

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION  
ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

CHAPTER 660-5-29  
MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR FOSTER FAMILY HOMES

660-5-29-.03      Physical Facilities.

(1) General.

(a) The home and grounds shall be maintained in a clean and safe condition.

1. A play space for indoor and outdoor activities will be provided. This area should be free from hazardous conditions that may cause injury.

2. The residence shall have a working telephone. Temporary disruptions of service shall be reported to the approving agency within 24 hours;

3. Electrical service.

4. Water.

5. Gas (If used for cooking/heating).

6. A waste disposal system (city sewage or septic tank).

7. Ventilation. If fans are used for ventilation, blades within reach of children shall be clean and enclosed for safety;

8. Comfortably regulated cooling and heating;

9. Lighting that provides for necessary activities and safety.

(2) Bedrooms and Bathrooms.

(a) Beds and mattresses shall be of size and quality to allow good sleeping posture. In addition, if infants will be placed in the home, additional guidelines shall be followed related to baby cribs. They are:

1. Slats on babies' cribs shall be no further apart than 2 3/8 inches.

2. Mattresses must be waterproof and fit tightly inside cribs, no more than two finger widths between mattress and each end of the bed.

3. Cribs and mattresses shall be kept clean and disinfected.

4. There be a distance of (3) three feet between babies' cribs.

(b) Separate sleeping rooms shall be provided for children over age 6 who are of the opposite sex.

(c) An adequate number of bedrooms shall be provided for all persons residing in the home.

(d) Bedrooms for foster children shall be used only for the child's sleeping, personal time, and study.

(e) Bedrooms for foster children shall have adequate space for the child's personal belongings.

(f) Sanitary bathroom facilities that provide privacy shall be available for use by family members and foster children.

(g) Accommodations shall be available for the special care of sick members of the family and foster children.

(3) Safety - General.

(a) A fence shall enclose the play area when there are hazards, such as, but not limited to bodies of water and dangerous highways, in the immediate neighborhood that would place a child's health and safety at risk.

(b) Chemicals and poisons that include, but are not limited to, pesticides, herbicides and pool chemicals, shall be stored in a locked storage area.

(c) There shall be adequate and appropriate facilities for the storage, protection, preparation, and serving of food.

(d) There shall be a safe water supply, with water temperature no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

(e) Decals at child's eye level shall be placed on all clear glass doors, (e.g., patio doors, storm doors).

(f) Handrails within a child's reach shall be placed on all stairs used by children.

(g) All guns/firearms must be unloaded and shall be kept in a locked storage area that is inaccessible to children.

(h) All ammunition for guns/firearms shall be kept in a locked storage area that is separate from the guns/firearms and is inaccessible to children..

(i) All medications shall be secured in a locked storage area that is inaccessible to children.

(j) There shall not be anything that constitutes a hazard on the property. This includes, but is not limited to, abandoned automobiles, unlocked or abandoned household appliances, uncovered wells and cisterns, stacked lumber with exposed nails, or explosives.

(k) There shall be appropriate safeguards against potential hazards. This includes, but is not limited to, protection for children from heaters with open flames; use of or being near cooking ranges when in use; tools and machinery shall be kept in an area where children cannot get to them or use them without supervision.

(l) If toddlers (approximate ages of 1 to 4 years) will be placed in the home, additional guidelines must be followed. They are:

1. Protective covers shall be placed over all exposed electrical outlets. The covers shall be large enough to prevent swallowing; and

2. Safety gates will be placed at the top and bottom of stairs.

(4) Safety - Swimming Pool and Hot Tub.

(a) General:

1. Pools shall be maintained in clean and safe condition.

2. Foster parents shall develop rules governing pool, hot tub and/or spa use. Rules shall be posted and reviewed with each child.

(b) Pools exceeding two (2) feet in depth (above or in ground):

1. Shall be enclosed by a fence or a solid wall that has no doors, windows, or other openings. The sides of an above ground pool shall not be considered a fence or wall. The fence shall be at least four (4) feet in height, with a locking gate. The gate and all areas of access shall remain locked at all time the pool is not in use.

