



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**  
**CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION – FIELD OPERATIONS**  
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September 24, 2013

TO: Children's Administration All Staff

FROM: Randy Hart, Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Children's Administration

SUBJECT: Procedures and Roles and Responsibilities for Children in Out-of-Home Care with  
a Plan of Adoption

Attached are procedures and roles and responsibilities for children placed in out-of-home care who are expected to or may remain in care longer than 90 days. Please note *these responsibilities begin the day the child is placed*. CPS is expected to gather information concerning the child's and family's medical, mental health and educational background. CFWS continues to collect background information as well as following up on referrals for tribal inquiries, relative search, and location and identification of absent parents. CFWS will continue to carry the responsibility of implementing permanency with the parents, child and courts up to termination of parental rights.

It is the expectation of the agency that cases transfer to adoptions within five days of the hearing that determined the child was legally free. While CFWS staff are expected to initiate activities that will allow the child's adoption to happen as soon as possible, it is not necessary to wait until the termination order is received or the caregivers' home study is approved to assign the case in adoptions. It is also not necessary to wait until legally free hard copy files are "split" to children's files. Adoption activities will happen concurrently in order to speed the finalization of adoptions.

The Children's Administration has also committed to implementing support for the child in his/her adoptive home through the adoption support program when the child is legally free and the adoption home study has been approved. This change is reflected in the attached procedures.

I realize that these procedures will require a change for some local offices. Your administrators will work to make those changes immediately.

## ADOPTION PROCEDURES

September 23, 2013

Procedures to finalize adoptions vary across the state. It is important that children be safely placed with their adoptive families, that those families have all necessary background information concerning the child, and that the family is offered the opportunity to apply for and negotiate an adoption support agreement to go into effect when the child is legally free and in their permanent family with an approved adoption home study. However, it is also important that these activities take place quickly and efficiently so that permanent plans can be finalized as soon as possible. The following procedures will be followed by the Children's Administration statewide.

### A. Assessment of the Prospective Adoptive Family

1. Upon placement of a child in a family, the child's assigned social worker is responsible for referring the family for an appropriate background check including fingerprints unless this has already been done (i.e., the family is licensed or has already been approved for adoption/relative/suitable person care through a background check that was not Purpose Code X for another child).
2. The child's assigned social worker is also responsible to submit information for administrative approvals and to obtain approval or ask the court to remove the child from the home.
3. If the home study is more than two years old, the adoption home study supervisor will determine if an update is needed. An update will be required if:
  - a. The family was not approved for adoption, but only for foster care licensing or relative care of the child.
  - b. There has been a significant change of circumstances (i.e., there has been a marriage, divorce, concerns about the care of a child, etc.)
  - c. There are concerns about the placement from the CFWS social worker or a service provider.
  - d. The prior home study had concerns that should be re-assessed.
  - e. A phone call to the provider determines that there has been a significant change of circumstances.
  - f. There have been concerns raised through CPS investigations or licensing referrals.
  - g. The home study is three or more years old.
4. The child's assigned social worker will provide the family with an application for the home study if an update is needed.

5. The child's assigned social worker will refer the family for a home study at or before the Adoption Planning Review. A home study worker will be assigned by DLR.
6. If there is difficulty in obtaining the home study application from the family, the situation will be staffed and an action plan to assist the family will be determined between the home study and the child's assigned social worker and their supervisors.

B. Gathering Information about the Child and Family

1. In addition to identifying relatives, locating parents, and inquiring about Tribal affiliation, gathering information about the child begins with the CPS social worker.
2. The form used to gather medical, mental health and educational information about the child and family is the DSHS 13-041 and includes attachments of pertinent documents providing the family with information and history about the child, siblings, parents and other relatives. Prior to the case going to adoptions, this form is used without the last page.
3. The CPS worker provides the family (parents and relatives) with the DSHS 13-041 minus the last page at interviews with the parents, at 72 hour shelter care hearings, and/or at FTDMs where decisions are made to place children.
4. Offices should have the DSHS 13-041 forms, with the last page removed, available where families often meet with social workers including courts and FTDM meeting rooms.
5. The CFWS social worker continues the responsibility to gather information from parents and relatives concerning their medical, mental health and education history.
6. If parents are unwilling to provide this information to the department, the CFWS social worker should ask the court to order a release of information from providers.
7. Assistance in getting medical information for children can be obtained from the Fostering Well-Being Care Coordination Unit at 1-800-422-3263.

