



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Introduction

3-17-89

After all material describing the child and the adoptive family is received and approval to proceed is given by the Central Office Adoption Specialist, the pre-placement interview is scheduled and conducted within two weeks. The Workers for the adoptive parents and the child arrange for the interview, the visits, and the upcoming placement.

Pre-placement Interview

9-9-2013

The pre-placement interview is a verbal and written exchange of information about the child between the Worker and the adoptive parents. For children four years of age and over, the interview is always held in the family's home (including out of state and private agency placements) unless the LO Manager has granted an exception for it to be held elsewhere. For children under four, the interview may be held in the office supervising the child. For children under 4 months, the interview can be held in the office supervising the family. Whenever possible, the Supervisor and the adoptive family's Worker are present. The interview affords the opportunity to discuss any questions and concerns and gives the adoptive parents a realistic basis to decide about the child.

The interview introduces the adoptive parents to the child's family background, developmental history, personality, hobbies, special interests, and behavior characteristics; provides interpretation of medical and psychological findings; and describes any problems the child may have experienced in the resource home or in school. The descriptive information about the birth family includes strengths and positive factors which are important for the adoptive parents to have as the child questions his background.

When a child has siblings who do not live with the birth parents, the concept of continued sibling contact is explored with the adoptive parents. Sibling contact allows the child to retain ties to his roots and gives him the strength to go forward into a new life with his adoptive parents. Each case is examined on an individual basis. Although

sibling contact is an important factor, placement decisions are based on the needs and best interests of each child. In situations where sibling contact has been maintained during resource care, the LO assesses the resource home(s) where the siblings are residing and how contact can be continued after adoption. This is documented in the case record.

All known pathology in the child's family background is shared with the adoptive parents. If the child's background contains a history of risk factors for HIV infection, see [CP&P-V-A-1-100](#), the adoptive parents must be informed. CP&P staff can not disclose the biological parent's HIV status. The child should be tested for HIV infection at a recognized center for pediatric AIDS. If the child is an infant, the adoptive parents must be informed of the child's need for retesting periodically up to the age of 2 years. They also must be made aware of the possibility that a young child who shows no sign of HIV symptomatology may exhibit the disease at a later time. See [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#) and [CP&P-IX-G-1-200](#) for policy on the disclosure of HIV information to persons outside DCF and [CP&P-II-B-1-500](#) for the requirement to inform clients of the disclosure policy.

The adoptive parents are informed about the child's legal status, i.e., CP&P has guardianship, or placement can be made on authority of the Surrender of Custody and Consent for Adoption, CP&P Form [14-86](#) or CP&P Form [14-86\(S\)](#), or legal authority has not yet been obtained.

If the child and the adoptive parents are eligible for subsidy, the service is explained to the adoptive parents. See [CP&P-IV-C-8-100](#), Adoption Subsidy.

Prospective adoptive parents do not have access to the child's case record. They also cannot have:

- identifying information about the birth family,
- identifying information about the siblings unless the case plan includes recommendation for continued involvement with siblings, or
- identifying information about previous resource parents unless there is recommendation for continued involvement with the child.

When appropriate, medical reports are released to the adoptive parents' physician for his or her review. Reports of psychological or psychiatric evaluations may be sent to a professional of the family's choice should they wish consultation regarding the child's psychological functioning.

The Worker for the adoptive parents participates in the interview whenever possible. If determined appropriate by the child's Worker/Supervisor, the current resource parents participate in this interview. Current resource parents are one of CP&P' best resources and can give the most accurate picture of the child's development and present level of functioning.

Children Four Months or Younger the Role of the Adoptive Parents' Worker 1-16-87

For problem free infants, the Worker shares the child's background with them first. A picture of the child is shown to them. If any questions or concerns are expressed by the adoptive parents, the Worker's responsibility is to contact the child's Worker. Although the problems may be settled as the result of phone contacts, the Worker documents the concerns and resolution in a memo which becomes part of the adoptive parents' case record. A copy of this memo goes to the child's Worker.

