



## Adoption Policies

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*Welcome to Family and Community Services! This booklet will provide you with important F&CS policies that you can refer to as you go through the adoption process. If at anytime throughout your adoption you have questions regarding any of these policies or procedures, please contact your adoption specialist or the adoption supervisor. We look forward to working with you!*

Orientation

**POLICY:** Family & Community Services, Inc., hereafter referred to F&CS/Sterling Heights, provides orientation to prospective applicants for adoption before an adoptive application is provided and an adoption evaluation is conducted.

**PROCEDURE:**

A Social Service worker, Social Service supervisor or the Director will provide orientation information to persons contacting F&CS/Michigan to learn about the agency's adoption programs and services. Orientation information will be provided verbally and in writing, via telephone and email contact and/or in person interviews. Orientation meetings are scheduled for individuals/couples, or with groups of prospective adoptive parents. Orientation information includes, but is not limited to the agency's program statement, policies and procedures; needs and characteristics of children available for adoption; services and resources available; fees and charges; legal process; training requirements; and post adoption service availability. F&CS, upon request, shall provide an adoptive application to an interested family. F&CS may consider an application withdrawn after 90 days if the applicant fails to cooperate with the completion of the evaluation process.

Adoption Evaluation

**POLICY:** Family & Community Services, Inc. (F&CS) adoption program, hereafter referred to F&CS/Sterling Heights, will conduct an evaluation of each prospective adoptive parent who submits an Adoption Application. The evaluations are conducted by social service workers.

**PROCEDURE:**

The complete Adoption Application, including all supporting documents (refer to Application Checklist) is reviewed by the Director or Social Service Supervisor. Applicants are notified if their application is accepted, not accepted, or additional information is needed to determine whether the agency can accept the application for adoptive evaluation services. An accepted application is assigned to a Social Service worker who will provide all services related to adoption evaluation, placement, and post-placement services requested or required by the applicants.

F&CS/Sterling Heights will write a report of all adoptive evaluations completed within 90 days of receipt of the approved formal application. When completing adoptive evaluations for applicants to international adoption programs, the Social Service worker follows the agency's Adoption Study Format when writing a report of the evaluation. The format adheres to the requirements of the state of Michigan (MCL 710.23f), the United States Citizen and Immigration Service, and/or the agency, state or foreign government placing a child with the applicant(s).

Adoption Record

**POLICY:** Family & Community Services, Inc. (F&CS) adoption program, hereafter referred to F&CS/Sterling Heights, creates and permanently maintains a case record for each adoptive child after adoptive placement and for each applicant family for adoption.

**PROCEDURE:**

Adoptive child case records contain, but are not limited to all of the following:

- Orientation documentation as required by R 400.12707
- Evaluation documentation as required by R 400.12708
- Placement documentation as required by R 400.12709
- Supervision documentation as required by R 400.12711

Applicant family case records shall contain, but are not limited to all of the following:

- Orientation documentation as required by R 400.12604
- Adoptive family evaluation as required by R 400.12605
- Record of Training Provided
- Documentation of agency policies that were provided to applicants
- All documents pertaining to adoption evaluation required by R 400.12605
- Agency recommendation as required by R 400.12606

The agency shall retain each applicant family record for not less than 3 years after the agency's termination of services to the applicant family.

In the event the F&CS/Sterling Heights ceases to operate, all case records will be retained by Family & Community Services, Inc. branch office or associate office, according to the rules of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. If F&CS ceases to operate or can no longer assume custody and responsibility of the child case records of F&CS/Sterling Heights, the records will be transferred to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Adoptive applicant family records shall be shredded or returned to the applicant family if services to the applicant family were terminated 3 or more years before the closure. Records shall be forwarded to the Department of Health and Human Services Central Office Adoptions for all other records.

The agency will place a child only with adoptive parents approved by the agency. A child will be placed with adoptive parents whose agency approval and placement recommendation (in the adoptive evaluation report of the family) is consistent with the needs of the child.

All adoptive placements meet the recommendation of the Social Service worker who conducted the adoptive evaluation and are approved by the Supervisor/Director of Adoption. The agency documents approval of all adoptive placements with the agency form Placement Approval, signed by the Social Service worker and the Supervisor/Director recommending and approving the placement.

### Supervision

**POLICY:** Family & Community Services, Inc. (F&CS) adoption program, hereafter referred to F&CS/Sterling Heights, provides post-placement supervision for the adoptive family and child.

### PROCEDURE:

When the adoptive petition is filed in a court in Michigan, all post-placement supervision visits will take place at the adoptive parent's home. Visits will be scheduled as needed for the child and adoptive family, but no less than once every month after placement of a child and until the final order of adoption. If the adoption is filed and is to be finalized in another state or country, the agency will comply with the specific requirements of the state or country of jurisdiction regarding frequency of post-placement/post-adoption country but the placement authority where the adoption originated has supervision requirements beyond finalization, F&CS will complete the supervision requirements of that placement authority. F&CS will provide a supervision visit within the first 30 days of placement into the adoptive home, despite the specific requirements other agencies, courts, states, or country of jurisdiction require.

