



Adoption Services

DEFINITION

Adoption programs provide services which may include: providing information about adoption, assessments, home studies, training, counseling, support, preparation, matching, placement, and post placement/post-adoption services to facilitate permanent caring relationships within families for children and youth.

Note: COA's standards are written to encompass best practices associated with all types of adoption and include standards for services provided to all members of the adoption triad. COA's standards are designed to be used by programs that provide some or all of the services in an adoption and programs that provide services to some or all members of the adoption triad. In particular, COA recognizes that some programs focus primarily on providing home studies, training, and/or post-adoption services, and that the services foster care adoptions can be limited based on the service delivery model structured by the public agency. Some standards include an option of "not-applicable" but many standards are written to be inclusive of all types of adoption programs so that at least one or more elements of the standard are applicable.

Note: Home study programs will be reviewed under AS 1, 2, 6, 12, and 13 only.

Post-placement/Post-adoption programs will complete: AS 1, 2, 11, 12, and 13 only.

Foster-to-adopt programs will complete all of FKC and AS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 only.

Note: The use of language in adoption is complex, sensitive, and evolving and COA selected language commonly in use at the time the standards were updated. Certain terms are used for broader applicability and ease of use throughout the standards. For example: The term "children" includes infants, toddlers, school-age children, and youth. The terms "American Indian and Alaska Native", "Indian", and "Native" are used throughout the standards to refer to children or families who are members of federally recognized tribes and protected under the Indian Child Welfare Act as well as to agencies or organizations that belong to or advocate on behalf of tribes. The term "birth parents" includes expectant parents and parents who are considering or have made a plan for adoption, and generally includes the birth mother and birth father. COA's standards do not further define birth father. State laws provide more specific definitions and requirements in relation to birth fathers and use terms such as legal or presumed father and alleged or putative father. The term "prospective adoptive parents" generally includes foster parents, kinship caregivers, relatives, single individuals, and

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Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



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couples.

Note: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the organization should engage and collaborate with the child's tribe throughout the provision of adoption services as outlined in the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which establishes "minimum federal standards" governing state proceedings involving American Indian and Alaska Native children. Updates to the federal regulations and guidelines were made in 2016 and went into effect for all child custody proceedings initiated on or after December 12, 2016, irrespective of any previously initiated proceedings. Organizations must have established procedures for identifying and serving American Indian and Alaska native children and families that articulate their role in the context of tribal-state child welfare agreements, ICWA, and any relevant state laws pertaining specifically to Indian child welfare.*

ICWA requires the inclusion of tribal representatives throughout all aspects of service delivery including, but not limited to, assessment, service planning, permanency planning, and case closing. Additional opportunities for inclusion are identified in the standards. While collaboration with federally recognized tribes is required by ICWA, organizations should reach out to tribal representatives in cases involving federally non-recognized tribes as well, as their involvement in the case will improve access to culturally-relevant resources and help establish permanency through a heightened sense of belonging and connectivity to the child's extended family, clan, or tribe.

While local Indian organizations are not granted the same rights as federally recognized tribes under the Indian Child Welfare Act, there may be circumstances under which their involvement is necessary and appropriate. These organizations can facilitate the child's connection to his or her tribe, inform the family and the organization of services available to the child, act as an advocate for the Indian child and his or her family, and provide ongoing support and information. This involvement is particularly important when the child's tribe does not have the infrastructure to participate formally in the case.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Provide an overview of the different services being accredited under this section. The overview should describe:

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- a. eligibility criteria;
- b. any unique or special services provided to specific populations;
and
- c. major funding streams.
- If elements of the service (e.g., assessments) are provided by contract with outside programs or through participation in a formal, coordinated service delivery system, provide a list that identifies the providers and the service components for which they are responsible. Do not include services provided by referral.
- Provide any other information you would like the peer review team to know about these programs.
- A demographic profile of clients served by the programs being reviewed under this service section with percentages representing the following:
 - a. racial and ethnic characteristics;
 - b. gender/gender identity;
 - c. age;
 - d. major religious groups; and
 - e. major language groups
- As applicable, a list of support groups or training provided directly by the program including, for each group or class:
 - a. the type and name of support group/training;
 - b. whether the support group/training is short-term or ongoing;
 - c. how often the support group/training is offered or a description of the frequency of activity in online support groups;
 - d. name of the model used if the support group or training is based on an established, standardized, or national model; and
 - e. the average number of participants per session of the support group/training, in the last quarter and/or number of participants enrolled in the most recent training series/session.
- A list of any programs that were opened, merged with other programs or services, or closed
- A list or description of program outcomes and outputs being measured
- Adoption Service (AS) Data Sheet

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

No On-Site Activities

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AS 1: Service Philosophy

The program is guided by a service philosophy that:

- a. establishes the best interest of the child as the primary aspect of the service philosophy;
- b. is culturally grounded;
- c. provides a logical approach for how program activities will meet the needs of clients served; and
- d. is based on program goals and the best available evidence of service effectiveness for the identified service population.

Interpretation: *A program model or logic model can be a useful tool to help staff think systematically about how the program can make a measurable difference by drawing a clear connection between the service population's needs, available resources, program activities and interventions, program outputs, and desired outcomes.*

NA *The organization only provides Foster Care to Adoption Services.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Written service philosophy needs improvement or clarification; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- In a few rare instances required consent was not obtained; or
- Monitoring procedures need minor clarification; or
- With few exceptions the policy on prohibited interventions is understood by staff, or the written policy needs minor clarification.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

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- The written service philosophy needs significant improvement; or
- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Documentation is inconsistent or in some instances is missing and no corrective action has not been initiated; or
- Required consent is often not obtained; or
- A few personnel who are employing non-traditional or unconventional interventions have not completed training, as required; or
- There are gaps in monitoring of interventions, as required; or
- Policy on prohibited interventions does not include at least one of the required elements; or
- Service philosophy is not clearly related to expressed mission or programs of the organization; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- There is no written service philosophy; or
- There are no written policy or procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Service philosophy

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Personnel

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AS 2: Personnel

Program personnel have the competency and support needed to provide services.

Interpretation: *Competency can be demonstrated through a combination of education, training, and experience. Support can be provided through supervision or other learning activities to improve understanding or skill development in specific areas.*

Note: *When the organization is unable to fully implement one or more of the practice standards, intensive efforts should be made to fully implement the other standards. For example, if the organization is unable to recruit workers with specific qualifications, it can ensure that appropriate supervision and workload standards are implemented.*

Rating Indicators

- 1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.
- 2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,
 - With some exceptions, staff (direct service providers, supervisors, and program managers) possess the required qualifications, including: education, experience, training, skills, temperament, etc., but the integrity of the service is not compromised.
 - Supervisors provide additional support and oversight, as needed, to staff without the listed qualifications.
 - Most staff who do not meet educational requirements are seeking to obtain them.
 - With some exceptions staff have received required training, including applicable specialized training.
 - Training curricula are not fully developed or lack depth.
 - A few personnel have not yet received required training.
 - Training documentation is consistently maintained and kept up-to-date with some exceptions.
 - A substantial number of supervisors meet the requirements of the standard, and the organization provides training and/or consultation to improve competencies.
 - Supervisors provide structure and support in relation to service outcomes, organizational culture and staff retention.
 - With a few exceptions caseload sizes are consistently maintained as required by the standards.

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- Workloads are such that staff can effectively accomplish their assigned tasks and provide quality services, and are adjusted as necessary in accord with established workload procedures.
 - Procedures need strengthening.
 - With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used.
- With a few exceptions specialized staff are retained as required and possess the required qualifications.
- Specialized services are obtained as required by the standards.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Â Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.
- A significant number of staff, e.g., direct service providers, supervisors, and program managers, do not possess the required qualifications, including: education, experience, training, skills, temperament, etc.; and as a result the integrity of the service may be compromised.
 - Job descriptions typically do not reflect the requirements of the standards, and/or hiring practices do not document efforts to hire staff with required qualifications when vacancies occur.
 - Supervisors do not typically provide additional support and oversight to staff without the listed qualifications.
- A significant number of staff have not received required training, including applicable specialized training.
 - Training documentation is poorly maintained.
- A significant number of supervisors do not meet the requirements of the standard, and the organization makes little effort to provide training and/or consultation to improve competencies.
- There are numerous instances where caseload sizes exceed the standards' requirements.
- Workloads are excessive and the integrity of the service may be compromised.Â
 - Procedures need significant strengthening; or
 - Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Specialized staff are typically not retained as required and/or many do not possess the required qualifications; or
- Specialized services are infrequently obtained as required by the standards.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

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For example:

- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Program staffing chart that includes lines of supervision
- List of program personnel that includes:
 - a. name;
 - b. title;
 - c. degree held and/or other credentials;
 - d. FTE or volunteer;
 - e. length of service at the organization;
 - f. time in current position
- Table of contents of training curricula
- Training and/or informational materials for staff about applicable notice and consent requirements for each state in which the agency is licensed to provide adoption services
- Procedures or criteria used for assigning and evaluating workload

On-Site Evidence

- Job descriptions
- Documentation of training
- Training curricula
- Data describing staff turnover
- Caseload size requirements set by regulation, contract, or by the organization
- Documentation of current caseload size per worker

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Supervisors
 - b. Personnel
- Review personnel files

AS 2.01

Adoption workers who provide adoption-related services that require the application of clinical skills and judgement meet applicable State or Federal

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requirements and are qualified by:

- a. an advanced degree from an accredited program of social work or a comparable human service field;
- b. a bachelor's degree from an accredited program of social work; or
- c. a combination of a bachelor's degree in any field and prior experience in family and children's services, adoption, or intercountry adoption.

