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From: [REDACTED]@vermont.gov>
To:
Date: 09/08/2023 1:46 PM EDT
Subject: Important Foster/Kinship Regulation Changes- Please Read



Department for Children and Families Family Services
Division Agency of Human Services
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Waterbury, VT 05671-1030

Greetings Vermont Caregivers,

The Family Services Division has been shining a spotlight on issues of justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in our practice. We are grateful to have so many amazing foster and kinship families that have paved the way by providing affirming care to Vermont's most vulnerable youth. We know that providing safe, affirming, accepting and welcoming homes benefits all youth and it has the power to save lives! Thank you for your willingness and desire to learn and grow with our youth. Here are some changes that we wanted to let you know.

The Division expects that our licensed foster parents will respect the worth of all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Eligibility for licensure is dependent on foster parents and applicants being able to support youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, or another diverse identity (LGBTQI+) even if the foster parents hold divergent personal opinions or beliefs. Both federal and state law and FSD policy have long provided the foundation for this stance.

Research has demonstrated that LGBTQI+ youth in foster care have higher than average negative outcomes, to include substance abuse, human trafficking, and suicide. By ensuring our foster parents to be affirming of the sexual orientation and gender identities of foster children and youth, we can improve outcomes for this group of kids in our care, to be on par with their heterosexual and cis-gendered peers (refers to a gender identity that matches

the sex assigned at birth). As well, it is a human right for all to be valued and supported, regardless of one's sexual orientation or gender identity. The Division upholds that expectation.

We know that a child or youth may not share their sexual orientation or gender identity, even if asked. Further still, with the understanding that many children may not have fully figured out their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, an honestly answered question today may not reflect the honest feelings of those same children the next day. That given, it is our responsibility to ensure all children and youth will reside in a home with caregivers who are committed to fully embracing and holistically affirming and supporting them regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The Division needs to be assured that the foster and kin care homes selected for our children and youth can honor these personal facets of their being when they choose to share them with us.

In order to support LGBTQ youth in foster care we have implemented new licensing rules for all foster caregivers. The new **Licensing Rules for Foster Homes in Vermont** explicitly prohibit licensed foster parents from discriminating against foster children based on sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as other personal characteristics.

This topic will be explored as part of the standard licensing and renewal processes.

All licensed caregivers should expect to receive a revised version of the Licensing Regulations for Foster Homes in Vermont booklet in the mail. Regulation numbers 35, 200, 201, and 315 were revised to come into alignment with the position we hold as a division.

Please review this link to the Child Welfare Information Gateway where you can find some excellent resources for [Working With LGBTQ+ Youth and Families](#). If you have further questions or you need more information, please reach out to your Resource Coordinator.

Thank You for your continued support of Vermont kids.

With Gratitude and Appreciation,

Aryka Radke DCF FSD

Deputy Commissioner

And

Brenda Gooley DCF FSD

Director of Operations