The Role of the Child's Worker 1-16-87

If the adoptive parents are interested in the child after receiving the background information and seeing a picture of the child, another interview is scheduled with the child's Worker. The Worker reviews the material already given the adoptive parents and shares any additional information. The adoptive parents visit with the child and if they and the Worker agree, placement may occur the same day.

If the child who is four months or younger has problems, the child's Worker presents all of the descriptive material about the child at the pre-placement interview. After a period of time during which the adoptive parents consider the information shared with them, the first visit can occur; however, placement must not take place the same day.

Children Five Months and Older 1-16-87

For these children, the child's Worker presents the information to the adoptive parents. If available the child's picture is shown to them. For children four years of age or over, the interview is held in the adoptive parents home unless an exception to this policy has been granted by the LO Manager.

For children under four, the interview may be held in the adoptive parent's home or the child's LO. If appropriate, the adoptive parents visit with the child, however, placement should not occur the same day.

Unsuitability of the Adoptive Parents 10-15-86

During the pre-placement interview, the attitudes and reactions of the adoptive parents may lead the Worker to question their ability to parent the particular child. In such a situation, the Worker interviewing the adoptive parents explores those attitudes and helps them decide whether they should proceed with the adoption plan. Placement plans do not proceed until all questions or concerns are resolved.

If the Worker cannot resolve the issues with the adoptive parents during the interview, the Workers for the child and adoptive parents attempt to resolve them.

If they agree that the adoptive parents are unsuitable for the child, placement plans are discontinued. The reasons for not proceeding are fully explained to the adoptive parents. If the Workers cannot settle the issue, the case is referred to the LO Supervisors for resolution.

Recording the Pre-placement Interview

10-15-86

The child's Worker dictates the interview with the adoptive parents in the child's case record. Since all the information which is shared with the adoptive parents is contained in the CP&P Form [26-53c](#) it is not necessary to repeat this material. The dictation confirms that all background material has been shared with the adoptive parents and includes their responses and any concerns which the Worker has. If placement does not occur, the child's Worker advises the Central Office Adoption Services Unit.

Visits Between the Adoptive Parents and Child

10-15-86

Before any visits with the child occur, the adoptive parents must have an opportunity to consider the child's history. The adoptive parents are encouraged to consider the matter at least overnight before scheduling the first visit. Visiting should begin within two weeks of the pre-placement interview and be completed within one month of the initial visit. Any decision to extend the visiting period for more than one month must be clearly documented in the record. Some adoptive parents decide that they really do not want to adopt or really cannot accept certain facts in the child's background.

The number of visits is determined according to the needs of the child and the adoptive family. The visits are arranged to allow the experience to be as comfortable as possible. For most children, and especially younger children, the first visit occurs in familiar surroundings, e.g., the current resource home.

Subsequent visits are arranged according to the individual child's capacity to adjust to new situations. Most children require a series of visits in familiar surroundings in order to minimize separation trauma. Pre-placement visits are arranged according to the age and individual needs of the child.

During these visits, the Worker who is familiar with the adoptive parents and the Worker who will be assigned supervision of the family become involved. This allows the child to interact with the Worker and helps the new Worker to develop a relationship with the child.

Preparation for Placement

3-17-89

Preparation of the child for placement in an adoptive home is an essential component of the adoption process. The amount of preparation for the child depends upon many factors such as age, needs of the child, understanding of adoption, and relationship with the current resource family or birth family.

In order to help the child understand and accept the adoption plan, the Worker must be sensitive to the child's background. The successful placement of the older child depends on accurate knowledge of his developmental history, his parental care, his emotional readiness to give up his or her birth family or current resource parents, and his or her feelings about any known siblings. It is important for the Worker to evaluate the feelings which the child has expressed about family relationships.

If a child's siblings are not living with the birth parents, it is important in identity work with the child to have continuing or renewed contact between the child and his siblings. Although the adoptive child on one level relinquishes his birth family, his sense of identity and ego can be strengthened by contact with his siblings. Continued sibling contact should be included in the final assessment and there should be written agreement between all parties to maintain contact during supervision and after finalization. If siblings are under LO supervision there is consultation, coordination and joint decision-making between the LOs.