Interpretation: *When a new worker providing clinical services does not have direct experience in adoption, they receive support and/or supervision or have access for consultation with someone who does have direct experience in adoption until they gain a sufficient amount of experience.*

Interpretation: *Examples of services that some programs provide that require the application of clinical skills and judgment include, but are not limited to:*

- a. *home studies;*
 - b. *child background studies;*
 - c. *clinical counseling;*
 - d. *obtaining consents;*
 - e. *preparation and training;*
 - f. *making clinical decisions such as approval of home studies, matching, etc.;*
 - g. *post-placement monitoring and post-placement reports;*
 - h. *crisis intervention; and*
 - i. *therapeutic interventions.*
- Examples of services that may not require the application of clinical skills and judgement include, but are not limited to:*

- a. *preparation of profiles or dossiers for prospective adoptive parents;*
- b. *provision of information or training on non-clinical topics such as the legal process for adoption, planning travel for international or interstate adoptions, etc.; and*
- c. *notarizing documents.*

AS 2.02

Supervisors are qualified by at least two years of prior experience in adoption, intercountry adoption, or family and children's services and either:

- a. an advanced degree from an accredited program of social work; or
- b. an advanced degree from an accredited program in a related human service field.

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AS 2.03

The program provides employees who provide adoption-related services that require the application of clinical skills and judgment, and others as needed based on their job responsibilities with training on:

- a. state, federal and foreign laws and regulations governing the types of services provided by the program;
- b. ethical considerations in adoption and applicable professional and ethical guidelines;
- c. issues relating to race, ethnicity, religion, culture, tribal affiliation and language and culturally competent services;
- d. factors that lead to children needing adoptive families;
- e. feelings of separation, grief, and loss which may be experienced prior to, during and after adoption by children, birth parents, adults who were adopted, and previously by some prospective adoptive parents;
- f. trauma experienced by children and youth who have been victims of abuse, neglect, or trafficking;
- g. common medical, psychological and developmental issues commonly experienced by children adopted through the program;
- h. the short and long term impact of out of home care and institutionalization on children and youth;
- i. ways in which adoption can affect child, adolescent and adult development and identity formation; and
- j. maintaining connections, openness in adoption, and attachment and bonding.

Related: TS 2

Interpretation: *Ethical considerations in adoption can include:*

- a. *preventing child buying, trafficking, and undue influence on birth parents;*
- b. *making decisions when the preferences and needs of the parties to the adoption differ; and*
- c. *limitations on eligibility and related professional, personal, and organizational values and beliefs.*

Interpretation: *Some training topics/competencies may not be relevant to all programs and programs may customize their training/competency requirements based on their program model. The program exempts employees from elements of their training/competency requirements only where the employee has demonstrated competence with the topic.*

(FP) AS 2.04

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Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



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Adoption workers and supervisors, depending on job responsibilities, are knowledgeable about relevant provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) including:

- a. the importance of ICWA and special considerations for working with American Indian and Alaska Native children;
- b. the identification of American Indian and Alaska Native children;
- c. determination of jurisdiction;
- d. appropriate notice and collaboration with the child's tribe;
- e. placement preferences that support the child's connection to their native culture and heritage;
- f. process for, and alternatives to, terminating parental rights; and
- g. court procedures.

Interpretation: *All adoption personnel should be trained in the basic requirements of ICWA with additional specialized training for staff in specialized service units, such as assessment or permanency planning. Screening personnel must be trained on how to identify children with American Indian or Alaska Native heritage. Workers should also be informed of the cultural norms and historical trauma associated with Indian tribes.*

Research Note: *Training resources on the Indian Child Welfare Act are available from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Indian Child Welfare Association, and the California Social Work Education Center.*

AS 2.05

Adoption workers who work with birth parents or have responsibilities relating to provision of required notices, obtaining consents, or legal proceedings are knowledgeable about:

- a. requirements and processes for the proper identification of all parties whose consent is required;
- b. requirements and processes for providing appropriate notice to all parties who must receive notice or whose consent is required;
- c. preventing undue pressure or coercion on parties whose consent is required, and what steps to take if it appears as if undue pressure or coercion have been exerted;
- d. inappropriate financial incentives or influence; and
- e. determination of jurisdiction and jurisdictional issues that could impact on the adoption.

Related: TS 2

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



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NA Program staff do not work with birth parents and do not have responsibilities for providing notice of an adoption plan, or obtaining consents.

AS 2.06

The program ensures that employees who provide adoption-related services that require the application of clinical skills and judgment complete ongoing professional development training on adoption related topics in accordance with applicable agency, state, and federal requirements.

Related: TS 1

Interpretation: The Intercountry Adoption Act regulations require no less than thirty hours of professional development training every two years.

NA Program staff do not work with birth parents and do not have responsibilities for providing notice of an adoption plan, or obtaining consents.

AS 2.07

Employee workloads support the achievement of client outcomes and are regularly reviewed.

Interpretation: *Examples of factors that may be considered when determining employee workloads include, but are not limited to:*

- a. *the qualifications, competencies, and experience of the worker, including the level of supervision needed;*
- b. *the scope of services being provided including the work and time required to accomplish assigned tasks and job responsibilities; and*
- c. *service volume, accounting for assessed level of needs of clients at varying stages of the adoption process.*

Note: *The evaluation of this standard will focus on whether the assigned workload is manageable for staff. Each organization should determine what caseload size is appropriate, and reviewers will evaluate whether the organization's designated caseload size reflects a manageable workload taking into consideration whether the organization maintains caseloads of the size it deemed appropriate.*

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AS 3: Outreach and Orientation

The program conducts outreach, recruitment and orientation activities in a responsive and ethical manner.

NA *The organization only provides foster to adopt services.*

NA *The organization provides home study services only.*

NA *The organization provides post placement and/or post-adoption services only.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of

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implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;
e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Samples of documents provided to prospective clients at initial contact or during orientation
- Intake forms or other tools used to collect information during the outreach and orientation process
- Recruitment plan
- Eligibility criteria

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

No On-Site Activities

AS 3.01

The program provides birth or prospective birth parents considering adoption with accurate information about the adoption process and services offered by the program and other organizations and individuals with whom they might work with.

Interpretation: *Examples of basic information about the process and services can include:*

- steps and timelines for the adoption process;*
- legal process for adoption and legal rights of each party to the adoption;*
- confidentiality and the range of openness in adoption; and*
- availability of post-placement and post-adoption services.*

NA *The program does not work with birth or prospective birth parents considering adoption.*

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AS 3.02

Upon initial contact with birth parents or prospective birth parents considering adoption, the adoption worker attempts to collect information about:

- a. immediate needs;
- b. any individuals who may need to be provided with notice of a future adoption plan or whose consent may be required;
- c. any open cases with child protective services; and
- d. any potential membership or eligibility for membership in a tribe.

NA *The program does not work with birth or prospective birth parents considering adoption.*

AS 3.03

Upon initial contact with youth who are considering or have a goal of adoption, the adoption worker provides age and developmentally appropriate information about the meaning of adoption, the adoption process, and services offered by the organization.

Interpretation: *Information about adoption may have already been provided by others and is sometimes provided before adoption is formally identified as a goal for youth. Adoption workers should have strategies for their initial contact with youth and strategies for engaging youth in conversations over time about adoption.*

NA *The program does not work with youth considering or with a goal of adoption.*

AS 3.04

The program has a plan for recruitment of prospective adoptive parents and when the program has responsibility for placement of children in foster care, children with special needs, or American Indian and Alaska Native children, the plan details specialized recruitment strategies.

Interpretation: *An organization that has responsibility for placing American Indian and Alaska Native children should work closely with tribes to establish eligibility for adoptive parents that are consistent with the norms of the tribe and to identify adoptive homes within the tribal community through joint recruitment efforts.*

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Interpretation: *Socialized strategies can include for example targeted and/or child-specific recruitment. Targeted recruitment strategies use data such as demographics of current children and youth in care and foster and adoptive parents to develop recruitment strategies. Child-specific recruitment strategies generally include a comprehensive assessment of the child and identification of all individuals who may have a connection to the child including family members, foster parents, former caregivers, members of the child's tribe, and other adults with a significant connection to the child.*

Interpretation: *Organizations that use online photo listing services ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to protect confidential information and respect an individual's right to refuse to have their photo taken.*

NA *The program does not recruit prospective adoptive parents, for example, the program is a foster to adopt program.*

AS 3.05

Upon initial contact, the program provides prospective adoptive parents with information which includes:

- a. a description of the adoption process, services offered by the organization, and any significant policies or procedures relating to its adoption services;
- b. eligibility criteria;
- c. fees and expenses prospective adoptive parents may be responsible for; and
- d. estimated timelines and general information on waiting lists if the program maintains such lists.

