

The Georgia home safety checklist — sourced, not folklore.

✓ Last verified July 2, 2026 Sources: DFCS policy 14.1 & 14.10 (PAMMS) · RBWO Minimum Standards FY26

How the inspection actually works

During the home study, your evaluator walks your home with a standardized form — policy 14.10 calls it the **Caregiver Home Inspection Safety and Compliance Checklist** — assesses the physical environment, photographs the proposed sleeping areas, and (where they apply) completes a water safety assessment for pools and spas and asks you to attest that your well and septic system are properly maintained. ✓ Jul 2, 2026

The standards that form enforces are published: DFCS policy 14.1, the **Safety and Quality Standards (SQS)**, which you acknowledge in writing during onboarding. That's what this page is built from — the actual policy text, not a Facebook-group memory of it. ✓ Jul 2, 2026

Two reassurances before you start walking the house. First, this inspection is **safety-oriented, not decor-oriented** — nobody is grading your furniture, your square footage, or the age of your carpet. Second, a fixable finding usually just gets fixed: evaluators would much rather you buy a lockbox or a smoke detector this week than fail you, and telling you what to fix is part of their job.

ROOM BY ROOM

Medications, chemicals & alcohol

Every item in this group: DFCS policy 14.1 (Safety and Quality Standards).

- ☐ **Medications, cleaning supplies, poisons, and hazardous materials are out of children's reach**
Policy requires conditions that prevent a child's access, as appropriate for their age. A locking cabinet or a high locked box covers most homes.
- ☐ **Prescription medications are stored in their original containers**
No pill organizers as primary storage, no unlabeled bottles — the original container with the prescribing instructions is the standard.
- ☐ **Alcohol is secured from children's access**
You don't have to remove it from the house. It has to be somewhere children can't get to it.

Firearms & ammunition

Every item in this group: DFCS policy 14.1 (Safety and Quality Standards).

- ☐ **Firearms and ammunition are stored under lock and key, inaccessible to children**
Policy 14.1's exact words: "Firearms and ammunition must be stored under lock and key, inaccessible to children." A gun safe or locking case satisfies this.
- ☐ **Ammunition is removed from firearms for storage**
Unloaded for storage — the yes-you-can-own-guns rule comes with this condition attached.
- ☐ **Keys to the locked storage stay with an adult or are secured from children**
A key hanging next to the safe doesn't count as locked. Keep it on you or reasonably secured.

Pools, spas & water

Every item in this group: DFCS policy 14.1; the walk-through water safety assessment is policy 14.10. Skip this group if you have no pool, spa, or water on the property.

- ☐ **Pool fence is at least four feet high, surrounds all sides, and has a locking gate**
Built so young children can't climb through or under it. This is the item most likely to require real money — price it before you apply, not after.
- ☐ **Above-ground pool steps or ladders are removed when the pool isn't in use**
- ☐ **Doors and gates leading to the pool have safety devices, like bolt locks**
- ☐ **Lifesaving and flotation devices are at the pool — a reaching pole, a ring buoy**
- ☐ **Pool covers are kept free of standing water and removed completely during use**
A sagging cover holding rainwater is itself a drowning hazard for small children.
- ☐ **A pool that can't be emptied after each use has a working pump and filter**
- ☐ **Hot tubs and spas have safety covers that lock when not in use**
- ☐ **You're committed to direct adult supervision around any body of water**
This one's a practice, not a purchase. Related: children 3 and older who can't swim must be enrolled in a swimming or water safety course within their first year in your home.

Sleep spaces

Every item in this group: DFCS policy 14.1. Your evaluator will photograph the proposed sleeping areas (policy 14.10).

- ☐ **Each child has a safe sleeping space of their own, with a mattress and linens**
A bed per child — not a couch, not an air mattress as the plan. It doesn't need to be new; it needs to be theirs.
- ☐ **Sleeping arrangements are equitable with the rest of the household**
Policy's word is "equitably" — a foster child's setup should look like the other kids' setups, not like an afterthought.
- ☐ **No co-sleeping or bed-sharing with children in foster care — ever**
This is absolute in policy, even for infants, even briefly. Plan where a scared child sleeps on night one so you're not improvising.
- ☐ **Infants sleep per the state's Infant Safe to Sleep guidelines**
A crib meeting safe-sleep practice — back to sleep, bare crib. If you're approved for ages 0–2, expect this to come up specifically.
- ☐ **No cameras or video recording devices in children's bedrooms or in/near bathrooms**
Baby monitors in a nursery are a different conversation — raise it with your evaluator. A camera pointed at an older child's bed is a no.

Fire safety & emergencies

Every item in this group: DFCS policy 14.1 (Safety and Quality Standards).

- ☐ **At least one working smoke detector on each level, plus one near all sleeping areas**
Test them the week before the walk-through. Batteries are the cheapest fix on this page.
- ☐ **At least one working carbon monoxide detector on each level, plus one near all sleeping areas**
The one families most often don't already own. About \$25 at any hardware store.

- ☐ **At least one working fire extinguisher, readily accessible**
"Readily accessible" usually means the kitchen — not the back of the garage.
- ☐ **Home is free of obvious fire hazards – defective heaters, badly stored flammables**
Gas heaters must be vented. Gas cans live in the garage or shed, not the hall closet.
- ☐ **A written evacuation plan is posted in a prominent place and reviewed with children**
Hand-drawn on paper is fine. The fridge is the classic spot.
- ☐ **Emergency numbers – including poison control – are posted**
Poison Control is 1-800-222-1222. Post it next to the evacuation plan and this item's done.
- ☐ **First aid supplies are on hand**
- ☐ **Water heater is set to a safe temperature**
Policy cites the Department of Energy's recommendation of 120°F. Most water heaters have a dial; turning it down takes two minutes and prevents scalds.

