

Chapter 5

COMPLETING A UNIFIED HOME STUDY

5-1. Purpose. The “Unified Home Study (UHS)” provides for the assessment of a common set of requirements that must be met when the department places a child into someone’s home, whether a relative/non-relative, foster care or adoptive home. The Unified Home Study created and approved in FSFN provides the department’s formal assessment of any type of out-of-home provider. The requirements for home studies of non-maltreating parents are provided in CFOP 170-7, [Chapter 5](#).

a. Any type of home study assesses the following:

(1) The caregiver(s) are able to provide a safe and nurturing environment for a child or siblings.

(2) The physical environment provides for safe and reasonable accommodations for the child.

(3) The caregiver(s) possess adequate financial resources to care for the child.

(4) There is nothing in the background history of the caregiver(s) or household member(s) that is a current concern or disqualifies them from providing care.

(5) Whether the caregiver(s) need further support or assistance.

b. This operating procedure applies to any child welfare professional responsible for investigations, case management, intake, placement, licensing or adoption. The procedures and timeframes also apply to child welfare professionals responding to home study requests from other counties.

5-2. Legal Authority.

a. U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [Joint Federal Guidance Letter](#), October 19, 2016, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

b. Sections [39.401\(2\)\(a\)](#), [39.5085\(2\)\(o\)](#), [63.092](#), [409.175](#), F.S.

c. Chapter [65C-13](#), F.A.C.

d. Chapter [65C-16](#), F.A.C.

e. Rules [65C-28.001](#), [65C-28.004](#), [65C-28.008](#), F.A.C.

f. Rule [65C-30.011](#), F.A.C.

5-3. Definitions.

a. “Emergency Placement” means that a child must be placed due to exigent circumstances. Emergency Placement UHS may only be completed by Child Protective Investigators and Child Protective Investigator Supervisors.

b. “Exigent Circumstances” defined in Rule [65C-30.01\(42\)](#), F.A.C., means situations in which it is anticipated that a child will be placed with a relative or non-relative within 72 hours.

c. "Planned Placement" means that the child's placement will change, however, not immediately. The home study will be completed prior to the child's placement. A planned placement includes the following:

- (1) Placement with a relative/non-relative.
- (2) Pre-adoption with a relative/non-relative.

d. "Non-relative" means a person who is not defined as a relative pursuant to s. [39.01\(66\)](#), F.S. The term includes a stepparent.

e. "Relative" defined in s. [39.01\(66\)](#), F.S., means a grandparent, great-grandparent, sibling, first cousin, aunt, uncle, great-aunt, great-uncle, niece or nephew, whether related by the whole or half-blood, by affinity, or by adoption. The term does not include a stepparent.

f. "Unified Home Study (UHS)" is the method supported in FSFN for documenting the home study of a relative/non-relative caregiver, an applicant for a foster care license or a prospective adoption applicant.

5-4. General Requirements.

a. The child welfare professional will collect and assess information to determine if the potential caregiver(s) will be able to care for and protect a child placed in their care. Care and supervision includes meeting a child's education, medical, mental health and special needs.

b. The child welfare professional will complete a UHS for the following purposes:

- (1) Emergency Placement.
- (2) Relative/Non-Relative Placement.
- (3) Licensing for Foster Homes.
- (4) Adoption Placement.

c. The child welfare professional must ask if any of the persons to be interviewed have a need for communication assistance. If so, the child welfare professional must take the following actions:

(1) Ask the individuals what device(s) or interpreters are needed in order to participate in an interview.

(2) Inform the individual that they may provide an interpreter of their own choosing, or the child welfare professional's agency will provide one at no cost.

(3) If an individual would prefer to have a friend or family member serve as an interpreter, the individual should be advised that confidential and private information will be discussed during the interview, such as medical, mental health and financial details. The individual should also be advised to consider whether their friend or family member responsible for interpreting might have a possible conflict of interest.

(4) Take reasonable steps to ensure that communication assistance is provided. The child welfare professional may use the DCF web page on [Auxiliary Aids and Service Plan](#) to locate appropriate assistance.

d. If the child is of American Indian or Alaskan Native descent, the child welfare professional must refer to requirements in Rule [65C-28.013](#), F.A.C. These requirements ensure that the placement complies with the Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. §1901 et seq.

e. For all UHS types, the child welfare professional will obtain, assess and document background checks in accordance with [Chapter 6](#) of this operating procedure.

f. For the initial foster home license and re-license, the home study determines the number of children that the caregiver(s) will be able to care for and supervise.

g. Child-Specific Information. For all home study types except the initial foster home license, the child welfare professional will collect child-specific information to determine if the potential caregiver(s) will be able to care for and protect an identified child or sibling group. Child-specific information includes the following:

(1) What are the needs of the sibling group?

