

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES  
STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE  
**STANDARDS FOR ADOPTION SERVICES**

**7.15 OPENNESS IN ADOPTION**

**Council on Accreditation Standards**

The Council on Accreditation Standards S14 (Adoption Services) and S14.4 (Openness in Adoption) link to and support Standard 7.15 *Openness in Adoption*.

**Administrative Code**

**I. Philosophy**

Openness in adoption allows the child to maintain a connection to his/her birth family thus potentially lessening the child's feelings of abandonment, aiding in the child's identity formation and decreasing divided loyalties. There is a whole openness continuum, from sharing information between the birth and adoptive families through an intermediary, to the birth and adoptive families having regular ongoing visits. The level of openness is based on the agency's assessment, and the comfort level among the triad members. The openness agreement can be adapted, based upon the changing needs of the adoption triad, and should always be in the best interest of the child.

Kinship adoption should be provided the same opportunities for information and support in relationship to openness as other adoptions, with particular sensitivity to the unique strengths and stresses of in-family adoptions.

**II. Outcome**

Child develops an integrated positive identity through connections with birth and adoptive family.

**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 adoptions per year;
- number of open adoptions per year;
- number of open adoptions that disrupt per year versus "closed" adoption disruptions per year;
- median length of stay between permanent custody and adoption finalizations for open adoptions versus "closed" adoption.

**IV. Standards for Implementation**

- 1) CFSA's will assist the adoptive family and the birth family to help them determine the level of openness desired. Initially, the CFSA may need to facilitate this conversation. Such assessment for openness include, but not limited to:
  - a. safety level including, severity of abuse/neglect, mental stability, violence, respecting boundaries, etc;
  - b. comfort level of all parties involved;

- c. level, frequency and appropriateness of previous contact with birth family and child;
  - d. level of healthy attachment to birth family (and adoptive family, if applicable);
  - e. roles defined and boundaries established; and
  - f. geographic proximity between the birth and adoptive family.
- 2) Based on the assessment, the degree of openness is decided by the adoptive family with the input of the birth family. The CFSA may want to facilitate this conversation (if meeting jointly).
  - 3) It should be emphasized that the openness agreement is not enforceable by Ohio law, but that it is more of a moral commitment.
  - 4) Over time, each adoptive family can modify the appropriate openness level based on changing needs of child, adoptive family and birth family.
  - 5) The CFSA should provide the adoptive family with support, training opportunities and information on open adoption (see Standard 7.1, *Combined Certification and Approval for Foster Care and Adoptive Families* and 7.13, *Adoptive Parent Training*).

#### **V. Financial Implications**

There are no additional costs anticipated with the implementation of Standard 7.15, *Openness in Adoption*, other than those identified in Standard.1, *Combine Certification and Approval for Foster Care and Adoptive Families* and Standard 7.13, *Adoptive Parent Training*.