The agency writes reports of all supervision visits. The written reports include an assessment of the child's and adoptive family's adjustment and details about the child's physical, mental, and emotional growth and development. As needed, the report will include plans to assist the child and/or adoptive family. Supervision reports are written in a format to comply with the requirements of the agency, court, state, and/or country of jurisdiction. The agency informs all adoptive parents of the results of the agency's continuing assessment of the placement at the conclusion of each visit. Written supervision reports are provided to adoptive parents.

Reports of adoptive evaluations will contain the dates and places of contacts and persons interviewed or observed. The report will serve as an assessment of all of the following:

- Visits at the residence of the applicants for adoption to conduct observations of, and interviews with, each member of the household to determine all of the following:
  1. Marital and family status and history, including current and past level of family functioning and relationships and any incidents of domestic violence
  2. Educational history and any special skills and interests
  3. Employment history, current financial status, including property and income, money management skills and outstanding financial obligations
  4. Physical, mental, and emotional health of each member of the household
  5. Any history of substance abuse of each member of the household
  6. Parenting skills and attitudes toward children
  7. Methods of discipline of children
  8. Adjustment and special needs of the applicants own children, including children not living in the home
  9. Strengths and weaknesses of each member of the household
  10. Experiences with own parents and any history of out-of-home care
  11. Reasons for adopting
  12. Previous licenses or experience in providing child foster care,
  13. Child day care, or adult foster care
  14. Attitude towards accepting an adoptive child
  15. Willingness to accept an adoptive child with the child's individual
  16. Characteristics, needs, and background
  17. Willingness to parent cross-racially or cross-culturally and to
  18. Create an atmosphere that fosters the racial identity and culture of an adopted child
  19. Willingness and ability to understand an adopted child's attachment to the birth family and other significant relationships
  20. An understanding of and willingness to participate in concurrent planning
  21. Willingness and ability to give an adopted child guidance, love, and affection and accept the child as a member of the household
  22. Existence of social support system and alternate care providers

Adoption Evaluation Continued

- Previous adoption evaluations or placements
- Previous criminal convictions, and substantiated child abuse or neglect investigations or concerns brought to the agency's department's attention for any member of the household
- Three current references from persons not related to the applicants
- A medical statement for each member of the household that indicates that the member has no known condition that would affect the care of an adoptive child. The statement shall be signed by a physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner within the 12-month period before the adoptive evaluation
- Safety and maintenance of the applicant's house and property, including but not limited to: sufficient beds and sleeping space, pets, guns and other weapons, and water hazards
- Assessment of the neighborhood, schools, and community, and available resources for the purpose of adoption as determined by an on-site visit
- The plan for guardianship of the child or children in the event of the parent or parent's death or permanent disability preventing continuation of parental responsibility
- The family's plan to discuss adoption with any child adopted
- Training needs of the family
- The age, number, gender, race, ethnic background, and special characteristics of children preferred by the applicants

The agency may review a previous adoptive evaluation conducted by another agency in this state or other states and considered the recommendation of that evaluation as part of the agency's adoptive evaluation process. Adoptive family evaluations accepted from other states or agencies in this state shall have been completed by an agency or social worker licensed to complete adoption home studies in the state where the evaluation was completed.

Fees

**POLICY:** Family & Community Services, Inc. (F&CS) adoption program, hereafter referred to F&CS/Sterling Heights, has and follows a written fee agreement for each of the countries F&CS is authorized to provide placement services. F&CS also has a written fee agreement for adoption services provided to families who are using another placement provider (independent adoption).

The fee agreements include all fees to be covered in a written agreement with the applicants, what specific services are covered by the fees, whether fees can change during an agreement, fees associated with modifying the agreement, specific fees for each country, fees associated with changing countries, what fees can be transferred during the agreement, what fees are refundable and at what points in time, how fees are to be paid to individuals in other countries for F&CS authorized placement countries, and which fees are to be paid to individuals in other countries for F&CS authorized placement countries.

PROCEDURE:

F&CS/Sterling Heights has established fee agreements for each country that F&CS is authorized to make placements in as well as an established fee agreement for families working with other placement agencies but seeking the assistance of F&CS for services required in this state and/or by the placement authority. The fee agreements are given to prospective adoptive applicants at the time of orientation and are also available through My Adoption Portal (MAPs) during the formal application phase.

Placement

**POLICY:** Family & Community Services, Inc. (F&CS) adoption program, hereafter referred to F&CS/Sterling Heights, requires a social services supervisor or chief administrator if the placement is recommended by a social services supervisor, to approve or deny the recommendation for placement and document the decision. For placements made when an adoptive family evaluation has been completed by a different agency or licensed social worker, where legal, the placement must be endorsed by the placement agency.

PROCEDURE:

When F&CS is responsible for placement of a child, consideration is given to the following factors prior to referring a specific child to adoptive parents:

- The physical, emotional, medical, and educational needs of the child
- The racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, heritage, and background. The child's racial, ethnic, and cultural identity, heritage, and background will only be considered if an assessment of the individual child indicates that such consideration is in the best interests of the child