(2) What are the child's special medical and emotional needs? Are there any fears the child has? Does the child have any behaviors that the caregiver(s) should know about? Could the child harm other children or persons in a new setting? Does the child have any self-harm behaviors?

(3) Does the child have allergies or other medical conditions? Is the child taking any medications and what is the frequency and dosage? What is the purpose of the medication? What is the name of any treatment provider(s)?

(4) Is the child of American Indian or Alaskan Native descent? If yes, which tribe is the child associated with?

(5) Does the child receive child care? If yes, who is the child care provider?

(6) Where does the child attend school? What is the child's grade level? Does the child have any educational needs that will be important for the prospective caregiver(s) to address?

(7) How does the child feel about living with the prospective caregiver(s)? What is the strength of the current relationship that the child has with the prospective caregiver(s)? Has/have the prospective caregiver(s) protected the child in the past? How frequently has/have the caregiver(s) cared for the child in the caregiver(s)' home.

h. Caregiver Demographics. The child welfare professional must gather demographic information about all household members and others who provide care of the child outside of the parent's ability to provide sight and sound supervision. The child welfare professional will complete all fields in the "Demographics" Tab of the UHS.

i. Financial Security Resources and Child Care Arrangement. The child welfare professional must ask for details about the current financial situation of the caregiver(s). This information will be documented in the "Financial Security Resources and Child Care Arrangement" Tab of the UHS in FSFN. The child welfare professional must have a frank and open discussion with the caregiver(s) about the family's needs for financial assistance. The child welfare professional must discuss the following options so that the prospective caregiver(s) can make the best choice for the child:

(1) Is/are the caregiver(s) willing and able to care for the child without any financial assistance?

(2) If eligible, would the caregiver(s) be willing to apply for a TANF child-only grant or, if eligible, assistance under the Relative Caregiver Program or the Non-Relative Caregiver Program? If yes, would they be willing to cooperate with Child Support Enforcement Program?

(3) Will caregiver(s) need assistance with the costs of childcare?

(4) Other local resources and supports available for caregiver(s).

j. Assessment of Caregiver(s). The child welfare professional will document the assessment of the caregiver(s) in the "Narrative Family Assessment" Tab of the UHS. For all home study types except the initial foster home license, the assessment of the caregiver(s) will be based on the needs of a specific child or sibling group. The documentation of caregiver capacity must explain how the caregiver(s) will meet specific child needs.

(1) Explain any experiences with child abuse or neglect; alcohol and/or substance abuse treatment; or domestic violence. Describe whether the history, if any, involved either of the parent(s) of the child being placed or the child. Explain how experiences may positively or negatively impact the ability of the caregiver(s) to care for and protect the child(ren).

(2) Explain any caregiver health or mental health conditions that may interfere with the ability of the caregiver(s) to care for the child. Explain how the caregiver will address any challenges. For example, the caregiver takes medications that may result in drowsiness, causing restrictions in the caregiver's availability for driving a vehicle; or the caregiver has significant individual needs that might affect the safety of the child such as severe depression, lack of impulse control, medical needs, other current caregiving demands, etc.

(3) Explain the caregiver(s)' willingness to participate on a team to support the child's safety, permanency and well-being needs. Teamwork includes sharing information with team members. It includes, but is not limited to, participating in planning activities and court hearings.

(4) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to commit to child safety and well-being, including but not limited to the following:

(a) Providing appropriate supervision and positive methods of discipline;

(b) Encouraging the child in his/her strengths; respecting the child's individuality and likes and dislikes;

(c) Providing opportunities to develop the child's interests and skills;

(d) Maintaining awareness of the impact of trauma on behavior;

(e) Involving the child in family and community activities;

(f) Providing transportation to school, child care, extracurricular activities, etc.;

and,

(g) Ensuring child safety by employing appropriate physical safety measures, including in the household, for transportation and with pets.

(5) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to make a loving commitment to the child(ren)'s safety and well-being. This includes, but is not limited to:

(a) Respecting and honoring any child's culture, religion and ethnicity.

