

## **Family Foster Home Fire Safety Evaluation Checklist Instructions**

**Please read these instructions prior to commencing your inspection.**

This checklist is provided to specific Foster Family Homes for the purpose of complying with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services fire safety evaluation requirements. The use of this form is limited to Foster Family Homes with not more than six ambulatory children, all capable of self preservation, except as provided for in item 2 below.\* These requirements are taken from NFPA 101, *Life Safety Code*® 2009 edition, a nationally recognized standard adopted by the State Fire Marshal, and are intended to provide a minimum standard of fire safety in Foster Family Homes.

For the purpose of this evaluation only, an owner is defined as the adult resident(s) having primary responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the home, regardless of who actually owns the home or building.

Using the checklist as a guide, review the fire safety requirements and answer each item “yes” or “no” with a check mark in the appropriate box. Any “no” checked items must be corrected in order to meet the minimal evaluation standards.

Explanation of each item on the checklist:

1. If seven or more children (total children, not just foster children) reside in the Foster Home, the home is defined as a “Foster Group Home,” and a site inspection by a certified fire safety inspector is required. Additional or modified fire safety requirements may apply. If the answer to this question is “No” and you are unable to locate a certified fire inspector in your area, you may contact the State Fire Marshal’s Office for assistance.
- 2.\* Children must be capable of self evacuation, and be without any primary medical needs. No more than two children younger than 24 months may reside at the home, and an emergency evacuation and relocation plan must specifically provide for the evacuation of all household members in less than three minutes.
3. Smoke detectors must receive power from the building electrical system or batteries. Check the smoke detector monthly for proper operation by pressing the test button or switch on the unit. Do not use a flame or smoke to test the unit. If a battery-powered smoke detector does not operate when tested, change the battery and retest. If the unit still does not work, replace the smoke detector. Any non-functional line-powered smoke detectors must be replaced. Batteries must be changed at least annually. Statistics show about one-third of the smoke detectors installed in homes are inoperative. When detectors are non-operational, the usual reason is dead or missing batteries. The detector(s) should be mounted according to manufacturer’s instructions.
4. In addition to providing a smoke detector within each sleeping room, smoke detector(s) must be located in the hall area(s) in the vicinity of the sleeping rooms. The detector(s) should be mounted according to manufacturer’s instructions. The smoke detectors must be tested in the same manner as described above.

5. In multi-story homes, the smoke detector that covers the upper floor(s), in addition to those required in sleeping rooms, should usually be located at the top of the stairs. The detector(s) should be mounted according to manufacturer's instructions. The smoke detectors must be tested in the same manner as described above.
6. Every sleeping room and every living and dining area must be provided with access to a secondary means of escape to the outside of the home in addition to the front or back doors. The purpose of the secondary means of escape is to provide an occupant with an alternate escape route when fire or other emergency blocks the primary exit from the Foster Home.

Three types of secondary means of escape are permitted:

- (A) A door that opens to the outside.

**OR**

- (B) The use of a readily operable window in the sleeping rooms and living areas of the home that provides an opening of not less than 5.7 sq. ft. in area, minimum of 20 inches wide and 24 inches high, and the bottom of the opening no higher than 44 inches above the floor, located within 20 ft. of outdoor space accessible to fire department apparatus.

**OR**

- (C) Every sleeping room and living area without a secondary means of escape (as described in A or B above), has a passage, other than the hallway, to another room that has a means of escape as described in A or B above. The passage must not have any doors that can be locked. An example would be two bedrooms or living areas directly connected with a passage or door. A shared bathroom connecting two sleeping rooms usually will not be acceptable, because one or both of the doors could be locked, preventing passage from one room to the other.

**Note:** There are two exceptions to the requirement for secondary means of escape from each bedroom or living area: (1) if the bedroom or living area has a door opening directly to the outside of the building, or (2) where the Foster Home is protected throughout by an approved automatic fire sprinkler system.

7. No Foster Home may have any interior door used in a path of escape that can be locked.
8. Primary exit doors and secondary means of escape, such as windows, and security bars that require a key, opening tool or special knowledge (security code, combination) are prohibited. Several multiple-death fires have occurred when a door lock could not be released because the key could not be found. The prohibition on these types of locks applies only to those doors or windows that are part of the required primary and secondary exits.
9. The requirement for a child being able to open a closet door from the inside is to ensure that the child cannot accidentally become locked inside.
10. Children will often lock themselves in the bathroom. Provisions for unlocking the doors from the outside will facilitate rescue by other occupants or by fire department personnel.
11. An attic room, for example, accessible only by a trap door or folding ladder, would not have an approved primary means of escape. A standard set of stairs to access the room would be required. Spiral staircases are also inadequate.
12. Un-vented heaters that have the mark or label of an approved testing firm and are installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and applicable safety codes are acceptable. Some

older, un-vented heaters are not equipped with vents to the outside of the home. These heaters depend on regular maintenance, proper adjustment, and an adequate air supply for proper combustion. Un-vented heaters can release lethal carbon monoxide into the home, deplete the oxygen levels in the home to dangerous limits, or provide an ignition source for a fire.

