

441—200.3(600) Adoption services. Adoption services shall include: adoptive home study, preparation of child, selection of family, preparation of family, preplacement visits, placement services, and postplacement services.

200.3(1) Adoptive home study. For applicants who apply to the department to adopt, the contractor shall prepare an adoptive home study through the following activities:

a. Family assessment. The family assessment shall include a minimum of two face-to-face interviews with the applicants and at least one face-to-face interview with each member of the household. At least one of the interviews shall take place at the applicant's home. The assessment of the prospective adoptive family shall include an evaluation of the family's ability to parent a special needs child or children including the following:

(1) Motivation for adoption and whether the family has biological children, adopted children or children in foster care currently placed in the home.

(2) Family's and extended family's attitude toward accepting an adopted child and plans for discussing adoption with the child.

(3) The attitude toward adoption of other people involved with the family in a significant way.

(4) Emotional maturity; marital history, including verification of marriages and divorces; assessment of marital relationship; and compatibility of the adoptive parents.

(5) Ability to cope with problems, stress, frustrations, crises, separation, and loss.

(6) Medical, mental, and emotional conditions that may affect the applicant's ability to parent a child; treatment history; status of treatment; and the evaluation of the treatment. Applicants and all household members must disclose any past or current mental health or substance abuse issues, or both. The department may require further documentation, evaluation, or both, to determine the suitability of the home.

(7) Willingness to accept a child who has medical problems (such as a child who is at risk for a communicable disease), intellectual disabilities, or emotional or behavioral problems. Ability to provide for the child's physical, medical, and emotional needs and commit to support a child's overall well-being.

(8) Description of biological children and previously adopted children, if any, including their attitudes toward adoption, relationship with others, and school performance.

(9) Capacity to give and receive affection.

(10) Statements from three references provided by the family and additional references the contractor may wish to contact.

(11) Attitudes of the adoptive applicants toward the birth parents and the reasons the child is available for adoption.

(12) Financial information, including the family's ability to provide for a child.

(13) Disciplinary practices that will be used.

(14) History of abuse involving family members, including how the abuse was addressed and how that history impacts the applicant's ability to be an adoptive parent.

(15) Assessment of, commitment to, and capacity to maintain other significant relationships.

(16) Recommendations for the number, age, sex, characteristics, and special needs of a child or children the family can best parent.

(17) The family's ability to anticipate and understand the special needs of an adopted child as the child gets older and how the family will manage those needs.

b. Record checks. Record checks are required for each applicant and for anyone who is 14 years of age or older living in the home of the applicant to determine whether any of those persons have founded child abuse reports, dependent adult abuse reports or criminal convictions or have been placed on the sex offender registry.

(1) The records of the applicants shall be checked:

1. On the Iowa central abuse registry using the Request for Child Abuse Information form;

2. By the Iowa division of criminal investigation, using the HHS Criminal History Record Check Form B;

3. On the Iowa sex offender registry;

4. On the child abuse registry of any state where the applicant has lived during the five years prior to the issuance of the investigative report; and

5. For a national criminal history through fingerprinting or another biometric identification-based process accepted by the federal government.

(2) The records of persons aged 14 or older living in the home of the applicant shall be checked:

1. On the Iowa central abuse registry using the Request for Child Abuse Information form;

2. By the Iowa division of criminal investigation, using the HHS Criminal History Record Check Form B; and

3. On the Iowa sex offender registry.

(3) Out-of-state child abuse checks, dependent adult abuse checks and national criminal history checks may be completed on any adult living in the home of the applicant if the department has reason to do so.

(4) The department shall not approve a prospective applicant and shall not perform an evaluation if the applicant or anyone living in the home of the applicant has been convicted of a felony offense as set forth in Iowa Code section 600.8(2)“b.”

(5) The department shall not approve a prospective applicant and shall not perform an evaluation if the applicant or anyone living in the home of the applicant has committed a crime in a state other than Iowa that would be a forcible felony if the crime would have been committed in Iowa, as set forth in Iowa Code section 600.8(2)“b.”

c. Evaluation of record.

(1) If the applicant or anyone living in the home has a record of founded child abuse, dependent adult abuse, a criminal conviction, or placement on the sex offender registry, the applicant shall not be approved to adopt unless an evaluation determines that the abuse or criminal conviction does not warrant prohibition of approval.