(b) Adapting to and supporting any child's individual situation, including and family relationships.

(6) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to commit to maintaining any child they accept in their home until such time as it is in the child's best interest to leave the home.

(7) Explain how the caregiver(s) will address challenges in caring for the child or sibling group, including available supports and resources.

(a) These challenges may include, but are not limited to, behaviors that are a significant threat to others, juvenile sexual abuse, problematic sexual behavior, severe self-harm behavior, etc. If the caregiver is a relative/non-relative, identify whether the caregiver(s) is(are) willing to implement a Child Placement Agreement.

(b) The caregiver is caring for other children or adults which results in significant demands on their time.

(c) The caregiver is caring for family members with mental health or medical conditions that might result in harm to the child.

(8) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able, in appropriate circumstances, to participate in transition planning for any child, as well as maintaining a relationship with the child after he/she leaves the home. This item is not required for an Emergency Placement Home Study unless the placement involves an immediate change of school, separation of a sibling group or other major disruption of a child's current routines.

(9) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to assist the biological caregivers in improving their ability to care for and protect their child(ren) and to provide continuity for the child(ren) after reunification.

(10) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to assist the child(ren) in family time/visitation and other forms of communication with family members when appropriate. As appropriate at the time the home study is completed, this includes ongoing communication with family members after a child's permanency goal is achieved.

(11) Explain how the caregiver(s) will assist with maintaining child resource records, medical records, school records, photographs and records of special events and achievements. This item is not required for an Emergency Placement Home Study unless there are known circumstances that will involve specific documentation for a child's medical or educational record.

(12) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to advocate for the child(ren) as needed with the child welfare system, the court and community agencies, including schools, child care, health and mental health providers, and employers. Describe previous parent experience, if applicable. This item is not required for an Emergency Placement Home Study unless there are known circumstances that require special advocacy; for example, a child needs an Individual Education Plan (IEP) established or a child needs a different treatment provider for a current condition that is not improving.

(13) Explain how the willingness and ability of the caregiver(s) to participate fully in any child's medical, educational, psychological and dental care. This includes providing transportation, attending appointments and communicating with professionals.

(14) Explain how the caregiver(s) is(are) willing and able to support the child(ren)'s school success. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(a) Participating in school activities and meetings including disciplinary and/or IEP meetings.

(b) Assisting with school assignments, supporting tutoring programs, meeting with teachers and working with an education surrogate if one has been appointed.

(c) Encouraging and supporting the child's participation in extra-curricular activities.

(d) For any child who has a disability or is suspected of having a disability, attending Educational Surrogate Parent training, if needed or recommended by the court; and thereafter advocating for the child(ren) in the school system.

(e) Maintaining the child(ren) in the school of origin, if it is in the child(ren)'s best interest to do so.

(f) If age appropriate, maintaining the child(ren) in the school of origin until an appropriate grading break in the academic year, if not possible or not in the child(ren)'s best interest to remain in the school of origin for the remainders of the school year.

(g) If age appropriate, maintaining the child(ren) in the child care setting until an appropriate break in the year, if not possible or not in the child(ren)'s best interest to remain in the child care setting.

k. Overall Functioning of Family and Capacity to Provide a Safe, Stable and Appropriate Placement. This includes a description of the following areas:

(1) Caregiver Motivation. Assess the motivation and ability of the caregiver(s) to protect the child(ren). This will be documented in the "Motivation" group box of the Narrative Family Assessment Tab of the UHS. If the home study is for a specific child, this includes but is not limited to the following:

(a) What is the alignment of the caregiver(s) with the child?

(b) What is the understanding of the caregiver(s) of the danger threats that make the child unsafe?

(c) What is the commitment of the caregiver(s) to implement and adhere to the safety plan?

(d) What is the willingness of the caregiver(s) to help the child achieve permanency?

(2) Education and Employment. The child welfare professional must describe how the caregiver(s)' education, special training or employment history helps prepare them to care for a child. Discuss whether the caregiver may have any challenges including, but not limited to, the caregiver(s)' past difficulties in school, a specific learning disability or his/her current work schedule. This will be documented in the "Education and Employment" group box of the Narrative Family Assessment Tab of the UHS.

