

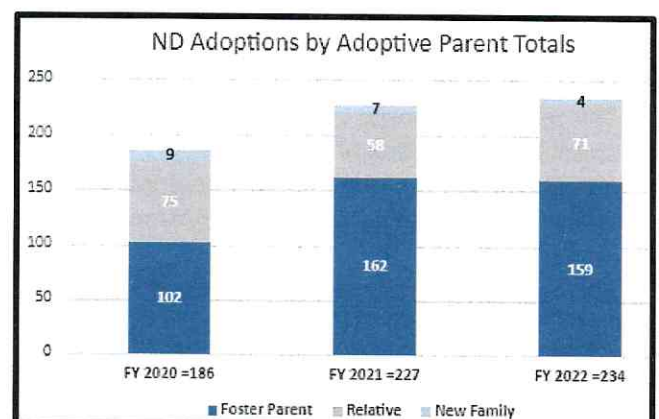
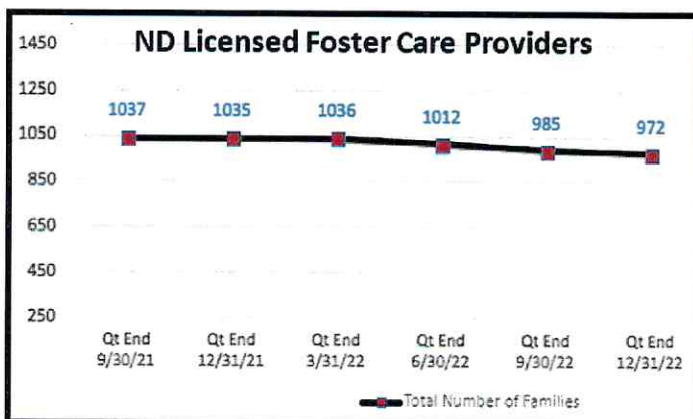
Children and Family Services has been facilitating a work group to discuss the need to offer efficiencies and better streamline the foster and adoption home study efforts. Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK), the vendor contracted with the department, along with CFS adoption administration and CFS Licensing Unit have been reviewing forms and eliminating duplication. What this work group has identified thus far:

- ND has two parallel processes working in tandem
- Assessing through two different lenses; Temporary (foster care) vs. Lifetime commitment (adoption)
- **Dual assessment impacts roughly 13% of the licensed foster care provider population**



A. Licensed Providers Adopting ND Children in Foster Care

North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) licenses roughly 1000 family foster care providers, with roughly 13% of the ND foster care providers identified as an adoption option. The charts below show the timeline of licensed foster care providers and three years' worth of adoption data. In FY 2020, 186 adoptions were finalized with 102 (55%) of the adoptive families being licensed foster care providers. In 2021, 227 adoptions were finalized with 162 (71%) of the adoptive families being licensed foster care providers. In FY 2022, 234 adoptions were finalized with 159 (68%) of adoptions were finalized by a licensed foster parent. *The work group will continue to identify areas where the processes can be streamlined, but not to negatively impact the larger population of foster care providers (87%) who may not ever engage in the adoption investigation process.*



The largest and most important difference between the foster care and adoption process is the lens utilized to assess two different placement types (temporary foster care vs. long term adoptive). While there may be similarities between the two assessments, an adoption investigation must assess the ability to not only meet a child's immediate needs, but ensure that the developmental, emotional, physical, spiritual, educational, and financial needs will be met lifelong without the supports of the child welfare system. Adoption investigation gathers information regarding the adoptive family, the child, their history of entry, details of the child's birth family, and more which is used to provide the required summary of investigation for the court.

Foster Care Home Study (Licensing)

\$Cost\$: Free to the provider. No cost to get licensed. Monthly reimbursement (\$818-\$1028) is issued once they are licensed and providing care to a child in foster care.

Items required by a prospective provider in efforts to be approved as a ND foster care provider (temporary):

- 1. Background Check:** Federally required fingerprint based Criminal Background Check
 - a. [Foster Care Checks](#)
- 2. Home Study:** Licensing Specialist is assigned to complete a mutual family assessment of the applicant/s for the purposes of temporary care.
- 3. Home Visits:** At least three home visits to assess the property for safety, interview family, and make a determination about their ability to provide temporary foster care to a child in need.
- 4. Relevant Forms**
 - a. [SFN 893](#) "Foster Care Application" completed by the applicant/s.
 - b. [SFN 889](#) "Initial Home Study" completed by the assigned licensing specialist.
 - c. [SFN 1037](#) "Licensing Packet" completed by the applicant/s.
 - d. [SFN 974](#) "Physical Exam Verification" completed by the applicant/s during initial licensing only.
 - e. [SFN 1038](#) "Foster Parent Policy and Standards Review" is to be reviewed by the licensing specialists with the providers.
- 5. Training**
 - a. Pre-Service Training (27 hours)
 - b. Fire Safety Training (initial + annual)
 - c. 13 hours per year
- 6. Renewal Options:** Applicants are required to complete an annual renewal of their licensure. This requires an onsite visit from the licensing specialist, completion of necessary safety checklists, review of the training transcript, and interview of placements, and system strengths and challenges.



Adoption Home Study (Approval to Adopt)

\$Cost\$: Up to \$2000 out of pocket costs reimbursed per child. No cost for the adoption assessment. Families do pay their attorney fees, testing fees, background checks, travel costs, etc. and submit receipts. Monthly adoption subsidy is reimbursed to the family.

Items required by an adoptive family in efforts to be approved as an adoption option (lifelong):

- 1. Background Check:** Federally required fingerprint based Criminal Background Check
 - a. [Adoption Checks](#)
- 2. Home Study:** Adoption specialist is assigned to complete a mutual family assessment of the prospective adoptive family for the purposes of a long-term, lifetime commitment to a child.
- 3. Home Visits:** At least four home visits to assess, interview, educate, and make a determination about their ability to provide a lifelong commitment to a child.
 - a. **Testing (TJTA/Prepare Enrich/AAPI):** Assess strength and growth areas within communication, conflict resolution, financial management, stress, affection, marriage expectations, social and relationship roles, personality, and parenting and adoption expectations.
 - b. **References:** Five personal references and all adult children are obtained in writing and verified verbally.
 - c. **Education:** Interactive preparation for long-term success. Engaging in "what-if" scenarios and talking through how to handle difficult situations independently without agency intervention.
 - d. **Referrals/Services:** Assessing if referrals for services (couples counseling, individual therapy, financial counseling, etc.) are necessary.
- 4. Relevant Forms:**
 - a. Application, Fee Schedule, Reference Request, and Program ROI
 - b. Family Fact Finding Form (being revised)
 - c. Self-Disclosure Statement
 - d. Declaration of Good Health
 - e. Privacy Practice, Client's Rights, and Technology Acknowledgements
 - f. Foster Care and Adoption Declaration History
- 5. Training:**
 - a. Pre-Service Training (27 hours)
 - b. As Needed/Per Recommendation
 - i. CORE Teen Right Time Training
 - ii. Trauma Knowledge Masterclass
 - iii. Other
- 6. Renewal Options:** For the limited number of waiting families who have not been matched with a child, an update to their home assessment every two years. This includes two home visits, required paperwork, reference checks, and education to reaffirm their adoption assessment recommendation.