

441—107.8 (600) Investigative services.

107.8(1) *Preplacement investigations.* When a certified adoption investigator provides a preplacement investigation of a prospective adoptive family, the investigation shall meet the requirements of Iowa Code section 600.8(1)“a,” including an assessment of the family’s ability to parent a child.

a. The preplacement investigation shall include at a minimum two contacts, one face-to-face interview with the applicants and each member of the household and at least one home visit.

b. The certified adoption investigator shall have on file a written assessment of the family which shall be used to approve or deny a prospective adoptive family. The written assessment (home study) shall include the date the home study was completed, shall be signed by the investigator and the signature notarized. The assessment shall include the following:

- (1) Motivation for adoption and whether the family has biological, adopted, or foster children;
- (2) Family and extended family’s attitude toward accepting an adopted child, and plans for discussing adoption with the child;
- (3) The attitude towards 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, or emotional conditions which would affect the applicant’s ability to parent a child;
- (7) Ability to provide for the child’s physical and emotional needs and to respect the child’s cultural and religious identity;
- (8) Description of biological children and previously adopted children, if any, including their attitudes towards adoption, relationships with others, and school performance;
- (9) Capacity to give and receive affection;
- (10) Statements from at least three references provided by the family and other unsolicited references that the investigator may wish to contact;
- (11) Attitudes of the adoptive applicants towards the birth parent(s) and the reason(s) the child is available for adoption;
- (12) Income information, including the family’s ability to financially 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) Substance use or abuse by members of the household, treatment history and current status of treatment;
- (17) Recommendations for the number, age, sex, characteristics, and unique needs of children best served by this family; and
- (18) The family’s ability to anticipate and understand the unique needs of an adopted child as the child gets older and how the family will manage those needs.

c. Record checks. The certified adoption investigator shall perform record checks for each applicant and for the other persons living in the home of the applicant as follows:

- (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 DHS 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 DHS Criminal History Record Check Form B; and
 3. On the Iowa sex offender registry.

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

(4) The person making the investigation shall not approve a prospective applicant and shall not perform an evaluation if the applicant or any other adult 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 person making the investigation shall not approve a prospective applicant and shall not perform an evaluation if the applicant or any other adult 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."

d. Evaluation of record. If there is a record of founded child abuse or a criminal conviction for the applicant or any other adult living in the home of the applicant, the applicant shall not be approved to adopt unless an evaluation determines that the abuse or criminal conviction does not warrant prohibition of approval.

(1) The evaluation shall consider the nature and seriousness of the founded child abuse or crime in relation to adoption, the time elapsed since the commission of the founded abuse or crime, the circumstances under which the abuse or crime was committed, the degree of rehabilitation, the likelihood that the person will commit the abuse or crime again, and the number of abuses or crimes committed by the person.

(2) The person with the founded child abuse or criminal conviction report shall complete and return the Record Check Evaluation form within ten calendar days of the date on the form to be used to assist in the evaluation. Failure of the person to complete and return the form within the specified time frame may result in a written denial of approval for adoption.

(3) If the applicant, or any other adult living in the home of the applicant, has been convicted of a simple misdemeanor or a serious misdemeanor that occurred five or more years prior to application, the evaluation and decision may be made by a certified adoption investigator. The certified adoption investigator shall notify the applicant of the results of the evaluation in writing. The notice shall contain information on appeal rights.

(4) If the applicant, or any other person living in the home of the applicant, has a founded child abuse report, has been convicted of an aggravated misdemeanor or felony at any time, or has been convicted of a simple or serious misdemeanor that occurred within five years prior to application, a certified adoption investigator shall initially conduct the evaluation.

1. If the certified adoption investigator determines that the abuse or crime does warrant prohibition of approval, the certified adoption investigator shall notify the applicant of the results of the evaluation in writing.

2. If the certified adoption investigator determines that the applicant should be approved despite the abuse or criminal conviction, the certified adoption investigator shall provide copies of the child abuse report or criminal history record and the Record Check Evaluation form to the Administrator, Division of Adult, Children and Family Services, Department of Human Services, Hoover State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0114. Within 30 days, the administrator shall determine whether the abuse or crime merits prohibition of approval and shall notify the certified adoption investigator in writing of that decision. The certified adoption investigator shall mail the applicant the department's written decision regarding the evaluation of an abuse or crime.

e. Decision. The certified adoption investigator shall notify the applicant in writing no later than 30 days after completion of the home study of the investigator's decision regarding approval for placement of a child.