Note: *Information on estimated wait times should be carefully articulated to prevent confusion or dissatisfaction if timelines happen to exceed what was originally projected.*

AS 3.06

Prospective adoptive parents participate in an orientation session, or after initial contact receive information that includes the following:

- a. an overview of the lifelong impact of adoption;
- b. the process for completing an adoption;
- c. common needs and characteristics of children awaiting adoptive families;

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- d. the importance of race, ethnicity, religion, tribal affiliation, language, and other factors in adoption;
- e. options for openness and maintaining connections that benefit the child; and
- f. the availability of supports, clinical services and subsidies following adoption.

Interpretation: *Prospective adoptive parents who have adopted through the program may need orientation if the information, their circumstances, or needs have changed.*

AS 3.07

When eligibility criteria is limited, the program:

- a. has considered its mission, resources, capacity, contractual and legal obligations, and the needs of children when developing and periodically reviewing its eligibility criteria;
- b. has a policy for such selectivity; and
- c. refers applicants who do not meet the organization's eligibility criteria to another provider.

Interpretation: *Referral to another adoption service provider is not required when it is evident the applicants do not meet legally required criteria.*

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AS 4: Service and Permanency Planning and Adoption Service Contracts

Clients served by the program participate in the development and ongoing review of service and permanency plans that are the basis for delivery of services and support.

Interpretation: *The program develops service and permanency plans for the clients they are responsible for serving. Plans for some clients may be combined or may be separate depending upon the nature of the program. Service plans are sometimes incorporated into the adoption services contract. Service plans are sometimes drafted prior to the completion of birth parent assessments, child studies and home studies and should be updated when those assessments are complete.*

NA *The organization only provides foster to adopt services.*

NA *The organization provides home study services only.*

NA *The organization provides post placement and/or post-adoption services only.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- In a few instances client or staff signatures are missing and/or not dated; or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the

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Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- In a number of instances client or staff signatures are missing and/or not dated (RPM 7.04); or
- Quarterly reviews are not being done consistently; or
- Level of care for some clients is inappropriate; or
- Service planning is often done without full client participation; or
- Appropriate family involvement is not documented; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Assessments are done by referral source and no documentation and/or summary of required information present in case record; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Service planning and monitoring procedures
- Adoption Services contract template
- Procedures for review of permanency plans
- Reports or other aggregate data regarding the length of stay in out-of-home care, if the organization facilitates foster care adoptions

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- b. Relevant personnel
- c. Clients
- Review case records

AS 4.01

Service plans are developed in a timely manner with the full participation of clients served and others as appropriate, and include:

- a. agreed upon goals, desired outcomes, and timeframes for achieving them;
- b. the adoption services and supports to be provided, and by whom; and
- c. the client's signature.

Interpretation: *Culturally-relevant interventions and practices or customs of children and families' cultures, tribe, or faith-based communities should be incorporated into the service plan to the greatest extent possible and appropriate.*

Some interventions adopted for the broader population, including evidence-based practices, may be ineffective or harmful to American Indian and Alaska Native children and families, and the program should instead identify culturally appropriate interventions that have been demonstrated to be effective for the population served.

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the tribal or local American Indian and Alaska Native organization must be included in the service planning process and culturally relevant resources available through or recommended by the tribe or local Indian organization should be considered and prioritized when developing the service plan.*

Interpretation: *Examples of ways to support the full participation of clients and others include: providing sufficient notice to interested parties, scheduling meetings at times and places where interested parties can attend.*

AS 4.02

The permanency plan for children in foster care defines the permanency

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

goal as adoption, is reviewed at least every 6 months through a court or administrative review process, and specifies:

- a. activities that support the achievement of adoption; and
- b. a timeframe for completing the adoption.

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, tribal definitions of permanency should be recognized and incorporated into the permanency plan.*

Interpretation: *Federal laws, state statutes or administrative rules may provide guidance about when and how administrative reviews are to be conducted. The case review may be conducted by or in collaboration with the public authority. The review is scheduled at times when appropriate parties can attend.*

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, a representative from the tribe or a local Indian organization should receive timely notification of court or administrative case reviews to ensure their involvement, particularly when any changes are made to the permanency plan.*

NA *The program does not provide services in foster care cases.*

AS 4.03

The worker and a supervisor, or a clinical, service, or peer team, review each case quarterly, or more frequently depending on the needs of clients served, to assess:

- a. progress toward achieving service goals and desired outcomes;
- b. need for additional or new services or other changes to the plan;
- c. the need for any updates to the child background study or the home study; and
- d. the continued appropriateness of agreed upon goals.

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, a representative from the tribe or a local Indian organization must receive timely notification of case reviews to ensure their involvement, particularly when any changes are made to the service plan. Phone and video conferencing can be used to facilitate tribal participation. The case review should include an assessment for compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 4.04

The worker and client:

- a. periodically review progress toward achievement of agreed upon service goals; and
- b. sign revisions to the service goals and plans.

Interpretation: *A clinical or other justification demonstrating the need for additional or new services, or for any significant pause in the process should be documented in the case record and discussion of such changes with clients should be documented in the case record to ensure the client fully understands the justification.*

Interpretation: *Each child receives information about progress toward achieving permanency as appropriate to his or her age, cultural needs, and developmental level.*

AS 4.05

Birth parents who have made a plan for adoption receive written information which includes:

- a. disclosure of the requirements relating to notice and consent;
- b. provisions for any financial support that will be provided;
- c. provisions for contact with prospective adoptive parents, as appropriate;
- d. steps to be taken if the birth parent believes that any undue pressure or influence is occurring; and
- e. circumstances under which services may be terminated by either party.

Interpretation: *The information can be provided for example in a service agreement, a disclosure of organization's policies, a rights and responsibilities disclosure, etc.*

NA *The program only provides services in cases where birth parents rights have already been terminated.*

AS 4.06

The adoption service contract signed by prospective adoptive parents includes:

- a. a description of the services to be provided by the program and

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- obligations of the prospective adoptive parents;
- b. fees and expenses to be paid;
 - c. a provision relating to duty of candor and ongoing disclosure requirements;
 - d. post placement and post-adoption services that will be available through the organization and details of any required post placement visits and reports; and
 - e. a plan describing the adoptive parents' and the organization's responsibilities if the adoption is disrupted or dissolved;
 - f. waivers of liability only when such waivers are limited, consistent with applicable law and regulation, and based on specific risks detailed in the contract; and
 - g. circumstances under which services may be terminated by either party.

Interpretation: *Examples of information in the plan if the adoption is disrupted or dissolved can include: legal and financial obligations of the family and the organization; how the child's wishes may be considered; how relevant authorities will be notified and may be involved.*

When a child is being placed prior to the termination of parental rights, the program informs the prospective adoptive parents of the risks of such a placement and the steps that will be necessary to complete an adoption.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 5: Birth Parent Assessments and Child Background Studies

The program conducts assessments and collects information to evaluate service needs, facilitate matching and permanency, and to ensure information will be available for future use.

Interpretation: *The term child study includes both the process of assessing the needs of the child and to the written report which is generally included in the referral information provided to prospective adoptive parents.*

NA *The organization provides home study services only.*

NA *The organization provides post placement and/or post-adoption services only.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Culturally responsive assessments are the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.05); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent; or
- Diagnostic tests are consistently and appropriately used, but interviews with staff indicate a need for more training (TS 2.08).

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Assessment and reassessment timeframes are often missed; or

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- Assessment are sometimes not sufficiently individualized;
- Culturally responsive assessments are not the norm and this is not being addressed in supervision or training; or
- Staff are not competent to administer diagnostic tests , or tests are not being used when clinically indicated; or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- Assessments are done by referral source and no documentation and/or summary of required information present in case record; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;

e.g.,

- There are no written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Procedures for child assessments
- Procedures for identification and collaboration in ICWA cases
- Procedures for birth parent assessments
- Assessment tools

On-Site Evidence

- Indian Child Welfare Act information provided to families
- Copies of tribal state agreements, when applicable

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Persons served
- Review case records

AS 5.01

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

Assessments are conducted and information is collected in a strengths-based, culturally-responsive manner to identify services and resources that support the achievement of agreed upon goals and increase engagement in service delivery.

AS 5.02

Records and information about both birth parents and their extended families is gathered from birth parents or other individuals, including:

- a. preferences for the child's placement and wishes for the child;
- b. preferences for openness or the child maintaining connections with siblings, family members or other individuals;
- c. birth mother and father medical and social history, including mental health and substance use history;
- d. birth parents' relationship history;
- e. support provided by birth mother and father during the pregnancy and care, visitation and custody of the child;
- f. dated photographs, videos, and/or a physical description of birth parents; and
- g. information about the child's grandparents and siblings.

Interpretation: *A birth parent's social history can include information about: marital status, family history, tribal affiliation, employment, education, religion, interests, and talents.*

When the program is unable to obtain this information, it makes reasonable efforts to obtain the information up until the time when the adoption is finalized and documents efforts to obtain the missing information in the case record.

In foster care adoptions, information from the foster care record should be obtained before the record is sealed, and appropriate information is shared with the prospective adoptive parents.

