

AGENCY POLICIES

Appendix to Program Statement

ADOPTION ELIGIBILITY

This agency seeks to advance the welfare of children throughout the adoptive placement process. Therefore, the agency will employ the following adoptive parent eligibility criteria:

Heterosexual couples who have been married for at least one year are eligible for domestic adoption and international home study. Single heterosexual women are eligible for international adoptive home studies. The sexual orientation of applicants will be assessed during the adoptive home study.

The agency will deny applications of persons:

- who have been divorced more than two times
- whose sexual orientation is other than heterosexual
- who are not married and are cohabitating with another person of the opposite gender
- who have been convicted of a felony
- who have any pending criminal charges
- who have any substantiated abuse or neglect charges
- who abuse alcohol or other substances

The agency reserves the right to deny applications of persons:

- who have any misdemeanor convictions
- who have been accused of abuse or neglect
- who have a significant medical condition
- who exhibit any behaviors, past or present, that are assessed to be detrimental to the well-being of the child or the family unit

ADOPTION SERVICES PROVIDED TO PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

- Orientation – Prospective adoptive parents complete the Domestic Adoption Awareness orientation (DAA) after submitting their preliminary application and attending an initial consultation. After attending DAA, prospective adoptive parents sign a statement confirming they have received orientation. Orientation occurs before the Domestic Infant Adoption Formal Application contract is completed.
 - Training – A minimum of 12 hours of home study education/training is required. Training requirements are discussed during DAA and assigned to prospective adoptive parents by their home study caseworker. A record of education/training completed is held in the family file.
 - Adoptive home study evaluation and recommendation – A caseworker completes a home study with prospective adoptive parents. A printed report including the agency recommendation and all supporting documentation is held in the adoptive family file. The home study process is discussed with prospective adoptive parents during DAA.
 - Grievance Policy – The agency has a formal grievance policy. Prospective adoptive families receive a copy of the Grievance Policy and Grievance Form with their DAA materials.
 - Adoptive family profile services – Prospective adoptive parents are assisted by their caseworker and a team of professionals when compiling their profile. Completed profiles are shown to potential birth mothers.
 - Adoptive placement services – The agency works with birth mothers and prospective adoptive parents to legally place a child into an approved adoptive family's home.
 - Adoption legal paperwork – The agency completes all legal paperwork required by courts in the State of Michigan to process adoptions through to finalization.
 - Post placement supervision and monitoring with reports – The agency completes required post placement monitoring along with written reports for the county court where the adoption is being processed. Copies of post placement reports are kept in the adoptive family file.
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CHILD SPACING

The agency requires that the placement of a child(ren) in an adoptive home provide at minimum a nine month age range between the adopted child and the other children in the home, and that the age of the child being placed be under the youngest child currently in the home. The purpose of this is to preserve the birth order, assure differential grade placements in their schooling, and minimize comparison and competition between siblings. Likewise, when adopting more than one child, unrelated adopted children and the existing children in the home must be at least nine months apart in age. The decision to place a child with a family not meeting the child spacing policy will be made according to the professional judgment of agency staff.

SUBSEQUENT (ADOPTIONS)

AAI requires that each adoptive family allow a transition time of one year between the placement of an adopted child or birth of a biological child into the home before adding another child to the family. We recognize that circumstances for each family situation are different and so encourage you to consult with your caseworker as to the right timing for you to begin the application process. Your caseworker will be a valuable resource in assessing your family's transition and readiness to proceed with a subsequent adoption.

HOME STUDY/HOME STUDY UPDATES/HOME STUDY ADDENDUMS

All home studies, updates, and addendums must be completed by a licensed adoption agency in the family's state of residence. If this agency completed the family's original home study, the agency will complete the home study update. The family will need to obtain new clearances, medicals, reference letters, and any other materials asked for by their home study caseworker. A visit with all family members in the home will also be required. Please see the fee schedule for applicable fees. If the family's home study was completed by a different agency, the family will be responsible for contacting their home study agency to complete the update and will be responsible for all costs incurred.

In the event that a significant change occurs in the family's life, or if the family wishes to be approved for, or the agency wishes to approve the family for a child with different characteristics than stated in the original home study, a home study addendum will be required. If this agency completed the family's original home study, then we will complete the home study addendum. If there is a new member of the household, the caseworker will visit all members of the household and the family must obtain a medical for the new household member, as well as a clearance if the new household member is over age 18. In the event of a change of residence, the caseworker will visit all members of the household at the new residence. When a job change has occurred, the caseworker will speak with the family by phone and the family will provide the agency with a letter from the new employer. The agency may require additional documentation or visits with the family at the agency's own discretion and will charge the family for addendums completed as a result of a change initiated by the family. If the family's home study was completed by a different agency, the family will be responsible for contacting their home study agency to complete the addendum and will be responsible for all costs incurred.

If using this agency for a home study only, all home study services will be billed according to applicable fee schedules, including all updates and addendums.

