



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

## Protocol for Making Adoptive Placements

### Supplemental to DCS Policy: 15.11, Adoption Assistance

1. When the permanency goal changes to a dual goal or sole goal of Adoption or when the petition for Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) has been filed, the DCS Family Service Worker (FSW) and/or the Provider Agency Worker will begin to discuss adoption with the current foster family to assess the family's willingness to provide permanency for the child/youth through adoption. If the foster family expresses a desire to adopt the child/youth, a Special Called CFTM will be convened to document the team's decision regarding whether adoption by the foster family is in the child's best interest.  
See [CFTM Guidelines for Identifying an Adoptive Family](#).
2. Once a child has been in care for nine months and no later than immediately following or when the petition to terminate parental rights TPR is filed (whichever event occurs sooner), the FSW/ Permanency Specialist (PS) or Provider gathers the information needed to write the Pre-Placement and Presentation Summaries. The DCS PS/FSW or the Contract Provider representative completes the Pre-Placement/Presentation Summary within 30-60 days for children entering full guardianship with an identified adoptive family and within 60-90 days for children entering full guardianship without a permanent family identified. See the [Adoption Best Practices Manual](#), Work Aid: Documentation Needed for Pre-Placement Summary Outline for additional information about required documentation.
3. Within 30 days of the child/youth being placed in full guardianship **and** the current foster family is not willing to adopt and no adoptive placement has been identified, the FSW/PS or Provider serving the child will convene a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) to write the Individualized Recruitment Plan and begin the process of Individualized Recruitment. Within 60 days of the child/youth being placed in full guardianship, the child will be registered on AdoptUSKids for recruitment of an adoptive family. Within 90 days of the child/youth being placed in full guardianship, an archeological dig will be completed.
4. Once a prospective adoptive family has been identified, the PS, FSW, Provider Agency Worker and/or Team Leader meets with the family to provide full disclosure and discuss the child's eligibility for adoption assistance. Full disclosure must be given to all adoptive families, whether it is a foster/kinship parent adoption or a new placement. (See DCS Policy [15.1 Adoption Related Disclosure](#) and DCS Policy [15.1 Adoption Related Disclosure](#)).
5. If the prospective adoptive family decides to move forward with adoption, the PS/FSW prepares form [CS-0460, Intent to Adopt Placement Agreement](#), and has the family sign to demonstrate their intent to adopt the child/youth. This is a formal agreement, but it is not a legal document. The child's birth name must be used on this form; however, the family and child can choose to begin "calling" the child by the proposed adoptive name. No legal documents, school records, or insurance forms can be placed in the adoptive name until finalization.

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RDA SW22

10/23

15.11

## **Subject: Protocol for Making Adoptive Placements**

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6. The Permanency Specialist completes the Application for Adoption Assistance, and secures appropriate signatures and approvals.
7. The PS completes the Adoption Assistance Agreement with the family at any point prior to the court date for finalization.
8. The PS provides the family with a list of adoption attorneys so the family can secure an attorney. A listing of adoption attorneys is available on the DCS website at <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/programareas/foster-care-and-adoption/adoption/attorneys.html> .  
The adoption attorney listing is intended and shall be used for informational purposes only to share with adoptive parents. It is strictly prohibited for any DCS employee or Contract Provider representative to make any recommendation or comment to influence the decision or selection of legal representation regarding the finalization of an adoption.
9. Once an adoption attorney is selected by the family, the PS obtains an attorney fee letter and subsequent approval of non-recurring expenses and enters a case services request in TFACTS.
10. Putative Father Registry searches must be submitted by designated parties ten (10) business days prior to a termination of parental rights hearing, adoption petition proceeding, or finalization proceeding. Effective May 5, 2023, for out-of-state putative father registry checks, the response must be filed with the court immediately upon receipt by the petitioner and prior to the finalization of the adoption unless waived by the court.
11. The PS/Provider Agency worker completes and submits DCS form [CS-0816, Confidential Court Report](#), and attachments to the court clerk.
12. The Attorney files a petition to adopt and secures a court date for adoption finalization.
13. If the current foster family is adopting the child, the adoption should be completed within 90 days of the child being placed in full guardianship (provided the court did not issue any additional requests for information and the child has been in the home for the required time period).
14. If the adoptive placement is a new placement, the adoption should be completed within 60 days after the end of the 6 month placement supervision period (provided the court did not issue any additional requests for information). Effective July 1, 2023, adoption finalization can occur if the child has been placed in the pre-adoptive home for at least three (3) months and the court finds that adoption by the pre-adoptive family is in the child's best interest.
15. Once finalization has occurred, the PS secures a certified copy of the final order of adoption, restricts, and closes the adoption case.
16. The adoptive family can request a new social security number from the social security administration after adoption finalization. If a new number is given, the family must provide the new social security number to the Permanency Specialist/Subsidy Specialist as soon as it is received.

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**Important Points to Remember:**

- ✦ Foster Home Board Payments continue until adoption finalization.
- ✦ Adoption Assistance payments do not start until adoption finalization.
- ✦ Birth name remains the legal name until finalization.
- ✦ The Social Security number can only change if the adoptive family requests and is granted a new number following finalization.
- ✦ Foster parent adoptions should be completed within 90 days of the child/youth being placed in full guardianship.
- ✦ New Placement Adoptions should be completed within 60 days after the end of the 6 month placement period. Effective July 1, 2023, adoption finalization can occur if the child has been placed in the pre-adoptive home for at least three (3) months and the court finds that adoption by the preadoptive family is in the child's best interest.
- ✦ Out of state adoptive placements must be approved through the ICPC office. See [ICPC Procedures Manual](#) and Protocol for ICPC and Unique Care Agreement.

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