(3) Family Life. The child welfare professional must describe relationships between household members, extended family and friends. Identify the family's formal and informal support systems, including planned childcare arrangements. Briefly discuss the children who already live in the home in terms of grade level, any special needs or behavioral challenges. This will be documented in the "Family Life" group box of the Narrative Family Assessment Tab of the UHS. This item is not required for an Emergency Placement Home Study.

(4) Physical Environment. Discuss the physical environment, including a description of the home; address the interior, exterior, number of rooms, bathrooms, etc., sleeping arrangements and accommodations for child(ren)'s personal belongings. This will be documented in the "Physical Environment" group box of the Narrative Family Assessment Tab of the UHS. The home study must identify any changes needed to accommodate the child(ren).

(5) Reference and Reviews. The Child Welfare Professional will complete a minimum of two references regarding the family's ability to meet the needs of the child.

5-5. Providing Information on Firearms Safety, Water Safety and Safe Sleep. For any type of home study, the child welfare professional must review and discuss the following safety information with the caregiver(s):

a. "Firearms Safety Requirements," form CF-FSP [5343](#) (available in DCF Forms). This is based on s. [790.174](#), F.S., which requires anyone who owns or stores a loaded firearm to keep it in a locked place secure from any minor who could gain access to it without lawful permission.

(1) The child welfare professional must discuss any specific observations or information learned about safety issues associated with firearms owned by the caregiver. The discussion should be documented in Case Notes.

(2) If there are no concerns about firearms safety, the child welfare professional must not document any information that the caregiver(s) owns firearms. This will ensure compliance with s. [790.335](#), F.S.

b. "Water Safety" practices for the supervision of children when they have access to a pool, lake or other body of water. Resources are available on the department's internet page under [Water Safety for Kids](#).

c. "Safe Sleep" practices for infants. The child welfare professional will share written information whenever applicable. Resources are available on the department's internet page as follows:

(1) [Safe Sleep Practices for Caregivers](#).

(2) The brochure "[Keep Your Kids Safe](#)".

5-6. Caregiver(s) Review of Home Study Information and Signatures. This paragraph applies to all home study types.

a. The child welfare professional must provide the caregiver(s) with an opportunity to review the information that the child welfare professional has documented in the home study. The caregiver(s)' signature(s) provides attestation that the information shared by the caregiver(s) is accurate as of the date that their signature is provided. The caregiver(s) will also indicate on the copy of the home study they sign that the information in paragraph 5-5 of this operating procedure has been provided to them.

(1) If communication assistance was necessary for the interviews conducted, the child welfare professional will provide the caregiver(s) with a translated copy of the home study to sign, if appropriate.

(2) For all home study types, the child welfare professional will complete all required fields on the UHS pages in FSFN and launch and print a copy for the caregiver(s) to review and sign.

b. The child welfare professional should advise the caregiver(s) of the following:

(1) Any concerns that might affect the anticipated outcome of the home study if known at the time.

(2) If the child is not already in the household where the home study was completed and the proposed out-of-home caregiver is not selected, the proposed caregiver will be verbally advised by the child welfare professional within three (3) business days of the supervisor's decision.

c. The child welfare professional will upload a copy of the home study signature page with the caregiver(s) signature(s) to the UHS page in FSFN within two business days of receiving the signature(s).

5-7. Child Welfare Professional's Recommended Outcomes.

a. After caregiver signatures have been obtained to attest to the information provided, the child welfare professional will use the FSFN UHS page to recommend the outcome of the home study. The child welfare professional's recommended outcome will not be final until a supervisor reviews and approves the home study in FSFN per paragraph 5-8 of this operating procedure.

(1) The recommended outcome must be based upon the information gathered by the child welfare professional and whether the caregiver(s) will be able to provide the care, nurturing and protection that a child will need.

(2) When the home study is for a specific child, the child welfare professional must determine if the placement is the best, individualized placement available for the child.

(3) The child welfare professional must not recommend a denial of any individual on the basis of race, color or national origin of the relative/non-relative, foster or adoptive parent, or the child involved.

b. The child welfare professional will select a recommended outcome.

(1) "Denied" based on one or more of the following:

(a) "Criminal Disqualifier" means that, based upon criminal history, the child welfare professional does not recommend placement of the child(ren) with the caregiver(s); this

includes automatic and 5 year disqualifiers as defined in s. [39.0138](#), F.S. See paragraph 5-9 of this operating procedure, Emergency Placement Home Studies, or paragraph 5-10 of this operating procedure, Planned Placements and Updating Home Studies.

