

# **Foster / Adoption / Family Fire Safety Evaluation Checklist**

## **Instructions/ Explanations**

Using the checklist, Check either YES or NO. Any item that is circled NO, needs to be corrected to pass the inspection.

- 1) There must be less than 7 children living in the home. This requirement is set forth in the Texas Administrative Code Section 749.2551. The code does allow for specific circumstances to raise the number of children up to 8.
- 2) It is important that children can be safely rescued or self-extricate in case of a fire or emergency. If there is a child with special circumstances, please let your fire department know and come up with a plan for extricating children in special populations.
- 3) Foster Homes are classified as Care and Board Facilities as an R-4 occupancy type. According to the 2018 International Fire Code section 907.2.10.2 smoke detectors must be installed *in each room used for sleeping purposes*. Test each detector every month by pressing the test button. DO NOT use flame or smoke to test. Any non-operational detectors need to be replaced. Statistics show that 1/3 of smoke detectors installed in homes are inoperable, usually due to dead batteries. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends that batteries be replaced every 6 months. The perfect time to do this is when clocks are set on / off of daylight savings time.
- 4) 2018 IFC section 907.10.2 also states that fire alarms be installed *on the ceiling or wall outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms*. If bedrooms are in the same hallway/ atrium, one detector may be enough to suffice, depending on how large the area is and the distance between sleeping rooms.
- 5) If the house is more than one story, including basements, 2018 IFC states that all inhabitable levels shall have a working smoke detector. This does not include crawl spaces or uninhabitable attics.
- 6) According to the 2018 International Fire Code section 1030.1, 1030.2, 1030.2.1, and 1030.3, all the above bullet points are explained in more detail. To explain further, every sleeping room and every living and dining area shall be provided with access to secondary means of escape to the outside of the home in addition to the front or back doors. The purpose of the secondary means of escape is to provide an occupant with an alternate escape route when fire or other emergency blocks the primary exit from the home. Three types of allowable secondary means of escape:

- a) A door that opens to the outside
- b) Window that can be opened in sleeping and living areas where the opening is not less than 5.7 sq. ft. or minimum 20 inches wide and 24 inches high. The bottom of the opening is no higher than 44 inches above the floor.
- c) Every sleeping room and living area without a secondary means of escape (as mentioned above), has a passage, other than the hallway, to another room that has a means of escape as described in a or b above. The passage cannot have doors that can be locked. For example, two bedrooms or living areas directly connected with a passage or door. A shared bathroom connecting two living areas or sleeping rooms usually will not be acceptable because one, or both doors, could be locked, preventing passage from one room to the other.

**Note:** There are two exceptions to the secondary means of escape from a bedroom or living area:

- a) If the bedroom or living area has a door opening directly to the outside of the building.
  - b) Where the home is protected throughout by an automatic fire sprinkler system.
- 7) According to the 2018 International Fire Code section 1031.7, required emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys or tools. No home may have any interior door used in a path of escape that can be locked.
- 8) According to the 2018 International Fire Code section 1031.2, security devices affecting means of egress shall be continuously maintained and free from obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or another emergency.
- 9) This requirement is to ensure that the child cannot accidentally become locked inside.
- 10) Children often lock themselves in the bathroom. Provision for unlocking the doors from the outside will facilitate rescue by other occupants or by fire department personnel.
- 11) According to the 2018 International Fire Code section 1022.1, interior exit stairways and ramps shall be enclosed and lead directly to the exterior of the building and not used for any other purpose that interferes with the function of the means of egress. An attic room, for example, accessible only by a trap door or folding ladder, would not have an approved primary means of escape. A standard set of stairs to access the room would be required.
- 12) Unvented heaters are not equipped with vents to the outside of the home. These heaters depend on regular maintenance, proper adjustment, and an adequate air supply for proper combustion. Unvented heaters can release lethal carbon monoxide into the home, deplete the oxygen levels in the home to dangerous limits., or provide an ignition source for a fire. Unvented heaters must bear the mark or label of an approved testing firm and be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and applicable safety codes.

- 13) It is important to safeguard children from the hot surfaces of heating equipment. Children do not always understand the dangers of hot surfaces. Screens (barriers) that prevent children from accessing heating equipment must be of closely spaced wire or expanded metal and must be securely attached to parts of the building to prevent movement.
- 14) All gas appliances must be equipped with metal tubing and connectors, no rubber hoses.
- 15) All gas-fired heaters, including any central heating unit, should be inspected annually by a qualified person to ensure the unit in proper working order to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- 16) According to the 2018 International Fire Code section 508.1.5, Combustible material shall not be stored in boiler rooms, mechanical rooms, electrical equipment rooms. No storage of any item that can burn (paper, boxes, clothing, wood scraps, blankets/pillows) near stoves, heaters, fireplaces, or other sources of flame or heat, including the gas water heater closets or other gas fired appliances.
- 17) All matches and or lighters must be out of reach of children. Children playing with matches and/or cigarette lighters cause many deaths and millions of dollars in damage each year.
- 18) Flammable liquids should be stored in a safety can with the lids shut to prevent vapors from escaping the cans. Also store in a cabinet or out of reach of children.
- 19) Extinguishers must be minimum 5 lbs. and marked as 3A:40BC on the label. They must have a State Fire Marshal Tag from a licensed fire inspection company. Search online for local companies that perform the test. The tag must be renewed every year. The extinguisher must be mounted to the wall. We have allowed it to be mounted in the pantry, if desired.
- 20) Home fire escape plans are essential to enable all residents to know what to do when the smoke alarm activates, or other signs of fire are present. Home fire escape plans must be rehearsed by all occupants each month to remain effective. The plan should enable all family members to escape using primary or secondary exits. A safe location outside the home should be selected for a gathering point, well away from the dangers of the fire, or responding emergency vehicles.
- 21) Extension cords are to be used for temporary use only. When the cords remain plugged in, they become part of the building wiring system. No frayed or spliced appliance cords are permitted because of the danger of a short circuit. All unused openings in the electrical circuit breaker box must be covered to prevent any material from contacting live electrical wires. Child proofing outlet plug protectors are required if you have children under 6 years of age.