

AGENCY POLICIES

Appendix to Program Statement

ELIGIBILITY FOR ADOPTIVE COUPLES

Adoptive parents must be of good moral character. Married heterosexual couples who have been married for at least one year and who have less than three divorces between them are eligible to adopt.

Adoptive couple applications will be denied for persons:

- 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

Adoptive couple applications/home studies may be denied for persons:

- who have 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

NON-DISCLOSURE POLICY

This agency requires the disclosure of arrests, convictions, unsubstantiated/substantiated incidents of child abuse or neglect, substance use/abuse, any addictions, and significant medical issues. If the prospective client does not disclose this information 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 be discovered through required state and FBI background checks. Significant medical issues will be reported on the medical form that is completed by the client's doctor, and substance use and addictions are discussed during the home study process. Disclosure allows the agency to inform prospective clients about eligibility concerns or additional documentation that may be required.

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.

MEDICAL CARE POLICY

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.

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. The family adopting will be guided through the home study process by their caseworker. Adoption Associates is licensed by the State of Michigan and therefore follows Licensing Rules for Child Placing Agencies as specified by Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Division of Child Welfare Licensing. During the home study process, a visit with all family members in the home is required. If the adoptive family is using a different agency to complete a home study, home study update, or addendum, they should be in direct contact with that agency to determine when an update or addendum is required. The adoptive family is responsible for all applicable fees and costs incurred according to the requirements of the agency preparing these documents.

In the event that a significant change occurs in the family's life, including but not limited to a job change or a desire to be approved for a child with different characteristics than stated in the original home study, a home study update or addendum will be required as applicable. In the event of a change of residence, the caseworker will visit all members of the household at the new residence and complete a home study update. The agency may require additional documentation or visits with the family at the agency's discretion. Please see the schedule of fees for costs of these services. 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 home study update or 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.

CHILD SPACING POLICY

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 ADOPTION POLICY

AAI prefers 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 placing another child to the family. We recognize that circumstances for each family situation are different and so encourage you to consult with agency staff as to the right timing for you to begin the application process for a subsequent adoption.

PREGNANCY POLICY

With the best interest of the family in mind, prospective adoptive couples who become pregnant during their adoption process may be required to stop or put on hold their adoption process at that time, as determined by administration on a case-by-case basis.

If the adoption process is stopped or put on hold, services for any portion of a home study/update, agency services, or post placement supervision terminated prior to completion will be billed on a pro-rated basis. Payments for services not yet performed will be refunded, with the exception of non-refundable fees. The timing of when the couple can pursue the agency's adoption program will be determined by administration, 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.

In cases where the adoptive family is utilizing Adoption Associates only for home study services, the home study/update will be completed within the 90-day timeframe as specified by MDHHS.

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.

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.

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.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

The agency has a formal grievance policy. Prospective adoptive families receive a copy of the Grievance Policy and Grievance Form with orientation materials.