Interpretation: *In the case of an American Indian or Alaska Native child, information gathered should also include the child's Certified Degree of Indian Blood and tribal membership card. To protect an American Indian or Alaska Native child's rights to tribal enrollment or membership, the state agency, court, and private agency if applicable must also coordinate the preparation and maintenance of confidential records on all state adoptions of American Indian and Alaska Native children that include:*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- a. a copy of the final adoption decree or order;
- b. the birth name and birthdate of the Indian child, their tribal affiliation, and the name of the child after adoption;
- c. names and addresses of the birth parents;
- d. names and addresses of the adoptive parents;
- e. name and contact information for any agency having files or information related to the adoption;
- f. any affidavit signed by the biological parent(s) requesting confidential identity;
- g. any information relating to tribal membership or eligibility of the adopted child

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is also authorized to receive and maintain these records and to release them at the request of an American Indian or Alaska Native adoptee, their adoptive or foster parents, or an Indian tribe when the American Indian or Alaska Native child has reached age 18.

AS 5.03

Records and information about the child are gathered from the youth, birth parents, or other individuals who have custody or are responsible for care of the child including:

- a. dated photographs or videos of the child;
- b. history and records of prenatal care and the child's birth;
- c. date the child entered into care, the circumstances of the child's entry into care and a history of all past and current placements;
- d. history of abuse or neglect;
- e. assessment of past trauma;
- f. the child's medical and social history including any significant illnesses, injuries, or diagnoses, hospitalizations, other special needs;
- g. all available medical records for the child including developmental status and data, test results, and immunization records; dental records and psychological records;
- h. results of a current medical examination;
- i. history and records of the child's education; and
- j. contact information for organizations, medical professionals or facilities, or others involved in providing services to the birth parents and the child.

(FP) AS 5.04

When the child study is for a youth, the program engages the youth in an assessment of:

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- a. their goals;
- b. their understanding of and interest in adoption;
- c. their concerns; and
- d. ways in which they can be involved in the process.

NA *The program does not work with youth considering or planning for adoption.*

(FP) AS 5.05

The organization identifies American Indian and Alaska Native children and collaborates with the tribe or Indian organization to:

- a. determine the applicability of, and ensure compliance with, the Indian Child Welfare Act;
- b. determine jurisdiction;
- c. assess the child's needs;
- d. provide the family with information regarding their rights under the Indian Child Welfare Act;
- e. determine the most appropriate plan for the child; and
- f. maintain connections between the child, the child's extended family, and his or her tribe.

Interpretation: *All programs must have established procedures for identifying American Indian and Alaska Native children to determine if the child or his/her biological parent(s) are members of a federally recognized Indian tribe, or if the child is eligible for membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe. Physical appearance, blood quantum, or perceived presence or absence of cultural cues within the family are not appropriate determinants of ICWA applicability. The organization should document efforts to identify and contact children's tribes and if tribes are unknown the organization should contact the regional office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to identify, locate, and notify the child's tribe.*

Note: *Evidence of tribal participation should be documented in the case record.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 6: Home Study Practice

Home study preparers use a standardized home study process to collect and analyze information and determine the eligibility, capabilities, and suitability of prospective adoptive parents.

Interpretation: *The term home study includes both the process of assessing the prospective adoptive parents and to the written report. The process is ongoing; home studies may need to be updated periodically or when there are significant changes.*

NA *The organization provides post placement and/or post-adoption services only.*

Note: *Foster Care to Adoption programs will implement FKC 18 and AS 6.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Home study procedures
- Homestudy tools
- Procedures for background checks

On-Site Evidence

No On-Site Evidence

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
- Review case records

AS 6.01

Home study preparers use a defined method and tools for home studies and the program has systems in place to reinforce the consistent application of the method and tools through initial and periodic training and ongoing supervision.

Interpretation: *While practice should be consistent with the program model, tools, and standards, decisions about how the home study is conducted in each case, including, who must be interviewed, how each interview is conducted, the content of interviews, and visits to the home, are clinical decisions that should take into account the unique needs and circumstances of the prospective adoptive parent(s) and the child if the child is already identified or living in the home.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

(FP) AS 6.02

The homestudy process includes:

- a. the receipt of self-reported information and documents from the prospective adoptive parents;
- b. at least one individual in-person interview with each prospective adoptive parent and one joint interview;
- c. age and developmentally appropriate interviews with each child and adult living or frequently in the home;
- d. age and developmentally appropriate interviews with each child or adult child of the prospective adoptive parents living outside the home;
- e. at least two visits to the prospective adoptive family's home and during one or more of those visits a safety assessment of the home and an observation of family members interacting together;
- f. criminal background and child abuse and neglect registry checks in accordance with applicable law and regulation;
- g. a review of information and documents relating to any previous unfavorable home studies, denied adoption petitions, disruptions, dissolutions, or placement of other children out of the home;
- h. written references and interviews with individuals providing references; and
- i. periodic updates and updates when there are significant changes in circumstance to ensure relevant information and documents are current.

Interpretation: *Individuals living in the home share common areas, sleep in the home, and have lived there for more than two weeks. Individuals frequently in the home can include, for example, a child care provider.*

In person interviews provide the best opportunity for engagement of the person interviewed and provide additional information through observations and interactions during the interview and are preferred, but have only been specifically required for the prospective adoptive parents. It can sometimes be appropriate to interview other individuals through a videoconference or over the phone. When the agency is unable to complete an interview, it makes a clinical determination if the interview is necessary given the circumstances, other steps that can be taken to obtain relevant information, and documents that decision and its efforts in the case record.

People who provide references should be interviewed to validate the reference and can provide additional information or verification of other information collected through the home study process.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

While best practice generally requires at least two visits to the home to effectively engage the family in the home study process, make the necessary observations, and effectively collect all the required and necessary information, the agency should conduct additional visits when it deems necessary.

Tribes and local Indian organizations may also be able to provide valuable support in assessing and approving adoptive families for American Indian and Alaska Native children.

Note: *Home studies including background checks should be updated periodically so that they remain valid in accordance with applicable requirements. A significant change in circumstance can include a change in: residence, employment or financial resources, additional children or adults residing in the home, criminal history, abuse history, medical status, etc. Updates for a significant change in circumstance are best completed as soon as possible, but may be postponed in certain circumstances, for example, if an additional change is expected or the prospective adoptive parents expect a significant amount of time to pass before their home study will be used.*

AS 6.03

The homestudy includes a psychosocial assessment of each prospective adoptive parent's:

- a. motivation and expectations relating to adoption;
- b. personal characteristics such as adaptability, coping skills, communication, and problem solving;
- c. caregiving abilities and experiences especially for children or adults with significant or complex needs, including knowledge and skills relating to discipline techniques;
- d. willingness and ability to support a child's continued connection to his or her birth parents, siblings, and relatives and racial, ethnic and cultural heritage; and
- e. previous experiences with foster care or adoption.

Interpretation: *The assessment of knowledge and skills relating to discipline techniques should include an assessment of the risk of prospective adoptive parents' use of interventions that can be harmful to children, especially children with a history of trauma. Some examples of interventions which can be harmful include but are not limited to:*

- a. *corporal punishment;*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- b. *interventions that involve withholding nutrition or hydration or that inflict physical or psychological pain;*
- c. *the use of demeaning, shaming, or degrading language or activities; and*
- d. *forced physical exercise as punishment or in excess.*

AS 6.04

The home study includes a psychosocial assessment of each prospective adoptive parent's:

- a. previous history of and services related to infertility, miscarriage or death of a child;
- b. personal history of trauma, abuse or neglect, alcohol or drug use;
- c. current status and history of physical and mental health;
- d. significant family history, status of marital and family relationships, and family lifestyle;
- e. education; literacy and language skills;
- f. employment history and financial status; and
- g. the community and social environment.

AS 6.05

The home study process engages prospective adoptive parents in an open and transparent self-assessment of their strengths and capabilities to provide lifelong care and support to children who have experienced trauma and loss and the program provides education and support and continued assessment throughout the home study and preparation process to help prospective adoptive parents confirm for themselves if adoption continues to be an appropriate goal.

AS 6.06

The information gathered during the home study process is carefully considered, in a timely manner, to determine if:

- a. if any further assessment is needed;
- b. what additional counseling, training, or preparation is needed;
- c. the family's ability and readiness to successfully complete an adoption;
- d. the family's eligibility and suitability for adoption;
- e. the specific characteristics and special needs of children the family would be suitable to care and provide for.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

Interpretation: *These assessments and determinations should be clearly documented in the record.*

Interpretation: *The assessment should include evaluation of information about the other children and adults living or frequently in the home.*

Note: *The program should have a system or approach that recognizes that there can be subjective aspects to its assessment and has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that its determinations are well justified.*

AS 6.07

When the program has reason to believe that the prospective adoptive parents may not meet the required eligibility criteria or certain factors may not be able to be adequately mitigated to demonstrate suitability, the program communicates the specific concerns to the prospective adoptive parents as early as possible and attempts to resolve the concerns, and if it is determined that approval cannot be given and the application has not been withdrawn, the home study report is completed and prospective adoptive parents receive a written explanation of the reasons for the decision and the procedures for appeal.