C. Permanency Planning Staffings and Adoption Planning Reviews

1. In addition to FTDM requirements, shared planning meetings are required (see Practices and Procedures Manual Chapter 1710 Shared Planning):
  - a. Within six months of a child's original placement date.
  - b. Nine to eleven months of a child's original placement date and prior to the Permanency Planning Hearing.

- c. Every twelve months or until the child's permanent plan is achieved or the case is closed.
  - d. Within 30 days of a referral for a petition to terminate parental rights (first adoption planning review).
  - e. Within 30 days of a court ordering a termination of parental rights (second adoption planning review).
2. Shared planning meetings can be combined with FTDMs and other staffings (i.e., LICWAC, adoption planning reviews, permanency planning meetings, and/or multi-disciplinary staffings).
  3. An adoption social worker or supervisor should attend all permanency planning and adoption planning shared planning meetings.
  4. DLR home study staff should be invited to attend shared planning meetings and, if unable to attend, to send information about the status of the home and if there are any concerns.
  5. Adoption support staff should attend the adoption planning reviews in order to inform prospective adoptive families about the adoption support program.
  6. At these shared planning meetings, the appropriateness of the placements should be discussed including the family's ability to meet the special needs of the child, siblings placed apart, and the family's commitment to permanency. If a decision is reached that the child will have to be moved if not returned home, the timing of that move will also be discussed at the staffing.
  7. If concerns are identified about the placement, a staffing can be called at any time to include at minimum the DLR home study and/or licensing worker, the adoption and CFWS supervisors, and the CFWS social worker.

D. Case Transfer from CFWS to Adoptions

1. The child's case will be assigned in adoptions **within five days of the hearing** in which the child was determined to be legally free if there is a plan for adoption. Even if the child is not in an adoptive home, if it is determined that the child can be placed and adopted within the next year, the case will be transferred. This decision will be made between the adoption supervisor and CFWS supervisor, involving the area administrators if no agreement can be reached.
2. Prior to case transfer, the CFWS social worker will:
  - a. Schedule a transfer staffing to be held within five days of the child being legally free.

- b. Enter the legally free date in FamLink. If the order has not been received, the date of the hearing will be entered. (If the order contains a different date when received by the adoption worker, the adoption worker will correct the date in FamLink.)
- c. Create a legally free case for the child in FamLink.
- d. Ensure that criminal history checks and administrative approvals have been completed for all non-licensed placements.
- e. Refer the family for an adoption home study at the time of the initial adoption planning review if one has not already been completed or if an update is required.
- f. Initiate local office procedures to create legally free files for children (“splitting the files”). This can begin prior to the termination trial date. Creating legally free case files should not delay the transfer to adoptions.
- g. Complete the health and safety visit for the child.

E. Disclosure to Adoptive Parents

1. Once medical and mental health background information is obtained for the child, siblings, parents and relatives, this information is shared with the adoptive family by the adoption worker. This information must be shared prior to the finalization of the adoption.
2. In addition to the DSHS 13-041, the adoption worker provides the family a copy (may be an electronic copy on CD or thumb drive) of medical and mental health reports and the additional information outlined in the Practices and Procedures Guide chapter 5361 including education, legal history, referral history and case notes. These items are redacted for the requirements of confidentiality (Operations Manual 3230 Confidentiality Policy).
3. Once this information has been provided and reviewed with the family, the adoptive family signs the DSHS 13-041 acknowledging receipt and the form is uploaded in FamLink and included in the archived record.

F. Adoption Support

1. The CFWS social worker and adoption worker will inform the prospective adoptive parent(s) of the existence of the adoption support program.
2. The adoption support manager provides information about the program and helps the family with the application for adoption support.

3. No one other than the adoption support manager will confirm a specific support provided through the program.
4. Application to the adoption support program can occur anytime after the first adoption planning review, prior to the child becoming legally free for adoption. The adoption support program manager, upon receipt of the application, will inform the prospective adoptive parents in writing that this is not a promise that the child will be legally free for adoption or that they will be approved as the adoptive placement for the child. No final decision on the adoption support application will be made until the child is legally free and the family's home study is approved.
5. The adoption support agreement will come into effect when the child is legally free for adoption and the family has an approved adoption or unified home study. The agreement will continue following the adoption of the child.

G. Other Finalization Activities

1. The adoption social worker will complete the post-placement report and provide the report when requesting the area administrator to sign the consent to adoption.
2. The adoption social worker will request a name/date of birth criminal history check and check the family in FamLink, providing the results when requesting the area administrator sign the consent to adoption.
3. The adoption social worker will provide the adoption home study when requesting the area administrator to sign the consent to adoption.
4. Activities to finalization an adoption can and should happen concurrently so that adoptions are completed timely.