(2) The evaluation shall be conducted according to procedures in 441—subrules 113.13(2) and 113.13(3) for applications for adoption through the department or procedures in 441—paragraph 108.9(4)“e” for applications for adoption through a child-placing agency.

d. Written report. The contractor shall prepare a written report of the family assessment, known as the adoptive home study, which shall be used to make recommendations on appropriate placement.

(1) The department shall notify the family of the decision using the Adoption Notice of Decision form.

(2) If the department does not approve the home study, the reasons shall be stated on the notice.

(3) The department shall provide the family a copy of the adoptive home study with the notification of approval or denial.

e. Preplacement assessment and home study update. A preplacement assessment and home study update is required if the adoptive home study was written more than two years previously, in accordance with Iowa Code section 600.8. The preplacement assessment and home study update shall be conducted by completion of the following:

(1) The child abuse, dependent adult abuse and criminal record checks shall be repeated, except for fingerprinting. If there are any founded abuses or convictions of crimes that were not evaluated in the previous home study, they shall be evaluated using the process set forth in paragraph 200.4(1)“c.”

(2) One face-to-face visit shall be conducted with the approved adoptive family.

(3) The information in the approved adoptive home study shall be reassessed.

(4) An updated written report of the reassessment and adoptive home study shall be written, dated, signed by the worker and supervisor for the contractor, and a copy provided to the adoptive family.

(5) Families that are dually licensed to provide foster family care shall have their adoption approval date align with their foster home licensing date.

f. Procedure for foster parent adoptions. When a licensed foster parent applies for approval as an adoptive home, home study activities that have been completed within the previous year as part of a licensing study pursuant to 441—Chapter 113 need not be repeated.

g. Annual visits to the adoptive family home. The contractor shall complete a minimum of one visit each year in the homes of families approved to adopt.

- (1) The visit shall not be waived.
- (2) When a person aged 14 or older moves into the home, the agency shall perform checks on the Iowa central abuse registry, by the division of criminal investigation, and on the sex offender registry. The record check evaluation process shall be completed if the person has a criminal conviction or founded abuse report or is on the sex offender registry.
- (3) Findings and observations of the visit shall be documented and provided to the department when the update is submitted.
- (4) The department shall be notified within 30 days of any deficiencies noted or other concerns discovered that require corrective action.

200.3(2) *Preparation of child.* The department shall conduct specific activities designed to enable a child to make the transition to an adoptive placement or refer the child to the family-centered services contractor or other professionals. The activities shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Counseling regarding issues of separation, loss, grief, guilt, anger and adjustment to an adoptive family.
- b. Assisting in the preparation or update of a life book.
- c. Provision of age-appropriate information regarding community resources available, such as children's support groups, to assist the child in the transition and integration into the adoptive family.
- d. Any appropriate evaluations or testing.

200.3(3) *Adoption selection process.* When the department is appointed guardian of a child(ren) following the termination of parental rights, the department has both the duty and the authority to select an adoptive placement for that child(ren). To fulfill this duty, the department must hold a conference during which the department selects an adoptive family for an identified child(ren). At the conference, known as an adoption selection staffing, each interested family with an approved adoption or interstate compact home study will be considered. The adoption selection committee will determine which family will be able to best meet the needs of the child(ren) going forward. The adoption selection process will value the best interest of the child(ren) above all else.

a. The selection committee will consider placement priority as outlined in Iowa Code section 232.117 and will consider the following:

- (1) The adoptive family selected for a child or sibling group must be based on a thorough assessment of each child's current and potential developmental, medical, emotional, and educational needs.
- (2) The child(ren)'s need for family connections will be prioritized. Separation of siblings should be avoided. When separation is necessary to protect the safety and well-being of one or more children in the sibling group, all reasonable efforts must be made to select a placement likely to maintain contact between siblings if such contact is in the best interests of each sibling.
- (3) The adoptive family selected will be able to nurture and accept the child(ren) as a fully integrated member(s) of the family.
- (4) Race, color, or national origin may not be considered in placement selections except when an Indian child is being placed pursuant to Iowa Code section 232.7 or chapter 232B.
- (5) Placement decisions shall be made consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child, including the adoptive family's capacity and commitment to holistically supporting the child's development and well-being.

(6) A relative who is within the fourth degree of consanguinity shall be given consideration for selection as the adoptive family for a child who is legally available for adoption if the child has a significant relationship with the relative or the child is aged 14 or older and elects adoption by the relative.