(i) If children are allowed in the pool area, additional supervision shall be required. The adult to child ratio shall be:

(I) One adult caregiver for each child younger than 2 1/2;

(II) One adult caregiver for every three (3) children 2 1/2 years up to 6 years of age;

(III) One adult caregiver to every five (5) children 6 years of age and older.

(ii) Direct supervision by a person age 16 or older certified in First Aid/CPR, including Pediatric CPR, and certified in water safety shall be required at all times when children are using swimming pools or playing in the fenced in area.

(iii) The pool shall be maintained in a clean and safe condition.

2. Shall be equipped with a ring buoy, rescue tube, or other appropriate flotation device with an attached rope of sufficient length to cover the pool;

3. Shall have depth markers, lifelines, ladders or steps in the deep and shallow ends;

4. Shall have the steps or ladders removed on above ground pool when the pool is not in use;

(c) Wading pools (less than 2 feet in depth).

1. When wading pools are being used, there shall be continuous supervision at all times by an adult;

2. Wading pools shall be filled with clean water prior to each use and shall be emptied when not in use.

(d) Spas and hot tubs

1. Hot tubs and spas that are not emptied after each use shall have a safety cover that is locked when not in use;

2. Hot tubs and spas used by foster children shall be operated at a water temperature not exceeding 104 degrees Fahrenheit;

3. The maximum continuous time foster children shall be allowed in a hot tub or a spa is 15 minutes, to be monitored by clocks or timers; and

4. Persons who suffer from any medical conditions that may be adversely affected by use of a hot tub or spa, including, but not limited to, heart conditions,

diabetes, or high blood pressure, shall not use the spa without a doctor's written consent.

(5) Safety - Health and Fire.

(a) All maintenance that is required for foster family home to be in compliance with health and fire safety standards shall be the responsibility of the foster parent(s).

(b) Inspections by the State or local health department shall be required as determined necessary by the Department of Human Resources, the licensed child-placing agency, or the foster parents.

(c) Inspections by the State Fire Marshal's Office or local fire department shall be required as determined necessary by the Department, the licensed child-placing agency, or the foster parent(s).

(d) Smoke alarms, powered by the building electrical system or battery powered, shall be installed and maintained in working order and shall be located in the following areas:

1. Outside each separate sleeping area and in the immediate vicinity (within 10 feet) of the sleeping rooms. Alarms shall be no more than 30 feet apart in hallways outside sleeping rooms.

2. At the head of the stairway on each additional story of the dwelling unit, including basements.

(e) A 2A-10BC dry chemical fire extinguisher no less than 5 pounds in weight, shall be installed and maintained in operating condition, in an accessible place, in plain view near room exits which provide an escape route. It is the responsibility of the foster care provider to maintain the fire extinguisher in operating condition.

(f) No stove or combustion heater shall be so located as to block escape if a fire occurs from malfunctioning of the stove or heater;

(g) Each bedroom shall have a window through which a child can exit in the event of a fire that blocks exit through the door. If the bedroom is on an upper floor, a ladder that can be used for exit through the window shall be supplied in the bedroom;

(h) The home shall be free of dangers which constitute an obvious fire hazard, such as faulty electrical cords, overloaded electrical sockets or an accumulation of papers, paint or other flammable material stored in the home.

(i) Unvented fuel fire space heaters shall not be used unless listed in the Building and Fire codes and have been inspected by a person/official knowledgeable and trained in examining the proper function of unvented fuel fire space heaters. This may be a person, firm, or cooperation that installs, repairs or provides maintenance for heat producing devices. These heaters must comply with the provisions of the NFPA 54 (Fuel Gas Codes) and be equipped with oxygen depletion safety devices. Written documentation (received from the inspector) will need to be maintained in the foster family home resource record.

Unvented fuel fire space heaters are prohibited in bedrooms and bathrooms. Any home with an unvented fuel fire space heater in the bedroom or bathroom must have the heater disconnected and/or removed from the bedroom or bathroom. Unvented fuel fire space heaters may not be used in manufactured homes, unless the heater has been manufactured for use in a manufactured home and is so listed.