Interpretation: *Factors that may need to be mitigated and could delay the completion of the home study process include, for example: healthcare and housing needs especially in kinship or relative adoptions.*

Eligibility criteria of countries and states may differ and the program must evaluate all applicable criteria. The program must ensure required eligibility factors are clearly and accurately addressed in the home study. While some jurisdictions are willing to waive eligibility criteria in unique circumstances, it is best to receive those waivers in advance and in writing.

AS 6.08

A written home study report is completed in a timely manner and contains complete, accurate and current information addressing all applicable eligibility criteria, suitability, and all other required information.

Interpretation: *Home studies are completed within timeframes established by the program which take into account the needs of children awaiting permanency.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

Interpretation: *The Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act requires generally, the completion with 60 days and acceptance of such studies received from another State within 14 days.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 7: Training for Prospective Adoptive Parents

Prospective adoptive parents complete required training to prepare them for adoption.

NA *The organization provides home study services only.*

NA *The organization provides post-placement and/or post-adoption services only.*

Note: *Training must meet all applicable state requirements and for international adoptions training must also meet all requirements of 22 CFR Part 96.48 and the child's country of origin.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;
e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Procedures for the provision of training and preparation of prospective adoptive parents including procedures for child specific training and preparation
- Table of contents or outline of training provided directly by the organization and/or a list of trainings provided by third parties

On-Site Evidence

- Informational materials that can be provided to prospective adoptive parents
- Training curriculum for any training provided directly by the organization

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Clients
- Review case records

AS 7.01

Suitable training methods and standardized and individualized curricula are used by the program to ensure each prospective adoptive parent is adequately prepared for placement.

Interpretation: *The program may customize their training methods and curricula based on the types of adoptions they are involved with or the unique characteristics of clients served. For example, relatives, foster parents or prospective adoptive parents who have already adopted another*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

child through the program may not training in all areas as new prospective adoptive parents. **Interpretation:** *Examples of training methods found to be effective or commonly used include:*

- a. *in-person, group seminars;*
- b. *online training through webinars and self-paced trainings;*
- c. *recorded trainings and podcasts;*
- d. *reading and writing assignments; and*
- e. *individual counseling and training.*

AS 7.02

Prospective adoptive parents receive training and demonstrate competence in:

- a. the adoption process and significant provisions of laws and regulations;
- b. the availability of and application process for subsidies or other financial benefits;
- c. options for openness in adoption;
- d. the importance of legally finalizing the adoption and for obtaining and maintaining documentation of citizenship for children adopted internationally; and
- e. long term impacts of adoption on the child and the family; and
- f. the availability and importance of post adoption supports and services.

AS 7.03

Prospective adoptive parents receive training and demonstrate competence in common experiences and needs of waiting and adopted children, including:

- a. the general characteristics and needs of waiting children;
- b. separation, grief, and loss;
- c. the frequency and impact of physical, psychological and sexual abuse; neglect; and child trafficking;
- d. the impact of institutionalization and living in out of home care;
- e. the impact of malnutrition, maternal substance abuse, and any other common factors that impact on health and development; and
- f. attachment and bonding.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 7.04

Prospective adoptive parents receive training and demonstrate competence in skills and strategies for helping children heal and thrive throughout their lives, including:

- a. coping with separation, loss and grief and supporting healthy attachments and relationships;
- b. navigating changing roles and relationships;
- c. supporting the child's identity development;
- d. raising a child of a different race, ethnicity, culture, or religion and strategies for maintaining connections with the child's culture, community, tribe, and/or country;
- e. responding effectively and safely to children's behavior and unknown or unexpected issues, and adapting parenting strategies and discipline techniques to fit the child's needs;
- f. recognizing signs of unknown or undisclosed abuse, effective strategies to support safe disclosure, and reporting abuse allegations to appropriate authorities;
- g. strategies for maintaining safety when there is a history of sexual abuse, trafficking, self-harming behavior, or other unsafe behavior; and
- h. overcoming barriers to seeking or obtaining help and support.

Interpretation: *Training on discipline techniques should include training on the risks associated with the use of interventions that can be harmful to children, especially children with a history of trauma. Some examples of interventions which can be harmful include but are not limited to:*

- a. *corporal punishment;*
- b. *interventions that involve withholding nutrition or hydration or that inflict physical or psychological pain;*
- c. *the use of demeaning, shaming, or degrading language or activities; and*
- d. *forced physical exercise as punishment or in excess.*

Interpretation: *Having strategies and skills to navigate changing roles and relationships is especially important when the child and prospective adoptive parents are relatives, already know each other, or when some level of openness is being considered.*

AS 7.05

Prospective adoptive parents receive specialized training and demonstrate competency in parenting a child with a history of trauma.

Interpretation: *Training can include:*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- a. *recognizing trauma triggers and conditioned responses;*
- b. *developing skills to avoid actions or reactions that may trigger the child;*
- c. *providing emotional support in ways the child can accept and normalizing their feelings;*
- d. *strategies for relaxation;*
- e. *providing positive experiences to encourage self-esteem;*
- f. *providing age appropriate information and education about trauma to the child;*
- g. *providing age appropriate opportunities for choice and control; and*
- h. *recognizing, preventing, and addressing secondary trauma.*

AS 7.06

Prospective adoptive parents are provided or referred to needed customized education, counseling or support specific to their unique needs or experiences which may impact on their readiness and suitability for placement and the program reassesses the prospective adoptive parents when needed to ensure they remain ready and suitable to move forward with an adoption.

Interpretation: *Examples of unique needs and experiences can include, but are not limited to:*

- a. *prior history of trauma, mental illness, or substance use;*
- b. *experience of infertility, miscarriage, or loss of a child; and*
- c. *an unsuccessful adoption attempt or disruption or dissolution of an adoption.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 8: Consents, Matching, Referral, and Placement

The program ensures consents are obtained properly and makes diligent and timely efforts to match and place children with prospective adoptive parents who can meet their needs for safety, well-being, and permanency.

NA *The organization provides home study services only.*

NA *The organization provides post placement and/or post-adoption services only.*

Note: *Foster Care to Adoption programs will implement FKC 6 and AS 8.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Procedures for identifying, locating, and providing notice to individuals whose notice and consent is required
- Procedures for obtaining consents
- Procedures for matching and referrals
- Tools used for providing notice, obtaining consents, matching, and referrals
- Procedures for placement and child transfers

On-Site Evidence

- Documentation of tribal participation in placement process, when applicable

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. clients
- Review case records

AS 8.01

Custody status and applicable notice and consent requirements are determined as early as possible.

Note: *The Indian Child Welfare Act includes provisions related to the termination of parental rights that apply to both public and private adoption proceedings.*

(FP) AS 8.02

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

The program ensures timely and diligent efforts to locate and provide notice to all parties who require notification or whose consent is required and documents such efforts in the case record.

Interpretation: *The program takes steps to prevent actions or practices that could limit or otherwise compromise a party's someone's rights to notice and consent. Examples of steps that can be taken include:*

- a. *implementation of procedures that articulate methods for follow up on inconsistent or incomplete information about someone whose notice or consent may be required;*
- b. *detailing important due dates and careful review and oversight of completion of required tasks;*
- c. *establishing a procedure to address determination of jurisdiction and change of jurisdiction; and*
- d. *verifying through careful review of relevant documentation and any other necessary steps that notice and consent requirements have been met when those steps are completed by another provider.*

NA *The program only provides services in cases where birth parents rights have already been terminated.*

(FP) AS 8.03

When obtaining consents to adoption the program ensures all applicable legal requirements are met and verifies each individual providing consent:

- a. has read the necessary documents and had their questions about those documents answered;
- b. understands of the significance and meaning of the information in the documents;
- c. has had sufficient time to consider the decision;
- d. is not under the influence of any substances or conditions that could compromise their understanding or decision making;
- e. understands the need for their consent and any conditions under which they can revoke their consent;
- f. has not experienced any undue pressure or duress for their consent;
- g. has not received or been promised any compensation or other consideration in exchange for their consent; and
- h. is not aware of any fraud having been committed in relation to the adoption.

NA *The program only provides services in cases where birth parents rights have already been terminated.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 8.04

The program assess all available information about the birth parents, the child, and prospective adoptive parents, including expressed preferences and determines which prospective adoptive parents may be most suitable to meet the needs of the child.

Interpretation: *Children are encouraged to participate in the matching process to the greatest extent possible given their age and developmental level.*

Interpretation: *An organization that has responsibility for placing an American Indian or Alaska Native child should work closely with the child's tribe to identify adoptive homes within the tribal community. Families from all tribes to which the child has ties should be considered as placement options, and eligibility should be consistent with the norms of the tribe.*

Interpretation: *Some circumstances which can make transition more difficult and have been found to be factors in some disruptions and dissolutions include:*

- a. *placement of more than one unrelated child into a home at the same time; or*
- b. *placement of a child too soon after the birth or addition of another child to the family.*
The program might generally avoid matching children with prospective adoptive parents in these circumstances or take additional steps to prepare for and support such placements.

Note: *Documentation of which prospective adoptive parents were considered and should be included in the case record.*

AS 8.05

The program provides information about the prospective adoptive parents who were identified as possible matches to the birth parents, the youth, and/or the individual(s) who are responsible for making the placement decision and documents the provision of this information in its records.

