

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Credentialing for Service Providers Practice Guide

2-2 PG Page 1 of 6

Policy The Department of Children and Families requires the credentialing of individuals and organizations that provide specific DCF-funded services to children and their families.

Definitions **Credentialing** means a formal system whereby individuals and organizations apply to provide specific DCF-funded services to children and their families and, upon approval of their applications, enter into Provider Agreements with DCF. The services are purchased through applicable wrap around services funding.

DCF-funded services means those services to which children and families involved in current child welfare or juvenile services cases are referred by DCF social work and juvenile services staff respectively, and those services provided to children and families through Advanced Behavioral Health who are not current clients of DCF.

Cross-reference: DCF Policy 2-2, "Fiscal Services Division"

Purpose and Rationale Credentialing services assures that all individuals and organizations, and their employees, seeking to provide DCF-funded services to children and their families are properly screened and have the requisite credentials before having unmonitored access to children. Only providers that have obtained or renewed their credentialing and have executed Provider Agreements with DCF shall be eligible to provide these specific services.

Responsibilities The entities responsible for credentialing are:

1. **Contracted Agent** - The entity with which DCF contracts to assist in managing the application and credentialing process. The current contracted agent is Advanced Behavioral Health (ABH).
 2. **Applicant** - The individual or organization that is applying to obtain or renew credentialing for it and/or for its staff, or is applying to obtain credentialing of prospective employees it is seeking to hire.
 3. **DCF Community Program Review Unit** - The unit within DCF that is responsible for overseeing the credentialing process and procedures.
 4. **DCF Credentialing Review Committee** - The decision-making body within DCF which has the authority to approve, deny or de-credential any applicant seeking to obtain or renew credentialing.
-

Resources The Contracted Agent shall maintain a list of services, service definitions and fee schedules for reimbursement of services, sample Provider Agreements and staff rosters of eligible providers. For a current list, see the Advanced Behavioral Health (ABH) website at www.abhct.com.

Application and Renewal Process

The application process to obtain or renew credentialing is the same. Once providers obtain credentialing, they are required to renew their credentialing every two years. The Contracted Agent shall manage and oversee the application process for providers to obtain and renew credentialing. The applications and directions are posted on the ABH website at www.abhct.com.

All credentialed providers shall be required to sign a Provider Agreement with the Department.

Background Checks and Qualifications

All applicants shall provide DCF with documentation of their qualifications and experience to provide the proposed credentialed service(s).

All individual applicants and all employees of organizational applicants shall submit signed releases for criminal and child protective services background checks with the application.

Upon receipt of an application for credentialing, the DCF Community Program Review Unit shall request that the Contracted Agent facilitate the completion of a Department of Public Safety criminal background check and a DCF child protective services background check for each individual and each organizational employee.

New Employees

All credentialed providers shall submit signed releases for criminal and child protective services background checks for all prospective employees. No prospective employee shall be permitted to have contact with children and their families receiving DCF-funded services until approved in writing by DCF.

Failure to secure the necessary background checks as outlined in this section may result in the provider being immediately de-credentialed.

Automatic Disqualifications

When obtaining or renewing a credentialing application, disqualifications that shall result in an automatic denial of the application, or the denial of the credentialing of an organizational employee, are the following adverse criminal and/or child protective service histories:

- a currently open DCF investigation or ongoing services case regarding child abuse or neglect;
- a substantiation of child abuse or neglect with a current listing on the Central Registry;
- pending criminal charges;
- a felony conviction for a crime against a minor including, but not limited to, crimes involving risk of injury to a minor, injury to a minor, or impairing the morals of a minor;
- a felony or misdemeanor conviction involving the sexual abuse of a minor or child pornography;
- a felony conviction for a crime of violence against a person including, but not limited to, spousal abuse, sexual assault or homicide;

(Continued next page)

Automatic Disqualifications
(Continued)

- a felony conviction within the past five years for other crimes involving physical assault or battery;
- a felony conviction within the past five years for the possession, use or sale of controlled substances or any drug-related offense;
- a felony conviction within the past five years for the illegal use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon or other similar offense;
- current probation or parole status; or
- a current listing on a state-sanctioned sex offender registry.

Discretionary Disqualifications

When obtaining or renewing a credentialing application, the following adverse criminal and/or child protective service histories may, in the sole discretion of the Department, result in a denial of the credentialing application:

- a substantiation of an allegation of child abuse or neglect, or removal of a minor from the applicant's care because of child abuse or neglect, with no current listing on the Central Registry;
- a misdemeanor conviction for a crime against a minor including, but not limited to, crimes involving risk of injury to a minor, injury to a minor, or impairing the morals of a minor;
- a misdemeanor conviction of a crime involving violence against a person including, but not limited to, spousal abuse, sexual assault, or homicide;
- a misdemeanor conviction for a crime involving physical assault or battery;
- a misdemeanor conviction of a crime involving the possession, use or sale of controlled substances or any drug-related offense;
- a misdemeanor conviction for a crime involving the illegal use of a firearm or other dangerous weapon or similar offense;
- an adverse motor vehicle driving record;
- a criminal record that, taken in totality, causes DCF to believe that the applicant is unsuitable for credentialing; and
- a demonstrated history or pattern of behavior including, but not limited to, driving under the influence and domestic violence, which calls into question the applicant's character or fitness to work with children.