(b) "FSFN Disqualifier" means the child welfare professional has determined that, based upon information reviewed in FSFN, placement in this home is not in the best interest of the child(ren).

(c) "Review Comments" means that there are other reasons which are the basis for the child welfare professional's determination that placement in this home is not in the best interest of the child(ren).

(2) "Recommended" means that the child welfare professional has determined that both of the following conditions exist:

(a) The caregiver(s) meet home study requirements.

(b) Placement in this home is in the best interest of the child(ren) (all home study types except the initial foster home license).

c. After the child welfare professional has selected the recommended outcome on the FSFN page, he/she must launch the UHS and submit it for supervisory approval. All of the fields on the home study pages must have information entered in order to submit a "completed" home study to a supervisor for approval.

5-8. Supervisor Second Level of Approval or Denial of Home Study.

a. The supervisor or designee will review the home study in FSFN to determine that appropriate interviews, background checks and analysis, and assessment of caregiver(s) to provide adequate care and supervision have been completed. The supervisor or designee shall not be the same individual who completes the initial child welfare home study recommendation.

b. The supervisor has the authority to approve or deny a completed home study. The supervisor must use the FSFN UHS module to record the final decision and completion date for all home study types. In the General Information group box on the FSFN UHS page, the supervisor will select an appropriate conclusion from the Outcome drop down choices:

(1) "Application Withdrawn" means that the caregiver(s) decided to not continue with the home study process.

(2) "Approved – Meets Requirements" means that the child welfare professional has determined that the caregiver(s) meet all requirements without the need for any support or assistance at this time.

(3) "Approved – Review Comments" means that the child welfare professional has determined that the caregiver(s) meet the requirements based on specific services or resources that must be available to care for the child.

(4) "Denied – Review Comments" means that the child welfare professional has determined that the caregiver does NOT meet the requirements needed to care for the child. If a supervisor denies a home study, he/she will document the reason in a FSFN UHS Outcome Box.

c. After the supervisor has approved or denied the home study in FSFN, the child welfare professional will complete the following actions:

(1) For an initial foster home license or renewal follow procedures in Chapter [65C-13](#), F.A.C., to obtain caregiver signatures on the final copy.

(2) For an adoption home study, follow procedures in Chapter [65C-16](#), F.A.C., to obtain caregiver signatures on the final copy.

(3) For all home study types, the child welfare professional and the supervisor must sign the home study.

(4) A Licensing Agency executive director or their designee will sign any home study for initial and re-licensing foster care or adoption.

(5) Submit a copy of the signed home study to Children Legal Services (CLS) to file with the court.

(6) Regardless of the supervisor's decision, provide a copy of the signed home study to the caregiver(s) within five business days.

5-9. Emergency Placement Home Studies.

a. The child protective investigator must complete an Emergency Placement home study when a child needs an emergency placement with a relative/non-relative. Prior to placing the child(ren) in the home, the child welfare professional must perform the following tasks:

(1) Obtain and assess background checks per requirements in [Chapter 6](#) of this operating procedure.

(2) Gather child information to the extent possible per paragraph 5-4 of this operating procedure.

(3) Interview the prospective caregiver(s) to discuss the following:

(a) The danger threats creating the child(ren)'s need for out-of-home care.

(b) Any special medical needs the child has, including current medications.

(c) The ability and willingness of the caregiver(s) to protect and care for the child.

(d) The shelter process.

(e) Conduct a walk-through of the home and discuss the child's sleeping arrangements.

(4) Prior to the child's placement, obtain the supervisor's verbal approval for the emergency placement home study.

b. The child protective investigator must complete the following within two business days of the child's placement:

(1) Record information gathered from the prospective caregiver(s) on the FSFN "Emergency Placement Unified Home Study."

(2) The child protective investigator will enter the words "Not required" in the fields not required per this operating procedure.

(3) After all information is documented on the UHS page, the child welfare protective investigator will launch and print the completed UHS and obtain signatures from the prospective caregiver(s) per paragraph 5-6 of this operating procedure.

(4) The child welfare professional will develop the recommended outcome of the home study per paragraph 5-7 of this operating procedure.

