

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
STANDARDS FOR ADOPTION SERVICES

7.16 ADOPTION SERVICES FOR NONTRADITIONAL ADOPTION FAMILIES

Council on Accreditation Standards

The Council on Accreditation Standards S14 (Adoption Services) and S14.3 (Services for the Child) link to and support Standard 7.16 *Adoption Services for Nontraditional Adoption Families*.

Administrative Standards

There are no Administrative Code Rules that directly address Standard 7.16 *Adoption Services for Nontraditional Adoption Families*.

I. Philosophy

Everyone with the potential to successfully parent a child in foster care or adoption is entitled to fair and equal consideration regardless of family structure, age, socio-economic status, physical or mental challenges, and/or sexual orientation. CFSA's should assess each applicant from the perspective of what would be in the best interest of the child. Staff and board training on cultural diversity should include factual information about nontraditional families as potential adoptive resources for children needing families in order to dispel common myths. The needs of the child are the priority consideration in adoption.

II. Outcome

Children reach permanency through adoption by considering all potential resources of adoptive families.

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 nontraditional prospective applicants per year;
- number of nontraditional prospective applicants qualifying per year;
- number of nontraditional prospective applicants completing all necessary paperwork per year;
- number of nontraditional prospective applicants completing all training requirements per year;
- number of nontraditional prospective applicants approved per year;
- number of nontraditional adoptive families that complete pre-service training for foster/adoptive applicants;
- number of nontraditional families that participate in pre-finalization trainings (at minimum three trainings);
- number of nontraditional adoptive families participating in support groups made available by CFSA;

IV. Standards for Implementation

A. Recruitment

- 1) Standard 7.3, *Recruitment of Adoptive Homes*, should be utilized to find permanent homes for children. In addition, the following standards should be applied to promote the recruitment of families for all Ohio's waiting children:
 - a) CFSAs and the state agency should expand adoption recruitment efforts to include nontraditional families.
 - b) CFSAs should participate in ongoing media recruitment activities within nontraditional communities.
 - c) CFSAs should make every effort to modify recruitment activities and promotions to be inclusive and welcoming to all potential foster/adoptive applicants.

B. Certification/Approval Process

- 1) Standard 7.1, *Combined Certification and Approval for Foster Care and Adoptive Families*, should be utilized to find permanent homes for children. In addition, the following standards should be applied to the certification/approval process:
 - a) In considering nontraditional applicants, CFSAs should have included in the materials sent to prospective applicants, information regarding agency's policies of supporting nontraditional families and encouraging all to apply.
 - b) During the process of certification and approval, CFSAs should be flexible with the homestudy process to meet the needs of the nontraditional family.
 - c) Staff should be cognizant of any unique needs or supports families may have, and be respectful throughout the homestudy process of these needs. Questions should be altered or expanded to fit the unique needs of the family.

C. Training

- 1) In addition to the training standards in Standard 7.13, *Adoptive Parent Training*, CFSAs and the state should provide pre-service training that is inclusive and dispels myths of nontraditional families. Training curriculum should include resources available for nontraditional families both pre and post adoption.

D. Matching

- 1) Standard 7.6, *Matching*, should be utilized to find permanent homes for children. In addition, the following standards should be applied to the matching process.
 - a) To make the best possible placement for a child, CFSAs should consider all families regardless of their nontraditional or traditional status during the matching staffing.

- b) CFSAs should develop matching guidelines to ensure inclusivity of all potential resource families. Personal values should not be an obstacle for making the best placement choice for a child.

E. Child Preparation

- 1) Standard 7.5, *Preparing Children for Adoption* and Standard 7.11, *Placement of Children in Adoptive Home*, should be referred to for preparing the child for adoption. In addition, the following standards should be applied when placing a child with a nontraditional adoptive family:
 - a. The preparation for any placement should require staff to assess the differences between the child's family, relatives and/or foster families compared to the nontraditional adoptive family and explain to the child the differences between the families.
 - b. According to the child's development level, staff should allow children to respond and share feelings, thoughts and concerns of being adopted by a nontraditional family.
 - c. In the event children do have concerns, questions or fears, staff need to prepare the child appropriately for the adoption placement. Staff should educate and try to alleviate the child's fear by having ongoing dialogue with the child's prospective family, allowing the child to spend time with the prospective family and talking with the child about his/her experiences with the pre-placement visits.
 - d. CFSAs should work to provide supportive environments during the transition that are particularly sensitive to the child's feelings and questions regarding the nontraditional status of the adoptive family. Foster and birth families should be encouraged to be supportive to the perspective family.
 - e. The child, and the birth family should have the opportunity to express their discomfort with a potential placement. CFSAs should be respectful of the child's birth, kinship and foster families discomfort with the potential family and work to alleviate or resolve issues of concern.

F. Support

- 1) Standard 7.8, *Supports for Multi-Racial, Multi-Cultural and Multi-Ethnic Adoptive Families* should be referred to for supports for families. In addition, the following standards should be applied when supporting the nontraditional family:
 - a. During the certification and approval process, CSFAs should assess the nontraditional family's support network and discuss needed or additional supports.
 - b. CFSAs should make every effort to maintain current resources to provide to nontraditional families throughout the adoption process.

G. Social Worker/Public Competency and Agency Policies

- a. CFSAs should be responsible to train their social work staff to be aware and inclusive of all resources available to children and to understand that nontraditional families can provide an important role in providing permanency.
- b. CFSAs should provide continuing education to social workers regarding ethical practice for social work and not to jeopardize possible adoptive placements based on personal values.

- c. CFSAs should provide training for social workers to establish trust and openness in relationships with all applicants, including nontraditional applicants.
 - d. CFSAs should educate/advocate with court appointed personnel, administration, guardian ad litem and the general community on the importance of assessing nontraditional families as resources in meeting the needs of permanency for waiting children.
 - e. CFSAs should have policies that address the services and supports that will be offered and provided to all families, including nontraditional foster and adoptive families.
 - f. Beyond training provided, CFSAs should display and include in day-to-day operations an open and inclusive environment that facilitates mutual respect and open dialogue on issues of diversity.
 - g. A working environment where values of inclusivity are fostered will produce practice that is nondiscriminatory.
- h. CFSAs should develop a committee to assess on an ongoing basis current policies to assure that they reflect nondiscriminatory practices to all families.
- i. CFSAs should promote these newly modified policies with the wider public, including court appointed personnel, guardian ad litem, public and private agencies, and the general public.

V. Financial Implications

No additional costs are anticipated for Standard 7.16, *Adoption Services for Nontraditional Adoption Families*.