(7) Foster parents shall be given consideration for selection as the adoptive family for a child in the foster parents' care who is legally available for adoption if the child has been in the foster parents' care for six months or longer or the child has a significant relationship with the family.

b. The adoption selection committee team should strive to complete the adoption selection process in 60 days or less absent special circumstances.

c. Upon reaching a decision, the adoption selection committee team staff will notify families of the decision made by the adoption selection committee team and will send placement notification to the family

not selected within two business days of the date all parties were initially notified, using the Adoption Notice of Decision form.

d. The selection of an adoptive family is not an appealable issue since a child continues to be under the guardianship of the department until an adoption is finalized.

200.3(4) *Preparation of family.* The contractor and the department shall conduct activities designed to enhance the family's readiness to accept the child or children into the family and strengthen the family's commitment to adopt. A referral may be made for family-centered services if needed. The activities shall include, but not be limited to:

a. Completion of required preservice training and the self-study course, "Universal Precautions in Foster and Adoptive Family Homes," before placement of a child. These training requirements apply to families who are adopting special needs children who are under the guardianship of the department.

(1) Relatives who have cared for a related child for at least six months and who have been selected to adopt that related child may have their participation in the preservice training waived by the service area manager or designee.

(2) The department may waive the preservice training requirement in whole or in part when the department finds that:

1. The applicant has completed relevant training or has a combination of relevant training and experience that is an acceptable equivalent to all or a portion of the required preservice training; or

2. There is good cause for the waiver based upon the circumstances of the child and the applicant.

(3) Applicants must retake the preservice training if the adoption approval process is not completed within 24 months after the preservice training is initially completed.

b. Discussion with family members regarding problems resulting from a child's separation, loss, grief, and anger due to the loss of the birth parents.

c. Provision of background information on the child and birth family, including a child study that includes experiences such as foster and adoption placements and other pertinent information and the child's life book.

d. Provision of information regarding the child's special needs and behavior patterns.

e. Provision of a description of the child's medical needs, including whether or not the child has a communicable disease.

f. Discussion of the impact that adding a new member or members to the family may have on all current family members.

g. Explanation of the state's subsidized adoption program.

h. Provision of information regarding the community resources that are available to assist the family, such as parent support groups, community supports including Medicaid funded supports and post adoption supports.

200.3(5) *Preplacement visits.* The department shall plan, conduct and assess the transitional visits between the adoptive family and the child or children before the adoptive placement of the child in the home.

200.3(6) *Placement services.* Placement services include the activities necessary to plan and carry out the placement of a child or children into the adoptive family.

Before placement of a child, the Agreement of Placement for Adoption form shall be signed by all parties.

200.3(7) *Postplacement services.* An adoptive family is eligible for postplacement services from the time a child is placed with the family until finalization of the adoption occurs. The department shall supervise the placement, provide ongoing support to the child and family, perform crisis intervention, and complete required reports. Assistance with behavioral interventions to strengthen the placement and prevent disruption may be provided through family-centered services.

a. Postplacement supervision shall focus on the following areas:

(1) Integration and interaction of the child or children with the family.

(2) Changes in the family functioning that may be due to the child's placement.

(3) Social and emotional adjustment of the child or children.

(4) Child's growth and development since placement with the adoptive family.

- (5) Changes and adjustments that have been made in the family since the child's placement.
 - (6) Family's method of dealing with testing behaviors and discipline.
 - (7) Behavioral evidence of the degree of bonding that is taking place and the degree to which the child is becoming a permanent member of the adoptive family.
 - (8) School adjustment of a child who is attending a school.
 - (9) The behavioral needs of the child.
 - (10) The psychological and mental health needs of the child.
 - (11) Services and supports that will assist the child and family in the future.
- b.* At a minimum, the department shall make monthly home visits until the adoption is final. If the family is experiencing problems, the department shall make as many visits as are necessary to assess and support the placement.
- c.* The department shall prepare a written report based on the postplacement visits with recommendations regarding the finalization of the adoption and submit the report to the court before the hearing to consider granting a decree of adoption.

200.3(8) *Postadoption services.* The department's contractor shall provide postadoption services to families that are eligible for the department's adoption subsidy program in accordance with the contract. The goal of these services is to prevent adoption dissolution. The family may obtain additional support through community resources or support groups.

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