services provided by DFCS, the impact that fostering has had on their family, and whether or not they wish to continue fostering.

DFCS shall require caregivers and all adult household members (18 year of age and over) to submit to fingerprinting for a national and state criminal records check at least every five (5) years after the initial approval at the time of the re-evaluation. A Criminal Records Check (CRC) is considered timely if conducted within ninety (90) calendar days prior to the re-evaluation due date.

DFCS shall require Foster Parents to have a medical evaluation every five (5) years. The medical evaluation is documented on Form 36. A physician’s statement is required on an
annual basis if a foster parent has a diagnosed health condition that impacts the foster parent’s ability to care for children placed in their home (i.e. lifting, walking, maneuvering, cognition, etc.) Form 36 is required in this situation.

DFCS shall include a recommendation for approval or disapproval of each applicant home within the written re-evaluation, and provide written notification to applicants regarding their approval status within five (5) business days of the approval decision.

DFCS shall ensure each home re-evaluation is signed by the final approving authority. For DFCS homes, it is the DFCS Director/Designee. For CPA homes, it is the CPA Director/Designee. The final approving authority must have minimally participated in the IMPACT FCP or other approved pre-service training overview class, or be a fully certified pre-service training leader. **Note:** IMPACT FCP leader training is only provided through the DFCS Education and Training Section.

DFCS shall update the foster or adoptive home status in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (Georgia SHINES) accordingly (See Policy 14.15 Household Approval Status) if the required CRC and medical evaluations are not received within the above referenced time frames.

### PROCEDURES

**The County/Regional DFCS Resource Development (RD) team will:**

1. Develop a system for tracking when home re-evaluations are due for completion. If a re-evaluation is completed within thirty (30) days of the due date, then the re-evaluation date may remain the same as it was previously. However, if the re-evaluation is completed more than 30 days early or late, the re-evaluation date must change. **Note:** Homes may not have more than 12 months of approval.
2. Initiate a comprehensive re-evaluation of the household at least ninety (90) days prior to the expiration date of the current approval term. This will allow adequate time to gather medical evaluations, update criminal records, etc. if needed.
3. Provide caregivers at least ninety (90) days notice of the need for any medical evaluations or criminal records checks for themselves or household members.
4. Complete the re-evaluation by the last day of the current approval term.
5. Gather information from Case Managers who have supervised placements in the foster home during the period being evaluated.
6. Conduct CPS screenings and online background checks (i.e. Georgia SHINES, Department of Corrections Offender Query, Sexual Offender Registry, and Board of Pardons and Parole)
7. Ask caregivers if there have been any 911 calls or arrests at their home during the past twelve (12) months. Caregivers are expected to report all arrests and 911 calls to their home by the next business day following the occurrence.
8. Include all members of the caregivers' household in the re-evaluation process.
9. Include the children who have been placed in the home during the past year, the caregivers’ interaction with these children, and their ability to meet the children’s needs.
10. Gather basic data to determine present household status, including significant information on the current household, health, employment, and financial status.
11. Require proof of current motor vehicle license and insurance. Include a verification statement that the documents were reviewed and are current.
12. Examine the need for supplemental supervision to continue, if applicable.
13. Address the safety of the home environment, carefully assessing the home’s compliance with Safety and Quality Standards.
14. Review and have caregivers initial, as indicated, the DFCS Child Safety Agreement (Form 29) at each re-evaluation.
15. Address the relationship between the agency and the caregivers, including the caregivers’ ability to accept agency supervision.
16. Discuss the effects of children leaving the home and the ability of the caregivers to prepare them for leaving.
17. Discuss the caregivers’ protective capacities and their ability to continue parenting the type of children for which they were approved.
18. Review the past year’s disciplinary practices and issues.
19. Address the caregivers’ continued parent development.
20. Provide recommendations for the classification of the home, age, sex, number, and characteristics of children for whom the home is approved. Include the beginning and ending dates of approval.
21. Submit the completed re-evaluation to the RD Supervisor and County Director for approval prior to the expiration of the current approval.
22. Notify the caregivers of the approval status of their home.
23. Update information on the FA Home page in Georgia SHINES.
24. Document the re-evaluation assessment period in section 1 (From and To) in Georgia SHINES.

The approved assessor will compose the Family Re-Evaluation so that it includes (at a minimum) the following components:

General Demographic Information
1. Date on in-home consultation, date of report, date of the Director’s/Designee’s signature; new term of approval (month/day/year to month/day/year)
2. Current home address and contact information
3. List of all current household members including children placed
4. Discussion of any changes in family composition since the last evaluation

Safety
1. Discuss the results of DFCS CPS screening and online background checks (i.e. Board of Pardons and Parole, database, Sexual Offender Registry, Department of Corrections Offender Query) for all adult household members (18 years of age or older).
2. Summarize results of GCIC and NCIC criminal records checks (CRC) within 90 days of expiration of the approval term. The CRC is due five (5) years from the date of initial approval and then every five (5) years from each subsequent approval.
3. Complete DFCS Child Safety Agreement (Form 29) and have it initialed by the primary and secondary caregiver, as applicable.
4. Review the disciplinary practices used, and whether or not there were any violations of the discipline policy
5. Review any policy violations and corrective action plans (CAP)
6. Review the caregivers’ use of non-reimbursed re-occurring and non-reoccurring substitute caregivers. Discuss the frequency of use and safety information obtained on each substitute caregiver. Discuss the use of other natural support systems.