(1) If the applicant is denied, the certified adoption investigator shall state the reasons for denial in the written decision.

(2) The certified adoption investigator shall date, sign and notarize the adoptive home study.

(3) The certified adoption investigator shall provide a copy of the home study to the family at the time the written decision is sent.

(4) A home study shall be valid for up to two years from the date signed by the certified adoption investigator.

f. Denial. The certified adoption investigator shall deny approval of an adoption application when:

(1) The applicant or any other person 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."

(2) The standards set forth in these rules are not met and cannot be corrected.

(3) The applicant or any person residing in the home has been convicted of a crime, unless an evaluation of the crime has been made by the department, which concludes that the crime does not merit prohibition of approval of an adoption application.

(4) The applicant or any person residing in the home has a record of founded child abuse, unless an evaluation of the founded child abuse has been made by the department, which concluded that the founded child abuse does not merit prohibition of approval of an adoption application.

(5) The applicant has knowingly made false statements or has knowingly concealed information that is material to the investigation.

g. Updates. An update to the home study shall be completed no later than 24 months from the previous home study or previous home study update in order for the home study to remain valid. The home study update shall consist of completion of the following:

(1) The child abuse and criminal history record checks, except for national criminal history checks, shall be repeated. If there are new 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 107.8(1) "d."

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

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

(4) An updated report of the adoptive home study shall be written, dated, signed and notarized and a copy provided to the applicant.

h. Annual visits to the adoptive home. The certified adoption investigator shall complete a minimum of one visit each year in the homes of families approved to adopt by the investigator.

(1) The visit shall include, but not be limited to, assessment of the following areas:

1. Home environment.

2. Persons present at the time of the visit.

3. Changes in the home or household members, or other areas addressed in the home study.

(2) When a person aged 14 or older moves into the home, the investigator shall perform checks on the Iowa central child 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 child abuse report or is on the sex offender registry.

(3) The findings from the visit shall be documented and maintained in the file.

107.8(2) Background information investigation. When a certified adoption investigator is requested to complete a background information investigation on the child to be adopted, the investigation shall include a complete medical, mental health and criminal history of the family and developmental history of the child to be adopted.

a. A personal interview with each parent of the child must be completed unless a parent's identity or whereabouts is unknown.

b. If a parent's identity or whereabouts is unknown, as much information as possible shall be obtained from the other parent or other sources if available.

c. A copy of the background information shall be provided to prospective adoptive families before placement of the child.

107.8(3) Postplacement supervision. When a certified adoption investigator completes postplacement supervision, at least three visits to the adoptive family's home and personal observation of the child are required.

a. Postplacement reports shall be written after each postplacement visit and copies kept in the permanent family file retained by the investigator.

b. Postplacement supervision shall address the unique needs of the child, including but not limited to the following areas:

- (1) Integration and interaction of the child with the family.
- (2) Changes in the family functioning which may be due to the child's placement.
- (3) Social and emotional adjustment of the child.
- (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 family in the future.

c. Postplacement visits shall be completed at a minimum as follows:

- (1) One no later than 30 days after placement.
- (2) One no later than 90 days after placement.
- (3) A final visit prior to requesting a consent to adopt, no later than 180 days after placement.
- (4) Postplacement visits shall be completed as often as necessary if the adoptive family is experiencing problems, and the visits may extend to finalization or beyond 180 days if additional time is needed.

d. The certified adoption investigator shall prepare a written report based on observations made during each home visit. Each report shall address the specific needs of the child and the family's ability to meet those needs. The reports shall be used by the certified adoption investigator in making a written recommendation to the court regarding finalization of the adoption.

107.8(4) Reports of investigations. The certified adoption investigator is authorized to provide reports to the courts concerning the above investigations and reports to the guardian or custodian of the child and the attorney for the adoptive family.

107.8(5) Fees for services. Certified adoption investigators may charge a fee for the services described in subrules 107.8(1), 107.8(2), and 107.8(3). The licensor shall review the amount of fees for services charged to families at the time that the investigator's records are reviewed for recertification. Information shall also be retained regarding fees charged to a family by another party and collected by the investigator.