



*Athens County  
Children Services*

Protecting Children  
Strengthening Families  
Securing Futures

# Adoption Policies and Procedures Manual

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**SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Children available for adoption through Athens County Children Services (ACCS) generally have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse and neglect. It should be noted that this document contains special needs factors (e.g. age, sibling group, mental health diagnoses) that relate to subsidy eligibility, but most of our children have special needs apart from those criteria. Infants are rarely available for adoption. Infants who are available, are often part of a sibling group and/or may have tested positive for drugs and/or alcohol at birth. Families seeking to adopt infants with no special needs would be better served by working with a private agency.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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## **SUMMARY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Almost all of the children in the permanent custody of ACCS who are available for adoption are considered special needs as defined by at least one of the following characteristics.

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## **GUIDELINES**

A child who, prior to finalization of adoption, has met at least one of the following special needs factors or conditions making it difficult to place the child with an adoptive parent(s) without the provision of AA or medical assistance:

- 1) Is in a sibling group being adopted together or is placed in the same adoptive home of a previously adopted sibling
- 2) Is a member of a minority, racial or ethnic group, but if between the age of newborn and 12 months the child must also be diagnosed to have a condition outlined in paragraph (A)(2)(g) or (A)(2)(h) of rule 5180:2-49-03 of the OAC
- 3) Is six years of age or older
- 4) Has remained in the permanent custody of a PCSA or PCPA for more than one year before an adoptive placement.
- 5) Has been in the home of the prospective adoptive parent(s) for at least 6 consecutive months directly preceding the adoptive placement and would experience severe separation and loss if placed in another setting due to significant ties with the prospective adoptive parent(s) as determined by a qualified mental health professional
- 6) Has experienced a previous adoption disruption or three or more substitute care placements while in the custody of a PCSA or PCPA.
- 7) Has a developmental disability, physical or mental impairment or medical condition diagnosed by a qualified professional within their area of expertise according to rule 5180:2-49-03 of the OAC.
- 8) Child or child's biological family has a social or medical history that establishes a substantial risk of developing a developmental disability, physical or mental impairment or medical condition. The substantial risk must be determined by a qualified mental health professional. A child is not at substantial risk if the biological parents' social/medical history cannot be determined.

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## **REFERENCES**

OAC 5180:2-49-03 Special Needs Criteria for Adoption Assistance

Procedure Approved: 3/24/2015

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 5/15/24, 02/20/2025

Athens County Children Services will conduct adoption-only home studies for individuals and families wishing to adopt a specific special needs child in the custody of Athens County Children Services or another public children services agency. ACCS does not provide adoption home study assessments for families pursuing private, stepparent, or international adoption. Any individual or family wishing to adopt a child that is not in the custody of Athens County Children Services will be referred to private adoption agencies.

Procedure Approved: 3/27/2017

Procedure Revised: 2/1/2017



**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

There are no religious affiliation requirements. Families may actively practice a religion or not at their choice.

Should a child placed in a home for adoption have certain religious beliefs and/or practice, an adoptive family should attempt to make accommodations to meet those needs of the child.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/2015

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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## **POLICY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Individuals applying for adoption through ACCS will complete the required preservice/preplacement training.

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## **GUIDELINES**

### **TRAINING OFFERED:**

Adoption applicants must complete 24 hours of pre-placement (pre-service) training using the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program standardized curriculum. This training is available locally through the Southeast Ohio Regional Training Center in Athens and at other sites in the state. Listings are available by contacting ACCS Trainer/Recruiter or the Southeastern Ohio Regional Training Center. Training is available in Athens at least twice a year and in nearby counties frequently throughout the year. Missed sessions may be made up at any OCWTP training site.

### **WHO MUST ATTEND:**

Both parents in two parent families are required to participate. Registration is completed with the individual listed as the agency contact for the training.

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## **PROCEDURES**

### **WAIVER OF TRAINING:**

ACCS may waive components of the requirement for education and training for adoptive only families if the assessor and supervisor determine that the family has received training previously or the family has the skills to care for the needs of the child that will be placed in the home. Training may not be waived for dual applications for foster care and adoption. The purpose of this training is to help families to begin a realistic decision about proceeding with adoption and to assist families in developing reasonable expectations of the needs of the children available for adoption through the public child protection system. Participating in training does not obligate the parent and there is no charge for the training.

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## **REFERENCES**

OAC 5180: 2-48-09 Application Process and Preservice Training

Procedure Approved: 3/24/2015

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



**POLICY**

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ACCS may approve families for both adoption and foster care.

**GUIDELINES**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 11/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Families may be simultaneously approved for adoption and foster care, however, joint applicants must be 18 years of age and meet all the individual requirements for both foster care and adoption to be jointly approved. In cases of joint approval, visits will be made to the home by staff from both the Adoption Unit and Placement Services Unit.

**PROCEDURES**

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Home studies for families applying to adopt special needs and non-special needs children will be initiated following the completion of preservice training and within 30 days of receipt of the completed, signed application (JFS 01691). Applications are available anytime upon request, but are routinely provided to applicants during or at the completion of preservice training.

**Home Study Completion Requirements:**

1. Three or more face-to-face interviews will be conducted in the course of obtaining information for the home study. At least one interview will occur in the home of the applicants, other interviews may take place in the Children Services offices or other mutually agreed upon locations. Interview will occur with all household members over the age of four.
2. The home study will include statements/documentation regarding the following topics: family background, physical condition of family members, summary of references, assessment of home and property (including site and safety requirements), discipline techniques, family relationships, review of personal characteristics of applicants and their ability to successfully parent an adoptive child, documentation of marital status, summaries of the BCII (Ohio's Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation) and FBI record checks, state automated child welfare information system (SACWIS) and central registry, out of state registries for states of residence for five years prior to application, JFS 01653 Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant (6/2009), JFS 01681 Applicant Financial Statement (10/2000), fire inspection report, JFS 01348 Safety Audit (12/2014) and any additional assessments deemed necessary by the agency.
3. An adoptive applicant's income must be able to meet the needs of the household and make timely payment of expenses. To show this an applicant must provide in addition to the JFS 01681:
  - a. Proof of income through the most recent tax return;
  - b. Proof of income for a two month period, but not more than six months prior

to approval for adoption;

- c. At least one utility bill for each utility necessary to maintain the household, not more than six months prior to approval for adoption.
4. All adult children of the applicant(s) shall be contacted for a reference. If they are unable or unwilling to provide a reference it will be assessed and documented in the home study.
5. Additional physical, psychiatric, or psychological examination or treatment may be required by the agency if needed to ensure the safety, health or care of an adoptive child.
6. To be considered eligible for approval as an adoptive family, the above documents must indicate that an adoptive child would be safe in the home and have all basic needs met.
7. Applications shall be completed on the required form given to them at the completion of preservice training. The agency shall not accept an incomplete application. Applications found to contain inaccurate or wrong information shall be denied pursuant to rule 5180:2-5-26 of the Administrative Code. The applicant who submits an incomplete application shall not have an opportunity for a hearing pursuant to Chapter 119 of the Ohio Revised Code.

**Required Notifications:**

1. Adoptive applicant(s) or approved adoptive parent(s) shall notify ACCS in writing if a person residing in the home who is twelve years old, but under eighteen years old, has been convicted or pleaded guilty to any offense listed in appendix A of rule 5180:2-48-10 of the Ohio Administrative Code or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by an adult, would constitute one of those offenses.

**Home Study Completion Time Frames:**

1. Home studies will be completed within 180 days of application if all application material is provided in a timely manner by the family.
2. If references fail to respond, additional references will be requested.
3. Timeliness on the part of the prospective parent(s) in providing requested documentation is critical to completion of the home study within these time frames.
4. ACCS will not continue with the home study process if all required documentation is not submitted within one year of receipt of the initial or revised application unless the agency makes a determination that the home study should not be terminated.
5. The applicant shall be notified in writing 30 days prior to termination of the application.

The final decision on home study content remains with the Assessor and Supervisor unless otherwise directed by the Executive Director through the complaint process. Written notification of the adoption home study approval or denial will be provided within ten days afterwards.

Home studies which meet the special needs of individual children will be regularly considered for potential adoption matches.



## **Joint Home Study Approval for Foster Care and Adoption**

### **2.4**

#### **Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Each family approved by ACCS will be entered into this agency's data base of available families, which will be reviewed when matching children with appropriate families. Approval as an adoptive home does not guarantee an adoptive placement.

#### **REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180: 2-48-09 Application Process and Preservice Training

OAC 5180:2-48-12 Completion of the Adoption Home Study

Procedure Approved: 3/24/2015

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



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## **POLICY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 11/1/15 & 12/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Multiple Children/Large Family Assessments, JFS 01530, shall be conducted when an applicant seeking to adopt a minor or foster child will have at least five children residing in the prospective adoptive home after the minor or foster child to be adopted is placed in the home for adoption, and when there are already five or more children in the home, including foster and kinship children and the number of children the family will be approved to adopt, at the time of the initial adoption home study.

A Multiple Children/Large Family Assessments, JFS 01530, shall be completed at the time of the adoption home study update if family circumstances have changed substantially or if a JFS 01530 was not completed at the time of the home study but is required at the time of the update.

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## **GUIDELINE**

The agency which holds the family's adoption home study generally carries out this assessment.

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## **REFERENCES**

OAC 5180:2-48-05 Agency adoption policy and recruitment plan

OAC 5180:2-48-11 Approval of a foster home for adoptive placement

OAC 5180:2-48-12 Completion of the home study

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



## **POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

All adoptive applicants as well as other adults living in the home will complete a criminal record check through the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation and the FBI. These background checks will be conducted in accordance with OAC: 5180:2-48-10.