13. It is important to provide safeguards to protect children from the hot surfaces of heating equipment. Children do not always understand the dangers of hot surfaces. Screens (barriers) that prevent children from accessing heating equipment must be of closely spaced wire or expanded metal and must be securely attached to parts of the building to prevent movement.
14. All gas appliances must be equipped with metal tubing and connectors, no rubber hoses.
15. All gas-fired heaters, including any central heating unit, must be inspected annually by a qualified person to ensure the unit is in proper working order, to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
16. There must be no storage of any item that could burn (boxes, paper, clothing, wood scraps, blankets/pillows) near stoves, heaters, fireplaces, or other sources of flame or heat, including the gas water heater closets or other gas fired appliances.
17. All matches and or lighters must be out of the reach of children. Children playing with matches and/or cigarette lighters cause many deaths and millions of dollars in damage each year.
18. Flammable liquids must be stored in safety cans with the lid shut to prevent vapors from escaping.
19. There must be a five-pound portable fire extinguisher mounted on a wall in the area of the kitchen to extinguish small fires that may develop in or on the stove.
20. Home fire escape plans are essential to enable all residents to know what to do when the smoke alarm sounds or other signs of fire are present. Home fire escape plans must be rehearsed by all occupants each month to remain effective. The plan must enable all family members to escape using primary or secondary exits. A safe location outside the home must be selected for a gathering point, well away from the dangers of the fire or responding emergency vehicles.
21. Extension cords are to be used on a temporary basis only. When the cords remain plugged in, they become part of the building wiring system. No frayed or spliced appliance cords are permitted because of the danger of a short circuit. All unused openings in the electrical circuit breaker box must be covered to prevent any material from coming in contact with live electrical wires.

## **NOTE**

**The above requirements set a minimum standard for fire safety in the home. Special situations and circumstances may call for increased fire safety requirements above those detailed above. You may request assistance from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services if you have questions. The State Fire Marshal's Office may be contacted to interpret fire safety requirements.**

**Texas Department of Insurance  
State Fire Marshal's Office  
Foster Family Home Fire Safety Evaluation Checklist**

**Name of Owner(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

	Yes	No	Item
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Will there be <b>less than seven</b> children living in the Foster Home?
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all the children ambulatory and capable of self preservation?
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is a working smoke detector installed in each sleeping room?
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is a working smoke detector installed in the hallway near the sleeping rooms?
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If the house is more than one story, is a working smoke detector installed at the top of the stairs?
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does each sleeping room and living area have <b>at least one of the following</b> secondary means of escape other than the "front" or "back" door of the home? A) A door, stairway, passage or hall providing unobstructed travel leading directly to the outside of the dwelling; <b>or</b> B) An outside window with a minimum opening of not less than 5.7 sq. ft. in area, minimum of 20 inches wide, and at least 24 inches high, and no higher than 44 inches above the floor, located within 20 ft. of outdoor space accessible to fire department apparatus; <b>or</b> C) A non-locking door into an adjoining room that has a means of escape described in A or B above.
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can a person travel from any room of the house to an exit that leads directly outside without having to pass through an interior door that can be locked?
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can all primary exterior exit doors, windows used as a secondary means of escape, and any security bars incorporated with these primary and secondary means of escape, be opened from the inside without the use of a key, tool or special knowledge (security code, combination)?
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the closet doors equipped so that a child can open the door from the inside?
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If the bathroom door is equipped with a lock, can the door be unlocked from the outside during an emergency?
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can all bedrooms and/or living areas above the first floor be accessed by a standard set of stairs?
12.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all gas, wood, or fuel-fired heaters used in the home vented to the outside? (unless listed and approved)
13.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are heaters, including wood burning or gas log fireplaces, equipped with immovable screens or barriers to prevent contact with open flames or hot surfaces?
14.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are gas appliances (heaters, water heaters, stoves) equipped with metal tubing and metal connectors?
15.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all gas-fired heaters inspected annually by a qualified technician?
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are combustible items (things that burn) stored away from any stove, heater, or fireplace in the Foster Home?
17.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all lighters and matches kept out of the reach of children?
18.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are flammable liquids stored in safety cans and kept away from heat and children?
19.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there an operable five-pound dry chemical fire extinguisher available for use in the kitchen?
20.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Has a Home Fire Escape Plan been written, practiced, and documented?
21.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the electrical system appear to be in good condition?

**Signature of Inspector:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_