A foster family home with an unvented fuel fire space heater that complies with the Fuel Gas Codes can only be approved for three foster care children. No exceptions will be granted. For fire code purposes a home qualifies as a single-family dwelling only if members of a single family occupy the dwelling and there is no more than three unrelated people residing in the home.

(j) All mobile homes shall conform to the National Mobile Home Construction and Safety Standard Act of 1974. An aluminum plate permanently attached to the mobile home will indicate conformity with the 1974 Act. Mobile homes shall comply with anchoring and tie-down requirements as specified by Code of Ala. 1975, §§24-5-30 through 24-5-34. Foster family home parents shall provide documentation from installer that requirements are met.

(6) Emergency Plan.

(a) Each home shall develop a fire evacuation plan and a plan to be implemented in the threat of a natural disaster (such as a tornado warning). The foster parents shall assure that, consistent with their ability to comprehend, foster children understand the plan. The plan will include, but is not limited to, instructions about the following:

1. When to dial 911.
2. A description of two or more means of exit from each floor level used for sleeping by foster children.
3. When to open the door into a hall and when to exit through a window.

4. The designation of a central meeting place outside the home.
5. A means of evacuating children who need assistance.
6. Leaving personal belongings behind in a situation that is a threat to safety.
7. Other emergency procedures:

(i) The licensee shall maintain a list of names and telephone numbers, posted by the telephone for emergency situations. The list shall include the name and telephone number of each child's parent(s)/guardian(s) (if applicable), each child's doctor, law enforcement, fire department, hospital, poison control, Department of Human Resources, caregivers, and substitutes.

(ii) A plan for the evacuation and care of the children in case of fire, tornado, serious accident or injury, or power failure shall be established and posted in a conspicuous place in the home. The licensee shall inform substitutes and all caregiver(s) of his/her duties and responsibilities in case of emergency. A written statement, signed by each substitute and caregiver, verifying that he/she has been informed of emergency procedures shall be on file in the home.

(iii) The licensee and each caregiver shall have current Infant-Child Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Certificate (CPR) from the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association or the National Safety Council and a current First Aid Certificate. Copies of the certificates shall be on file in the home.

(iv) The licensee shall post the Poison Control Center's toll free number on or near the telephone. The toll free number is 1-800-462-0800. When a child is suspected to have swallowed a toxic substance, the licensee shall immediately contact the poison control center. Documentation of the poison control center's instructions shall be placed in the child's file with the date, time, and details of the incident.

(7) Cleanliness.

(a) Home Dwelling

1. The house shall be clean overall;

2. The house shall be maintained so as to prevent and/or eliminate rodent and insect infestation. This includes the presence of screens on doors and windows if used for ventilation;

3. Outside garbage and trash shall be stored in containers with lids;

4. Garbage and trash shall be removed at intervals to avoid creating a nuisance or menace to health.

(b) Animals in the Home

1. An animal shall not be kept if the animal has shown aggressive behavior.

2. Animals shall have an annual certificate of rabies vaccination on file in the home if required by law to be vaccinated.

3. An animal that is not aggressive but could pose a threat to the health and safety of children such as, but not limited to lizards, snakes and turtles, shall be routinely confined (e.g., a cage or an aquarium) in an appropriate container.

4. Children may be allowed to handle pets if determined that it is reasonably safe to do so.

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**Statutory Authority:** Child Care Act of 1971 (Title 38, Chapter 7, Code of Ala. 1975,) with specific reference to §§38-7-2, 38-7-3, 38-7-4, 38-7-8, 38-7-10; Title 38, Chapter 13, §§1-12, Code of Ala. 1975; Title 41, Chapter 22, §§1-27, Code of Ala. 1975; 12-15-65 and 26-14-1; Federal Court Orders in reference to the R.C. v. Fuller case (R.C. v. Hornsby, No. 88-H-1170-N, Consent Decree) (M.D. Ala. Approved December 18, 1991), Pub. L. No. 89-105, the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

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