## **PROCEDURES**

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The fingerprinting will be performed at Athens County Children Services or other approved site.

Applicants could be assessed a fee for the cost to the agency for this service should budget constraints warrant.

Out of state central registries will be checked for applicants unable to prove five years of continuous residence in Ohio immediately prior to application.

Athens County Children Services also conducts a driving record check and checks of county and municipal records as well as the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

Household members who turn eighteen years of age shall have a BCII background check and FBI check, as outlined in rule 5180:2-48-10 of the Administrative Code, initiated within ten working days of the date they turn eighteen years of age.

New criminal records checks will be completed every four years.

## **REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-48-10 Restrictions Concerning Provision of Adoption Services

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Per Ohio Revised Code 3107.031, A person seeking to adopt a minor who knowingly makes a false statement that is included in the written report of a home study conducted pursuant to this section is guilty of the offense of falsification under section 2921.13 of the Revised Code.

## **PROCEDURES**

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Per OAC rule 5180:2-33-13, ACCS, upon an internal investigation, shall refer all cases to the county prosecutor in which there is probable cause to believe that falsification of an adoptive application or home study has been committed under section 2921.13 of the Revised Code. ACCS shall follow procedures as outlined in rule 5180:2-33-13 of the Administrative Code when an agency determines there may knowingly be falsification on an adoptive application or home study.

The assessor of ACCS shall report in writing a person who knowingly makes a false statement on an application or home study document during the home study process to the agency administrator or designee within three days of the assessor's determination of possible falsification. The written statement shall include but is not limited to: The original application completed by the applicant and documentation verifying the information reported on the application or in the home study by the applicant is knowingly false.

### Agency Response

ACCS shall within ten days of the determination of falsification, send a notification letter to the applicant indicating that the information submitted to the agency had been determined to be knowingly false. The notice shall include procedures for an agency review and shall include all of the following information:

1. Date the notice was mailed.
2. Mailing address of the applicant(s)
3. A statement indicating the home study process will discontinue because the agency has probable cause to believe the information provided by the applicant on the JFS 01691, "Application for the Placement of a Child" or during the home study process is knowingly false
4. A copy of the information that is alleged knowingly false
5. Documentation verifying the information submitted on the JFS 01691 or during the home study process that is knowingly false
6. A statement indicating that all cases in which it is determined by the agency the applicant made knowingly false statements will be referred to the county prosecutor office in the county the applicant(s) reside
7. A statement indicating that if the applicant(s) fails to respond within a ten day period, the applicant(s)' application is withdrawn, and the action of refusing to respond to



allegations of knowingly making false statement(s) has resulted in the applicant(s) selecting themselves out of continuing the home study process.

8. The notification letter shall be mailed to the applicant by certified mail.

### Family Rights

The applicant(s) has a right to an agency review to respond to the alleged falsification.

### Agency Review Process

If the applicant responds within ten days of the date of receipt of the written notice alleging falsification, ACCS is responsible for reviewing information received from the adoptive applicant within twenty-one days of receipt of the applicant(s) response. ACCS shall conduct an internal investigation that shall include but not limited to:

1. A review of the information received from the family and face-to-face visit with the adoptive applicant, and all relevant witnesses, if available
2. Issuance of a final investigatory report to the adoptive applicant(s) that is the subject of the investigation no later than 30 days after the receipt of the adoptive applicant's or adoptive family's response to the allegation. The report shall include:
  - a. The allegations
  - b. Relevant background information deemed appropriate by the agency
  - c. The results of the investigation and recommendation of whether or not the agency found probable cause to indicate the applicant(s) made knowingly false statements on the application for child placement or during the home study.
3. If unanticipated circumstances require additional time to complete the investigation or to issue the final report, ACCS shall notify the adoptive applicant that is the subject of the investigation of the need for additional time. The extension shall not be longer than fourteen days after the agency notifies the applicant(s) of the need for additional time to complete the investigatory report.

ACCS shall provide written notification within thirty days of receipt of the applicant(s) response to the adoptive applicant of any action to be taken.

Upon completion of the final investigation report and the agency determines there has been no falsification made by the applicant(s), ACCS shall resume the home study process if the applicant(s) chooses to proceed. The home study shall be completed within one hundred eighty days from re-commencement.

ACCS shall include in the adoptive family case record all documentation which supports the ACCS' action in determining the results and recommendation of the internal investigation.

### Falsification After Adoptive Placement

If an adoptive child is placed in an approved adoptive parent(s) home and the adoptive parent(s) or other household member(s) knowingly made a false statement that results in the assessor's reassessment of an approved or updated home study, the prospective adoptive parent(s) or other household member(s) is guilty of the offense of falsification under section 2921.13 of the Revised





Code. The assessor shall report incidents of falsification according to the procedures pursuant to this rule.

The Executive Director or designee must determine in twenty-four hours of completing the agency's internal investigation, if there is probable cause related to the adoptive child's safety and well-being to remove the child from the adoptive parent(s) home until the result of an investigation is rendered.

## **REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-33-13 Adoption Falsification Administrative Procedures

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15





**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 01/01/2024, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

When conducting adoption home studies for families that reside outside of Athens County, ACCS will notify the public children services agency in the county in which the prospective adoptive parent(s) resides in writing per OAC 5180:2-48-12. A copy of that correspondence will be maintained in the adoptive home study record.

Per OAC 5180:2-48-16: If a PCSA intends to place a child for adoption with an adoptive parent who resides in another county, it shall notify the PCSA in the county in which the parent resides of the impending placement. The notification shall be sent at least ten days prior to placement of a child.

**REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-48-05 Agency Adoption Policy and Recruitment Plan

OAC 5180:2-48-12 Completion of the Home Study

OAC 5180:2-48-16 Adoption Preplacement and Placement Procedures

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15

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**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Athens County Children Services will not approve for adoption any home where the prospective parent(s) live in a home operated as an adult boarding home, whether licensed for boarding purposes or not licensed. A boarding home is defined as a home where non-related adults occupy rooms and/or share common living space in the home.

Duplexed or tri-plexed structures where renters have separate entrances and no shared living space are eligible for consideration. Athens County Children Services reserves the right to require background checks of all the renters. The final decision regarding use of such homes rests with adoption staff.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 11/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

In order to appropriately and safely match youth with adoptive families, home study information will be accurate and current.

## **PROCEDURE**

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[OBJ]

(A) An approved adoptive parent shall notify the recommending agency within one hour of any of the following circumstances involving an adoptive child whose adoption is not finalized:

- (1) A serious injury or illness involving medical treatment of the adoptive child.
- (2) Unauthorized absence of the adoptive child from the home.
- (3) Removal of the adoptive child from the home by any person or agency other than the placing agency, or attempts at such removal.
- (4) Any involvement of the adoptive child with law enforcement authorities.
- (5) The death of the adoptive child.

(B) An approved adoptive parent shall notify the recommending agency within twenty-four hours or the next working day if any of the following occur:

- (1) A change in the marital status of an approved adoptive parent(s).
- (2) Any serious illness or death of an approved adoptive parent or household member.
- (3) The finalization of an adoptive child placed by a different agency.
- (4) A change in the number of household members, not including foster children.
- (5) A criminal charge or conviction of any approved adoptive parent or other adult household member(s).
- (6) A significant change in financial status or income.
- (7) A change of address for the adoptive family that is different than the address listed on the most recent homestudy or update.



(C) If the agency is notified of any of the following changes for the adoptive family, the agency shall amend the homestudy:

- (1) A change in the marital status of the approved adoptive parent(s).
- (2) The death of an approved adoptive parent or household member.
- (3) A change in household members, not including foster children.
- (4) A change of address for the adoptive family that is different than the address listed on the most recent homestudy or update.

(D) An amendment is a narrative of the assessor's evaluation of the change that has occurred in the approved adoptive family. The agency shall document the date of notification in the amendment.

- (1) The amendment shall be completed within thirty days of the date of the change, or within thirty days of the date the agency became aware a change occurred if notification did not occur pursuant to paragraph (A) or (B) of this rule.
- (2) If the change is to add an adoptive parent to the homestudy, the amendment shall not be completed until the preservice training has been completed or waived pursuant to rule 5180:2-48-09 of the Administrative Code.
- (3) In completing the amendment, the agency shall, if necessary, redetermine the specific number, age, and gender of children the family is approved to adopt. The amendment shall address sleeping arrangements, beds and bedrooms, and shall evaluate whether the adoptive family remains in compliance with all applicable requirements.

(E) If the amendment is due to a new household member, the agency shall ensure the following:

- (1) New household members residing with the adoptive parent shall have a JFS 01653 "Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Members" completed.
  - (a) If the new occupant is an adopted child who immediately prior to the adoption resided in the home as a foster child, a JFS 01653 is not required.
  - (b) The JFS 01653 shall be dated within ninety days of the date the person becomes a household member.
  - (c) If the agency was not notified of the new household member pursuant to paragraph (B) of this rule, the agency shall ensure the new household member completes the JFS 01653 within ninety days of the date the agency became aware of the new household member.
- (2) New adult household members residing with the approved adoptive parent shall have a search



of the national sex offender registry at <https://www.nsopw.gov/>, a bureau of criminal investigation (BCI) and federal bureau of investigation (FBI) records check, as outlined in rule 5180: 2-48-09 of the Administrative Code.

(a) The criminal records checks shall be conducted within ten working days of the date the person becomes a household member.

(b) If the agency was not notified of the new household member pursuant to paragraph (B) of this rule, the criminal record checks shall be conducted within ten working days of the date the agency became aware of the new household member.