Interpretation: *Children are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process to the greatest extent possible given their age and developmental level.*

AS 8.06

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

The program incorporates provisions of applicable law and regulations for placement preferences and matching into its established criteria for determining or making recommendations about the best interests of the child, makes placement decisions based on this criteria, and documents the decision in its records.

Interpretation: *In cases where expectant parents have made an adoption plan prior to the child's birth, the program can make or support a preliminary match before the birth, and makes a final decision or recommendation on the match only after the child is born and the child study is completed and reviewed.*

Interpretation: *Programs must follow guidelines set forth in the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act and the Indian Child Welfare Act and should take into account birth parents expressed desires and the importance of keeping siblings together. When there is any conflict in these preferences or priorities the organization engages administrative personnel and legal counsel as needed to make its decision and carefully documents its deliberations and a rationale for its decision.*

Interpretation: *When the organization is working with American Indian and Alaska Native children and families, tribal representatives and service providers must be involved in placement decisions and placement changes in order to ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act, which requires that preference be given to families in the following order:*

- a. a member of the child's extended family;
 - b. families who are members of the child's tribe; and
 - c. other American Indian or Alaska Native families.
- Alternative placement preferences established by the child's tribe may apply, and the court may also take into consideration the preferences of the child or his/her birth parents.*

Note: *When the program does not have responsibility for making the decision, it provides input in the process whenever possible and/or reviews the placement decision and provides feedback when necessary to express any questions or concerns about the match.*

AS 8.07

The program notifies prospective adoptive parents of the match and provides a referral package which includes the child study and all non-identifying information that can be provided.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

Note: *The organization must not withhold or misrepresent any information concerning the child. Intentional misrepresentation or concealment or withholding of information can put the organization at risk for litigation and can negatively impact children and families. Practices that may limit exposure to liability include: informing prospective adoptive parents in advance of any limits on information gathering and disclosure, maintaining detailed records of the collection and provision of information, providing information in writing rather than or in addition to providing it verbally, and training staff on procedures for collecting and disclosing information and documentation requirements.*

AS 8.08

The program allows the prospective adoptive parents at least two weeks to consider the match and provides information, counseling, training, and ongoing assessment of the suitability of the match in light of the information in the referral and the home study.

Interpretation: *The prospective adoptive parents should have a minimum of two weeks to make a decision and should have sufficient time to give careful thought and consideration into the decision. While there may be circumstances where the child's needs are significant and the child would benefit from a shorter timeframe, the program must still take steps to ensure the prospective parents have given careful thought and consideration into their decision.*

Interpretation: *Examples of factors which might need to be considered include:*

- a. *the child's medical, developmental, mental health needs in relation to the information contained in the referral;*
 - b. *risks of unknown or undiagnosed issues or conditions common to the child's history or circumstances;*
 - c. *impact on all parties when there are other children or adults living frequently in the home;*
 - d. *adaptations that might be required to the home;*
 - e. *alignment with expectations;*
 - f. *access to resources the child will need; and*
 - g. *assessment of ability to meet the child's lifelong needs.*
- Prospective adoptive parents often seek the services of skilled professionals to evaluate medical and developmental information included in the referral.*

AS 8.09

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

The program takes all appropriate measures to ensure that the transfer of the child takes place in secure and appropriate circumstances, with properly trained and qualified escorts, if used.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 9: Preparation and Support for Placement

The program provides information, counseling, training, and support to help prepare parties to the adoption for placement.

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, resources offered by the tribe or a local Indian organization should be considered and prioritized.*

NA *The organization provides homestudy services only.*

NA *The organization provides post placement services only.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- A list of informational materials or other resources utilized to help prepare clients for adoption
- Procedures for preparing for adoption which include procedures for the provision of information, counseling and support
- Procedures for maintaining continued contact with relatives and openness in adoption

On-Site Evidence

- Informational materials provided to clients

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Clients
- Review case records

AS 9.01

The program provides or arranges for services and supports needed to help prepare birth parents for the child's placement including:

- a. planning for the immediate future and referral for needed services;
- b. assistance as needed in planning for details of the child's birth, placement, and for the adoption process;
- c. counseling and support relating to grief, separation, loss, and the lifelong implications of placing a child for adoption;
- d. discussion of changing roles and relationships in the case of a relative adoption or when the birth parents will have an ongoing relationship or maintain contact with the child or adoptive parents;

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- e. support for maintaining relationships with friends and family who can provide support; and
- f. information on post adoption services and the potential for search and reunion in the future.

Interpretation: *It can help birth parents to maintain supportive relationships by providing, with their permission, information, counseling, and/or support to family members or other individuals with whom they have a close relationship especially if those individuals may not be fully supportive of the adoption plan.*

In foster care cases where the birth parents' rights have been involuntarily terminated, it may not be possible or appropriate to provide such services. The program may consult with the public agency or its designee to determine the appropriateness and needs for such services. Documentation of that consultation and implementation of the guidance provided is sufficient evidence of implementation for this standard.

AS 9.02

The program provides or arranges for developmentally appropriate services needed to help the child prepare for adoption including:

- a. information to help the child understand the meaning, process, and lifelong impact of adoption;
- b. counseling to help the child understand and cope with feelings of fear, separation, and loss;
- c. opportunities to visit prospective adoptive parents and preparation and support for such visits;
- d. discussion of changing roles and relationships in the case of a relative adoption or when the birth parents will have an ongoing relationship or maintain contact with the child;
- e. preparation for moving to a new community or school;
- f. opportunities for peer support;
- g. information on post-placement services; and
- h. assisting the child to have involvement in the planning for placement.

Interpretation: *A life book is something that can be created by older children or for younger children to describe the child's personal history.*

AS 9.03

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

When the parties to the adoption are considering an open adoption or maintaining connections between the child and the birth parents, relatives, siblings, or others with whom they have a connection, they are offered counseling, assistance and support to:

- a. develop and agree on plans for the exchange of information or continued contact; and
- b. plan for how to resolve conflicts that might arise in the future.

Interpretation: *Most birth parents making a voluntary plan for adoption have an interest in some level of openness in the adoption. In cases where parental rights are involuntarily terminated there may be situations where ongoing connection with a sibling, birth parent, relative, or other individuals with a significant connection to the child can be beneficial for the child's growth, development and stability of the placement. A Not Applicable option is not available for this standard. Documentation of the assessment of the appropriateness of openness or maintaining connections in the record will be sufficient evidence of implementation in cases where no openness and maintaining connections are not planned.*

Interpretation: *Counseling helps the parties to consider whether continued contact is in the best interest of the child and others involved in both the immediate and long term future. Planning can include identification of individuals the child might continue contact, and the type and frequency of contact. The program should explain limitations on confidentiality and enforcement of agreements and document in the case record expressed preferences and concerns.*

Interpretation: *The continuum of openness is extensive. Some examples of openness include, but are not limited to:*

- a. *the birth parent(s)' provision of identifying information to the prospective adoptive parents about the birth parents at the time of placement,*
- b. *organization-mediated written communication,*
- c. *occasional contact with birth parents or other relatives, and/or*
- d. *frequent in-person contact with birth family members.*

AS 9.04

Adoptive parents receive assistance preparing for the child's safe and healthy transition into the home through services and supports including:

- a. planning for the details of the transition;

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- b. information on the types of behaviors and emotions children typically experience during the transition and typical length of time for the transition period;
- c. counseling on how to ease the transition given the information known about the child;
- d. assistance with preparation of other children or individuals living or frequently in the home;
- e. obtaining resources for the child's special needs; and
- f. assistance in obtaining insurance or other benefits.

Interpretation: *Information can be provided through reading materials, contact information for service providers, group or individual counseling and training sessions, and online resources.*

AS 9.05

The program promptly provides prospective adoptive parents with updated information about the child if and when such information becomes available.

Interpretation: *There can be situations where the program has reason to believe that new information received might not be complete or accurate. It may be appropriate in certain situations to briefly delay the disclosure of the information to prospective adoptive parents so that the information can be verified.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 10: Temporary Care for Children Awaiting Placement

Foster parents provide temporary care that ensures the health and safety of infants awaiting adoption.

Interpretation: *When the case involves an American Indian or Alaska Native child, the tribe or a local Indian organization and the Bureau of Indian Affairs should be notified of the decision to temporarily place an infant awaiting adoption in a foster home.*

Interpretation: *This section is intended for programs that provide short term, temporary care for children, usually newborns, while they await placement, typically in states where direct placement with prospective adoptive parents is not possible and do not otherwise provide foster care services.*

NA *The program does not provide temporary care for children awaiting placement or the program provides such care through its foster care program.*

NA *The organization provides homestudy services only*

NA *The organization provides post placement services only.*

NA *The organization only provides foster to adopt services.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Policy and procedures for licensure, approval, or certification of homes
- Procedures for foster home assessments, including criminal background checks
- Procedures for visits to foster homes

On-Site Evidence

- Training curricula

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Relevant personnel
 - b. Foster parents
- Review case records
- Review foster parent records

AS 10.01

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

Prior to placement, foster homes are licensed, approved, or certified according to state, tribal, or local regulation and foster parents have completed all required training.

AS 10.02

Prior to placement, the home is assessed to identify any safety concerns, and criminal background and child abuse registry checks are conducted for all adults living or frequently in the home in accordance with applicable federal and state requirements.