Health/Drug Screening
1. Discuss overall health and well-being of the caregivers and other household members
2. Review the results of the medical evaluation for each caregiver. The medical evaluation is due every (5) years from the date of approval.
3. Review the results of the annual medical evaluation on caregivers with health issues that impact their ability to care for children.

Finances/Employment
1. Discuss the current employment status of all adult household members and the impact of fostering on the family’s financial status.
2. Verify all sources of income and any changes in income since the last evaluation.
3. Discuss evidence of the family’s current financial stability (e.g. proof of current utility or mortgage/rent payments).
4. Examine the need for supplemental supervision to continue, if applicable.

Caregiver/Household Input
1. Conduct at least one in-home consultation.
2. Interview all caregivers, all children in the home, including foster care placement, and all other household members.
3. Obtain written input from the caregivers.
4. Obtain an updated Placement Preference Form.
5. When practical and appropriate, obtain input from children who have been placed in the home during the re-evaluation period.

Caregiver Protective Capacities
1. Address the relationship between DFCS and the caregivers, including the caregivers’ ability to accept agency supervision.
2. Discuss the caregivers’ protective capacities and their ability to continue parenting the type of children for which they were currently approved.
3. Evaluate the caregivers’ strengths and needs as it relates to the following
   a. Making an informed decision to continue/discontinue fostering (Knows the rewards and challenges faced by their family as a result of fostering, and have made a definitive choice)
   b. Teamwork and communication (Demonstrated ability to work with birth families, DFCS, and community partners to meet the needs of children)
   c. Parenting abused and/or neglected children (Demonstrated ability to understand children’s needs and issues, and the ability to help children form a positive self image)
   d. Understanding grief, loss and attachment issues for children in care (Demonstrated ability to help children identify and manage losses and form healthy relationships)
   e. Understanding, preventing, and managing misbehavior (Demonstrated ability to provide appropriate behavior management based on a child’s age and developmental and needs)
f. Supporting primary or birth family connections (Demonstrated encouragement and support of significant connections for a child)
g. Providing a safe, nurturing, and healthy environment (Demonstrated ability to meet the child’s physical, emotional, medical, dental, and psychological needs)

Placements during the Re-evaluation Period
1. List the names and placement dates of each child placed in the home since the last evaluation and the removal reason (if applicable). Include whether or not a 10-day notice was provided prior to any placements which ended in disruption. Discuss whether or not a pattern of placement disruptions is evident.
2. Gather information from SSCMs who have supervised placements in the home during the period being evaluated. Obtain feedback regarding the quality of care provided by the caregivers. Identify any areas of concern prior to the in-home visit for possible discussion with the caregivers at that time.

Update Household Information
1. Discuss general environmental conditions of the home including general housekeeping standards.
2. Address the safety of the home environment, carefully assessing the home’s compliance with Safety and Quality Standards.
3. Document sleeping arrangements, including where all current household members sleep and the type of bed in each room. Assess whether or not the configuration meets utilization standards.
4. Re-assess and ensure the following areas meet Safety and Quality Standards since the last evaluation:
   a. Presence of weapons in the home, including location and how they are secured
   b. Need for Environmental Inspection
   c. CPR and First Aid certification
   d. Functional smoke detectors on each level of the home
   e. Functional Carbon Monoxide Detectors on at least the sleeping level and on the level with an unvented gas heater, if applicable
   f. Pool and water safety standards
   g. Utilization/Need for car seats
   h. Pet vaccinations

Training
1. Confirm the caregivers’ completion of the required fifteen (15) hours of annual continued parent development for the previous calendar year.
2. List the types of classes and number of hours completed.
3. Identify the topics covered and additional parenting skills needing to be developed.
4. Confirm continued parent development activities have been scheduled for completion during the current calendar year.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Re-Evaluation Documentation
List the documents reviewed or provided for the home re-evaluation. At a minimum, the following items are required to be included annually for all adult household members (age 18 years of age or older)
1. Results of safety screening (i.e. Pardons and Parole, Department of Corrections, Sex Offender Registry screen prints
2. CPS screening clearance
3. Other attachments required by Safety and Quality Standards such as health and drug screening information should be uploaded into External Documents in Georgia SHINES

Summary of Key Information
1. Discuss key information from the caregivers’ written input and household members; discuss any need for follow-up to address concerns, if applicable.
2. Discuss key information from SSCMs’ input and any need for follow-up to address concerns, if applicable.
3. Discuss key information from the children previously placed in the home during the re-evaluation period and any need for follow-up to address concerns, if applicable.
4. Summarize key information from any CPS activity and/or policy violations during the re-evaluation period.
5. Discuss the strengths and challenges of the caregivers based upon the service history and information gathered during the re-evaluation.
6. Discuss any changes to the Placement Preferences Form.

