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|  | INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY | |
| | Chapter 10: Adoption | Effective Date: July 1, 2018 |
| | Section 10: Unlicensed Relative Adoption | Version: 3 |

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) has established the following guidelines for an unlicensed relative who wants to become a prospective adoptive parent for the purpose of adopting a DCS ward in his/her care:

1. Efforts to reunite the child with either parent have not been successful;
2. The child has lived in the home for six (6) continuous months or longer;
3. The permanency plan is adoption and there is a significant emotional attachment between the child and the unlicensed relative as assessed by a counselor, therapist, or other professional specializing in attachment;
4. Completion of pre-service adoption training and six (6) hours of "Adoption" training. See policy [12.5 Pre-Service Training Requirements](#) for further guidance;

Note: The pre-service adoption training and six (6) hours of "Adoption" training may be waived with a written exception from the DCS Local Office Director (LOD).

5. Submission of a written [adoption summary](#) to the court detailing DCS' recommendation for adoption.

Note: A complete home study is not required for unlicensed relative adoptions.

DCS requires background checks on all persons who live in a prospective adoptive home when a DCS ward is being adopted. See policies [13.7 Conducting Background Checks for Adoption](#) and [13.8 Evaluating Background Checks for Adoption](#) for further guidance.

DCS will ensure that the prospective adoptive parent is made aware of the ability to apply for Medicaid, Non-Recurring Adoption Expenses (NRAE), adoption assistance periodic payments, and [Post Adoption Services \(PAS\)](#). See separate policy [10.14 Indiana Adoption Assistance Program Overview](#).

Code References

1. [IC 31-19-8-5 Agency report and recommendation; filing requirements; waiver of report](#)
2. [IC 31-19-8-6 Contents of report](#)
3. [IC 31-19-2-2 Adoption of minor child; petition; venue; substituting petitioner](#)
4. [IC 31-19-2-7.5 Submission of information, forms, or consents for criminal history check](#)
5. [IC 31-19-26.5: Adoption Subsidies](#)
6. [IC 31-9-2-99.2 Prospective Adoptive Parent](#)
7. [IC 31-19-2-15 Information provided to current foster parent and prospective adoptive parent; explanation of information; signature](#)
8. [42 USC 673: Social Security Act](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Complete the [10.B Tool: Child Social Summary](#). See policy [10.11 Child Social Summary](#) for further guidance;
2. Explain the adoption process, including the Adoption Assistance Program to the unlicensed relative and the child, if applicable. See policies [10.1 Planning for Adoption \(Overview\)](#), [10.14 Indiana Adoption Assistance Program Overview](#), and [10.A Tool: Termination of Parental Rights \(TPR\)/Adoption Checklist](#) for further guidance;
3. Initiate the background check process of all individuals living in the home. See policy [13.7 Conducting Background Checks for Adoption](#) for further guidance;
4. Conduct an agency staffing to discuss the approval of the unlicensed relative as a prospective adoptive parent after the child has been in the home for six (6) months;
5. Complete a written [adoption summary](#) for the court within 60 days of the date the adoption petition is filed. The [adoption summary](#) should include the following information.

Note: The [adoption summary](#) may not contain information concerning the financial circumstances of the prospective adoptive parent or any recommendation regarding a request for subsidy by the prospective adoptive parent.

6. Provide and explain the [Explanation of Adoption Summary \(SF 56527\)](#) and ensure necessary signatures are obtained;
7. Ensure that the prospective adoptive parent has contact information for the Regional [Adoption Consultant](#) to access [PAS](#); and

Note: The FCM should provide the prospective adoptive parent with the [PAS](#) brochure and [Adoption Consultant](#) map. This information is also available on the DCS website.

8. Upload all documentation into the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Ensure that the FCM has completed all required background checks in a timely manner. See separate policies, [13.7 Conducting Background Checks for Adoption](#) and [13.8 Evaluating Background Checks for Adoption](#) for further guidance;
2. Participate in the staffing and provide input as necessary;
3. Ensure the [Explanation of Adoption Summary \(SF 56527\)](#) has been explained and all necessary signatures obtained; and
4. Ensure that all required information and documentation is in the child's adoption file and uploaded into case management system. See separate policy, [10.14 Indiana Adoption Assistance Program Overview](#) for further guidance.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Adoption Summary

The adoption summary is submitted to the court and provides the court with the following information:

1. FCM's name;
2. Petitioner's name;

3. Child's name;
4. Adoption Cause Number;
5. Wardship date;
6. Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)/Consents (Date);

Note: It is important to include this information for all identified alleged fathers.

7. DCS Consents for Adoption (document the status of consent if not yet signed);
8. Adoption staffing date;
9. Adoptive placement date;
10. Adoptive placement approval (by whom/date);
11. Summary about the child. (talk about the former environment of the child and the child's health in this section);
12. Summary about the child's sibling(s);
13. Summary about the biological parent(s);
14. Summary about the adoptive family (talk about the suitability of the home for the child in this section):
 - a. Adoptive parent(s),
 - b. Children of adoptive parent(s),
 - c. Parenting and discipline,
 - d. Home and community, and
 - e. Substantiated reports of Child Abuse or Neglect (CA/N) of adoptive parent(s).
15. DCS' evaluation and recommendations for placement, including the strengths, needs, and concerns for the placement and any information about substantiated reports of CA/N;
16. FCM's signature;
17. FCM Supervisor's signature; and
18. Signature of the Local Office Director (LOD) or designee.

Post Adoption Services (PAS)

The adoptive parent may, at any time, submit a request to DCS for a PAS referral on behalf of the adoptive child or family. The adoptive parent(s) must contact the DCS [Adoption Consultant](#) in the region of his or her residence to initiate a referral for services. The [Adoption Consultant](#) will complete a referral to an appropriate service provider for purposes of an assessment and creation of a service delivery plan tailored to the particular needs of the adoptive child and family. See [Post Adoption Services](#) for further guidance.

Note: A request for [PAS](#) may not be submitted prior to the finalization of adoption.

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| FORMS AND TOOLS |
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1. [Tool 10.B: Child Social Summary](#)
2. [Explanation of Adoption Summary \(SF 56527\)](#)
3. [10.A Tool: Termination of Parental Rights \(TPR\)/ Adoption Checklist](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Prospective Adoptive Parent: A prospective adoptive parent means a person who has filed a petition for adoption of a child under [IC 31-9-2-99.2](#).

Changes in Dynamics – When a Unlicensed Relative Resource Parent Adopts

Adoption means the unlicensed relative:

1. Is making a commitment to provide permanency for the child; and
2. No longer shares decision making responsibility and liability with DCS or the court.

He or she is solely responsible, legally and financially, for the parenting, care, growth, and development of the child. This includes ensuring that the long-term developmental, therapeutic, social, medical, educational, and emotional needs of the child are met.

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