(3) New adult household members shall provide the name of any agency they have applied to or had a homestudy approved for foster care or adoption, or any organization they have worked with in providing care and supervision of children. The new adult household member shall complete a written and signed release of information so that any such reference may be contacted.

(4) If the new household member is the spouse of the approved adoptive parent and shall therefore be added as an approved adoptive parent, the agency shall ensure the following is completed in addition to the requirements found in paragraph (F) of this rule:

(a) The agency shall contact all adult children of the new spouse for a reference. If the adult children are unable or unwilling to provide a reference this shall be assessed during the amendment process and documented in the amendment.

(b) If the new spouse has not previously completed the preservice training, the agency shall ensure the spouse completes the training or meets the requirements for a waiver pursuant to rule 5180:2-48-09 of the Administrative Code no later than one hundred eighty days after becoming a household member. The spouse shall not be added to the adoption approval until the training or waiver has been completed.

(F) If the amendment is due to a change of address of the adoptive family, the agency shall ensure the following:

(1) The agency shall conduct a safety audit documenting the new residence satisfactorily meets all safety standards.

(a) The safety audit shall be completed on the JFS 01348 "Safety Audit."

(b) The safety audit shall be conducted within ten working days after the change of address.

(c) If the agency was not notified of the change of address pursuant to paragraph (B) of this rule, the agency shall conduct the safety audit within ten working days of the date they became aware of the change of address.



(2) The agency shall require the approved adoptive parent to obtain a fire safety inspection certifying the new residence is free from conditions hazardous to the safety of an adoptive child.

(a) The fire safety inspection shall be completed on the JFS 01200 "Fire Inspection Report for Residential Facilities Certified by ODJFS" or other form used for a local or state fire inspection.

(b) The fire safety inspection shall be requested prior to or within thirty days of the date of the change of address. If the agency was not notified of the change of address pursuant to paragraph (B) of this rule, then the fire safety inspection shall be requested within thirty days of the date the agency became aware of the change of address.

(c) The fire safety inspection shall be conducted prior to or within ninety days of the date of the change of address. If the agency was not notified of the change of address pursuant to paragraph (B) of this rule, then the fire safety inspection shall be conducted within ninety days of the date the agency became aware of the change of address.

(G) The assessor shall provide written notification to the adoptive parent of approval or denial of the amendment to the adoption homestudy. The written notification shall be provided to the adoptive family within ten days of completion of the homestudy amendment. If an amendment is denied, the adoption homestudy is no longer approved.

(1) Amendment approval notification shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

(a) A summary of the change requiring the amendment.

(b) The date of the notification provided pursuant to paragraph (B) of this rule.

(c) The date the change occurred that required the amendment.

(d) Date of approval of the adoption amendment.

(2) Adoption homestudy denial shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

(a) A detailed explanation of the reasons for the denial.

(b) A description of procedures for an agency review pursuant to rule 5180:2-48-09 of the Administrative Code.

(H) All adoption homestudies shall be updated every two years from the date of approval of the initial homestudy or the date of approval of the most current update, whichever is more recent. If a homestudy is simultaneously approved for adoption and certified for foster care by the same agency, the spans shall be the same for both programs from the date of the foster home certification.



(1) If an approved adoptive home is subsequently certified for foster care by the same agency that approved the home for adoption, the adoptive homestudy shall be updated at the same time the home is initially certified for foster care so that the spans will coincide.

(2) If a certified foster home is subsequently approved for adoption by the same agency that certified the home for foster care, the next adoption update shall be completed when the current foster care certificate is recertified so that the spans will coincide.

(I) The agency shall notify the adoptive parent(s) of the date of expiration of the homestudy not fewer than ninety days or more than one hundred fifty days prior to the expiration date. The notification shall:

(1) Identify any information or documentation that is required for the homestudy update.

(2) Be completed on the JFS 01331, "Notice of Expiration and Reapplication for a Foster Home Certificate or Adoption Homestudy Approval."

(J) Following agency notification to the adoptive parent, if the adoptive parent fails to either reapply or voluntarily terminate prior to the expiration date of the approval, the homestudy approval shall expire. If the family wishes to have an adoption homestudy approval after the expiration date, they shall reapply through the initial homestudy application process pursuant to rule 5180: 2-48-09 of the Administrative Code.

(K) If the adoptive parent has applied to update an adoption homestudy prior to the expiration of a current adoption approval, an assessor shall complete a JFS 01385 "Assessment for Child Placement Update," ensure that the adoptive parent remains in compliance with the requirements of Chapter 5101:2-48 of the Administrative Code, and determine the continued suitability of the adoptive family. The agency shall compile and review the following documents, in addition to completing the JFS 01385:

(1) The most recent JFS 01653 "Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Members" completed for the applicant and all household members. The agency may require a new JFS 01653 if the agency deems it necessary.

(2) The agency may require a report of a physical, psychiatric or psychological examination or treatment of the adoptive parent(s) or other household member in order to ensure the safety, health or care of an adoptive child. The examination shall be conducted by a licensed physician, psychologist, or other certified or licensed professional.

(3) The most recent fire inspection by a state certified fire safety inspector or the state fire marshal's office using the JFS 01200 "Fire Inspection Report for Residential Facilities Certified by ODJFS" or other form used for a local or state fire inspection. The agency may require a new fire inspection at the time of the update if the agency deems it necessary to ensure the home is free from conditions which may be hazardous to the safety of an adoptive child.





(4) The most recent JFS 01681 "Applicant Financial Statement." The agency may require a new JFS 01681 if there have been any substantial changes to the adoptive family's financial situation.

(5) The most recent well water test approved by the health department, if applicable. The agency may require a new well water test if the agency deems it necessary.

(6) The most recent JFS 01530 "Large Family Assessment," if applicable. If the family circumstances have changed substantially since the previous JFS 01530, or if a JFS 01530 was not previously completed and is now required, the agency shall complete a new JFS 01530 at the time of the update.

(7) The agency shall conduct a safety audit utilizing the JFS 01348 "Safety Audit" completed within six months prior to the approval of the adoption homestudy update, documenting the residence continues to meet all safety standards.

(8) The most recent criminal records check for the adoptive parents and adult household members. Once a homestudy is approved, a new criminal records check shall be conducted, pursuant to section [2151.86](#) of the Revised Code, for the adoptive parent(s) and each adult household member every four years prior to approving the adoption update. If an existing resident of the home, including youth placed in the home, turned eighteen years of age during the current approval span, the agency shall have criminal records checks completed at the time of the next update and every four years thereafter at the time of update.

(9) A minimum of one written reference from a professional who is knowledgeable of the family dynamics and family functioning. If a reference is not available from a professional, a personal reference from someone aware of the adoptive family's functioning is permissible. This reference shall not be completed by a household member. This reference is required for families who are only approved for adoption by the recommending agency. If the family is also certified for foster care by the recommending agency, the reference is not required.

(11) The agency is to complete a check of the national sex offender registry for the approved adoptive parent and each adult who resides with the adoptive parent. The results are to be reviewed prior to each adoption homestudy update. The adoption homestudy update may be denied solely on the results of the search.

(L) An assessor's update of an adoption homestudy shall include at least one home visit and one interview with each member of the household (except foster children) based on his or her age and development currently residing in the home. This may be a joint interview or individual interviews.

(M) If an agency receives a completed JFS 01331 at least thirty days prior to the expiration date of the adoption approval, an agency shall follow the requirements listed in this rule to complete the assessment for the update of the adoption approval.

(1) At the completion of the assessment and prior to the expiration of the current adoption





homestudy approval span, an agency is to enter the required data into SACWIS documenting one of the following:

- (a) Adoption update approval.
- (b) Denial of the adoption update and closure of the adoption homestudy.
- (c) Closure, based on receipt of voluntary withdrawal.

(2) The effective date of the adoption homestudy approval shall be the first day following the expiration of the previous approval span.

(N) If an agency receives a completed JFS 01331 less than thirty days prior to the expiration of the adoption approval, the agency may complete the requirements listed in this rule if they have sufficient time and resources to complete the assessment and submit the requirements in paragraph (G) of this rule prior to the expiration date of the current approval span.

(1) If the agency is unable to complete the update of the adoption approval prior to the expiration, the adoption approval will expire on the date of expiration.

(2) If the adoption approval expires, the agency shall, within ten days after the expiration date of the current approval span:

(a) Provide written notification to the family of the following:

(i) That the adoption homestudy approval has expired.

(ii) That the family must reapply for initial adoption approval pursuant to rule 5180:2-48-09 of the Administrative Code if they would like to obtain adoption homestudy approval.

(b) An agency shall enter the required data into SACWIS to document the provider has closed because the adoption homestudy approval has expired.

(I) The assessor shall provide written notification to the applicant(s) of approval or denial of the update to the adoption homestudy. The written notification shall be provided to the adoptive family within ten days of completion of the adoption approval update.

(1) Adoption homestudy update approval notification shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

(a) Date of approval of the adoption homestudy update with the date the update expires.

(b) A description of the characteristics of the child or children for whom the update is being



approved.

(2) Adoption homestudy update denial shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

(a) A detailed explanation of the reasons for the denial.

(b) A description of procedures for an agency review pursuant to rule 5180:2-48-24 of the Administrative Code.

## **REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-48-12.1 Completion of Adoption Home Study Updates

OAC 5180:2-48-12.2 Completion of Adoption Home Study Amendments

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



## **POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS shall make its home studies of all approved families, who have signed the authorization for release of information form, available to any other child placing agency which requests a copy of the home study.

