



Foster Home Inspection Checklist

Get your home ready before your scheduled inspection

Walk through your home and check off each item after it is ready. Correct problems before your appointment. If an item does not apply or you are unsure what is required, contact our office for guidance.

This checklist covers common inspection items. Approval depends on the conditions and requirements that apply to your home; completing it does not guarantee approval.

1 Test your alarms

- ☐ Check for smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area and on every floor, including the basement. Existing-home exceptions may apply.
- ☐ Test each alarm using the test button and manufacturer instructions. Replace missing batteries and alarms that do not work. Keep required wired or interconnected alarms connected.
- ☐ If you have fuel-burning equipment, a fireplace or an attached garage, confirm whether carbon monoxide alarms are required. When required, place them near each sleeping area and inside any bedroom with fuel-burning equipment in it or its attached bathroom.

2018 IFC: 907.2.10.2, 907.2.10.5-907.2.10.6, 1103.8; 915.1-915.4, 915.6, 1103.9.

2 Make sure everyone can get out

- ☐ Clear hallways, stairs, exit doors and the paths outside. Move furniture, boxes and other items that could slow an escape.
- ☐ Check that exit doors open from the inside without a key or special knowledge. Ask our office about any lock or security device that could delay escape.
- ☐ Open each required escape window. Keep it free of obstructions and make sure any security bars or covers release from inside without a key or tool.
- ☐ Make sure closet doors that latch can be opened from inside. Keep stairs, handrails and guards in good condition; a ladder is not a substitute for an approved exit from a bedroom.

Check escape window size before making changes. Where current IFC dimensions apply, the clear opening is at least 5.7 sq. ft. (5.0 sq. ft. for qualifying grade-floor openings), at least 20 inches wide and 24 inches high, with the bottom no more than 44 inches above the floor. A 20-by-24-inch opening is too small. Existing openings and certain layouts have exceptions; contact HCFMO before replacing a window.

2018 IFC: 1010.1.9, 1010.1.9.6.1; 1011, 1015; 1030; 1031.2-1031.3, 1031.7.

3 Check heaters and appliances

- ☐ Use approved appliances with the correct connections and required venting. Have damaged equipment, loose connections or vent problems checked by a qualified professional.
- ☐ Keep heater guards in place. Move furniture, clothing, boxes and other items away from heaters, stoves, fireplaces and water heaters according to their required clearances.
- ☐ Use only listed portable electric heaters. Plug them directly into a wall outlet and keep them at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.

2018 IFC: 305.1; 603.1-603.1.2, 603.5-603.6; 604.10.1-604.10.4.



HAYS COUNTY

FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

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San Marcos, Texas 78666

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4 Check electrical equipment and storage

- ☐ Stop using frayed cords, damaged outlets or unsafe equipment. Have missing electrical covers, exposed wiring and other hazards corrected by a qualified professional.
- ☐ Remove extension cords used in place of permanent wiring. Keep cords out from under rugs and away from damage. Plug power strips directly into wall outlets, not into each other.
- ☐ Clear the area in front of the electrical panel. Typical minimum clearance is 30 inches wide, 36 inches deep and 78 inches high. Wider panels need more width; other exceptions may apply.
- ☐ Store gasoline and other regulated flammable liquids in approved containers, away from heat and flames. Contact our office if you are unsure about storage locations or quantities.

2018 IFC: 604.1, 604.3-604.7; 305.1; 5701.2, 5704.3.1.1, 5704.3.4.2, 5704.3.4.4.

5 Check fire protection equipment

- ☐ Keep required extinguishers mounted and easy to reach. Check for damage or low pressure, if a gauge is provided. Ask HCFMO if you are unsure about the required rating or service.
- ☐ Keep installed sprinkler and fire alarm systems in service. Have service records ready; ask HCFMO before changing bedrooms, building use or resident care arrangements.

2018 IFC: 901.6; 903.2.8; 906.1-906.3, 906.5-906.9; 102.1-102.3, 1103.1.

6 Recommended household safety steps

These are recommended practices. Separate foster care licensing rules may impose additional requirements.

- ☐ Make sure bathroom privacy locks can be released from outside in an emergency. Secure matches, lighters and household fuels where children cannot reach them.
- ☐ Have fuel-fired heating equipment checked annually by a qualified technician and follow the manufacturer's maintenance instructions.
- ☐ Keep a listed multipurpose fire extinguisher accessible to adults near the kitchen exit, even when one is not required by the IFC.
- ☐ Write and practice an escape plan with help for each resident, alternate routes, an outside meeting place and calling 911 from outside. Record monthly drills and test smoke alarms monthly.

Group R-4 residential care homes must follow 2018 IFC 403.10.3 and 405 for plans and drills. Ask HCFMO which requirements apply to your home.

7 Be ready on inspection day

- ☐ Have an adult available to provide access to all rooms, alarms and electrical panels. Secure pets before the visit.
- ☐ Have your confirmation and any previous correction notice ready. Be prepared to explain how many people receive care and who needs help evacuating.

All code references are to the 2018 IFC. HCFMO evaluates existing-building exceptions and local amendments. This checklist does not replace foster care licensing requirements.