Interpretation: *Individuals living in the home share common areas, sleep in the home, and have lived there for more than two weeks. Individuals frequently in the home can include for example, a child care provider.*

AS 10.03

The program coordinates needed healthcare services for the child, and foster parents are trained to respond to the healthcare needs of the child.

AS 10.04

The adoption worker visits the foster parents and the child within the first two weeks of placement and at least once a month while in temporary placement to evaluate safety and needs.

AS 10.05

Each foster family develops or uses the organization's protocols for responding to emergencies, including accidents, serious illness, fire, and natural disasters.

(FP) AS 10.06

Foster parents who transport infants in their own vehicles:

- a. use age-appropriate passenger restraint systems;
- b. properly maintain vehicles and obtain required registration and inspection;

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- c. provide the organization with validation of their driving records; and
- d. appropriate insurance coverage.

Interpretation: *Regarding element (d), this information should be provided as frequently as necessary, based on the amount of time licenses and insurance are valid. For example, if licenses are valid for two years, license validation can occur every two years. Regarding validation of appropriate insurance coverage, it is suggested that the organization maintain a copy of each foster parent's auto policy declaration.*

Note: *In some cases this standard may not be applicable to all foster parents (e.g., if foster parents live in urban areas and utilize public transportation instead of private vehicles).*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 11: Post-Placement and Post-Adoption Support and Family Preservation

A comprehensive continuum of post-placement and post-adoption services are available to ensure safety, well-being, and long-term stability and permanency.

Interpretation: *Whenever possible, services provided by others should be provided by adoption competent professionals with experience in trauma informed care and when American Indian or Alaska Native children or families are in need of services, resources offered by the tribe or a local Indian organization should be considered and prioritized.*

NA *The organization provides homestudy services only.*

Note: *All individuals involved in an adoption have their own unique experiences and needs related to adoption. People may experience few or frequent needs, minimal or extensive needs, and may experience those needs at any point in time throughout their lives.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Aftercare planning is not initiated early enough to ensure orderly

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

transitions; or

- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards;

e.g.,

- There are no written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Procedures for responding to crisis situations
- Procedures for the provision of or referral to preventive, supportive, intensive and therapeutic post-placement services
- A list of post-placement services provided directly by the agency and a list of services provided by other providers and other resources or information provided to persons served
- Procedures for post-placement monitoring, visits, and reports

On-Site Evidence

- Reports related to any adoption related crisis situations reviewed through risk management or performance and quality improvement activities

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Clients
- Review case records

AS 11.01

The program provides or refers children, youth, adoptive parents, adoptive families, and adopted adults to an array of preventive and supportive

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

services including:

- a. information, education, and counseling;
- b. social and cultural events and activities;
- c. preventive care for medical, developmental, and mental health needs;
- d. respite care; and
- e. support and advocacy groups.

Interpretation: *Examples of common adoption related issues which may benefit from preventive and supportive services may include:*

- *difficulties with grief or feels of loss or abandonment;*
- *challenges in developing trust and establishing and maintaining relationships;*
- *identify formation;*
- *difficulty navigating developmental milestones and events such as birthdays, holidays, addition of children to the home, death of a family member; and*
- *unknown medical, developmental or mental health history or issues.*

Support for transracial and transcultural adoptions can include cultural and social events such as picnics, camps, educational activities, and heritage tours.

Note: *Engaging families in social activities and basic supportive services can help to keep them connected to the program and increase their likelihood of requesting help when more significant needs emerge.*

AS 11.02

The program provides or refers children, youth, adoptive parents, adoptive families, and adopted adults to an array of intensive and therapeutic services when needed including:

- a. medical, developmental, and psychological evaluations;
- b. crisis intervention services;
- c. individual, group, and family counseling and therapy;
- d. early intervention and other developmental and educational supports;
- e. mental health and substance abuse services; and
- f. medical or rehabilitative care and residential treatment.

AS 11.03

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

The program completes required post-placement and post-adoption visits to monitor and assess safety, permanency, and well-being and has strategies and procedures in place for encouraging full participation and compliance with visits and reports.

Interpretation: *Agencies have developed a variety of strategies with mixed results to encourage participation. Examples of strategies some programs have used to promote completion of visits include:*

- a. *making visit and report requirements known in advance through the contract and training;*
- b. *keeping the family engaged with the program through social and other supportive services; and*
- c. *requiring families to pay refundable deposits or pay post-placement fees in advance.*

(FP) AS 11.04

The program acts promptly in situations where the placement is in crisis, a child may be in danger, or where conduct relating to the adoption may be in question.

Related: RPM 2.02

Interpretation: *Examples include situations where:*

- a. *the placement may be at risk of disruption or dissolution;*
- b. *adoptive parents are considering, planning or have completed an unregulated custody transfer;*
- c. *allegations of child abuse or neglect are made;*
- d. *a child discloses a prior history of being a victim of sexual abuse or human trafficking;*
- e. *a child experiences a mental health crisis or suicide attempt; and*
- f. *a question or concern is raised about the consents to the adoption or other fraudulent or unethical conduct relating to the adoption.*

(FP) AS 11.05

When the program believes that a child is in danger if he or she remains in the placement or that the placement is no longer in the child's best interests, the program acts promptly, in accordance with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements, to report the situation to the appropriate authorities and assist as needed with transitioning the child to another appropriate

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

placement.

Interpretation: *In an international adoption that is not considered a final placement, the program must coordinate with the primary provider, foreign central authority and the Department of State, and in all international adoptions the program should take appropriate steps to prevent the return of the child to the country of origin without authorization from the foreign central authority and the Department of State.*

AS 11.06

The program provides information, counseling and support for individuals interested in searching for and making contact with relatives, complies with applicable confidentiality requirements, and respects the expressed preferences of individuals involved in the adoption.

AS 11.07

When a child is placed prior to the final adoption order the program takes steps to ensure an order declaring the adoption final is sought by the prospective adoptive parents, and when the adoption is an international adoption, the program takes steps to ensure the child's US citizenship is obtained and documentation of the final adoption order and citizenship is maintained.

AS 11.08

The program provides or refers birth parents to supportive services including:

- a. information and counseling;
- b. the ability for the program to receive and maintain updated medical or social information, including, as appropriate, contact information so that it could be made available to the adoptee in accordance with applicable requirements; and
- c. support and advocacy groups.

Note: *If the program works on cases where the birth parents' rights were involuntarily terminated, the program should consult with the public agency*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

or its designee to determine what services, if any, would be appropriate for the program to provide directly to birth parents. In intercountry adoptions, it is unlikely for the program to have contact with birth parents. In either instance, the program should at a minimum have procedures to address element (b) of the standard.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 12: Adoption Program Administration

The program has administrative policies, procedures and systems in place to ensure that adoption services are provided ethically and to ensure:

- a. adoptions take place in the best interests of children;
- b. the program has taken all appropriate actions to prevent the exploitation, sale, abduction, or trafficking of children; and
- c. persons whose consents are required give those consents freely without any undue influence; and
- d. fees and compensation paid do not inappropriately influence adoption decisions.

Note: *Elements c and d might not be applicable to all programs.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Policy on ethical adoption practice
- Compensation procedures
- Procedures for donations
- Fee policy and procedures
- Fee schedule
- Procedures for the collection of information, record keeping and retention, and information disclosure

On-Site Evidence

- Board minutes documenting the review and approval of policies relating to the adoption program
- Documentation of licensure or credentials of collaborating organizations or individuals
- Service agreements and contracts
- Records of any complaints received in the last two years related to the adoption program

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Clients
- Observe record storage area
- Review financial records of compensation and fees paid by adoptive parents

AS 12.01

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

The program has written policies and procedures in place which:

- a. prohibit its employees and agents from giving money or other consideration, directly or indirectly, to a child's parent(s) or other individual(s), or entities as payment for the child or as an inducement to release the child;
- b. prohibit compensation of any individual who locates or refers children, prospective birth mothers, or birth parents on a contingent or incentive basis; and
- c. when compensation is permitted or required to be paid directly or indirectly to individuals whose consents may be required, those payments are not excessive and are only for activities appropriately related to the adoption.

Interpretation: *Examples of activities appropriately related to the adoption include:*

- a. *adoption proceedings,*
- b. *pre-birth and birth medical costs,*
- c. *care of the child,*
- d. *care of the birth mother while pregnant and immediately following birth of the child, and*
- e. *the provision of child welfare and child protection services generally.*

Interpretation: *Procedures should include provisions relating to documentation and close oversight of requested payments and actual compensation and purchase of services or goods. The program reinforces these policies and procedures in periodic training for personnel, contractors or other agents acting on behalf of the program, and through information it provides to birth parents and prospective adoptive parents who might be involved in such payments.*

AS 12.02

Compensation paid to program personnel and any other individuals directly or indirectly involved in providing adoption services:

- a. is not unreasonably high in relation to the services rendered and other appropriate factors;
- b. is on a fee-for-service, hourly wage, or salary basis rather than a contingent fee basis; and
- c. is only paid for services actually rendered or for reimbursement of appropriate expenses incurred.

Interpretation: *When the program allows for the payment of compensation in advance, the procedures detail how the advanced compensation will be*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

returned to the program if services are not rendered.