## **PROCEDURE**

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### **RELEASING THE HOME STUDY**

The home study shall be released within fifteen days after a request has been made as long as the authorization for such release has been submitted to ACCS and required fees have been paid. (See Schedule of Fees)

Documentation of the dates of the request and release of the home studies will be made in the case recordings of the approved adoptive family.

The home study, not including reference letters, may be viewed by the adoptive applicant at their request for their own perusal

1. The review will take place at ACCS and the home study may not be taken outside of ACCS offices. Adoptive family cannot keep a copy of their home study
2. A family may review the home study and suggest items to be added or deleted
3. Families may not directly submit their home study to other agencies per ODJFS rule 51012:48-19 as agencies are not allowed to consider home studies submitted directly from the prospective family

## **REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-48-19 Sharing and Transferring Adoptive Home Studies

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS will send written notification to the adoptive family's county of residence, i.e. the county where the child is being placed, of the intent to place the child(ren) for adoption. This will be done no later than ten days before the placement and will include a description of the child's special needs, the child's age, the name of the adoptive parents, and the number of children that will be in the home. In the case of an infant placement, the notification can be made before the birth of the child.

For children placed in an adoptive home outside the state of Ohio, the procedures required through the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC) will be followed.

**REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-48-16 Adoption Preplacement and Placement Procedures

OAC 5180:2-52 Interstate Placement of Children

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 11/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

## **SHARING**

ACCS shall only consider approved home studies forwarded by a Public Children Services Agency (PCSA), Private Child Placing Agency (PCPA), private non-custodial agency (PNA) or comparable agency of another state. An adoptive parent may provide other information deemed relevant by the parent to the receiving agency.

ACCS shall not require any additional documentation for the home study beyond the requirements of Chapter 5180:2-48 of the Administrative Code.

If the approved adoptive family signed an authorization for release of information, ACCS shall make the home study available to any other agency requesting a copy of the home study for sharing or transferring.

ACCS shall release the home study and related materials, including the JFS 01530 "Multiple Children/Large Family Assessment" within fifteen days after the signed release of information any applicable fee is received as long as the requirements outlined in paragraph (D) of OAC 5180:2-48-19 are met.

## **FALSIFICATION**

ACCS shall not release or accept a home study for sharing or transferring purposes if it is determined an application or home study contains a false statement knowingly made by the applicant(s) and is included in the written report of the home study.

If ACCS determines a home study is falsified, ACCS shall follow the procedures outlined in rule 5180:2-33-13 of the Administrative Code (See falsification section of policies).

If ACCS released a home study and the agency in receipt of the home study determines the home study contains a knowingly false statement, the agency in receipt of the home study shall not consider the home study in the matching process and shall notify the sending agency in writing of the false statement within three days of determination of the false statement.

## **TRANSFERRING**

The receiving agency shall not approve the transfer request until the following information is received and approved by the agency, at which point an assessor will be appointed to review the information and assess the request:



1. Contact will be made to the recommending agency and adoptive family regarding the reasons for the transfer;
2. At least one visit to the adoptive home and a face to face meeting with all household members will be made;
3. Three new personal references from three persons who do not live with the prospective adoptive parent(s). A minimum of one of the required references is to be from a relative and at least two references from non-relatives.;
4. New references will be sought from all adult children of the adoptive parents. If those children are unable/unwilling to give a reference, this will be documented in the provider's record.
5. A new criminal records check is obtained, reviewed and approved by the assessor for all persons residing in the home subject to a criminal records check;
6. A new safety audit of the adoptive home is conducted to verify the home meets all current safety requirements;
7. Documentation of the assessor's decision to recommend approval of the transfer request.

A decision on the request to transfer will be completed within sixty days from the date the complete record was received. If this time frame cannot be met, the reasons will be documented by the assessor in the family's record.

The prospective adoptive parent and the sending agency are sent a written notice of the receiving agency's decision within five working days of the decision. The approval or denial of a transfer is at the sole discretion of ACCS.

If an incomplete home study is received from an agency, or supporting documentation is missing from the record, the receiving agency shall notify the sending agency in writing within ten days from the date of receipt of the incomplete home study.

1. The written notification shall indicate the information needed in order for the home study to be considered complete as required by Chapter 5180:2-48 of the Administrative Code;
2. The sending agency shall respond within fifteen days from the date of receipt of the written notification from the receiving agency;
3. Upon acceptance of the transfer of an adoption home study, the JFS 01334 shall be completed and signed by both the sending and receiving agencies and all information gathered shall be a part of the provider's record by the receiving agency;
4. Home studies from other agencies shall be regularly considered for potential adoption matches pursuant to rule 5180:2-48-16 of the Administrative Code. See Schedule of Fees, Section 2.15.

## **REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-48-19 Sharing and Transferring Adoptive Home Studies

ACCS Adoption Unit Program Manual 2.15 Schedule of Fees



*Athens County*  
*Children Services*

**Sharing and Transferring Adoptive  
Home Studies**

**2.13**

**Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS shall only consider approved home studies that have been forwarded by a public or private, custodial or noncustodial agency or comparable agency of another state.

ACCS shall not require additional documentation for the home study beyond that which is required by Chapter 5180:2-48 of the Administrative Code.

When approved home studies are forwarded to ACCS for a specific child, ACCS will consider those home studies in the same manner in which the agency considers its own home studies approved within the agency.

Approved home studies received from any other agency, at the discretion of ACCS, are maintained for a period of 6 months after receipt.

Home studies not maintained or home studies that are maintained and reach the 6 month time period are shredded.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15





## **SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS assumes most of the financial costs related to approving and supporting adoptive families. However, the adoptive family may incur some expenses.

## **PROCEDURE**

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Home study fees:

1. ACCS families approved for adoption may have their home study sent to other agencies ten times without accruing fees.
2. For additional copies sent to other agencies, a fee of \$25 per episode will be charged    to the adoptive family.
3. Adoptive families who request transfer of their adoption home study to another public agency will not incur fees for the transfer.

No fees will be charged to public children services agencies for copying, sending, transferring or releasing ACCS adoptive home studies.

Adoptive families should not request a home study through ACCS in order to avoid fees incurred in working with a private adoption agency.

Families who obtain a completed home study through ACCS and then request transfer or release of their home study to a private agency will be assessed a fee equal to the fee typically charged by the private agency for a home study or release of a home study for placement.

The schedule of fees is unaffected by multiple births.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 12/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS strives to make the best match for children in adoptive homes. The agency follows procedures to support that goal.

## **PROCEDURE**

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Matching children with an adoptive parent(s)

1. If the child is a member of a federally recognized tribe or Alaskan Native Village, the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C.A. 1901 (1/2/06) (ICWA) shall take precedence for an adoption.
2. Siblings will be placed together wherever such placement is assessed as being in the best interests of the siblings.
3. Any adult relative, adult non-relative, or foster caregiver, whose placement would be in the best interests of the child, and the adult has expressed an interest in adopting the child and already has an approved adoptive home study or has submitted the following required documentation at least five business days prior to the scheduled matching conference:
  - a. JFS 01691, Application for Child Placement
  - b. JFS 01692, Application for Adoption of a Foster Child or Sibling Group
  - c. The adoption application or equivalent document that is required in the state in which the adult resides.
4. A foster caregiver with who the child has resided in the past, who is approved for adoption pursuant to Chapter 5180:2-48 of the OAC or the laws of the state in which the foster caregiver resides, whose placement would be in the child's best interests.
5. An approved adoptive parent(s) who is accepting of the child's characteristics and who has expressed an interest in adopting the child, and whose placement would be in the child's best interests.
6. The child's preference may be considered if the child has the capacity to express a preference.

Child safety and stability of placement are given consideration when evaluating the above preferential placements.

Geographic location will not be used as a factor in determining the best match.

## **REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-48-16 Adoption Preplacement and Placement Procedures



*Athens County*  
*Children Services*

**Placement Considerations and  
Preferences**

**3.1**

**Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



## **SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS supports the goal of permanency for all youth in custody. Procedures have been developed for timely placement.

## **PROCEDURE**

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If no adoptive family has been identified within ninety days of the date of obtaining permanent custody of a child or resolution of an appeal, ACCS will list available children on the AdoptUSKids website at [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org) and the Ohio Adoption Photo Listing.

ACCS will also search the ACCS Available Adoptive Homes Database for potential matches.

When all agencies are able to list available adoptive families in SACWIS, the agency may conduct a search for prospective families in the statewide automated child welfare information system if there are no families identified to be presented at any matching conference.

If there are no families available to be considered at a matching conference for a specified child, ACCS shall conduct child specific recruitment for the child prior to the next matching conference. This includes at a minimum:

1. Distribution of written information regarding the child to two or more adoption agencies;
2. Review of the case file for relatives or individuals in the child's past who may be able and willing to provide a permanent home for the child;
3. Exploration with the child of the individuals with whom the child is familiar who may be able and willing to adopt the child.

Matching conferences will no longer occur:

1. After a child has been matched and the JFS 01654, Adoptive Placement Agreement, has been signed;
2. The child is 18 years of age or older, unless the agency decides to continue matching conferences due to the child having a mental or physical handicap and is still in the permanent custody of the agency;
3. The child's custody status changes to a status other than permanent custody.

## **REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-48-16 Adoption Preplacement and Placement Procedures



Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15

Procedure Amended: 5/10/22

**Timely Search for Prospective Parents  
for A Child in the Permanent Custody  
of ACCS**

**3.2**

**Adoption Unit Program Manual**



## **SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS utilizes a systematic means to assure consideration of matching families with youth waiting to be adopted.

## **PROCEDURE**

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The Athens County Children Services MEPA Monitor is invited to all matching meetings to assure compliance with this policy.

