

The STAR Newsletter

Adult Foster Care (AFC) Issue

WELCOME

New Providers!

November 2023

- **Monica Chinn**
Oakdale
- **Jalaina Collins**
Woodbury

New Contact Information

Please contact your licensor with any changes to your email address and home/cell phone numbers.

Adult Foster Care Licensing Team's Mission

To enrich the lives of adults by promoting safe and quality licensed care.



Community Services
Adult Foster Care
Licensing
14949 62nd Street N.
Stillwater, MN 55082
[Adult Foster Care
Licensing Website](#)

Reminder to Issue Certificates of Rent Paid Form

All AFC providers should issue their residents a Certificate of Rent Paid (CRP) form by Jan. 31, 2024. Residents need this form to apply for a Renter's Property Tax Refund. *Do not issue a CRP if the person's entire room and board cost was paid for by Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA), or Housing Support Funds.*

For each qualifying resident, follow the instructions below to complete the CRP form:

1. On line B, enter the amount of Housing Support (formerly Group Residential Housing [GRH]) payments you received on the resident's behalf.
2. Multiply the number of months the resident lived in the residence by \$930 (the assumed monthly rent for 2023, adjusted each year).
 - If the resident lived in the residence for part of the month, prorate the rent (\$930 or less) for that month.
 - Enter the result on line 1.

| Example: | A renter lived in adult foster care from Jan. 1 - June 10. The renter had five full months and one partial month in the unit. |
|--------------------|---|
| Five Full Months: | $\$930 \times 5 \text{ months} = \$4,650$ |
| One Partial Month: | $\$930 \times (10 \text{ days} / 30 \text{ days}) = \310 |
| Total Rent: | $\$4,650 + \$310 = \$4,960$ (round to nearest dollar) |

For additional information and to obtain a Certificate of Rent Paid form visit the [Minnesota Department of Revenue's CRP Information for Landlords website](#) - - scroll down to the Adult Foster Care section.

Request a Well Water Test

Providers who own wells must test their water every year to ensure it is safe to use. ([Minnesota Rule 9555.6215, Subp. 1](#)). As license holders, you are responsible in making sure this testing is done annually. You may choose a company yourself to do the testing, or you can get a testing kit from Washington County Public Health. These kits are available to pick up in person during office hours (8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.). You can also ask your licensor for a testing kit, however we recommend you use the website below to request one be mailed to you.

Using this website, water test kits are mailed within two business days. You should select the standard drinking water option which is currently \$50. This fee must be paid when you

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submit your sample. *Water samples are accepted on Tuesdays between 8:15-10:30 a.m. in the Washington County Public Health & Environment Department on the 4th floor of the Stillwater Government Center.*

Order your well water testing kit directly by submitting a [Public Health & Environment Water Test Kit Request Form](#).

Scams for New Medicare Cards

Do you know what isn't new this year?
Your Medicare card.

Medicare beneficiaries are not receiving new cards this year, but scammers may tell you otherwise. Some scammers may falsely tell you that Medicare is issuing new cards – perhaps a card that is plastic or metal or a card that has a chip in it. The scammers may tell you that for them to send your new card, you need to verify your identity. *This is a scam and an attempt to get your personal or financial information.* Don't give it to them.

Here are some red flags to look for:

- phone calls from anyone claiming to be from Medicare;

- anyone needing your personal information so that they can send you an updated Medicare card;
- anyone saying your card is expiring; or
- anyone asking you to verify your Medicare number.

If you have been scammed

Call the Senior LinkAge Line at 800-333-2433 to report it. The Senior LinkAge Line is the federally designated Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) for Minnesota. We report scams as well as fraud, waste, and abuse situations to the federal agencies that handle these issues.

Published by and originally posted on the [Senior Medicare Patrol \(SMP\) website](#).

Adult Foster Care Background Studies

Who needs a background study?

Background studies must be completed on all household members age 13 and older and all caregivers. A caregiver is defined as someone who is providing care for your residents. This could be a person you hire or a friend or family member that comes to help you.

What if the caregiver works for another agency?

If the person is acting as a substitute caregiver in your home, you will need to complete a background study. Here are a few examples:

- **Situation 1:** A Personal Care Assistant (PCA) provides respite for you in your home. The PCA is hired through an agency and paid by a second agency (not you) to provide you time away from your residents. You leave the home while the PCA is present.
In this situation, you would need a background study as the PCA is the substitute caregiver.

- **Situation 2:** A Home Health Aide (HHA) from hospice comes to give a resident a bath. The HHA has the one resident in the bathroom while you are caring for your remaining residents. You are present during the entire time the HHA is there.

In this situation, you would not need a background study as the HHA is not responsible for the complete care of the residents in your home.

