

 <b>INDIANA</b> DEPARTMENT OF <b>CHILD</b> <b>SERVICES</b>	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 10:</b> Guardianship and Adoption	<b>Effective Date:</b> August 1, 2021
	<b>Section 02:</b> Assessing the Child's Readiness for Adoption	<b>Version:</b> 3

## **POLICY OVERVIEW**

Assessment of a child's readiness for adoption and the development of strategies to facilitate readiness is a critical and ongoing process, which helps to reduce the number of adoption disruptions and dissolutions and establish and maintain a strong support system. To assist children in grieving the loss of their birth family, the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) provides children with the opportunity to openly discuss their feelings.

## **PROCEDURE**

DCS will ensure any child with a permanency plan of adoption will be assessed for readiness to be adopted and strategies to facilitate readiness will be developed as needed.

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Review the child's case record and conduct personal interviews to gather the following information to assess the child's readiness for adoption:
  - a. Birth and biological family history,
  - b. Placement experiences,
  - c. Trauma and attachment history,
  - d. Current functioning and developmental concerns, and
  - e. Resources and support systems that allow or will allow the child to maintain cultural connections.

**Note:** Personal interviews may be conducted with the child (if age and developmentally appropriate); the child's siblings (if applicable); resource parents; the child's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad Litem (GAL); educational, medical and mental health professionals; and any other individuals who may have a significant relationship with the child.

2. Engage the resource parent and the Child and Family Team (CFT) to assist with assessing the child's knowledge of the termination of parental rights (TPR) and adoption processes. See the Child's Comprehensive Assessment and Talking with Children about Adoption/Guardianship or Aspects of their Past for additional guidance in addressing questions the child may have regarding TPR and adoption;
3. Develop an individualized plan for the child and prospective adoptive family to help prepare them for adoption. This plan may be developed during a CFT meeting and may include the involvement of the child (based on the child's age and developmental level), mental health provider, resource parent, informal supports, and the child's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or Guardian ad Litem (GAL);

4. Address separation, grief, loss, and attachment with the child;
5. Assess the need for an adoption competent therapist or counselor to help the resource parent address any concerns related to the adoption of the child and make a referral if appropriate. See *Finding the Right Therapist* for additional guidance;
6. Ensure the child has a Lifebook and is provided the opportunity to review and update as needed.
7. Assess whether it is appropriate to have a goodbye visit between the child and the child's birth parents and/or other significant relatives if post-adoption visitation is not appropriate;

**Note:** A decision as to whether a goodbye visit should be scheduled should be made after consulting with the CFT and the child's counselor/therapist (if applicable). The child's age and emotional development should be considered in the decision. The current court orders in the case should be reviewed before scheduling the goodbye visit, and the DCS Staff Attorney should be consulted on whether a court order is needed to allow the visit to occur.

8. Prepare a Child Social Summary that provides a comprehensive and balanced picture of the child. See policy 10.11 Child Social Summary.
9. Document in the case management system all actions taken and ensure all parties have a clear understanding of the adoption process; and
10. Develop a plan for permanency. If the child is not in agreement with adoption, discuss the following to understand the child's needs and concerns regarding adoption;
  - a. Concerns around name changes,
  - b. Post-adoption contact to maintain birth family connections,
  - c. Post-adoption contact to maintain connections with prior foster families and other connections,
  - d. Methods to maintain connections with the child's community, culture, and traditions, and
  - e. Address any other questions or concerns the child may have regarding the transition to adoption.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Discuss case specifics with the FCM during case staffing to provide guidance to the FCM in completion of all required actions;
2. Review referrals and approve as necessary; and
3. Ensure all actions taken, assessment results received, and any deviation from best practice are documented in the case management system.

## **LEGAL REFERENCES**

N/A

## **RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **Definitions**

#### Case Staffing

Case staffing is a systematic and frequent review of all case information with safety and risk, stability, permanency, and well-being as driving forces for case activities.

**Forms and Tools**

- [10.B Tool: Child Social Summary](#)
- [Child's Comprehensive Assessment](#)
- [Finding the Right Therapist](#)
- Lifebook - available in hard copy from the [Adoption Consultant](#)
- [Talking with Children about Adoption/Guardianship or Aspects of their Past](#)

**Related Policies**

- [10.11 Child Social Summary](#)