

TN

Department of
Children's Services



Contract Provider Manual

Section Eleven (11) - Adoption

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Adoption-For Level II and Level III Continuums

1. Protocol for Making Adoptive Placements

The DCS [Adoption Best Practices Manual](#) is used when the provider agency completes the permanency steps through adoption.

The following DCS policies in Chapter 15 (Adoption Services) and Chapter 16 (Foster Care) are to be used as they relate to adoption and selected foster care services applicable to adoption.

<http://tn.gov/dcs/topic/policies-procedures>

2. Adoption Case Management Services

The agency provides all case management services (both those that are typical for foster care and those that are additional due to the child's adoption status):

- a) In accordance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requirements regarding concurrent planning, the provider begins the process of gathering the necessary documentation for preparation of the pre-placement summary when a referral is made to the DCS attorney to file termination of parental rights. The provider will review the file and alert DCS of any missing records within five (5) days. DCS will then submit a request for missing records within five (5) days.
- b) Partner with DCS to perform all steps necessary to provide diligent search for an adoptive family.
- c) Partner with DCS to perform all services necessary to place the child for adoption, including compliance with legal requirements and other binding documents, ICPC, and securing adoption assistance when the child is eligible.
- d) Partner with DCS to perform all steps necessary to prepare the child for adoption, including but not limited to adoption specific counseling and grief and loss counseling. If the provider is unable to provide through their network, they make the necessary referral to an outside agency and communicate this information to the child and family team.
- e) Partner with DCS to prepare the family for adoption and ensure they are aware of post-adoption resources that are available to them.
- f) Perform regular continuum services through finalization of the adoption, including:
 - ◆ Responding to any crises and assistance to the child and family, as needed.
 - ◆ The provider preserves the child's current foster care placement by providing appropriate foster care management and supportive services.
 - ◆ The provider submits monthly summaries on the child to DCS until finalization of the adoption because this is a foster care placement until finalization.
 - ◆ Provider will participate, along with DCS in development of the permanency plan, and participation in court reviews and foster care reviews.
 - ◆ The provider prepares the appropriate forms (copy of DCS Permanency Plan, monthly

summary, and/or court report) for each review. Both DCS and the provider need to have a representative at court reviews.

3. Steps to Adoption

- a) Identify children to be placed. DCS and the provider confirm which children have a goal of adoption and assess the placement with siblings. However, DCS must approve any separation of siblings. The provider therapeutically prepares the child for adoption using the guidelines and criteria currently implemented by DCS in the Adoption Best Practices Manual.
- b) Ensure Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has been obtained. DCS verifies that all TPRs, surrenders, and appeals are finalized on all legal/birth parents.
- c) The provider prepares the pre-placement summary and the presentation summary following the guidelines set forth by DCS, for all youth on a Level 2 contract or higher, including medically fragile care. Reference: Adoption Best Practices Manual. DCS allows the provider to have temporary physical access to copy the entire record for a specified period of time at the DCS Office according to a signed agreement for use of the file. The record is made available to the provider within five (5) working days of the agency's request for the record. Delays with obtaining access to the case record are communicated to the DCS Permanency Specialist assigned to the case. The pre-placement summary shall be completed within thirty (30) days of the date of full guardianship. DCS reserves the right to review the summaries and communicate the need for revision/changes, if applicable. Any changes should be submitted to DCS within ten working days.
- d) Recruit Adoptive Families - When the foster family is not identified as the adoptive family, the provider must prepare and implement an Individual Recruitment Plan (IRP) with the Child and Family Team. The IRP must be specific, have action steps with responsible parties and timelines for completion. The IRP must be updated every three months at a minimum. All recruitment efforts need to be documented on the IRP. Families who inquire through Adopt US Kids or any other source receive a response and their home study requested, where appropriate. Searches for potential matches on AUK are initiated, if needed. The provider will take the lead in updating or initiating an "archeological dig" for potential placements or supports. This dig is completed within 30-60 days after a child comes into full guardianship for all children that are not in an identified or anticipated home. DCS ensures that the child's file is made available to the provider for this purpose.
- e) Adopt US Kids (AUK Status)- The agency partners with DCS to provide the necessary **CS-1012, Adopt USKids Registration Form**, profile and picture, if needed, so that this information can be forwarded to the Central Office point person. Utilize DCS Policy **15.5 Registering and Maintaining Status of Children with Adopt US Kids**.
- f) Guidelines for Identifying a Permanent Family-Home studies of potential adoptive families are reviewed regularly in selection CFTM's and DCS must be a part of the CFTM. Reference DCS Policy Attachment: **CFTM Guidelines for Identifying a Permanent Family**.
- g) Presentation of the Child- The provider partners with DCS in presenting the child to the family identified, using the child's presentation summary, medical records, educational records, and

current pictures of the child. For this very important process, utilize the Best Practices Manual and reference DCS Policy [15.1, Adoption Related Disclosure](#).

- h) Adoptive Placement with the Family-When the foster family is the adoptive family, the provider is responsible for completing the adoption within 90 days of full guardianship. They are to partner with DCS to perform all necessary steps to complete the adoption using the [Adoption Best Practices Manual](#) and Policy Attachment [15.11, Protocol for Making an Adoptive Placement](#). If this is a new adoption placement, the provider is responsible for completing the adoption within 60 days of the end of the 6 month placement period.
- i) Adoption Assistance- The provider works with the family to obtain all necessary documentation as needed by the Permanency Specialist to determine eligibility for adoption assistance. Once the AA rate is determined, the provider completes the application and agreement in accordance with DCS Policy 15.11 and Adoption Best Practices Manual. The provider discusses the child's eligibility for adoption assistance and negotiates with the adoptive family consistent with DCS Policy [15.11 Adoption Assistance](#).
- j) Report to Court- The provider obtains the signed consent to the adoption by DCS.
- k) The provider prepares and submits court reports and necessary documents as required by the court using [Adoption Best Practices Manual](#) (section on finalizing the adoption).
- l) The provider completes the application for a new birth certificate by adoption. ([Adoption Best Practices Manual](#) - *Responding to the Reference; Providing for the Issuance of a New Birth Certificate by Adoption*).
- m) Seek clearance of the Putative Father Registry Reference DCS Policy [15.4, Clearing the Putative Father Registry](#).
- n) Adoption Finalized
 - ◆ The provider attends the court hearing to finalize the adoption.
 - ◆ Seal adoption record and submit to the identified regional Adoption TC for verification and approval of accuracy. DCS will have the record available and ready for the provider to seal Reference: [Adoption Best Practices Manual](#) for preparing the record for permanency filing. Utilize DCS Policy [15.8 Preparing Adoption Records for Archives](#).