- **Situation 3:** Your resident goes out with their recreational therapist to do activities.
In this situation, you would not need a background study as the resident is not in your home and is acting on behalf of the agency alone.

Who does the background study?

Adult Foster Care providers are responsible to make sure that caregivers and employees enter their information on the NETStudy system. The study must be entered online, paid for, and then verified by the county before the

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person can have supervised contact with residents. *The county must verify the information entered on NETStudy before the actual processing begins. A study is not considered submitted until it is verified by the county. For the study to be verified, you must send in the data collection form to your licensor. If you fail to send in the correct form, the study will sit on the website and not be processed.*

Your licensor can contact you when the study has been verified. **This means before you even start to train staff to work with clients, the NETStudy must be verified.** *They cannot be unsupervised until a cleared study has been returned to you or you have received a more time notice allowing the person to have unsupervised direct contact. You will be directly informed of the results of the study by mail. You must read and follow any notices you receive regarding a background study. If a person is deemed to be a potential threat to residents or does not fully comply with a background study, the person could be ordered to be immediately removed from the program. This means that this person must not ever have any contact with residents unless you receive further notice allowing such contact.*

How do I complete the NETStudy process?

- Send a completed [Data Collection Form](#) to your licensor. The form can be found in the [Provider Forms section on Washington County's Forms for Adult Foster Care web page](#).
- The study subject will create their own unique NETStudy account and enter the required

information. They will pay the background study fee (currently \$44).

- A licensor or support staff will contact the study subject to verify their acceptable form of identification (I.D.) via video call or in-person.
- Once the person is verified, a licensor or support staff will make sure their I.D. matches the information entered on NETStudy. *If everything is correct, the study will be submitted.*
- Once submitted, the subject may need to complete fingerprinting. If so, the subject will get an email from IDEMIA – Identigo with instructions on how to schedule fingerprinting. **They will have two weeks to get fingerprinting done from the date the study is submitted.** The current cost for fingerprinting is \$10.50.
- A study result will be generated by NETStudy and sent to the license holder.

Keep a dated record of background study results, as well as a caregiver's first supervised and unsupervised contact with residents. This can be documented using the required [Background Study Tracking Form](#) which can be found in the [Provider Forms section on Washington County's Forms for Adult Foster Care web page](#).

Failure to have a background study completed on a caregiver or household member, or to allow unsupervised contact before clearance is received, can result in a correction order and/or \$200 fine.

Please contact your licensor with your questions.

Tips on Practicing Self-Care During the Winter

The AFC licensing team hopes you all enjoyed the holidays and are taking care of yourselves this winter. While some people thrive in the cold weather, these chilly months are hard for others as it can limit travel, connection, and socialization. It is important to prioritize self-care when possible, especially as caregivers. As they say, you have to put on your own oxygen mask first in order to help others. See some tips and tricks for how to conquer winter blues:

Sauna

Minnesotans love their saunas! Saunas were first

introduced to Minnesota by Finnish immigrants who moved here in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Explore Minnesota). If you don't have your own sauna, don't fret. Many gyms, spas, hotels, and resorts throughout the state have saunas and offer single day passes for those who don't have a membership.

Self-Reflection & Goal Setting

When the new year comes around, many of us start to reflect over the past year and think about resolutions

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for the upcoming year. Others are hesitant to make goals in fear that they won't be able to meet them by the end of the year. Try to use the winter months to shift your thoughts around goal setting. Goals don't necessarily need to be life-changing but could be as simple as finally cleaning out your garage or organizing your AFC binders.

It is helpful to keep goals measurable and attainable. Sometimes it helps to break bigger tasks up into smaller steps first. Consider journaling to write down things that brought you happiness in the past year, as well as things you could improve or want to challenge yourself to do.

Exercise

Physical benefits are arguably the most common reason people exercise, but exercise is important in taking care of our mental health as well. Whatever your reasons for exercise are, moving your body in joyful ways can improve mood and be a source of socialization.

Perhaps a traditional gym setting is not for you, but you have always wanted to try a Pilates studio or Zumba class. Many gyms and studios have free trials to take advantage of. If a friend or family member has a gym membership that allows guests, consider joining them to get benefits from both exercise and interaction with a loved one.

Another option is exercising outdoors. It might sound absurd to go outside to exercise if you are already someone who struggles in the winter months. It could be hard to try this on a sub-zero day, but on a warmer winter day, you'll be surprised how much bundling up and getting out for a walk can boost your mood. Washington County Parks have free admission on the first non-holiday Tuesday of each month which are great days to try this out.

If you are a home body, there are also plenty of free at-home workouts to search on YouTube that don't require equipment.