(5) The child welfare professional will submit the home study to his/her supervisor for final approval in FSFN. The child welfare professional will submit a copy of the signed home study to CLS to file with the court. CLS will also be provided with a copy of any criminal records obtained. All home study information will be submitted to CLS per paragraph 5-13 of this operating procedure.

c. The supervisor will approve or deny the home study per paragraph 5-8 of this operating procedure and record their approval decision on the UHS page in FSFN.

d. The child protective investigator and the supervisor will sign the final approved home study. New signatures from the caregiver(s) are not required unless there is new information in the home study that is different from the version signed by the caregiver(s).

5-10. Planned Placements: Relative/Non-Relative Home Studies.

a. The child welfare professional will complete a relative/non-relative home study in the following situations:

(1) Within 45 calendar days of the case transfer of an Emergency Placement home study for a relative/non-relative if a licensing home study has not already been completed. The child welfare professional responsible may use the copy feature in FSFN to add and edit as necessary to the emergency placement information.

(2) Prior to any new planned child placement with a relative/non-relative.

(3) To update the home study when:

(a) There are changes in the composition of the household. This includes placement of additional child(ren). The child welfare professional must complete background checks per requirements in Chapter 6 of this operating procedure.

(b) The household location changes.

(c) There is a change observed by the case manager in the physical environment that is a significant safety concern.

(d) There are significant changes or circumstances that affect the ability of the caregivers to care for or protect the child(ren).

(e) To re-screen household members every 12 months per requirements in Chapter 6 of this operating procedure.

b. The child welfare professional will conduct interviews with the caregiver(s), the child(ren) and other persons as necessary to complete and/or update the information in paragraphs 5-4 of this operating procedure.

c. The child welfare professional must advise the caregiver(s) of supports available, their rights and responsibilities as follows:

(1) Relative caregiver information per CFOP 170-10, [Chapter 8](#).

(2) Non-relative caregiver information per CFOP 170-10, [Chapter 9](#).

d. The child welfare professional will document their assessment of all information gathered on the FSFN UHS page.

e. The child welfare professional will launch and print the completed UHS in FSFN to obtain signatures from the caregiver(s) per paragraph 5-6 of this operating procedure.

f. The child welfare professional will follow the procedures in paragraph 5-7 of this operating procedure to determine the recommended outcome of the home study and submit it to his/her supervisor for final approval.

g. The supervisor will approve or deny the home study per paragraph 5-8 of this operating procedure.

h. The updated home study with all signatures must be uploaded to the UHS page in FSFN.

5-11. Initial License or Relicense for Foster Home.

a. The UHS must be completed by a child welfare professional employed by the CBC, subcontracted agency, or other licensed child-placing agency per requirements in Rule [65C-13.025](#), F.A.C., for an applicant who wants to be initially licensed or Rule [65C-13.028](#), F.A.C., to be relicensed for providing out-of-home care for children placed by the child welfare system.

b. The child welfare professional will enter the information gathered and assessed in the FSFN UHS for an Initial License or a Re-license Home Study.

(1) The child welfare professional will follow the procedures in paragraph 5-7 of this operating procedure to determine the recommended outcome of the home study and submit it to his/her supervisor for final approval.

(2) The supervisor will follow the procedures in paragraph 5-8 of this operating procedure to approve or deny the home study.

(3) The child welfare professional will obtain signatures per paragraph 5-6 of this operating procedure on the FSFN printed UHS.

(4) The child welfare professional will attach required documents per Rule [65C-13.025](#), F.A.C., to the FSFN-UHS home study page.

c. To obtain the license, the supervisor will follow the attestation procedures in Rule [65C-13.025](#), F.A.C., for initial licensure and Rule [65C-13.028](#), F.A.C., for re-licensure.

5-12. Adoption Home Study.

a. The UHS must be completed by a child welfare professional employed by the CBC, subcontracted agency, or other licensed child-placing agency. The child welfare professional will complete the home study per requirements in Rule [65C-16.005](#), F.A.C., to evaluate the adoptive parent(s)' capacity for adoptive parenthood.

b. The child welfare professional will enter the information gathered and assessed in the FSFN UHS for an Adoption Home Study.

(1) The child welfare professional will follow the procedures in paragraph 5-7 of this operating procedure to determine the recommended outcome of the home study and submit it to his/her supervisor for final approval.

(2) The supervisor will follow the procedures in paragraph 5-8 of this operating procedure to approve or deny the home study.

(3) The child welfare professional will obtain signatures per paragraph 5-6 of this operating procedure on the FSFN printed UHS.

(4) The child welfare professional will attach required documents per Rule [65C-16.005](#), F.A.C., to the FSFN-UHS home study page.

c. Adoption home studies are valid for one year after the approval date.