Athens County Children Services will not use the family's geographical location as the basis for denying or delaying a child's adoptive placement.

A state hearing through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is available if a prospective applicant(s) believes that an adoptive placement was denied or will be denied solely for the reasons of geographic location of the family.

A copy of the JFS 01611 "Non-discrimination Requirements for Foster Care and Adoptive Placements" is attached to these policies.

When there are more than five families who may be a potential match, the agency may narrow the field to a minimum of five families based on:

1. The level of experience a family has working with the specific medical, behavioral, or mental health challenges presented by a specific child
2. The preference to keep siblings together.

If a family was previously considered for a child in a matching conference and was not interested in the child, ACCS is not required to consider the family for the same child in subsequent matching conferences.

Interview protocol:

1. ACCS conducts interviews of all adoptive families being considered for potential matching with a child;
2. If the family lives more than an hour away from ACCS, an initial interview will be conducted via Zoom, or by phone/Facetime if Zoom is not available;
3. If further consideration for match is being given based off the Zoom interview, an in-home interview will be scheduled;
4. In-home interviews are scheduled with families who are being considered;
5. If a two parent family, both parents must be present at all interviews, and the family may ask their agency worker to be present.

## **REFERENCE**



*Athens County*  
*Children Services*

**Procedures to Review All Approved  
Adoptive Families for Matching with  
Available Children**

**3.3**

**Adoption Unit Program Manual**

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OAC 5180:2-48-16 Adoption Preplacement and Placement Procedures

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15

Procedure Amended: 5/9/22

**SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 12/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Matching Conferences are a structured decision making process that address all needs of the child and assesses the ability of the prospective family to meet those needs.

**PROCEDURE**

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The first match meeting is held within ninety days of the file stamp date of permanent custody or, if an appeal was filed, within ninety days after receipt of the appeal decision. Subsequent matching meetings are held every ninety days.

Matching meetings are conducted per ODJFS rule 5180:2-48-16.

Families are considered for placement based on how child characteristics that are acceptable to them match with the child's characteristics.

All families accepting of the child's characteristics, where in-home interviews occurred, shall be considered by the agency to be presented in the matching conference.

The family who matches the child's needs most closely is matched with the child.

In case of a tie in scores when more than one family has been considered for a match, the decision on with whom to match will be made through discussion by the ACCS Adoption Team. Documentation of how the match was determined will be included in the matching paperwork.

It is possible that a family with a lower score from the match could be considered to be the best match for the child. In those circumstances:

1. Discussion will occur by the ACCS Adoption Team regarding the reasons why it is felt the family with a lower score is the better match;
2. Documentation of that discussion and justification will be included in the matching paperwork.

All adoptive placements made will be with the home to be in the child's best interests.

**REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-48-16 Adoption Preplacement and Placement Procedures

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

One year between adoptive placements is recommended to allow for adjustment of the child and all family members.

This policy may be waived at the discretion of the agency for sibling placements, foster parent adoptions, or when a significant relationship exists between the adoptive applicant and the available child.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15

**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

When a child is still in the custody of ACCS but placed in an adoptive placement, the adoptive family has requirements to notify ACCS of changes in the home that will impact the child.

**PROCEDURE**

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An approved adoptive parent shall notify the recommending agency within one hour of any of the following circumstances involving the adoptive child whose adoption is not finalized:

1. A serious injury or illness involving medical treatment of the adoptive child.
2. The death of the adoptive child.
3. Unauthorized absence of the adoptive child from the home.
4. Removal of the adoptive child from the home by any person or agency other than the placing agency or attempts at such removal.
5. Any involvement of the adoptive child with law enforcement authorities.

An adoptive parent shall notify the recommending agency within twenty-four hours or the next working day if any of the following occur prior to finalization of the adoption of the child:

1. A change in the marital status of an approved adoptive parent(s).
2. Any serious illness or death of an approved adoptive parent(s) or household member.
3. The finalization of an adoptive child placed by a different agency.
4. A change in the number of household members through birth or kinship who have not reached the age of majority.
5. A change in the number of adults residing with the approved adoptive parent (not including an existing household member reaching the age of majority).
6. A criminal charge or conviction of any approved adoptive parent or other adult household member(s).
7. A significant change in financial status/income.
8. The physical relocation of the approved adoptive parent(s) resulting in a change of address different than the address listed on the most recent home study or home study update.
9. Adoptive parent(s) shall notify the ACCS in writing if a person residing in the home who is twelve years old, but under eighteen years old, has been convicted or pleaded guilty to any offense listed in appendix A of rule 5180:2-48-10 of the Administrative Code or has been adjudicated to be a delinquent child for committing an act that if committed by an adult, would constitute one of those offenses.

**REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-48-12.2 Completion of Adoption Home Study Amendments

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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## **SUMMARY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

All families who have a child placed in their home for the purpose of adoption will receive, free of charge from ACCS, pre-finalization services. These services may include provision or linkage to the following:

1. Case management services
2. Counseling services
3. Crisis intervention
4. Diagnostic assessment
5. Therapeutic services
6. Respite

For children in ACCS placed out of county or out of state, the above services will also be secured by the child's caseworker in the family's area of residence.

These services are designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Help the child, the adoptive, and foster families cope with the inherent stress of the move.
2. Help the child adjust to a new family and environment.
3. Help the families adapt to the changes in the family system and facilitate the development of healthy family relationships.
4. Help the child maintain emotional ties with persons who are important to him.
5. Help the child deal with issues of separation and loss.
6. Assist the family in accessing appropriate community resources.
7. Educate and empower the parents to use therapeutic behavior management techniques.
8. Build sources of ongoing support for the child and family.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



**PROCEDURE**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Athens County Children Services provides services to birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptive children. Pre and post-adoption counseling for birth parents considering an adoption plan is available. Birth parents may participate, in conjunction with a caseworker, in the following activities:

1. Review non-identifying summaries of the adoptive parents and provide input.
2. Provide pictures of themselves and family members for the child, mementoes, or anything they want their child to have.
3. Exchange letters or other written information with the adoptive parents.
4. Receive pictures or information about their child periodically throughout the child's

life.

In the case of an infant placement, the following may also be mutually agreed upon and arranged. Occasionally these services are also available in non-infant placements. *Please note, though, even if these arrangements are made, it is the decision of the adoptive family and they may change their mind at any point.*

1. Meet the adoptive family.
2. Be present at the time of placement.
3. Periodic visitation.
4. Contact with other birth relatives such as grandparents or other extended family members.

In cases where parental rights are severed through ACCS pursuing and being granted permanent custody of the child which makes him/her eligible for adoption, there are sometimes situations where adoptive families are sought for matches who are willing to maintain positive existing relationships for a child.

1. The degree of openness sought in a prospective adoptive family is based upon the needs of the child and is delineated in recruitment materials for that child.
2. This is a sensitive area for many families and can be a source of anxiety for some, but ACCS has encountered a number of situations where willing adoptive families in conjunction with birth families have successfully maintained varying degrees of openness.
3. ACCS does not advocate for maintenance of relationships which would be believed to be detrimental to the child or place him or her at risk.

After the legalization of the adoption, it is important to remember that the obligation to uphold the openness in the relationship is now an ethical, rather than a legal decision. At the point of legalization, adoptive parents are given the responsibility of deciding what is in the best interest of their child. Adoptive parents may request the assistance of the Adoptive Family Caseworker as an intermediary or in other appropriate capacities.



**Open Adoption**

**4.3**

**Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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## **SUMMARY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Subsidy programs are financial assistance programs whose purpose is to make permanent homes possible for children with special needs. A wide variety of subsidy options are available. These subsidies can help with the general costs of rearing a child or may be to pay for a specific service the child needs. Children who receive subsidies must meet the special needs criteria and financial criteria, which vary dependent on the subsidy program.

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## **PROCEDURE**

Information about all the subsidy programs will be provided to all families who are approved for adoption and again at the time a placement is made. Athens County Children Services presents some Adoption Assistance requests to the Board for final approval. These subsidies are available:

1. Title IV-E Adoption Assistance (board approved)
2. Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Connections (AAC) to Age 21
3. State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy (Medicaid) (board approved)
4. Non-recurring expenses of adoption (board approved)
6. Post-Adoption Special Services Subsidy -PASSS (only provided to families residing in Ohio)
7. Athens County Special Services Subsidy

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 01/01/2024

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**SUMMARY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Federal IV-E Adoption Assistance is available for most children adopted through ACCS and may include a monthly payment and/or a Medicaid card.

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**PROCEDURE****Federal IV-E Adoption Assistance**

1. The majority of children in the permanent custody of ACCS are eligible to receive a monthly subsidy through the Federal Title IV-E program.
2. Eligibility is based on the child's special needs at the time of the adoptive placement and one of several other strict criteria such as the age of the child and length of time the child spent in foster care.
3. This may include a Medicaid card to cover a variety of health-related services.
4. Application is made to the county having permanent custody of the child and must be submitted prior to finalization.
5. If all other eligibility criteria are met, and the only special needs factor met is that the child has been determined at substantial risk, with no manifestation of a special needs factor at the time of adoptive placement, an Adoption Assistance Agreement only with no payment shall be entered into in accordance with rule 5180:-49-07. Agreement set at \$0.00 which allows for renegotiation later if eligible needs are manifested.

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**REFERENCES**

OAC 5180:2-49-01 Administration of the Adoption Assistance Program

OAC 5180:2-49-07 Adoption Assistance Agreement Only with No Payment

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15





## **SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Children with special needs who are not eligible for IV-E may be eligible for State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy program, which is based on the adoptive parent(s) income.