This does not prohibit an organization or person from providing in-kind or other donations not intended to influence or affect a particular adoption.

Interpretation: *Evaluation of the reasonableness of compensation can take into account, for example:*

- a. *norms for compensation in the region in which the adoption services are provided;*
- b. *norms for compensation within the adoption community;*
- c. *norms for compensation within the organization;*
- d. *qualifications of staff; and*
- e. *workload requirements such as the scope and complexity of the work.*

AS 12.03

If it accepts or makes charitable donations, the program has safeguards in place in its policies and procedures to ensure that such donations do not influence child placement decisions in any way.

Interpretation: *Making donations to individuals or entities who are involved in obtaining or consenting to the adoption can compromise the integrity of the process. When possible such arrangements should generally be avoided. When such donations are made, the program should take significant steps to ensure the integrity of the process.*

AS 12.04

The program itemizes and discloses in writing the following information for each of the following separate category of fees and estimated expenses that the program may charge to prospective adoptive parent(s) in connection with an adoption:

- a. home study, including any fees for updates;
- b. placement or other program fee(s);
- c. fees charged by other individuals or entities in the United States;
- d. fees and expenses for the care of the child;
- e. document and translation expenses;
- f. required donations or contributions;
- g. post-placement and post-adoption services;
- h. other third party fees; and

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- i. travel and accommodation.

Interpretation: *Translation and document expenses can include costs for obtaining, translating, or copying records or documents required to complete the adoption, costs for court documents, and costs for notarizations and certifications.*

NA *The organization does not charge prospective adoptive parents any fees for its services.*

AS 12.05

The program does not routinely charge additional fees and expenses beyond those disclosed in the adoption services contract and only collects and retains fees for services rendered.

Interpretation: *If the program charges fees in advance or the delivery of services, it should have procedures in place to accurately account for those funds, and must have procedures for refunding fees for services that are not rendered.*

NA *The organization does not charge prospective adoptive parents any fees for its services.*

AS 12.06

The program returns any funds to which the prospective adoptive parent(s) may be entitled within sixty days.

Interpretation: *If fees are charged or paid in advance, best practice is to maintain the funds collected separately from general operating expenses so that they can be properly accounted for and refunded promptly when necessary.*

NA *The program does not charge prospective adoptive parents any fees for its services.*

AS 12.07

In accordance with applicable legal requirements and contractual obligations, the program makes readily available to the adoptee and the adoptive parent(s) upon request all non-identifying information in its custody

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

about the adoptee's health history or background and other information as appropriate.

Related: RPM 8

AS 12.08

The program ensures that personal data gathered or transmitted in connection with an adoption is used only for the purposes for which the information was gathered and safeguards sensitive individual information.

Related: RPM 6.01

AS 12.09

In the event that the program ceases to provide or is no longer permitted to provide adoption services, it has a plan for:

- a. transferring custody of adoption records that are subject to retention or archival requirements to an appropriate custodian and ensuring the future accessibility of those adoption records, and
- b. transferring open cases to other programs.

Interpretation: *It can be helpful to detail transfer plans in an agreement with another adoption service provider in advance and to plan for how clients may be provided with choices in the transfer process. The plan should also address the refunding of fees paid for services not yet rendered and expenses not yet incurred.*

AS 12.10

When working in collaboration with other individuals or organizations for the provision of adoption services, the program operates under a written agreement with that provider which specifies:

- a. the adoption services to be provided by each party;
- b. fees and compensation;
- c. applicable laws, regulations and standards that govern the provision of services;
- d. the lines of authority between the providers including who is responsible for oversight of the services provided
- e. terms and conditions for terminating the agreement;
- f. documentation, record keeping and confidentiality requirements; and

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- g. timely communication and the exchange of information between the parties and with clients.

Interpretation: *Provisions relating to fees and compensation should articulate the amount of fees and compensation; which party will bill the client; conditions under which fees are paid and compensation is made including required documentation; and provisions for refunds.*

NA *The organization does not collaborate with other providers.*

AS 12.11

The program conducts quality improvement activities appropriate to its size and circumstances and in coordination with the organization's quality improvement program through which it makes systematic efforts to improve its adoption services as needed.

Interpretation: *Examples can include: case record review; critical incident reviews; complaint reviews; outcomes measurement; business analytics; and client satisfaction.*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

AS 13: Intercountry Adoption Program Administration

The program has administrative policies, procedures and systems in place to ensure that intercountry adoption services are provided consistent with applicable foreign, federal, state, and primary provider requirements.

NA *The program does not provide any services in intercountry adoptions.*

NA *The organization only provides foster to adopt services.*

Rating Indicators

1) All elements or requirements outlined in the standard are evident in practice, as indicated by full implementation of the practices outlined in the Practice standards.

2) Practices are basically sound but there is room for improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

- Minor inconsistencies and not yet fully developed practices are noted, however, these do not significantly impact service quality; or
- Procedures need strengthening; or
- With few exceptions procedures are understood by staff and are being used; or
- For the most part, established timeframes are met; or
- Proper documentation is the norm and any issues with individual staff members are being addressed through performance evaluations (HR 6.02) and training (TS 2.03); or
- Active client participation occurs to a considerable extent.

3) Practice requires significant improvement, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards. Service quality or program functioning may be compromised; e.g.,

- Procedures and/or case record documentation need significant strengthening; or
- Procedures are not well-understood or used appropriately; or
- Timeframes are often missed; or
- A number of client records are missing important information or
- Client participation is inconsistent; or
- One of the Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

4) Implementation of the standard is minimal or there is no evidence of implementation at all, as noted in the ratings for the Practice standards; e.g.,

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- No written procedures, or procedures are clearly inadequate or not being used; or
- Documentation is routinely incomplete and/or missing; or
- Two or more Fundamental Practice Standards received a rating of 3 or 4.

Table of Evidence

Self-Study Evidence

- Executive Verification

On-Site Evidence

- Records of any complaints received in the last two years related to intercountry adoption services
- List of any adoptions that have been disrupted or dissolved in the last 4 years or written verification that no disruptions or dissolutions are known to the organization

On-Site Activities

- Interviews may include:
 - a. Program director
 - b. Relevant personnel
 - c. Prospective or adoptive parents
- Review case records

AS 13.01

The program demonstrates to the accrediting entity and the primary providers it works with that it is suitable and qualified to provide services in an intercountry adoption by providing current and historical information about its operations and services before it provides services and periodically and as needed thereafter.

Interpretation: *Examples of information that should be provided include:*

- a. *verification of the absence of, or information about, any other names under which the organization has been known;*
- b. *verification of current insurance coverage;*
- c. *documentation of current licensure status for adoption services;*
- d. *documentation demonstrating past history of compliance with licensing and accreditation requirements including any non-compliance with*

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

licensing requirements for the last 10 years;

- e. *verification of the absence of, or documentation of, any instances in which the organization lost the right or authority to provide adoption services or documentation of any such instance;*
- f. *verification of the absence of, or documentation of, any instances of known complaints filed against the organization in the last 10 years with or by an domestic or foreign authorities in relation to its provision of adoption services;*
- g. *verification of the absence of, or documentation of, any instances of known lawsuits or investigations or criminal charges filed against the organization in the last 10 years in relation to its provision of adoption or other child welfare services or financial irregularities;*
- h. *a list of all personnel who provide or oversee adoption services which indicates the names of any other adoption service providers they worked for;*
- i. *verification of the absence of, or documentation of, any instances in which personnel providing or overseeing adoption services were subject to external disciplinary proceedings, convicted of a crime or, is currently*

Interpretation:

COA's Executive Verification Form - ICA can be used as evidence and documentation can be provided in the form of an attestation or as otherwise required by the primary providers with whom the program works.

The program must disclose any changes in the information required within the timeframes specified in COA's self-reporting requirements or as specified by the primary provider and at least within thirty business days of learning of the change.

AS 13.02

The program maintains the following data when it learns of a possible or actual disruption or dissolution and promptly reports the situation and the information to the primary provider:

- a. the foreign country from which the child emigrated;
- b. the State to which the child immigrated;
- c. the current age of the child;
- d. the date of the child's placement for adoption;
- e. the date of or planned date for the disruption or dissolution;
- f. the reason(s) for the disruption or dissolution;
- g. information on the child's subsequent placement(s) and final legal

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.



Adoption Services

- adoption;
- h. the names of the agencies or persons that handled the placement and adoption; and
- i. the plans for the child.

Interpretation: *When citing reasons for the disruption or dissolution, it can be helpful to specify reasons cited by the adoptive parents separately from reasons being cited by the program in the even they differ.*

AS 13.03

Personnel do not take any action to discourage or retaliate against any individual for:

- a. questioning the conduct of the program;
- b. expressing an opinion about the program;
- c. making a complaint or expressing a grievance; or
- d. providing information, expressing a concern, or filing a complaint with the primary provider, the accrediting entity or any authority.

Interpretation: *This does not preclude the organization from taking appropriate legally available remedies when such actions are taken in good faith. For example, state law concerning libel and slander may provide a cause of action for public false statements.*

AS 13.04

The program promptly complies with any requests for information or data made by the primary provider.

Purpose

Adoption programs establish permanent family relationships for children in need of permanency, and increase the well-being, functioning, and stability of children, birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.