For the successful adoption placement, it is helpful if the child is reasonably certain that adoption is what he wants and is involved in the planning process. The Worker's familiarity with the child promotes the discussion of the child's reactions surrounding the adoption process and the evaluation of the child's adjustment to each new adoption procedure leading to placement with the adoptive family.

Child

10-15-86

When the adoptive parents have decided that they are interested in adopting the child, the Worker discusses this with the child if he is old enough to comprehend the meaning of adoption and to be aware of the permanence of the new family unit he will enter.

In all situations where the child is old enough to understand the meaning of adoption, he or she must have the opportunity to express and examine his or her feelings or anxieties about living permanently in the proposed home. His or her reactions to the adoptive parents and his or her comments to the Worker and the current resource parents are important to the placement plan.

Adoptive Parents

10-15-86

Before the child is placed in the adoption home, the Worker gives the adoptive parents considerable help in anticipating what they need to know once the child has joined their family. In the case of an infant, they will need to know the routine for his or her feeding and sleeping habits to avoid discomfort in adjusting to new surroundings. With the older child, any information regarding his or her eating and sleeping habits, as well as any anticipated behavior reactions, is helpful.

Subsidy

10-15-86

See [CP&P-IV-C-8-100](#) for adoption subsidy policy and procedures.

Child's Placement

7-26-2004

After the decision has been made to place the child, the Workers arrange the placement date (within six to eight weeks of the pre-placement interview) with the adoptive parents. The child's Worker makes preparation for the transfer of supervision of the child to occur within one week. When the child is placed with the selected adoptive parents, enter the appropriate information in NJS.

At the time of placement, written information is shared with the adoptive family including a copy of the child's Pre-Adoptive Medical, CP&P Form [14-126](#). All identifying data is removed, e.g., child's surname, case number, address, etc. However, if the child is eligible for a medical subsidy, the child's Worker gives the adoptive parents a temporary Emergency Service Letter (ESL) for Medicaid, using the child's preadoptive name. See [CP&P-V-A-2-200](#).

The child's Worker also gives the adoptive parents a statement which verifies the date of placement and acknowledges that the adoptive parents have assumed responsibility for the child. This is particularly important for purposes of insurance coverage.

Within one week of the placement, the Adoption Home Study, and Outline are returned to the Central Office Adoption Specialist by indicating the date of placement. The child's case record is forwarded to the supervising office within one week of placement.

Once the child is placed with the adoptive parents, the child uses their surname. If the child attends school, the Worker informs the school of the relationship and gives the school the child's proper name while emphasizing that this information is privileged and confidential. Home teaching (schooling) is not permitted for a child in a CP&P selected adoptive home placement. See [CP&P-VII-A-1-100](#).

The Worker must advise the court and the Child Placement Review Board of the child's status.

Procedures Related to Placement of Children in Adoption Homes 7-7-93

Responsibility	Action Required
Child's Worker/Parents Worker	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Conduct pre-placement interview with adoptive parents according to the child's age within two weeks after Manager CO Adoption Unit has been notified by the LO which adoptive home has been selected:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• discuss child's background;• share child's legal status; and explain subsidized Parents' adoption service, when necessary.2. Arrange visit(s) between child and adoptive parents when appropriate beginning within two weeks of the pre-placement interview and ending one month after the initial visit.

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Include appropriate persons in visiting schedule.4. Prepare the child and adoptive parents for placement.5. Arrange and place the child within six to eight weeks of the pre-placement interview.6. Document the pre-placement interview within one week of the interview.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forward two copies to CO Adoption Services Unit, when placement does not occur.7. Give the adoptive parents at time of placement:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-Adoptive Medical Report, CP&P Form 14-126,• Part B of the Outline,• Emergency Service Letter (ESL) for Medicaid, if appropriate.• Statement verifying placement.8. Bring dictation up to date.9. Complete appropriate NJS recording.10. Transfer case record, through clerical, to LO supervising the placement.11. Return Adoption Home Study and Case Outline to C.O. Adoption Adoptive Specialist12. Notify school of child's status, if appropriate.13. Notify the court and the Child Placement Review Board |
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