Conclusion
1. Assess family’s service during the re-evaluation period and the impact of service on the caregiver and family.
2. Assess the family’s ability to continue to manage separation and loss issues which may be triggered by a child’s transitions.
3. Assess the caregivers’ ability to serve as a partnership or resource parent.
4. Assess the caregivers’ partnership with DFCS (and CPA, if applicable). Include an assessment of the caregivers’ willingness to act on previous recommendations or follow through with corrective action plans. Assess any community partnership issues, as applicable.
5. Assess any changes indicated to the types of placements to be made in the future.

Recommendations
1. Provide recommendations for the classification of the home (i.e. Regular Foster Home, Relative Foster Home, or Adoptive Home), age, sex, number, and characteristics of children for whom the home is approved.
2. Indicate whether or not the recommendations are different than the caregivers’ selections on the Placement Preferences Form or the previous approval. Explain the reason for the differences.

Attestation Statement
“I attest that this Family Re-evaluation was completed by a qualified assessor, the applicant(s) meet the Safety and Quality Standards, and all attachments, verifications and processes for approval have been completed.”

Required Signatures (Electronic signatures in Georgia SHINES is acceptable)
Resource Development Case Manager
Resource Development Supervisor
For Adoptive Resources, the RD Case Manager will also:

1. Describe efforts to identify a placement match.
2. List the dates of contacts with the caregivers, including formal presentations of potential placement matches. Describe the reasons the family declined placements, if applicable.
3. Describe information provided to the family to assist them with self-identifying placement matches (e.g. invitations to events, providing instructions to online photo listings, etc.)

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The assessment of an approved home is an ongoing process between DFCS and caregivers. A home re-evaluation may be completed at any time during an approved home’s one year approval period, but is usually completed just prior to the expiration of the current approval period. The key purpose of the re-assessment is to utilize information gathered during the approval term to determine if a home continues to be a safe and suitable environment for the placement of children in foster care, and meets Safety and Quality Standards. Information gathered from various sources (i.e. in-home consultation, written input from caregivers, case managers, children placed in the home, documentation, safety screening, training logs) is used to conduct a holistic review of the caregiver and household.

Required Safety Screens

1. Criminal Records Checks (CRC) through the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) [Every five years]
2. Georgia DFCS Child Protective Services (CPS) Records
3. Georgia Sex Offender Registry
4. Georgia Bureau of Pardons and Parole
5. Georgia Department of Corrections

Medical and Drug Screening

Caregivers must complete a comprehensive medical review every five (5) years after initial approval. The medical review must be completed annually by caregivers with health issues that may impact their ability to care for children placed in their home. Other household members must complete a health screen.

The comprehensive medical reviews and health screens must be completed and signed by a licensed physician, physician’s assistant, or public health department. Caregivers must utilize the Comprehensive Medical Report (Form 36). Other household members must utilize the Health Statement (Form 36-A).

The drug screen must include a test for Marijuana/Cannabinoids (THC), Cocaine, Amphetamines/Methamphetamines, Opiates, Ecstasy, and Phencyclidine (PCP). It must be conducted and signed by a qualified health professional or laboratory. The report must show no evidence of illicit drug use was detected for an applicant to be considered for approval.

Caregiver Input on the Re-evaluation

In addition to re-evaluations reflecting a comprehensive review of the overall quality and
functioning of the foster home, re-evaluations are also an opportunity for caregivers to formally share insight from their perspective. Caregivers describe their reactions to providing foster care and the impact it has had on them and the members of their family. Caregivers address the stresses and benefits, as well as their role in the child’s foster care experience over the past year. Caregivers provide their perception of the support the agency has offered, of the supervisory contacts, and of their role as a member of the foster care team. In addition, caregivers provide input regarding training needs and issues. Moreover, caregivers share their views about birth parents, contacts with birth parents, and parent/child visits during the past year.

**Re-occurring Criminal Records Checks**
Criminal records checks (CRC) are required for caregivers and all adult household members (age 18 and over) at least once every five (5) years after initial approval. If a household member reaches age 18 during the approval period, a CRC must be completed by the next re-evaluation due date. If a household member reaches age 18 less than 90 days prior to the re-evaluation due date, the CRC is due within 90 days of the 18th birthday. Document the results of the CRC on the Records Check Detail page in Georgia SHINES (See Policy 14.10 Criminal Records Checks for guidelines). *Unreadable fingerprints* must be submitted to GCIC and NCIC for processing **twice** before a waiver can be granted for a "name check only" (with date of birth and Social Security Number) due to unreadable prints. The DFCS Regional Director has the authority to approve waivers for unreadable prints, those of the elderly or disabled who reside in otherwise approved homes, and any other CRC waivers. The approved waiver must be documented in Georgia SHINES (See Policy 14.10 Criminal Records Checks).

### FORMS AND TOOLS

| Form 29 | DFCS Child Safety Agreement |
| Form 36 | Comprehensive Medical report **Pending** |
| Form 36-A | Household Member Health Statement **Pending** |
| Form 44 | Financial Statement |
| Form 404 | Criminal Records Check |
| Form XX | CPS Screening Form **Pending** |
| Form XX | Placement Preferences **Pending** |