

## Report in Brief

Date: September 2017  
Report No. A-05-16-00049

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
**OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**



### Why OIG Did This Review

Congress has expressed concerns about the safety and well-being of children in foster care. These issues were highlighted in a media report that provided several examples of children who died while in foster care. Additionally, in a recent series of OIG health and safety audits of State-monitored childcare facilities, we found that the majority of childcare providers in various States had instances of potentially hazardous conditions and noncompliance with State health and safety requirements, including criminal records checks requirements.

Our objective was to determine whether Ohio's monitoring ensured that foster care group homes complied with State requirements related to the health and safety of children in foster care, as required by Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (the Act).

### How OIG Did This Review

Of the 154 group homes in Ohio that received foster care Title IV-E funding for calendar year 2015, we selected 30 homes for our review. We selected these homes based on various factors, including the homes' location, capacity, children in the homes, and operational status. We conducted unannounced site visits from June 28 through August 11, 2016.

## Some Ohio Group Homes Did Not Always Comply With Foster Care Health and Safety Requirements

### What OIG Found

Although the State agency conducted the required inspections at all 30 of the group homes that we reviewed, this monitoring did not ensure that the group homes that received funds under Title IV-E of the Act complied with State requirements related to the health and safety of children in foster care, as required by Federal law. We determined that 19 of the 30 homes that we reviewed did not comply with 1 or more requirements. Specifically, we found that 17 homes did not always comply with physical and environmental safety requirements, 5 homes did not always comply with required criminal records checks, 4 homes did not always comply with requirements related to fire safety of residential facilities, and 3 homes did not always comply with staff record requirements.

### What OIG Recommends and the State Agency's Comments

We recommend that the State agency (1) ensure that all instances of noncompliance are documented and corrected; (2) ensure that the group homes adhere to all requirements for the health and safety of children by continuing onsite visits; (3) ensure that group homes obtain the required criminal records checks for all employees who provide direct care to children; and (4) consider additional outreach programs for the group homes, such as training and technical assistance in the areas identified as noncompliant.

In written comments on our draft report, the State agency stated that it was "in accordance" with our first three recommendations and that it concurred with our fourth recommendation. After receiving our preliminary findings, the State agency stated that it took immediate action to ensure that the instances of noncompliance with health and safety regulations were being corrected and that group homes adhered to all requirements, including those related to criminal records checks for all employees. The State agency also said that it will provide ongoing individual and group technical assistance to reinforce current mechanisms in place for disseminating State-wide policy on health and safety issues.