

Licensed Child Foster Care: Implementation plan for 2025 legislative changes

New laws passed by the 2025 Legislature include several provisions that impact child foster care. This document outlines an overview of each change, instructions for what license holders need to do about the change, the date the change is effective, and guidance on how licensors will monitor these changes. The changes below have different implementation dates and are listed chronologically.

Definition of ‘individual who is related’ – Relative child foster care

Overview

The definition of “individual who is related” in Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.01, subd. 15 has been expanded to include language specific to family child foster care. An individual who is related includes someone who, prior to the child’s placement in the individual’s home for foster care or adoption, is an important friend of the child or of the child’s parent or custodian. “Important friend” means an individual with whom the child has previously resided or had significant contact or who has a significant relationship to the child or the child’s parent or custodian.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.01, subdivision 15](#).

Effective date: July 1, 2025

What license holders need to know

There is no change for license holders. Applicants may qualify for an emergency relative placement if they meet this definition.

What licensors need to know

Licensors must be aware of this expanded definition used by placing workers when determining emergency relative placement.

Who must be licensed in domestic partnerships – Relative child foster care

Overview

New language in Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.05, subd. 3, allows an individual who has a domestic partner and who is seeking to provide child foster care for a relative to apply for a license on their own. In this situation, the domestic partner is not required to be licensed. Background studies must still be conducted on household members, as required under section 245C.03, subd. 1.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.05, subdivision 3](#).

Effective date: July 1, 2025

What license holders need to know

An individual who has a domestic partner and who is seeking to provide child foster care for a relative may apply for a license on their own; the domestic partner is not required to be licensed. However, a license holder with a domestic partner who is caring for a relative child should consider whether the domestic partner wants to be a permanency option. If so, the domestic partner should also apply and be added to the license.

What licensors need to know

The domestic partner of someone who is seeking to provide child foster care for a relative is not required to be licensed; however, licensors should discuss with the applicant and domestic partner whether the domestic partner would like to be a permanency option and, if so, encourage the domestic partner to apply. Adding the domestic partner to the license earlier in the process will help avoid permanency delays.

Technical clarifications

Overview

Licensed family child care recently moved to a continuous license structure where licenses are issued on a calendar-year cycle (January 1 – December 31) and automatically renewed each year upon payment of an annual fee. With this change, some technical cleanup language was added to Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.10, subd. 14 and Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.30, subd. 1 to clarify which programs are not on a continuous license and must apply for and be granted a license to operate. The new language does not change the current licensing structure for child foster care; it simply allows for the possibility to transition to a continuous license structure in the future when child foster care licensing is in the Provider Hub. It is anticipated that child foster care licensing will be launching in the Provider Hub in approximately mid-2027.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.10, subdivision 14](#) and [section 142B.30, subdivision 1](#).

Effective date: July 1, 2025

What license holders need to know

These are technical changes; there are no immediate changes for license holders.

What licensors need to know

These are technical changes; there are no immediate changes for licensors.

Changes with 2026 effective dates

Child passenger restraint systems training

Overview

Effective January 1, 2026, child passenger restraint systems training under section 142B.51, subd. 2 is changed to require the training before transporting a child or children under age nine in a motor vehicle. The previous requirement was under age eight. This change aligns with 2024 Minnesota transportation law changes in [section 169.685](#) to require children up to age nine to use a child passenger restraint. Please note: The applicable age for the variance in paragraph (e) did not change.

Effective July 1, 2026, the child passenger restraint systems training variance for relatives will no longer be available due to changes in the training delivery model. Please note: The variance language itself did not change. Until it expires on July 1, 2026, it will apply to transporting a relative foster child younger than eight years of age.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.51, subdivision 2](#).

Effective date: January 1, 2026 (changes to age); July 1, 2026 (changes to variance)

What license holders need to know

Before transporting a child under age nine in a motor vehicle, license holders must complete child passenger restraint systems training. For child passenger restraint systems training variances for relatives issued before July 1, 2025, the applicable age for the variance in paragraph (e) did not change.

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) fully transitioned from CARS training to B.E.S.T. (Basic Education for Safe Travel) as of January 1, 2025. Effective July 1, 2026, license holders who have a child passenger restraint systems training variance for relatives will need to complete the B.E.S.T. training before the child requires a different size car seat, prior to relicensing, or before additional foster children are placed in the home. No new child passenger restraint systems training variances for relatives will be issued.

DPS updated its [BuckleUpMN.org](https://www.buckleupmn.org) website to include information for caregivers, including licensed foster care providers. On the website is a [flyer](#) about B.E.S.T. and information about how to complete the two-step training. There is also a [tool](#) for locating B.E.S.T. facilitators. Questions about the training can be submitted to DPS on the [Contact Us](#) page.

What licensors need to know

As is current practice, licensors will review child passenger restraint training for all license holders who transport a child in a passenger restraint (such as a car seat or booster seat). Beginning January 1, 2026, licensors will review that the training was completed by everyone who transports a child under age nine in a motor vehicle. Licensors cannot issue child passenger restraint systems training variances for relatives after July 1, 2026.

Child passenger restraint systems training – Relative child foster care

Overview

Individuals who are seeking to provide care only to a relative child may complete child passenger restraint systems training within 30 days of being licensed.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.51, subdivision 2.](#)

Effective date: January 1, 2026

What license holders need to know

License holders who will only be caring for a relative child and transporting a relative child under age nine in a motor vehicle may have additional time to complete the child passenger restraint systems training. The training must be completed within 30 days of being licensed.