Other circumstances that may result in a discretionary disqualification when obtaining or renewing a credentialing application include, but are not limited to:

- applicant does not meet the credentialing criteria for the service to be provided;
 - applicant falsified information on the application; and
 - applicant is a current DCF employee or applicant's effective date of separation from DCF state service is less than one year.
-

Background Checks and Qualifications

Any person who has previously been denied credentialing may re-apply if:

- all allegations of child abuse or neglect have been unsubstantiated and/or the Department has ended its involvement with the applicant;
- a substantiation of abuse and neglect and/or a Central Registry listing has been overturned by DCF or a court;
- all pending criminal charges have been dismissed or nolle, or the applicant has been found not guilty;
- the applicant has successfully completed parole or probation;
- the applicant can present sufficient evidence showing that the conditions that led to disqualification have been successfully mitigated; or
- the applicant can present sufficient evidence showing that he or she has acquired the requisite qualifications and can meet all eligibility requirements.

Note: DCF reserves the right to deny a re-application even if the disqualifying event has been rectified.

Note Regarding Accredited DCF Facilities

Providers who work with children placed at an accredited DCF facility may be subject to additional qualifications based on the relevant accreditation standards.

Waivers

In cases involving automatic disqualifications (adverse criminal or child protective services background), the applicant may seek a waiver of the disqualifying event from the Commissioner through the Credentialing Review Committee.

Factors that shall be considered by the CRC in determining whether to present a waiver request to the Commissioner include the time period when the adverse event occurred and the degree of rehabilitation achieved.

Whenever possible, recommendations of the CRC shall be made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the CRC chairperson or designee shall develop a specific recommendation for review by the Commissioner or designee, and include supporting documents as well as a summary of dissenting opinions voiced by CRC members.

The Commissioner, or designee, shall make the final decision to approve or deny the waiver. No waiver shall be granted until the Commissioner, or designee, has so indicated in writing.

The sole discretion to grant or deny a waiver rests with DCF. The decision of the Commissioner, or designee, is final.

Quality Assurance

DCF may place an individual, organization or an employee of an organization "on hold" for new referrals while developing a Program Improvement Plan (for an organization) or setting forth conditions designed to improve performance (for an individual or employee of an organization).

If an organization does not implement or follow through with the provisions of a Program Improvement Plan, DCF may de-credential the organization and terminate the Provider Agreement.

If an individual or employee of an organization does not fulfill the conditions designed to improve performance, DCF may terminate the individual's Provider Agreement or remove the employee from the roster of credentialed staff.

Circumstances Leading to De-Credentialing

An employee of a credentialed organization may be removed from the roster of credentialed staff of the organization or an individual or organization may be de-credentialled prior to the expiration of the two-year credentialing period if:

- the individual or organization terminates the Provider Agreement with written notice to the Department at any time;
- a child's safety is jeopardized by any behavior or action by an individual or employee of an organization;
- any circumstance arises that meets the Automatic Disqualifications or Discretionary Disqualifications criteria;
- an individual or an employee of an organization falsifies reports or records, including but not limited to, timesheets and billing invoices;
- other fraudulent activity by an individual, employee or organization is discovered;
- an individual, employee or organization fails to adhere to the terms and conditions specified in the Provider Agreement;
- an individual, employee or organization fails to implement or follow through with a Program Improvement Plan or conditions designed to improve performance of an individual or employee;
- an individual, employee or organization makes willful misstatements, misrepresentations or omissions during the credentialing process or at any time during the credentialing period; or
- an individual, employee or organization is subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension or revocation of a professional license by another state agency, professional organization or professional board.

DCF shall provide written notice of de-credentialing to individuals, and their organizational employers if any, in accordance with the "Termination of Provider Agreement" section of this Practice Guide.

Note: Persons who have been de-credentialled because of a pending child protection matter, criminal case, or current parole or probation status may re-apply in accordance of the terms of the "Re-Applications for Disqualified Individuals or Organizations" section of this Practice Guide.

Termination of Provider Agreement

Individuals or organizations may terminate their Provider Agreements at any time, with written notice to the Department.

DCF may terminate a Provider Agreement, with written notice, according to the terms of the Agreement and this Practice Guide.

The individual credentialed status of one or more employees of an organization may be terminated, with written notice according to the terms of this Practice Guide.

Notice of De-Credentialing and / or Termination of Provider Agreement

The DCF Fiscal Services Division shall issue the official notice of de-credentialing and termination of Provider Agreement. For an individual or organization, the individual or executive director of the organization shall receive the official notice. For employees of an organization, both the employee and the executive director shall receive the official notice.

Transition of Clients

The notice of de-credentialing and termination of a Provider Agreement shall include a time frame determined by DCF for the transition of clients to other providers unless there are safety concerns that require an immediate transition. DCF reserves the right to change the time frame and effective date of termination, if circumstances warrant.

For DCF clients:

To begin the transition process, the provider shall submit a complete list of all children and families receiving services, organized by Area Office of cognizance, to the Community Program Review Unit.

The Community Program Review Unit shall forward the list to the Area Offices and provide the Area Offices with a list of other credentialed providers in the service area that may be able to assume service provision.

The Area Offices shall be responsible for notifying clients and completing the transition of clients within the transition period.

For non-DCF clients serviced through Advanced Behavioral Health:

- To begin the transition process, the provider shall submit a complete list of all children and families receiving services to the Community Program Review Unit.
 - The Community Program Review Unit shall forward the list, along with a list of other credentialed providers in the service area that may be able to assume service provision, to the local System of Care Coordinator.
 - The System of Care Coordinator shall be responsible for notifying clients and completing the transition of clients within the transition period.
-