Adoption Associates, Inc. will not complete a home study for families seeking an independent adoption. Families seeking an international home study must also be contracted with a U.S. placing agency.

MEDICAL CARE

The agency will place children only into homes with parents who agree to seek medical attention when necessary for the child. In addition, parents must agree not to withhold medical treatment for the child against the advice of medical personnel.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The agency will thoroughly assess the prospective adoptive parent's approach to child discipline as part of the home study process. There is substantial and compelling research to indicate that corporal punishment generally has a negative and harmful impact on children. Alternately, there are positive and affirmative forms of discipline that should be utilized instead. The agency will provide educational resources to prospective clients as requested and when concerns arise. The agency reserves the right to deny approval of the client's home study if the parents' approach to child discipline is deemed inappropriate by the agency.

NON-DISCLOSURE POLICY

This agency takes nondisclosure of arrests, convictions, unsubstantiated/substantiated incidents of child abuse or neglect, and significant medical issues very seriously. If the prospective client does not disclose said issues on the formal application, this could result in possible denial of the application or rescission of the adoptive home study—if already completed. The agency understands and acknowledges prospective adoptive clients may be apprehensive to disclose such incidents, but a criminal record, including an expunged record, will almost certainly be discovered through required state and FBI background checks. Medical issues can be discovered by required forms from the client's doctor. If these issues are not disclosed to the agency by the prospective adoptive client, it can result in feelings of mistrust between agency and client.

Disclosure of incidents can save time by allowing the agency to direct prospective clients away from programs who may not be accepting of even seemingly minor criminal or medical issues. Disclosure allows the agency to inform prospective clients about additional documentation that may be required to provide to the court or cooperative agency. This can save valuable time for the client and the agency.

In the event that a prospective adoptive parent, immediate family member, or resident of the home is arrested, convicted of a crime, accused of child abuse or neglect, or diagnosed with a significant medical issue during the adoption process, such incidents or issues must be disclosed to the agency within 24 hours.

In the event that a significant change takes place in the household, including but not limited to, a new household member or change in employment, disclosure to the agency is required within 24 hours.

The ultimate determination to either terminate, hold, or continue the case will be made by the administration of the agency after review is completed of each case, taking into consideration the circumstances that are cause for concern regarding the best interest of the child and/or family. Several issues will be considered, to include, but not limited to: severity of the incident, length of time that has passed since the incident happened, circumstances surrounding the incident, rehabilitation, and lifestyle changes.

In the event that the agency terminates a case, the client must agree to fully cooperate with the agency to ensure that any child matched to or placed with the prospective adoptive family is allowed the opportunity to be adopted by another prospective family.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO ADOPTIVE FAMILY

In compliance with Hague Regulation 96.42 (b) and upon receiving a signed written release of information document, the agency makes all non-identifying information in its custody about the adopted person's health history and/or background available directly to the international adoptive parent(s), who will ensure the documentation is used only for the purpose for which it was requested.

PREGNANCY

Domestic Adoption Program

With the best interest of the family in mind, prospective adoptive couples who become pregnant during their adoption process will stop their adoption process at that time. Services for any portion of a home study/update, agency services, or post adoption supervision terminated prior to completion will be billed on a pro-rated basis. Payments for services not yet performed will be refunded, excepting the non-refundable fees. The timing of when the couple can pursue the agency's adoption program should

be discussed with the administration, always taking into consideration the Child Spacing policy; the clinical advisability of proceeding with adoption placement plans; the ages of the children involved; and the family's wishes.

International Home Study Only Services

AAI requires disclosure to the prospective adoptive couple's home study caseworker when a pregnancy occurs at any time up to the time of placement and/or finalization.

FEE AND REFUND POLICY

The agency has made a good faith effort to provide a comprehensive schedule of adoption fees. However, the agency cannot guarantee the final amount of a family's adoption fees and expenses. All fees, including agency, state, and third party fees, are subject to change during the adoption process. Prospective adoptive parents are required to pay the fees according to the fee schedule in effect when the fee is invoiced (if invoiced by AAI) or when the fee becomes due (for those fees which are not invoiced by AAI).

Fees are charged based on both direct and indirect services provided. All or a portion of a fee may be due prior to completion of a specific service. Any portion of a fee that is not paid prior to completion of a service will be due in full upon completion of that service. If payments are not received as scheduled, adoption services may be suspended until outstanding balances have been paid. Failure to pay outstanding balances for an extended period of time may result in the case being closed.

In the event that either the agency or the county/state is unable to complete your adoption process, or if the prospective adoptive parents choose to withdraw from an adoption program, the following refund policy will apply:

1. All fees payable to AAI are nonrefundable once they are paid.
2. Fees paid directly to third parties are nonrefundable by the agency.

AAI Administration reserves the right to make exceptions to the refund policy in the event that such exceptions would benefit prospective adoptive parents. Refunds to which prospective adoptive parents are entitled will be provided within sixty days of the completion of the delivery of services.