## **GUIDELINES**

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State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy program is a subsidy program unique to Ohio adoptions.

1. A State Adoption Subsidy application (JFS 01613) will be available upon request.
2. All prospective applicants who wish to apply must do so prior to finalization of their adoption.
3. Application must be made to the county that has permanent custody of the child.

## **PROCEDURE**

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In order to be considered for State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy, adoptive families must apply for and be denied IV-E Adoption Assistance.

Each applicant must complete and submit the following for consideration of a state subsidized adoption:

1. Application for subsidized adoption (JFS 01613);
2. Annual financial report;
3. A copy of the adoptive family's most recent federal income tax form;
4. Documentation of the child's special needs.

ACCS no longer provides the state adoption special services subsidies for those approved prior to July 1, 2004.

Applicants have the right to a state hearing pursuant to 5180.35 of the ORC and division 5180:6 of the OAC.

## **REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-44-03 Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) Administration of the State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy Program

OAC 5180:2-44-06 Eligibility for the State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy Program



**State Adoption Maintenance  
Subsidy**

**5.3**

**Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Adoptive families may incur costs related to the legal adoption of a child. There are funds for which families can apply to offset these costs

## **GUIDELINES**

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This subsidy is intended to assist with legal, medical, transportation, and lodging expenses incurred by the adoptive family in the process of finalizing an adoption and is only reimbursable following finalization up to \$2,000 per child.

1. The child must be special needs, and adoptive family income is not a factor.
2. If all other eligibility criteria are met, and the only special needs factor is the child has been determined to be at substantial risk, with no manifestation of a special needs factor, the child is not eligible for nonrecurring adoption assistance.
3. Application must be made prior to finalization on form JFS 01421.

## **REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-49-21 Reimbursement of Nonrecurring Adoption Expenses for a Child with Special Needs

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15

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**SUMMARY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Athens County Children Services special services subsidy is available to families who adopt children in the permanent custody of ACCS.

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**GUIDELINES**

Application may be made at any time after the adoption finalization by contacting the Adoptive Family Caseworker for an application.

ACCS Special Services will only be available for:

1. Non-PASSS covered services;
2. When PASSS funding for the year has been spent;
3. When a family lives out of state and does not have access to PASSS;
4. When the PASSS program is closed.

Funding amount and period:

1. A maximum per year expenditure of \$1200 per child will be offered but is limited to a funds available basis.
2. Funding periods will be January 1 to December 31, and re-application must occur yearly.
3. Funding will be pro-rated, based on when an adoption is finalized or application is made (i.e. adoption finalized or application made in March, maximum amount will be \$1000).

Children must qualify under the state special needs guidelines and services must be pre-approved and fall within agency guidelines.

The Special Services Subsidy is effective until a child turns 18, unless he/she meets the criteria of a physical and/or mental handicap. This criteria is the same as used for continuation of adoption assistance and PASSS past the age of 18. If this subsidy is approved to continue after the age of 18, the end date will coincide with the termination of adoption assistance.

ACCS Special Services Subsidy may be utilized after accessing all available funds including Medicaid, insurance, PASSS and any other available funding source. Service examples are psychological, medical, rehabilitative care, as deemed necessary to meet the child's special needs. A professional statement of need will be required for non-PASSS services.

Cost of Services must be preapproved, if possible, by the Post Adoption Caseworker and fall within agency guidelines. Payment is not guaranteed for expenditures that are not preapproved. All respite services must be paid directly to service providers, other expenditures may be reimbursed to the



**ACCS Special Services Subsidy  
5.5  
Adoption Unit Program Manual**

adoptive parents with a valid receipt and proof of payment. Respite providers must provide a W-9 to the agency prior to service provision.

**Reimbursable Services**

Tutoring  
Respite  
Transportation to regular long-distance appointments  
Medical equipment  
Funding for other services on a case by case basis

**Non-Reimbursable Services**

Computer equipment and software  
Orthodontia  
Medical co-pays or deductibles  
Camp or other recreational activities  
Child care

There is no grievance process for approval/denial of Special Services Subsidy requests. Applications will be managed through the ACCS Subsidy Committee.

**APPENDIX**

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**ACCS Special Services Subsidy Policy**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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REVISE WITH GENERAL LANGUAGE and statement on assistance the agency can provide

**STATEMENT**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

**General Information**

1. PASSS is designed to assist Ohio families after adoption finalization regardless of the type of adoption (with the exception of step-parent).
2. Families must apply through OhioKAN by visiting [ohiokan.jfs.ohio.gov/passs](http://ohiokan.jfs.ohio.gov/passs). If an Athens County adoptive family or adoptive family living in Ohio who adopted through ACCS does not have access to technology and/or desires counsel on how PASSS may benefit their specific situation, they may contact the Adoptive Family Caseworker.
3. PASSS is intended to pay for services not covered by other adoption subsidy programs, insurance programs, or Medicaid. Funds may be used to cover medical or psychological services deemed necessary to meet the needs of the child and to pay for respite care and/or the maintenance costs of residential treatment programs. PASSS will not cover educational or recreational services or activities solely designed to improve self-esteem.

**ELIGIBILITY FACTORS**

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1. The child has a physical or developmental, mental, or emotional condition that either existed before the adoption finalized petition was filed or can be attributed to factors in the child's pre-adoption background or history.
2. The child must be less than 18 years of age, or younger than 21 and has a mental illness, emotional disturbance, or physical disability that impairs their ability to meet activities of daily living or daily functioning.
3. The family must have explored other sources of assistance but found them to be inadequate or are unavailable to meet the child's immediate needs.
4. The expenses must be beyond the economic resources of the adoptive family.
5. The child must not be in the custody of a PCSA or PCPA.
6. The family must live in Ohio,

**REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-44-13 Public Children Services Agency (PCSA) Administration of the Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS) Program

OAC 5180:2-44.13.1 Eligibility and Application Process for the Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS) Program

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15



Procedure Revised: 01/01/2024

**Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy  
(PASSS)  
5.6  
Adoption Unit Program Manual**



## **POLICY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

An adoptive child in receipt of a JFS 01615 "Approval for State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy Agreement" may be eligible for Medicaid as outlined in rules 5160:1-4-06 of the Administrative Code based only upon the child's income, resources, and special needs for medical, mental health, or rehabilitative care.

## **GUIDELINES**

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In order for an adoptive child to be considered a child with special needs for medical, mental health, or rehabilitative care, the public children services agency (PCSA) responsible for determining state adoption maintenance subsidy program eligibility shall determine that, at the time of adoptive placement, the child has a medical necessity as defined in rule 5160-1-01 of the Administrative Code. The medical necessity includes at least one of the following needs or circumstances that may be a barrier to the adoptive placement without medical assistance because the child:

1. Has a medical condition, physical impairment, or developmental disability.
2. Has been diagnosed with a mental disorder as characterized by a behavioral, psychological, or biological dysfunction.
3. Has been diagnosed with a substance-related disorder.

Eligibility criteria:

1. For any such child for whom the approval for state adoption maintenance subsidy was entered into between April 7, 1986 and June 30, 2004, Medicaid eligibility as outlined in rules 5160:1-4-06 of the Administrative Code, is contingent upon the following:
  - a. A determination by the PCSA administering the agreement that the child's state adoption special service subsidy case record contains sufficient documentation that the child cannot be placed with the adoptive parents or parent without medical assistance because of the child's special needs for medical or rehabilitative care.
  - b. A finding by the county department of job and family services (CDJFS) of the child's residence that either the child was eligible for Medicaid as outlined in rules 5160:1-4-06 of the Administrative Code, prior to the approval for state adoption special service subsidy being entered into; or that the child would have been eligible for Medicaid, based on the child's income, during any of the six months prior to the approval for state maintenance adoption subsidy being entered into.
2. For any child for whom a JFS 01615 was entered into on or after July 1, 2004, Medicaid eligibility as outlined in rules 5160:1-4-06 of the Administrative Code, is contingent upon all of the following:
  - a. A finding by the PCSA administering the agreement that the child has a





medical necessity as outlined in paragraph (B) of this rule which makes the child with special needs eligible for medical, mental health, or rehabilitative care as documented on the JFS 01449 "Determination of Special Needs for Medical, Mental Health, or Rehabilitative Care".

b. The adoptive parent or parents are eligible for a state adoption maintenance subsidy under division (B) of section 5153.163 of the Revised Code.

c.

## **PROCEDURE**

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## **REFERENCES**

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OAC 5180:2-44-05.1 Covered Families and Children (CFC) Medicaid Eligibility: Children with Special Needs

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15, 02/25/2025

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Following adoption finalization, all services to families are voluntary. These services are intended to provide support, education, and advocacy to families.

## **GUIDELINES**

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Families may request any of the following services:

1. Subsidy assistance;
2. Crisis intervention;
3. Access to educational resources on adoption;
5. Support through advocacy by attending school meetings, team meetings, etc.;
6. Referral to services;
7. Adoptive Family Support Group;
8. Workshops and training opportunities;
9. Assistance with birth family issues/mediation;
11. Other case management activities.

Post adoption services are available for any family who has adopted through ACCS and to any adoptive family who resides in Athens County.

These services will be offered on a case by case basis to the extent local resources and funding is available.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 1/1/2024



### **STATEMENT**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS will respond to a request to verify when an adult who consents to be adopted was in the agency's custody on the date of their eighteenth birthday.

