

	<b>GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL</b>			
	<b>Chapter:</b>	(14) Resource Development	<b>Effective Date:</b>	March 2015
	<b>Policy Title:</b>	Household Approval Status		
	<b>Policy Number:</b>	14.15	<b>Previous Policy #:</b>	1014.5

<b>CODES/REFERENCES</b>
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N/A

<b>REQUIREMENTS</b>
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The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) must ensure each caregiver’s household approval status is appropriately assigned and reflects the current assessment of whether the caregiver meets the Safety and Quality Standards. The approval status for caregivers is assigned according to the following definitions:

1. **Full Approval:** The household meets all the Safety and Quality Standards and has been approved by the applicable final approving authority (DFCS County Director/Designee or CPA Director/Designee)
2. **Full Approval-Special:** The household meets all the Safety and Quality Standards, operates a home based daycare, and has been approved by the applicable final approving authority.
3. **Pending Full Approval:** The home meets the Full Approval requirements and is awaiting final approval by the applicable final approving authority.
4. **Full Approval 30-Day Grace:** During the Full Approval status term, the household no longer meets the Safety and Quality Standards. This status provides 30 calendar days for the household to address circumstances needed to meet the Safety and Quality Standards. A home should only be placed in this status for the following:
  - a. Lack of current medical evaluations;
  - b. Lack of current criminal record checks of caregivers or household members;
  - c. Untimely Family Re-Evaluations; and
  - d. Insufficient Continued Parent Development hours.
5. **Pending Full Approval 30-Day Grace:** The home once again meets the Full Approval requirements (following the Full Approval 30-Day Grace status) and is awaiting final approval by the applicable approving authority.
6. **Pending Unapproved:** The home was previously assigned a 30-Day Grace status (Full Approval or Full Approval-Special) and failed to meet the Safety and Quality Standards by the 31<sup>st</sup> day; however, the Regional Director has approved an additional 30 day extension to allow the home to come into compliance with Safety and Quality Standards. This status indicates the home now has an extension of **30 calendar days** beyond the 30-Day Grace status (Full Approval or Full Approval-Special).
7. **Unapproved:** The home was previously assigned a 30-Day Grace status (Full Approval or Full Approval-Special), failed to come into compliance with the Safety and

Quality Standards by the 31<sup>st</sup> day or within an additional 30 calendar days granted by the Regional Director/Designee, and was moved to *Pending Unapproved* status. If the Regional Director approves a second 30-day extension, the home moves from *Pending Unapproved* to *Unapproved* status. If by the end of 30 calendar days in this status, the home still fails to meet the Safety and Quality Standards, the home must move to *Closed* status.

8. **Pending Closure:** The home was previously assigned a 30-Day Grace status (Full Approval or Full Approval-Special) and failed to come into compliance with the Safety and Quality Standards by the 31<sup>st</sup> day and no extension was requested or granted. This status is also used for homes that will be closed but have children currently placed. The home may remain in this status for no more than 30 days to allow for transition of any children placed before moving to *Closed* status.
9. **Closed:** The home no longer meets the Safety and Quality Standards, the caregiver requests closure, the family did not move forward from the Inquiry/Applicant stage, or other circumstances dictate that the home be closed. A home cannot be closed with an active placement. If a child in DFCS custody remains in a home that will be closed, the home should first be placed in Pending Closure status to allow no more than 30 calendar days to transition the child to another placement. To close the home, the RD Case Manager or Resource Maintainer must complete the Change of Status Reason section on the Home Information Page in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (Georgia SHINES).

There are two statuses for prospective caregivers:

1. **Inquiry:** Assigned to prospective caregivers at the point of inquiry.
2. **Applicant (Pre-Service Training):** The prospective caregiver begins pre-service training.

DFCS shall not utilize CPA homes for DFCS placements until the Office of Provider Management (OPM) documents and approves the home in Georgia SHINES. If the home does not appear in or have a Full Approval or Full Approval-Special status in Georgia SHINES, it may not be used.

DFCS and CPAs shall only grant Full Approval or Full Approval-Special status to caregivers when they have been assessed to meet the Safety and Quality Standards at initial approval, re-evaluation, and at any other time a reassessment is warranted during their ongoing service. Re-assessment is warranted at any time during the approval term when observed or reported changes in the household indicate the caregiver or members of the household may no longer meet the Safety and Quality Standards.

DFCS and CPAs shall grant Full Approval and Full Approval-Special status for a term of up to 12 months at a time.

DFCS shall report changes in a home's approval status by preparing a written addendum to the most recent home assessment.

DFCS shall only place children in homes assigned Full Approval or Full Approval-Special status. Caregivers may maintain current placements when assigned *30-Day Grace* status

(Full Approval or Full Approval-Special), but may not receive new placements. New placements may not be made when the household status is in any of the “pending” statuses or *closure* status.

DFCS must remove any children placed in a home prior to moving the home to *Closed* status.

**NOTE:** CPAs are responsible for approving their caregivers’ homes in accordance with the DFCS Safety and Quality Standards, Residential Childcare rules and regulations, and the guidelines of any other governing authority.

## PROCEDURES

**To ensure foster and adoptive homes meet Safety and Quality Standards, DFCS and CPA staff will:**

1. During each contact with caregivers, assess the safety and well-being of any children placed and determine whether any changes have occurred in the caregiver’s household or personal circumstances that impact approval status.
2. Immediately notify the Adoption Exchange/State Adoption Unit of any change in family composition (e.g., births, deaths, change in marital status, new household members, etc.) that may disrupt an adoptive placement or delay finalization of an adoption.
3. Have a consultation with the Adoption Exchange/State Adoption Unit within 10 business days of becoming aware of a change in the family composition of an adoptive home.
4. Immediately enter any changes in the approval status of a home into Georgia SHINES and GA SCORE (CPAs only).
5. Submit extension requests for Pending Closure to the State Foster Care Services Director’s Office via the waiver request mailbox: [dfcs-waivers@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:dfcs-waivers@dhs.ga.gov).

## PRACTICE GUIDANCE

It is extremely important for the approval status of each foster home to be correctly entered and maintained in Georgia SHINES. A household should be placed in a *30-Day Grace* status (Full Approval or Full Approval-Special) when a non-safety related standard has not been met (e.g., change in marital status, new household member moves in, caregiver moves, or the 15 hour annual continuing parent development requirement has not been met by December 31<sup>st</sup>), and the expectation is that the necessary adjustments will be made to bring the home into compliance with the Safety and Quality Standards within 30 calendar days.

Changes to a family’s composition can affect an adoption in various ways. Therefore, it is extremely important that such changes be reported. The family will have to be re-evaluated to determine how the change in family composition might impact the child being adopted. Subsequently, another recommendation will have to be made based on the new family composition. In most cases, the Case Manager making routine visits in the home is the first to become aware of the changes and should immediately report them to a member of the Resource Development (RD) team. Once caregivers sign an Adoption Placement Agreement, no new placements should be made in the home unless it is to reunite siblings.

See policy [14.1 Resource Development: Safety and Quality Standards](#) for additional information regarding approval standards. See policy [14.23 Resource Development: Home Closure](#) for additional information surrounding reasons for closure of a home.

**FORMS AND TOOLS**

N/A