## Roles and Responsibilities in Completing a Permanency Plan of Adoption

CPS	CFWS	Adoptions	Home Study
<b>Obtain and Share Information about the Child's and Parents' Background</b>			
Ask the parents and relatives family to complete the DSHS 13-041. Remove the last page prior to giving the families the forms.	Continue to collect information about the child and family medical and mental health history.	Ensure confidential information is redacted from information that will be provided to prospective adoptive families.	Obtain from the child's social worker information about the child, his/her special needs, and what demands will be placed on the caregiver family to meet those needs.
Obtain releases of information (or request court order) to get medical and mental health records for the parents.	Continue inquiries as to Tribal affiliation if any is indicated. Involve identified Tribes in case planning.	Share child's and family's background information with the prospective adoptive family. This includes the DSHS 13-041 and all attachments.	
Make efforts to identify and locate parents, including presumed and alleged fathers.	Follow-up on relative search and repeat search at least annually or until a shared planning meeting determines search is no longer needed.	Obtain the prospective adoptive family's signature on the last page of the DSHS 13-041.	
Request any information concerning Native American and Tribal heritage. Complete the ancestry chart and inquire as to Tribal affiliation per local office procedures.	For siblings placed apart, continue to assess for opportunities to place together (i.e., move to same foster home, or with relative caregiver).	For siblings placed apart, continue to assess for opportunity to place together for adoption.	
Using local office procedures, complete a relative search.	Use local office procedures and staffings to determine if the current placement is a possible and appropriate permanent placement, or if a new home needs to be recruited.		

CPS	CFWS	Adoptions	Home Study
Make placements that will provide for permanency as well as supporting return home.			
<b>Approval of the Placement for the Child</b>			
Complete background checks for non-licensed placement providers. Follow administrative approvals procedures.	Refer for a home study. Submit the home study referral within 30 days of placement unless the child is expected to change placements within 90 days or a home study has been completed within three years and no update is required.	Request a name/date of birth criminal history check (if this has not been done in the year prior to the adoption finalization date) and review FamLink, providing the results when requesting the area administrator sign the consent to adoption.	The home study supervisor reviews the referral for a home study and determines if a home study has already been completed and if an update is required.
Refer non-licensed providers for home study unless the child is expected to change placements within 90 days.	If a home study is required, ensure and assist the family to complete an application for a home study.		Notify the social worker when a home study referral has been assigned or if it is determined that an update is not required.
	Ensure all background checks and administrative approvals have been completed for the placement home.		Provide a copy of the home study to the adoption worker when completed.
<b>Schedule and Attend Shared Planning Meetings</b>			
At the initial FTDM meeting, discuss with the family the permanency planning options if reunification is not possible. Provide a copy of the DSHS 13-041 minus the last page to the parents and relatives for completion.	Schedule and conduct shared planning meetings at six months of a child's OPD, prior to each permanency planning hearing.	An adoption worker or supervisor will attend all permanency shared planning meetings.	Home study staff attend shared planning meetings if there are significant concerns about the placement. In any event, information should be shared with the meeting participants concerning the status of the home and the approval process.

CPS	CFWS	Adoptions	Home Study
	<p>Ensure adoption planning reviews are scheduled within 30 days of referring the child to the Attorney General's Office (AGO) for a termination petition to be filed (can be combined with a shared planning meeting).</p>	<p>Attend all adoption planning reviews and invite the adoption support program manager to the first adoption planning review and other shared planning meetings as appropriate. Application for adoption support can begin at this time, but will not be finalized until after the child's parental rights are terminated.</p>	
<b>Other Case Planning Activities</b>			
	<p>When adoption is the appropriate plan, refer the child to the AGO to file a petition to terminate parental rights. This can be done any time after the dependency dispositional findings in order to be in court no earlier than six months following the entry of the dispositional order. Referral to the AGO must occur by the 12<sup>th</sup> month of placement.</p>	<p>Ensure the family is aware of the adoption support program, has applied, and is working with the adoption support program manager to negotiate an agreement for adoption support.</p>	
	<p>If compelling reasons exist to not file a petition to terminate parental rights, these must be documented in FamLink and included in the court report.</p>	<p>Complete the post placement report.</p>	

CPS	CFWS	Adoptions	Home Study
	<p>Within <b>five days</b> of the hearing in which the child became legally free, the case will be transferred to adoptions.</p>	<p>Provide the consent to adoption with the home study, updated background checks if required, and the post-placement report to the area administrator for approval.</p>	

CPS	CFWS	Adoptions	Home Study
	Create a legally free case in FamLink, using the hearing date as the legally free date if the order has not been received.		