### **PROCEDURE**

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1. Adults who consent to adoption shall sign a Release of Confidential Information agreeing to the verification of their being in the custody of ACCS on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday if they wish the agency to provide that information to the court.
2. The adoption supervisor or designee will then enter that information in a letter to the court or the adult's attorney as requested within 7 days of receiving the release.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15

**SUMMARY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

The Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, 42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9), 671(a)(18), 674(d) and 1996(b) (hereinafter “MEPA”) and title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq as it applies to the foster care and adoption process (hereinafter “Title VI”), are designed to decrease the time children wait for foster care and adoption placement, prevent discrimination in the placement of children, and aid in the identification and recruitment of foster and adoptive families who can meet each child’s needs. It prohibits any agency using federal funds from denying any person the opportunity to become an adoptive parent or foster caregiver on the basis of race, color or national origin of that person, or of the child involved and from delaying or denying the placement of a child for adoption or foster care on the basis of race, color or national origin of the adoptive parent or parents, of the foster caregiver or caregivers, or the child involved.

Under MEPA and Title VI, no agency may routinely consider race, color or national origin as a factor in assessing the needs or best interests of children. In each case, the only consideration shall be the child’s individual needs and the ability of the prospective foster caregiver or adoptive parent to meet those needs. Only the most compelling reasons may serve to justify consideration of race, color or national origin as part of a placement decision. Such reasons emerge only in the unique and individual circumstances of each child and each prospective foster caregiver or adoptive parent. In those exceptional circumstances when race, color or national origin need to be taken into account in a placement decision, such consideration must be narrowly tailored to advance the child’s best interest. Even when the facts of a particular case allow consideration related to race, color or national origin, this consideration shall not be the sole determining factor in the placement decision.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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## **GUIDELINES**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

The following actions by a PCSA, PCPA, or PNA are permitted under MEPA and Title VI:

1. Asking about and honoring any choice made by prospective adoptive parents or prospective foster caregivers regarding what race, color or national origin of child the prospective adoptive parents or prospective foster caregivers will accept.
2. Honoring the decision of a child over 12 years of age to not consent to an adoption when that decision has been approved by a court pursuant to section 3107.06 of the Revised Code.
3. Providing information and resources about adopting a child of another race, color or national origin to prospective adoptive parents or prospective foster caregivers who request such information and making known to all families that such information and resource are available.
4. Considering the request of a birth parent(s) to place the child with a relative or nonrelative identified by name.
5. Considering race, color or national origin as a possible factor in the placement decision when compelling reasons serve to justify that race, color or national origin needs to be a factor in the placement decision. Even when the facts of a particular case allow consideration related to race, color or national origin, this consideration shall not be the sole determining factor in the placement decision.
6. Discussing the special cultural and physical needs of children of different races, ethnicities, and national origins as part of the training which is required of all persons who seek to become eligible to be adoptive parents or foster caregivers.
7. Documenting verbal comments, verbatim, or documenting in detail any other indication made by a prospective adoptive family member or prospective foster caregiver family member living in the household reflecting a negative perspective regarding the race, color or national origin of a child for whom they have expressed an interest in adopting and indicating whether those comments were made before or after completion of the cultural diversity training which is required for all prospective adoptive or foster care applicants.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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## **GUIDELINES**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 12/1/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

The following are examples of actions prohibited under MEPA and Title VI:

1. Using the race, color national origin, age, gender, sexual identity, or sexual orientation of a prospective adoptive parent or foster caregiver to differentiate between adoptive placements for a child, unless an individualized assessment has been completed.
2. Honoring the request of a birth parent(s) to place a child with a prospective adoptive parent or prospective foster caregiver of a specific race, color or national origin, unless the birth parent(s) identifies a relative or non-relative by name and that person is found to meet all relevant state child welfare protection standards, unless the agency determines that the placement is not in the best interests of the child.
3. Requiring a prospective adoptive family or a prospective foster caregiver to prepare or accept a transracial adoption or foster care plan.
4. Using "culture" or "ethnicity" as a proxy for race, color or national origin.
5. Delaying or denying placement of a child based upon the geographical location of the neighborhood of the prospective adoptive family or a prospective foster caregiver whenever geography is being used as a proxy for the racial composition of the neighborhood, the demographics of the neighborhood, the presence or lack of presence of a significant number of persons of a particular race, color, or national origin in the neighborhood or any similar purpose.
6. Requiring extra scrutiny, additional training, or greater cultural awareness of individuals who are prospective adoptive parents or foster caregivers of children of a different race, color or national origin than required of other prospective adoptive parents or foster caregivers
7. Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the needs of children of a particular race, color or national origin.
8. Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the ability of prospective adoptive parents or prospective foster caregivers of a particular race, color or national origin to care for or nurture the sense of identity of a child of another race, color or national origin.
9. "Steering" prospective adoptive parents or foster caregivers away from parenting a child of another race, color, or national origin. "Steering" is any activity that attempts to discourage prospective adoptive parents or prospective foster caregivers from parenting a child of a particular race, color or national origin.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



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## **POLICY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 10/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS will respond to complaints from adoptive applicants and prospective adoptive parents.

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## **PROCEDURE**

The agency review of any complaint received from an adoptive applicant, prospective adoptive parent or adoptive parent shall occur within thirty days of the receipt of a request for an agency review and shall include a face-to-face meeting with the adoptive applicant, prospective adoptive family and adoptive family requesting an agency review, the adoptive family caseworker, the adoptive child's caseworker if applicable, the Executive Director of ACCS or her/his designee, and any other individual with information regarding the complaint and deemed appropriate by the Executive Director of ACCS or his/her designee.

A written decision, including the reason for the decision, shall be rendered by the Executive Director of ACCS or her/his designee.

1. The decision shall be based upon the evidence presented at the review.
2. A copy of the decision shall be provided to all parties to the agency review within fifteen days of the review.
3. All documentation related to notification regarding rights to an agency review and written decisions of the agency review required by this rule shall be maintained in the child and family case record.

When an approved adoptive family requests an agency review because the family believes an adoptive placement was denied or will be denied solely on the basis of geographic location, ACCS shall provide the family with notices and copies of all materials related to requesting a state hearing.

See MEPA complaint policy for MEPA complaints.

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## **REFERENCE**

Adoptive parent Grievance Policy

OAC 5180:2-48-24 Agency Adoption Review Procedures

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15





## **POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12, 7/1/15

Revised: 12/1/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

As a public children services agency, Athens County Children Services acts as a representative of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services in recommending family foster homes for certification, accepting temporary, permanent, or legal custody of children, and in placing children for foster care or adoption. In acting as a representative of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Athens County Children Services will comply with the Ohio Administrative Rules applicable to the functions performed.

## **GUIDELINES**

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Per 5180:2-5-13, A(38), included in this policy is a copy of the JFS 01611 "Non-discrimination Requirements for Foster Care and Adoptive Placements."

Per 5180:2-5-13, A(39), Athens County Children Services shall comply with the standards of conduct regarding MEPA and Title VI in accordance with rule 5180:2-33-11 of the Administrative Code, "Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) Agency Administrative Requirements." Standards of Conduct attached.

Per 5180:2-5-13, A (39), Athens County Children Services adopts as policy, the complaint process pursuant to rule 5180:2-33-03, "Procedure for complaints of alleged discriminatory acts, policies or practices in the foster care or adoption process that involve race, color, or national origin."

## **PROCEDURE**

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Athens County Children Services shall provide a written notice of the procedure for any complaints of discrimination in the foster care or adoption process that involve race, color or national origin (RCNO) to all individuals inquiring about or applying to be a foster caregiver or adoptive parent. Such notices shall be provided within 7 days of the individual's first contact with the agency.

Any individual may file a complaint alleging a discriminatory act, policy, or practice involving RCNO in the foster care or adoption process of a public children services agency, a private child placing agency, private noncustodial agency, or the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). Any person, including but not limited to, an employee or former employee of an agency or a member of a family which has sought to become a foster caregiver or adoptive parent, may also file a complaint alleging that he or she was intimidated, threatened, coerced, discriminated against or otherwise retaliated against in some ways by an agency or ODJFS because he or she has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing in connection with an allegation that an agency engaged in discriminatory acts, policies, or practices as it applies in the foster care or adoption process.



The individual filing a complaint shall use the JFS 02333 "Discrimination Complaint Form." The complaint shall be filed within 2 years from the date of the occurrence of the alleged discriminatory act; or 2 years from the date upon which the complainant learned or should have known of a discriminatory act, policy, or practice. The complaint may be filed with:

1. Any public children services agency, private child placing agency, or private noncustodial agency
2. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
3. ODJFS Bureau of Civil Rights or
4. U.S. Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights.

When any complaint alleging discrimination involving race, color, or national origin in the foster care or adoption process is received by:

1. A public children services agency, private child placing agency, or PNA, the agency shall forward the complaint to ODJFS within 3 working days of the date of the receipt of the complaint.
2. ODJFS, the department shall notify the agency that is the subject of the complaint within 3 working days of the receipt of the complaint.

ODJFS shall conduct an investigation of the complaint. The agency that is the subject of the complaint shall not initiate, conduct, or run concurrent investigations surrounding the complaint, or take any action regarding the complainant or the subject of the complaint until the issuance of the final investigation report by ODJFS, unless approved by ODJFS.

The agency that is the subject of the complaint shall cooperate fully with ODJFS during the course of the investigation and shall submit any information request by ODJFS not later than 14 days from the date of the request, unless otherwise agreed upon.

ODJFS shall conduct an investigation that shall include, but is not limited to:

1. Face-to-face interviews with the complainant, the respondent, and all relevant witnesses.
2. Issuance of a final investigation report to the complainant and the agency that is the subject of the complaint. The report shall include the allegations, background information, analysis, determination and recommendations and shall be issued within 90 days of the receipt of the initial complaint. If unanticipated circumstances require additional time to complete the investigation or to issue the final report, ODJFS will notify the complainant and the agency that is the subject of the complaint of the need for additional time.