There is no change for license holders who serve non-relative children or a mixture of relatives and non-relatives; they must complete the training prior to being licensed.

What licensors need to know

Licensors should encourage applicants to complete the child passenger restraint systems training as soon as possible and assist with barriers to completing the training. If the training was not completed prior to being licensed, licensors should note this on the Home Study Assessment training page. Licensors should follow up with relative license holders 30 days after being licensed to ensure that the training has been completed. If the license holder has not completed the training within the timeframe, a correction order must be issued.

Sudden unexpected infant death and abusive head trauma training – Relative child foster care

Overview

Individuals who are seeking to provide care only to a relative child who is under 6 years old (an infant or child through five years of age) may complete sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) and abusive head trauma (AHT) training within 30 days of being licensed.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.47.](#)

Effective date: January 1, 2026

What license holders need to know

License holders who will only be caring for a relative child who is an infant or child through five years of age may have additional time to complete the SUID/AHT training. The training must be completed within 30 days of being licensed.

There is no change for license holders who serve non-relative children or a mixture of relatives and non-relatives; if serving children under 6 years old, they must complete the training prior to being licensed.

What licensors need to know

Licensors should encourage applicants to complete the SUID/AHT training as soon as possible. If the training was not completed prior to being licensed, licensors should note this on the Home Study Assessment training page. Licensors should follow up with relative license holders 30 days after being licensed to ensure training has been completed. Agencies may continue to include SUID/AHT training in foster parent orientation. If SUID/AHT training is not completed during orientation, it must be completed within 30 days after being licensed. If the license holder has not completed the training within the timeframe, a correction order must be issued.

Placing workers and licensors are encouraged to share information and available resources with applicants/license holders. For example, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) [Infant Safe Sleep Quick Card](#) is available in several languages on the [MDH SUID website](#). Information on abusive head trauma can be found on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder training – Relative child foster care

Overview

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) training is not required for relative providers who will be caring only for a relative child who does not have FASD.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.80](#).

Effective date: January 1, 2026

What license holders need to know

License holders who only care for a relative child who does not have FASD do not have to complete FASD training.

There is no change for license holders who serve non-relative children or a mixture of relatives and non-relatives; they must complete at least one hour of training on FASD each year as part of their 12 hours of required in-service training.

What licensors need to know

Relative providers who are caring for a child with a known FASD diagnosis will have to complete this training. Licensors should ensure license holders are aware of the training requirement and are aware of resources to satisfy the training requirements. Relative providers who are caring for a child without a known FASD diagnosis do not have to complete this training. Licensors must monitor for compliance with training requirements.

In-service training – Relative child foster care

Overview

License holders who only care for a relative child must complete six hours of in-service training per year in one or more of the areas listed in [Minnesota Rules, part 2960.3070, subpart 2](#), or in other areas agreed upon by the licensing agency and foster parent.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 142B.81](#).

Effective date: January 1, 2026

What license holders need to know

License holders who only care for a relative child must complete six hours of in-service training per year. License holders must consult with their licensor and complete trainings in areas that are most applicable to caring for the relative child(ren) in their home.

There is no change for license holders who serve non-relative children or a mixture of relatives and non-relatives; they must continue to complete 12 hours of in-service training each year.

What licensors need to know

Licensors must monitor for compliance with in-service training requirements.

Household member background studies

Overview

Effective January 13, 2026, in order to meet federal compliance, the type of background study completed for household members will change. They will no longer have a national criminal history (Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)) record check included in their background study. They will continue to have all other checks they currently receive, including searches of MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) records, MN Predatory Offender Registry records, and Child Abuse Neglect Registry checks, among others.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 245C.02, subdivision 15a](#); [section 245C.05, subdivisions 1, 5, and 5a](#); and [section 245C.08, subdivision 1](#).

Effective date: January 13, 2026

What license holders need to know

The process of completing a background study for household members will remain the same. If a household member would like to be added as a license holder, a new background study may be required depending on when the original study was completed.

What licensors need to know

License holders and licensors should continue to consult the [Is a background study required? guidance document](#) to determine if an individual needs a background study.

Refer to the NETStudy 2.0 Foster Care and FADS User Manual in NETStudy 2.0 for information on how to identify household members in NETStudy 2.0.

License holders must have a national criminal history (FBI) record check; this type of background study is not required for household members. If a household member would like to be added as a license holder, a new background study may be required depending on when the original study was initiated. Household member background studies that are initiated (started) on or before January 12, 2026, include a national criminal history (FBI) record check. Household member background studies initiated on or after January 13, 2026, will not include a national criminal history (FBI) record check but will continue to include all other checks they currently receive, including searches of MN Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) records, MN Predatory Offender Registry records, and Child Abuse Neglect Registry checks, among others.

Additional information

Background studies

Updates on additional legislative changes related to background studies are posted on the ["What's new" for background studies webpage](#).

Relative notice requirements

Effective January 1, 2026, a responsible social services agency's relative notice requirements under Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.221, subdivision 2, will also include informing relatives of how to access respite care, strategies to leverage natural supports, ways to include other caregivers in a child's case plan, access to legal services, and a relative's choice between county or private agency licensing and services, depending on existing funding and contracts.

See [Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.221, subdivision 2](#).