Bathing

Soaking in the bath can be a great act of self-love. Bathing promotes restful sleep, soothes muscle and joints, and helps to decrease stress (Everyday Health). Take an extra soothing step by adding Epsom salt, a bath bomb, or whatever your heart desires to create a peaceful environment.

Light Therapy

For those who struggle with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), you may be familiar with light therapy. A light therapy box mimics outdoor light. It's thought that this type of light may cause a chemical change in the brain that lifts your mood and eases other symptoms of SAD, such as being tired most of the time and sleeping too much (Mayo Clinic).

If you have a SAD diagnosis, a therapeutic light box may be covered by your insurance. Otherwise, there are a variety of light boxes you can purchase yourself. Did you know that many libraries offer light therapy kits for rent? Contact your local library to see if this is available.



Sources:

- [Explore Minnesota's Warm Up at Minnesota Spas & Saunas web page](#)
- [Everyday Health's 5 Health Benefits of Taking a Bath, Plus 5 Healthy Add-Ins for Your Next Soak web page](#)
- [Mayo Clinic's Seasonal Affective Disorder Treatment: Consider a Light Box web page](#)

Upcoming Training and Events

Consider participating in one (or all) of these upcoming Washington County hosted trainings and events:

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) Connect

Join your Washington County neighbors for free get-togethers at our wonderful Washington County parks this winter. BIPOC Connect is intended to be a safe space for Black, Indigenous, and people of color to meet along with allies. While the January meet up has passed, a group snowshoe and group hike are planned for February and March. View the poster to the right for more information.

Provider Training Group

Our January provider training group will be held virtually. *RSVPs are no longer needed and the training link has been sent out to providers via email.*

Our Words Matter

We often get stuck in certain patterns and language when developing services and creating support plans for the people we serve. Learn how our words can be used thoughtfully to promote inclusion and diversity.



These events take place on a Free Tuesday. There is no vehicle permit required.

Sunset Group Hike
at Lake Elmo Park Reserve

- Start at the Nordic Center
- Hike Eagle Point

January 2
4-5 p.m.

Group Snowshoe
at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

- Meet at Ravine Landing
- 20 teen to adult snowshoe spots available
- 4 youth spots available, 90 pounds or less
- Additional rental equipment spots available for \$5-10 depending on size
- Pre-registration required

February 6 | 4:30-6 p.m.

Group Hike
at Lake Elmo Park Reserve

- Start at the Nordic Center
- Hike Eagle Point

March 5
4:30-6 p.m.

www.co.washington.mn.us/parks
If you have questions or looking to pre-register for group snowshoe? Contact the Parks Equity Coordinator at 651-430-4333, or elena.schewe@co.washington.mn.us.

Tuesday, Jan. 23 | 6:30-8 p.m.
Online with Webex

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We are looking for training topics that our providers would like to learn more about. Please reach out to your licenser with any suggestions of relevant training ideas you think could be helpful.

Vulnerable Adult Mandated Reporter Training

We host two mandated reporter trainings a year with our first one coming up in March and our standard one in September. More details will be sent to providers in the coming weeks about the March training.

Foster Care Recognition Event

Thank you to all the providers who took our recognition event survey. A significant number of providers would like to see the return of a formal recognition event. The event will be held this May at the Lake Elmo Event Center. More details to come!

Radon Testing

Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that naturally comes from the soil. Radon can enter any building—homes, offices, and schools—and result in a high indoor radon level. Radon gives off radioactive particles that, when breathed in, can damage the lining of the lungs.

Radon is a serious public health issue in Minnesota, where 2 in 5 homes tested have radon levels that are a major health risk. Minnesota has high radon levels due to its unique geology and cold climate. During the winter, home heating systems tend to draw in radon gas from the soil, increasing radon levels inside the home. Many Minnesotans also use basements as living spaces, which can increase radon exposure.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

The U.S. Surgeon General has warned that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States today. *Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths.* If your home has high radon levels and you smoke, your risk of lung cancer is even higher. Radon accounts for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year. You don't have to be a smoker to get lung cancer; 2,900 lung cancer deaths were nonsmokers.

Test your home for radon

Radon is present everywhere, but the greatest exposure is inside buildings. Radon exposure is most likely to happen at home, where people spend most of their time. Your home can have high radon levels whether it is old or new, well-sealed or drafty, and with or without a basement. All houses have some radon, but even houses next to each other can have very different radon levels. *The only way to measure your radon risk is to test your home.*

If you do have high radon levels in your home, there are ways to reduce it. Here's more information on radon and testing:

- [Keeping You Safe from Radon Brochure](#)
- [Order a Radon Test Kit \(Minnesota residents\)](#)
- [Find a radon mitigation professional via the Minnesota Department of Health website](#)

Published by and originally posted on the [Minnesota Department of Health's Radon Data Portal web page](#).

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