

Foster Home Guidelines

Foster homes provide children with a home living environment. Follow this checklist of best practices for foster home providers to operate a foster home safely.

Create a safe home environment

LEGEND

- Mandatory practices
- Recommended practices*

- Provide at least 2.5 square metres of bedroom space per child under 10 years or 5.0 square metres of bedroom space per individual 10 years and older.
- Install smoke alarms just outside of all sleeping area and maintain in operating condition.
- Install screens on all windows, doors and openings of the home that provide ventilation for the room.
- Ensure all bedrooms have a window or door that provides access to the outside, or a sprinkler system for fire safety. Bedroom window openings must be at least 3.8 square feet, with no dimension less than 380mm (15"). Windows security bars must be equipped with quick release devices or installed to be opened without tools or special knowledge. *Windows used as a means of egress should have safety ladders in each bedroom.*
- Install handrails and guardrails where necessary.
- Dispose of garbage in a manner that prevents odours and the attraction of pests.
- Protect your home from mice, flies and other pests.
- Check that the home is structurally sound.
- Remove dangerous objects from the yard and around the home.
- Maintain plumbing and drainage systems or private sewage disposal systems in proper working order.
- Submit water samples to the Provincial Lab for testing if the home is on a private water system.
- Maintain room temperature at a minimum of 22°C.
- Install windows that open or mechanical ventilation in all sleeping areas.
- Maintain hot water supply with adequate pressure and at a safe temperature.
- Keep home well lit to minimize risk of injury.

Keep foster children safe

- Keep a basic first aid kit available in the home.
- Cover electrical outlets with approved safety covers.
- Secure dangling cords from blinds and other window coverings, and secure electrical cords away from children's reach.
- Lock away chemicals, medications, and other dangerous objects.
- Keep area around hot water tank free of clutter and combustibles.
- Prevent at-risk individuals from accessing the laundry room.
- To prevent scalding, keep hot water temperature for baths and showers at or below 49C (recommended 43C). Keep all other hot water taps at or below 54C (recommended 49C).
- For homes with at-risk individuals, identify and repair tripping or fall hazards throughout your home (examples: stairs, uneven flooring, loose carpet, slippery floors). Keep gates secured at the top and bottom of all accessible stairways.
- Maintain beds and cribs for foster children in a safe and sanitary condition. Protect mattress with a mattress cover if the individual is incontinent (a mattress cover may not be required if the bed belongs to the client).
- Secure televisions, shelving, dressers, and other furniture over 4 feet to prevent it from falling on a child.*
- Supervise the use of any outdoor pools. Provide safety equipment for pool (examples: throwing ring, reach pole). Completing a course in pool operation and maintenance is recommended.*
- Provide a puncture proof container for sharps disposal, if needed.*
- Review a fire evacuation plan with children. Maintain fire extinguishers and carbon monoxide detectors in good working condition.*
- Avoid using trampolines - <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ip/hi-ip-position-statement-trampoline.pdf>.*
- Install and maintain protective fall surfacing under and around play structures - <http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/item/playground-surfacing>.*
- Eliminate entrapment, entanglement and protrusion hazards on play equipment.*
- Clean and service furnace every 2 years.*
- Complete a course in basic childcare safety - <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-home-study-child-care.pdf>.*

Prevent the spread of disease

- Provide hand soap and single use towels for handwashing.
- Keep toilets and sinks clean and in good condition.
- Have sanitizer or low-level disinfectant available.
- Test sanitizer strength with a test strip before use.*
- Clean and disinfect shared surfaces, such as showers and baths, between users.*
- If diapered children are in the home, provide a separate space for diapering children. Follow proper diapering procedures and practices. For directions, use Health and Safety Guidelines for Child Care Facilities - <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-health-safety-guidlines-child-care-facilities.pdf>.*
- Avoid placing clean laundry in baskets used for dirty laundry. Label baskets "For clean laundry only".*
- Avoid contact between toothbrushes, hair combs, and brushes. Each item should be stored separate from one another.*
- Use individual separate wash cloths and towels for each foster child.*
- Wash hands after touching animals, animal waste, or any related animal supplies.*
- Take animals to routine vet examinations and vaccination.*

Keep food safe

- Keep hot and cold potable water available at all times in the kitchen.
- Protect food from unsafe conditions (examples: dirt, dust, broken glass insects, sneezing, coughing).
- Store food separate from poisonous substances.
- Store foods in sanitized food grade containers. Use food grade packaging material to wrap or cover foods (examples: aluminum foil, plastic wrap, wax paper).
- Do not store food in washrooms.
- Store potentially hazardous food (examples: meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, cooked vegetables, cooked rice) below 4°C or above 60°C.
- Keep frozen foods frozen solid while in storage (*recommended -18°C*).

- Use smooth, durable, easily cleanable, sanitized countertops and cutting boards for food preparation.
- Clean and sanitize all food equipment and keep in good condition.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize all food preparation equipment before each use.
- Two-compartment sink, or 1-compartment sink and domestic dishwasher available.
- Practice good personal hygiene. Wash hands with soap and use paper towels to dry prior to handling food.
- Purchase food from permitted and licensed businesses only. Avoid using home canned foods, with the exception of fruit jams, jellies, and pickles.
- Keep a thermometer in the fridge close to the door. Check the temperature of the fridge often.*
- Use a thermometer to measure internal temperature of cooked food and hot water supply.*
- Keep animals out of kitchen and food storage areas.*
- Do not store food in the laundry room, unless it is prepackaged and protected from contamination.*
- Keep animal food, cleaning equipment and supplies separate from your food.*
- Complete course in basic food safety - <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph/Page3151.aspx>.*

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.

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