

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
STANDARDS FOR ADOPTION SERVICES

7.11 PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE ADOPTIVE HOME

Council on Accreditation Standards

The Council on Accreditation Standards S14 (Adoption Services) and S14.3 (Services to the Child) link to and support Standard 7.11 *Placement of Children in the Adoptive Home*.

Administrative Code

The Ohio Administrative Code Rules 5101:2-39-06 (Preplacement Preventative Services, Reunification Services and Life Skill Services); 5101:2-39-07 (Supportive Services); 5101:2-42-05 (Selection of a Placement Setting); 5101:2-42-651 (Pre-Finalization Services); 5101:2-48-12 Adoption Placement Requirements); 5101:2-48-13 (Adoptive Placement Requirements Pursuant to the Multiethnic Placement Act); 5101:2-48-16 (Adoptive Placement Procedures); 5101:2-48-17 (Pre-Finalization Services) address Standard 7.11 *Placement of Children in the Adoptive Home*.

I. Philosophy

CFASAs recognize the placement of children in the adoptive home as a pivotal point in the adoption experience. For adoptive parents, this includes new responsibilities of parenting, protection and care of the child. For the child, this includes separation and loss, as well as adjustment to a new environment, home and family. The addition of new family members requires care and support for the family to achieve balance and stability. Therefore, varying levels of support are necessary throughout the adoption process to meet the individual needs of the family and child.

CFASAs, in support of the stabilization and maintenance of the new family unit, should provide pre-placement opportunities and post-placement involvement. CFASAs must provide or link the family to service supports to assure the family's successful efforts at permanency beyond finalization. CFSA's case management activities provide additional support for the family as it strives to redefine itself.

II. Outcome

Children, along with their adoptive family, are supported and educated throughout the adoption process.

III. Evaluation

FACSIS events, CPOE and the Federal Health and Human Services outcomes may be considered when evaluating this standard. In addition, the CFSA may consider the following:

- number of children in permanent custody per year;
- documentation that all children in permanent custody have had an opportunity to discuss feelings about adoption, input about permanency plan and identifying potential relationships to maintain;
- number of good-bye visits held by the agency with the child and child's family within ninety days of obtaining permanent custody;
- number of pre-placement activities and visits held per child and prospective adoptive family;

- number of children with adoption finalizations per year;
- median length of stay in permanent custody prior to adoption finalization;
- number of weekly visits made by agency staff during first month of placement in the adoptive home;
- documentation that post-finalization services were offered and available to adoptive families;
- number of adoptions that disrupt per year.

IV. Standards for Implementation

A. Pre-Placement Activities

- 1) Prior to the placement of the child in the adoptive home, the CFSA, adoptive family, and child (when age and developmentally appropriate) should meet to:
 - a. discuss the child's strengths, interests, specific care and needs with the family explicitly, acknowledge and discuss with the family the pivotal and, at times, difficult nature of the transition for the child (see Standard 7.5, *Preparing Children for Adoption* and 7.6, *Matching*);
 - b. establish pre-placement activities and visitation plan that can help minimize the stress and/or trauma to the child, adoptive family and foster family;
 - c. identify and ensure needed services and supports are accessible for the family and child; and
 - d. develop the Adoption Placement Agreement, which identifies and commits all parties to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

- 2) Pre-placement visits aid in lessening the degree of stress and trauma experienced by child and family, which may occur during a placement transition. These activities should also give the child a sense of control, assist the child in understanding the process, ease the child's and family's adjustment, and facilitate new attachments. The Pre-Placement Visitation Plan should be written, shared and agreed upon by all parties. The plan should include the following activities to assure successful transition.
 - a. A pre-placement visitation plan that identifies the frequency, duration and location of visits based on the child's needs.

The initial visit,

 - i. should occur where the child is most comfortable with the worker, foster family (if applicable) and/or other significant persons;
 - ii. should be short, keeping in mind the child's schedule and if possible, no more than two to four hours.

Further visits,

 - iii. should progress steadily from day long visits (if distance allows) to overnights, weekend, weeks and more extended periods (visits should not be less than four weeks and not more than six weeks);
 - iv. should allow breaks between visits to allow time for the child to process the transition in which the worker explores the child's feelings and thoughts regarding the visits and the adoptive family;
 - v. include staff to review feedback received from the foster family regarding the child's and the adoptive family's response to scheduled visitation;
 - vi. may be less or more than the specified timeframe based on the child's circumstances and developmental needs.

- b. Assurance that the foster family has educated the adoptive family about the child's routine and the adoptive family has experienced the routine;
 - c. Assurance that the transition of parental responsibilities (including school placement, counseling, medical information, etc.) to the adoptive family;
 - d. Establishment of the approximate adoptive placement date. While a date is identified, both the adoptive family and CFSA should remain flexible, adjusting the time frame to meet the needs of the child and the adoptive family.
- 3) The Adoption Agreement should include, but not be limited to, the following:
- a. acceptance of the child in the home;
 - b. acknowledgment of the adoption as a legal process requiring court action;
 - c. acknowledgment of the CFSA as the legal custodian and supervisor of the placement until finalization;
 - d. willingness of the adoptive family to provide daily care to the child as necessary to meet the child's needs;
 - e. assumption of financial responsibility for the child (with CFSA support where indicated);
 - f. willingness to notify the CFSA within 24 hours of serious illness or injury;
 - g. agreement to defer additional foster care or adoptive activities prior to finalization without the written consent of the CFSA;
 - h. agreement to notify the CFSA when taking the child out of state for a period of five or more days;
 - i. acknowledgment of the adoptive family's right to apply for subsidies;
 - j. agreement to honor the child's visitation plan;
 - k. inclusion of appropriate support services;
 - l. acknowledgment that the adoptive family is making a lifetime commitment to the child as a member of the family unit;
 - m. acknowledgment that the Adoption Agreement may be amended, with both signatures, when additional needs are identified; and
 - n. signatures of the CFSA, the supervising agency and adoptive caregiver(s), and date the Agreement was entered into.

B. Placement/Pre-Finalization Activities

- 1) The child and family's identified needs and adjustment should be the primary focus of each agency's visit. The worker should explore the child's and family's feelings and thoughts regarding the adoptive placement.
- 2) The worker should make monthly collateral contact with each service provider and receive written reports to monitor transition.
- 3) Pre-finalization visits should be used to assist the adoptive family in moving through the stages of adjustment to finalization.
- 4) The worker and adoptive family should discuss the finalization procedures and mutually agree on when finalization should occur.
- 5) Prior to the legal finalization of the adoption, the staff should offer post finalization services to the adoptive family (see Standard 8.12, *Post Finalization Services*) and should work with the family to put identified services in place.

V. Financial Implications

Additional costs associated with Standard 7.11, *Placement of Children in the Adoptive Home* are dependent, and will vary, based on the services needed to support the child and adoptive family to maintain the adoptive placement.