5-13. CLS and Judicial Requirements.

a. The child welfare professional will submit a copy of the signed home study to CLS to file with the court. CLS will also be provided with a copy of any criminal records obtained. The following time frames are required:

(1) Emergency Placement.

(a) This home study must be provided to CLS in conjunction with the shelter or emergency removal hearing documents.

(b) If for any reason the home study is not available in time for the shelter or emergency removal hearing, it must be provided to CLS no later than the next business day after the shelter or emergency removal hearing.

(2) Relative/Non-Relative Placement.

(a) This home study must be provided to CLS in conjunction with any request for placement with the relative/non-relative.

(b) If a relative/non-relative home study is needed for a hearing that is not an emergency, it must be provided to CLS for review and filing with the court five (5) business days prior to the hearing, unless the hearing is set within a period of less than five (5) business days, in which case the home study must be provided no later than 72 hours prior to the hearing.

(c) Per s. [39.521\(2\)\(o\)](#), F.S., a current home study must be submitted to the court when a child will be remaining with a relative/non-relative at the time of the disposition hearing.

(3) Adoption.

(a) An Adoption home study is generally filed with the petition for adoption under its own case number; however, if the court has ordered the filing of the adoption home study on a prospective adoptive home, the adoption home study must be redacted to remove identifying information.

(b) The home study must be provided to CLS for review and filing with the court five (5) business days prior to the hearing, unless the hearing is set within a period of less than five (5)

business days, in which case the home study must be provided no later than 72 hours prior to the hearing.

b. If the supervisor does not approve the home study and the child is in the placement, the department or contracted service provider will request an emergency hearing to inform the court of the findings and make a recommendation for another placement.

c. Other than for an emergency wherein a child protective investigator removes a child, at no time shall the placement of a child be changed prior to receiving a new court order approving the new placement. Irrespective of the timeframes noted above, there must be full compliance with all court orders regarding home studies.

d. When a child has been placed in an Emergency or Planned Placement by the court against the recommendation of the department or contracted service provider, the department or agency responsible for the case will:

(1) Notify the appropriate supervisor of the court's determination.

(2) The supervisor will schedule a staffing with CLS to be held within three (3) business days of the court decision to discuss the reasons for the denied home study.

(3) The purpose of the staffing will be to develop a plan of action that includes identifying services and/or safety management actions for the family with whom the child is placed.

e. When the court has ordered a placement despite the department's recommendation for denial of the home study, the information will be recorded in the Provider record in FSFN. A copy of department's home study with the department's recommendation for denial must remain in the FSFN record.

5-14. FSFN Documentation.

a. The child welfare professional must document the child's placement in FSFN within 24 hours of the child's placement. This includes all of the following tasks:

(1) The child welfare professional must check FSFN to ensure that the provider has not already been created.

(2) If the provider does not already exist in FSFN, the child welfare professional creating the FSFN UHS will create a new provider.

b. The child welfare professional will create the home study page in FSFN, selecting the provider and the appropriate type of home study per paragraph 5-4b of this operating procedure.

c. The child welfare professional will complete documentation of required information in all fields of the UHS in FSFN.

d. After selecting the recommended outcome of the UHS, the child welfare professional will launch the UHS before submitting it for supervisory approval.

e. The supervisor must document their approval or denial of a home study using the FSFN UHS page per paragraph 5-8 of this operating procedure.

f. The Completed Date of the UHS pre-fills with the system date of the supervisor's approval. Upon final approval, the UHS page becomes disabled and non-modifiable.

g. The child welfare professional will upload a copy of the signed home study signature page to the UHS page in FSFN. National and state criminal background records received are not to be attached to the UHS.

h. When the child welfare professional updates an approved home study and a previous UHS page exists in FSFN, the information can be copied-over using the FSFN Copy hyperlink. The child welfare professional will edit the information as necessary to provide current information.

i. The following FSFN resources are located on the [Center for Child Welfare](#) website:

- (1) [Organization Provider How Do I Guide.](#)
- (2) [Person Provider Inquiry How Do I Guide.](#)
- (3) [Provider Merge, Split, Deter How Do I Guide.](#)
- (4) [Person Provider How Do I Guide.](#)
- (5) [Unified Home Study User Guide.](#)
- (6) [Unified Home Study How Do I Guide.](#)

