

Essential Elements of a Fire Evacuation Plan

Section 6.3

All Family Care Homes (FCH) must have a Fire Evacuation Plan which considers the unique characteristics of the home and the needs of the individuals living there. The Fire Evacuation Plan should be reviewed monthly by the Family Care Home Liaison and Family Care Provider (FCP). An evacuation plan may not be limited solely to fire situations. Evacuation from a home may be required for other reasons such as a gas leak or an impending flood. Evacuation routes will be different for each FCH and these must be detailed in the Fire Evacuation Plan.

When a Fire Evacuation Plan is developed or updated, the FCP and all individuals living in the home must be trained on the new plan. A record of this training must be maintained by the Sponsoring Agency. Substitute Providers, if providing services in the FCH, must be trained on the new or updated Fire Evacuation Plan. It is recommended that adult household members over the age of 18 be familiar with the Fire Evacuation Plan and assist, if willing and able to, in the event of an emergency. During an evacuation drill, it is expected that all household members will evacuate in a timely manner. A sample Fire Evacuation Plan is attached.

For a FCH located within an apartment complex, evacuation plans should consider any emergency steps or evacuation plans identified by the landlord or local housing authority.

Components of Acceptable Fire Evacuation Plans

At a minimum, each of the components below must be included in the written Fire Evacuation Plan:

1. The plan must detail the specific actions to be taken upon:
 - a) Actual discovery of the fire;
 - b) Smelling smoke; and/or
 - c) Hearing the alarm
2. How to safely check and enter rooms during the evacuation process
3. How to evaluate evacuation priority
4. Provider's responsibilities during the evacuation process
5. An identified safe area for head count
6. Notification to the fire department
7. Other Information

1a. Actions to be taken upon discovery of a fire

- This is the most important aspect of the Fire Evacuation Plan. The FCP must react decisively, promptly, and in the correct sequence to assure maximum safety when they encounter a real fire situation.

The RACE acronym can be used to reinforce the important sequence of response to a fire event.

R → Rescue and close the door to the room of the fire origin.

A → Alarm/Alert – sound the fire alarm or shout “FIRE” to alert the household

C → Confine the fire by closing all doors when exiting.

E → Evacuate individuals using the closest exit and go to the designated meeting area; then notify the fire department.

1b. Actions to be taken upon smelling smoke

- Immediately sound the alarm or alert household members and begin evacuating the home, while carefully checking doors to see if they are hot. Revert to RACE when the fire is found.

1c. Actions to be taken when alarm sounds

- Specific duties of FCP (and household family members over the age of 18 if they are willing and able to assist) will be clearly identified in the Fire Evacuation Plan.

2. How to safely enter rooms during the evacuation process

- All plans must have instructions on how to safely enter rooms during a fire emergency. It is important that the FCP is aware of the dangers of flash-over and how entering a room too quickly could be disastrous. The FCP must touch the door (using the back of his/her hand) to determine if it is hot. If it is, the FCP must not open the door and must proceed to the adjacent room.

3. How to evaluate evacuation priority

- Plans must reflect consideration given to the specific needs of the individuals (e.g. cognition, motor skills, ability to follow directions,) as well as their location within the house, proximity to exits, etc.

4. Identify FCP responsibilities during the evacuation process

- All plans must list the specific responsibilities of the FCP during the evacuation process. Family Care homes with two providers on the operating certificate may develop evacuation plans to reflect assignments by floor or area, if there are multiple individuals in the home.

5. Identified site for the safe area

- All plans must identify a specific location to gather after evacuating to determine if everyone evacuated safely. The “safe area” must be at a safe distance from the building, avoiding roads, fire hydrants and areas to which rescue equipment/personnel may need access.

6. *Notifying the fire department*

- During an actual fire or smoke event, the fire department should be contacted after everyone has been safely evacuated from the home. The fire department does not need to be contacted when the FCH is practicing a monthly fire drill evacuation.

7. *Other information*

Identify any other information relevant to the needs of the individuals living in the home for their safe evacuation.