The whole house

Every item in this group: DFCS policy 14.1 (Safety and Quality Standards).

- ☐ **Kitchen works: sink, refrigerator, stove, and oven all operating**
- ☐ **At least one toilet, sink, and tub or shower in operating condition**
- ☐ **Heating and/or cooling consistent with community standards, and safe drinking water**
"Consistent with accepted community standards" — in Georgia, that means working AC in summer.
- ☐ **A working phone in the home, or access to one in close walking proximity**
Your cell phone counts.
- ☐ **Home and grounds are clean, safe, and sanitary – free of rodent and insect infestation**
Note the standard: clean and safe, with adequate lighting, ventilation, and trash disposal. Not spotless. Lived-in passes; infested doesn't.
- ☐ **Nobody smokes (including e-cigarettes) around the child – in the home, or in vehicles**
You'll sign an attestation to this. It covers your guests too.

Outside: yard, well & septic

Items in this group: DFCS policy 14.1; well and septic verification steps are policy 14.10.

- ☐ **Grounds and all structures on the property are properly maintained and hazard-free**
The exterior standard mirrors the interior one: free from dangerous objects and conditions.
- ☐ **If you have a well: it's covered, and you can attest it meets Georgia water well standards**
Policy 14.10 has the evaluator ask about maintenance, request an attestation (citing O.C.G.A. § 12-5-134), and photograph the well covering. The statute's well standards include that "the upper terminal of the well shall be protected by a sanitary seal or cover to prevent entrance of pollutants to the well" (§12-5-134(1)(J)).  Oct 18, 2026
- ☐ **If you have a septic tank: you can attest it's properly maintained**
If you can't remember the last pump-out, schedule one before the visit and keep the receipt.
- ☐ **Pets are vaccinated per state and local law**
Have the rabies certificates findable.

- ☐ **Any animal with a history of aggression toward people is securely enclosed**
Cage, fence, or similar enclosure. Exotic animals need a veterinarian's health statement and DFCS/agency approval — and any animal aggression toward a child must be reported within 24 hours.

Vehicles & getting around

Every item in this group: DFCS policy 14.1 (Safety and Quality Standards).

- ☐ **Reliable, legal, safe transportation: valid license, insurance, and registration**
For any privately owned vehicle used to transport the child.
- ☐ **One child per seat belt, individually secured**
- ☐ **Children under 8 ride in a federally approved child safety seat**
Installed per the manufacturer's instructions. Foster closets often lend car seats free — see the resource directory.
- ☐ **Children 12 and under ride in the rear seat**
Airbag protection — this is policy, not just a recommendation.
- ☐ **No child is ever left unattended in a vehicle**
- ☐ **Helmets for bike riding**

Commonly checked, but not in the published standards

Everything above is cited to published policy. The items below are different: families around Georgia commonly report being asked about them, but **we could not find them in the published standards we verified** — they may live on the evaluator's internal inspection form, vary by county or agency, or be folklore. We won't publish them as rules, and you shouldn't panic-buy for them.

Minimum bedroom square footage per child — a specific number is often quoted; we found none in the published standards.

Bedroom-sharing rules by age and sex — commonly reported; not in the published text we verified.

Electrical outlet covers and cabinet latches — beyond the general "hazards inaccessible" standard, no specific requirement found.

Fire-escape ladders for upper-story bedrooms — not in the published standards.

Locked storage for knives and sharps in family foster homes — required in group settings; we found no family-home equivalent in the published text.

Trampoline rules — not addressed in the published standards we verified.

The evaluator's own form isn't public — so ask for it

Policy names the form used at your walk-through (the Caregiver Home Inspection Safety and Compliance Checklist), but the form itself isn't published where we can cite it.  **Jul 2, 2026** The fix is simple and it's this page's best advice: **at your first home-study consultation, ask your evaluator for the current checklist.** They'll gladly hand it over — they'd rather you fix things before the walk-through than after. If your copy includes items we're missing here, tell us and we'll chase the citation.

To fix before the home visit

What needs fixing, and the date you'll have it done.

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Notes

Sources & verification

DFCS policy manual (PAMMS) §14.1 — Safety and Quality Standards: the item-by-item caregiver standards above (firearms, detectors, pools, sleep, vehicles, and the rest)

pamms.dhs.ga.gov  Jul 2, 2026

DFCS policy manual (PAMMS) §14.10 — Initial Family Evaluation: the inspection process, the named checklist form, photos, water safety assessment, well & septic attestations

pamms.dhs.ga.gov  Jul 2, 2026

RBWO Minimum Standards FY2026, §11.35 — matching safety requirements for CPA (private-agency) foster homes

gascore.com (PDF)  Jul 2, 2026

Official Code of Georgia Annotated (public access for the General Assembly; current through the 2026 Special Session), re-read Oct 18, 2026: §12-5-134 (standards for wells and boreholes). Search the section number.

advance.lexis.com  Oct 18, 2026

Policy details can change between our verification dates, and your evaluator's current form is the final word. If today is well past the dates above, confirm specifics with your case manager or agency before spending money.