Upon completion of the final investigation report, ODJFS shall determine if any action against an agency is warranted. For noncompliance of a public children services agency, ODJFS may take action concerning the agency's certificate permitted under section 5101.24 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC).

No person who has filed a complaint alleging a discriminatory act, policy or practice involving RCNO in the foster care or adoption process of an agency or who has testified, assisted, or participated in

any manner in the investigation of a complaint shall be intimidated, threatened, coerced, or retaliated against by any employee or contractor of the agency or ODJFS.

Nothing in this rule or in an agency's policy shall prohibit an individual from filing a complaint with the United States Department and Health and Human Services (HHS), office for civil rights (OCR), alleging discrimination that involved RCNO in the foster care or adoption process of an agency or ODJFS.

The requirements of rules 5180:2-33-04 and 5180:2-48-24 of the Administrative Code to not apply to complaints of discrimination in the foster care or adoption process that involve RCNO.

Each PCSA, PCPA or PNA shall provide a written notice of the procedures for any complaints of discrimination in the foster care or adoption process that involve RCNO within thirty days of the effective date to all foster caregivers certified or in the process of certification and to all individuals who have approved adoptive home studies or who are participating in the adoptive home study process on the effective date of this rule.

#### **REFERENCE**

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OAC 5180:2-33-03 Procedure for Complaints of Alleged Discriminatory Acts, Policies or Practices in the Foster Care or Adoption Process that Involve Race, Color, or National Origin.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15



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## **SUMMARY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Athens County Children Services has established the following Standards of Conduct with regard to the performance of employees and contractors/providers related to compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 as amended by Section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9), 671(a)(18), 674(d) and 1996(b) (MEPA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq (Title VI), as they apply to the foster care and adoption process.

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## **GUIDELINES**

These Standards of Conduct prohibit policies, procedures or actions which serve to:

1. Deny any person the opportunity to become a foster caregiver or an adoptive parent on the basis of race, color or national origin of that person, or of the child involved
2. Delay or deny any placement of a child in foster care or for adoption on the basis of the race, color or national origin of the foster caregiver(s), of the adoptive parent(s) or of the child involved.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **GUIDELINES**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

MEPA and Title VI permit the following actions as they apply to the foster care or adoption process:

1. Asking about and honoring any initial or subsequent choices made by prospective foster or adoptive parents regarding what race, color, or national origin of child the prospective foster or adoptive parents will accept.
2. Honoring the decision of a child twelve years of age or older to not consent to an adoption when that decision has been approved by a court pursuant to section 3107.06 of the Ohio Revised Code.
3. Providing information and resources about fostering or adopting a child of another race, color or national origin to prospective foster or adoptive parents who request such information and making known to all families that such information and resources are available.
4. Considering the request of a birth parent(s) to place the child with a relative or non-relative identified by name.
5. Considering the race, color or national origin of the child as a possible factor in the placement decision when compelling reasons serve to justify that race, color or national origin need to be a factor in the placement decision pursuant to 5180:2-48-13 and 5180:2-42-18.1 of the Ohio Administrative Code. These rules permit consideration of race, color or national origin if an Individualized Child Assessment (JFS 01688) completed pursuant to these rules indicates the child has needs related to race, color or national origin that should be taken into account when placing the child. Even when the facts of a particular case allow consideration related to race, color, or national origin, this consideration shall not be the sole determining factor in the placement decision.
6. Promoting cultural awareness, including awareness of cultural and physical needs that may arise in the care of children of different races, ethnicities, and national origins as part of the training which is required of all applicants who seek to become foster or adoptive parents.
7. Documenting verbal comments, verbatim, or describing in detail any other indication made by a prospective foster or adoptive family member living in the household or any other person living in the household reflecting a negative perspective regarding the race, color or national origin of a child for whom the prospective foster or adoptive family has expressed an interest in fostering or adopting. The documentation shall indicate whether those comments were made before or after completion of the cultural diversity training which is required for all foster and adoptive applicants. Documentation shall be included in the family's home study, update, or an addendum to the home study or update prior to consideration of placement or a matching conference. A matching conference is the process of determining the most appropriate adoptive family for the child based on the child's special needs. The matching committee may consider the information in determining if the placement is in the child's best interests.



**Permissible Actions in the Foster  
Care of Adoption Process  
8.2  
Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



## **GUIDELINES**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 12/1/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

MEPA and Title VI prohibit the following actions as they apply to the foster care or adoption process:

1. Using the race, color national origin, age, gender, sexual identity, or sexual orientation of a prospective foster or adoptive parent to differentiate between placements.
2. Honoring the request of a birth parent(s) to place a child with prospective foster or adoptive parent(s) of a specific race, color or national origin, unless the birth parent(s) identifies a relative or non-relative by name and that person is found to meet all relevant state child protection standards, provided that the agency determines that the placement is in the best interests of the child.
3. Requiring a prospective adoptive family to prepare or accept a transracial adoption plan.
4. Using "culture" or "ethnicity" as a proxy for race, color or national origin.
5. Delaying or denying placement of a child based upon the geographical location of the neighborhood of the prospective foster or adoptive family whenever geography is being used as a proxy for:
  - a. The racial or ethnic composition of the neighborhood;
  - b. The demographics of the neighborhood; or
  - c. The presence or lack of presence of a significant number of persons of a particular race, color, or national origin in the neighborhood or any similar purpose.
6. Requiring extra scrutiny, additional training, or greater cultural awareness of individuals who are prospective foster or adoptive parents of children of a different race, color or national origin than required of other prospective foster or adoptive parents.
7. Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the needs of children of a particular race, color or national origin.
8. Relying upon general or stereotypical assumptions about the ability of prospective foster or adoptive parents of a particular race, color or national origin to care for or nurture the sense of identity of a child of another race, color, or national origin.
9. "Steering" prospective foster or adoptive parents away from parenting a child of another race, color, or national origin. "Steering" is any activity that attempts to discourage prospective foster or adoptive parents from parenting a child of a particular race, color or national origin.
10. Requiring an ongoing, foster care or adoption worker or contractor to justify a proposed placement for the reason that the race, color or national origin of the child is different from that of the family whom the worker is proposing as the child's foster caregiver or adoptive parent.



**Prohibited Actions in the Foster  
Care or Adoption Process**

**8.3**

**Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 12/1/15

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**POLICY**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS employees and contractors/providers may not intimidate, threaten, coerce, discriminate against or otherwise retaliate against any individual who makes a complaint, testifies, assists or participates in any manner in an investigation related to alleged discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in the foster care or adoption process.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15





**PROCEDURE**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

Employees or contractors/providers who desire more information about MEPA and Title VI as related to the adoption and foster care process may contact:

Emily Kresiak, ACCS MEPA Monitor  
(740) 592-3061

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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**PROCEDURE**

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Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

These standards of conduct include enforcement requirements to be used whenever an agency employee or contractor/provider engages in discriminatory acts, policies, or practices involving race, color, or national origin in the foster care or adoption process as determined by the Bureau of Civil Rights of ODJFS upon completion of the investigation conducted pursuant to rule 5180:2-33-03 of the Administrative Code.

For ACCS employees, these enforcement requirements shall include a range of sanctions in employee discipline, in accordance with Chapter 13 of the Athens County Children Services Board Policy and Procedures Manual. Such sanctions include suspension and/or removal in accordance with ACCS policies and procedures.

For contractors/providers performing foster care or adoption services on behalf of ACCS, these enforcement requirements shall include discipline in accordance with the contractor/provider's personnel policy and may include contract termination. Enforcement requirements for contractor/provider subcontractors shall include corrective action in accordance with the contractor/provider's contract with the subcontractor and may include contract termination.

These enforcement requirements are applied in accordance with applicable employment law and union contracts.

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15



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## **POLICY**

Issued: 2/6/08, 4/08, 9/08, 10/09, 2/11/10, 8/3/10, 1/19/12

Revised: 3/24/15

Revision being considered: Five Year Review

ACCS shall provide for the submission of a corrective action plan whenever an investigation conducted by ODJFS, pursuant to rule 5180:2-33-03 of the Administrative Code, results in a finding that an agency employee or contractor/provider engaged in discriminatory acts, policies, or practices.

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## **GUIDELINE**

If the finding involves a discriminatory act, policy or practice by a contractor/provider or subcontractor, ACCS shall develop the corrective action plan in collaboration with the contractor/provider or in collaboration with the contractor/provider and subcontractor.

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## **PROCEDURE**

The corrective action plan shall:

1. Address how ACCS will prevent future violations by that employee or contractor/provider or subcontractor, and
2. Be submitted to ODJFS within thirty days of notification of the findings of the investigation.

ACCS shall provide a copy of these Standards of Conduct to each employee or contractor/provider who is:

1. Engaged in the placement of children into foster care or for adoption, or
2. Engaged in the recruitment, assessment, approval, or selection of foster or adoptive families.

Provision of Standards of Conduct

1. Employees or contractors/providers shall receive a copy of the written Standards of Conduct no later than March 3, 2005, or within 30 days of the effective date of this rule.
2. If these Standards of Conduct are revised, employees and contractors/providers shall receive a copy of the revised Standards of Conduct within 30 days of the completion of any revisions.
3. New employees or contractors/providers shall receive a copy of the written Standards of Conduct within thirty days of their hire date or the effective date of their contract. ACCS and contractors/providers shall ensure that these Standards of Conduct are provided to their employees and subcontractors.



**Corrective Action Plan**  
**8.7**  
**Adoption Unit Program Manual**

Procedure Approved: 3/24/15

Procedure Revised: 3/24/15