

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE
STANDARDS FOR ADOPTION SERVICES

7.5 PREPARING CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION

Council on Accreditation Standards

The Council on Accreditation Standards S14 (Adoptive Services); S14.3 (Services to the Child); and S14.3 (Permanency) link to and support Standard 7.5 *Preparing Children for Adoption*.

Administrative Code

The Ohio Administrative Code Rules 5101:2-42-67 (Preparation of Lifebook); 5101:2-48-03 (Requirements of ODHS Social and Medical History); 5101:2-48-04 (AdoptOhio Agency Responsibilities); 5101:2-48-21 (Child Study Inventory); and 5101:2-48-14 (Preparation of Child for Adoptive Placement) address Standard 7.5 *Preparing Children for Adoption*.

I. Philosophy

Preparing children for adoption should begin prior to the time permanent custody is filed and should assist the child with processing separation from the birth family. Children should be prepared prior to, up to, and following the point at which the placement is made and the adoption is finalized. Children need to be given honest information based on their developmental level. It is important to help the child process his/her grief resulting from separation and loss. It is essential for the future adjustment for both the child and the birth family to be given an opportunity to say "good-bye".

Preparation improves the readiness level of children for an adoptive placement. Therefore, CFSA's regard the preparation of children as necessary and primary to their best interest, long-term adjustment and well-being.

II. Outcome

Children are prepared to successfully transition to the adoptive home.

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 children and children'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;
- number of adoptions that disrupt per year.

IV. Standards for Implementation

A. Prior to Permanent Custody

Prior to seeking permanent custody, the CFSA should:

- 1) explain to the child why he/she cannot return home;
- 2) discuss the meaning of permanent custody, the process and the possible outcomes;
- 3) obtain child's input/feelings regarding permanency plan;
- 4) gather information about the child and birth family; and
- 5) clarify with child the potential to maintain relationships with significant family members/persons in his/her life.

B. Between Permanent Custody and Adoptive Placement

- 1) The child should be provided with a good-bye visit with his/her birth family within ninety days of obtaining permanent custody.
 - a. The birth family, worker, and the adoption worker should jointly prepare the birth family for the good-bye visit by informing the birth family of their need to assure child of three things:
 - i. they will always love them;
 - ii. it is alright to love someone else and to be happy in the new family; and
 - iii. give permission to move on.
 - b. An appropriate comfortable location should be secured for the visit.
 - c. Plans should be made for a separate support person for the child and another for the birth family to be available afterwards to process the visit.
 - d. The visit should be preserved for the future. At a minimum, pictures should be taken, but ideally the visit should be audio/video taped. The child and the birth family should both receive a copy of the pictures and/or video/audio tape.
 - e. The birth family should be encouraged to bring a special gift for the child, and the child should be encouraged to make a special gift for the birth family.
 - f. In situations where there is an agreement for ongoing contact with birth family members after adoption, this visit should be adapted to bring closure to the idea of the child returning to live with birth family, while allowing for the transition to the level of contact agreed upon for the future.
 - g. If good-bye visits are not possible with the child's birth family, the social worker should work with the child and current caregiver to provide some event/experience of closure.
- 2) Preparation for the child should occur at every visit the child has with a counselor and/or agency worker. The following activities should occur at these visits:
 - a. updating the Lifebook;
 - b. process child's feelings regarding separation and loss from birth family and feelings about being adopted;
 - c. discuss the type of adoptive family the child would like and the child's expectations of adoption;

- d. discuss the level of openness for his/her adoption (see Standard 7.15, *Openness in Adoption*);
 - e. discuss the recruitment plan and the role the child will play in the recruitment activities. If age appropriate, the child should be asked to identify important persons in his/her past, to include kinship connections and blood relatives;
 - f. providing to the child information about the family and the family's photo/narrative scrapbook should be shared and processed with the child.
- 3) The child should participate in the planned recruitment activities.
 - 4) The child should participate in pre-placement activities/visits with the prospective adoptive family (see Standard 7.11, *Placement of Children in Adoptive Home*).
 - 5) The prospective adoptive family and child should be linked to community resources and services to support the transition.
 - 6) The worker should explain the planned permanency activities to the foster family to assist in the transition of the child to the new family.
 - 7) The staff should have regular conversations with the foster family to gain additional information regarding the child's behavior including: likes and dislikes, fears, concerns, and share these with the prospective adoptive family. If possible, the foster family should directly share information regarding the child with the prospective adoptive family.

C. Adoptive Placement Through Finalization

- 1) If appropriate, the foster family should visit the child in his/her adoptive home to ease the transition.
- 2) The CFSA worker should provide support and assess the adjustment of the child and the family at each visit to the home. Weekly visits by the agency worker should be provided for the first month after placement in the adoptive home.
- 3) The worker should discuss with the child and adoptive family what the name of the child will be.
- 4) The agency worker should prepare the adoptive family and child for the finalization hearing (including taking the child to the court where the finalization will occur).

V. Financial Implications

Costs associated with Standard 7.5, *Preparing Children for Adoption* are the costs associated with the counselor to prepare the child for permanency (if other than the CFSA staff).

Cost impact could be \$75 per weekly visit x 52 weeks = \$3,900 annually per child. These sessions could be billed to Medicaid or PASSS if the child is eligible.