

# OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN PLACEMENT (OChYP)

## Adoption

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### Policy

The Office of Children and Youth in Placement (OChYP) is a coordination, planning and support unit ensuring uniformity in the implementation of foster care and adoption initiatives statewide.

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### Adoption Services

Specific adoption services provided by OChYP staff include the following:

- maintaining the child and family registries;
  - recruiting for special needs children free for adoption via the Heart Gallery, web based recruitment sites, child specific recruitment events or activities;
  - collaborating with the Office of the Chief of Staff, Communications and Media Relations for special recruitment efforts;
  - maintaining the DCF website highlighting every child for whom legal permission has been granted for media recruitment;
  - maintaining the Adopt US Kids web site;
  - providing training opportunities for families on the adoption registry who are waiting to be matched for a child via hosting "While You Are Waiting" evening institutes
  - processing adoption decrees within the DCF computer system;
  - maintaining the information on all adoptions finalized in Connecticut;
  - maintaining the subsidized adoption program;
  - processing subsidized adoption requests after finalization;
  - providing identifying and non-identifying information to adult adoptees and others.
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### Responsibilities

Dedicated staff within OChYP located at Central Office, provide the following services:

- assistance to regional office staff in planning for children whose goal is adoption;
- locates adoptive family resources; and
- information on adoption practice, policy, procedures and statutes.

The following requests and inquiries shall be directed to the staff at Central Office:

- forms requiring the Commissioner's signature for adoption hearings;
  - requests for adoptive family home studies registered on the Exchange;
  - requests for closed adoption records;
  - adult adoptee requests for information; and
  - requests for information on adoption statutes, legislation, policy, and procedures.
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### Registration of Children for adoptive resource

All children for whom the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families is the statutory parent shall be registered for adoption in the Department's computer system.

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### Registration of Children for adoptive resource (continued)

A child may also be registered within the Department's computer system to identify an adoptive home when the prognosis for reunification is poor and a match for a "legal risk" home is needed.

**Cross Reference:** DCF Policy 23-3, "Removal from Home and Placement".

### Registration with Photo Listing service

The OChYP maintains a photo-listing service which shall be distributed to all child care and child-placing agencies and other organizations concerned with adoptions. The photo listing services shall recruit adoptive families for children who qualify for registration.

All children for whom the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families is the statutory parent shall be registered for photo listing within 10 days unless a deferral is approved. Deferral of registration may be granted for the following reasons:

- The child is in an adoptive placement but is not legally adopted;
- The child's foster parents or other individuals are considering adoption;
- Diagnostic study or testing is required to clarify the child's problem and provide an adequate description;
- The child is currently in a hospital and continuing need for daily professional care will not permit placement in a family setting; or
- The child is fourteen years of age or older and will not consent to an adoption plan.

A child for whom the Department is not the statutory parent may be registered for photo listing if the Superior Court of Juvenile Matters has issued an order to photo list the child and approved a permanency plan of termination of parental rights and adoption.

The Department shall refer appropriate children to the national adoption or permanency resource exchanges when an adoptive family has not been identified within one hundred eighty days of the termination of parental rights.

**Legal Reference:** Connecticut Gen. Stat. §17a-42 through §17a-46.

### Registration of Families

Families who are licensed or approved for adoption shall be registered in the Department's computer system and maintained on the adoption registry by staff in OChYP.

The FASU licensing worker shall enter the information for Department licensed families as well as private agency or out-of-state families found via child specific recruitment.

The Permanency Resource Exchange supervisor shall enter family registrations from private agencies or out-of-state agencies when families are seeking to adopt off the adoption registry.

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### Families Registered

The following types of families are registered in the DCF computer system:

- families licensed or approved for adoption by the Department;
- families approved by licensed in-state private child placing agencies to adopt a child in foster care; and
- families approved by an out-of-state child placing agency to adopt a child.

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### Materials to be Submitted for Family Registration

For a family to be registered, the following materials must be submitted via e-mail to the OChYP supervisor:

- a completed DCF-334, "Family Registration", and
- one copy of the licensing home study and any additional addendums completed by a licensed or approved child placing agency or area office.

Child placing agencies must submit copies of all applicable criminal and child safety background checks.

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### Review of Registrations

Family registrations shall remain on file with the DCF OChYP to be reviewed by the staff when a child's registration is received. Based on the family's interest and capacities as stated on the registration form, appropriate home studies are forwarded to the child's Social Worker for consideration.

**Note:** The original family registrations shall be maintained on file with the appropriate DCF Office.

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### Annual Updates

Annually, or more often if the need arises, the agency which initially licensed or approved the registered family shall:

- update the family's homestudy;
- complete a new DCF-334, "Family Registration" and
- send the updated DCF-334 to Central Office OChYP staff.

The OChYP supervisor will send annual notification to the appropriate agency for those families whose home studies and background checks need updating.

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### Change in Family's Status

The Social Worker for registered families shall notify central office when a family has been identified for a placement or is to be withdrawn from the adoption registry for any reason.

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### Telephone Inquiries

The regional Foster and Adoption Service Units (FASU) and the central office OChYP staff shall provide a timely and informative response to all individuals who call for adoption information.

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### Telephone Inquiries (continued)

The FASU worker or the Central Office OChYP recruiter shall:

- obtain preliminary information to identify the caller's interests and to answer general questions about adoption;
- explain special needs adoption and the Department's need for families who can parent these children; and
- refer the family to 1-888-KID-HERO so a packet of information can be sent to the family.

### Records of Adoptions

The OChYP maintains information on all adoptions completed in Connecticut. Records have been maintained since 1943. Probate court notifies OChYP of adoptions finalized in the state by a private, licensed child placing agency.

### Requests for Information

OChYP responds to requests for information about birth family members. The requestor shall be required to provide a notarized letter verifying their identification.

The non-identifying information shall be provided upon receipt of the letter.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §45a-743 through §45a-757.

### Information Provided

The OChYP worker shall provide non-identifying information to the requester. Information that may be disclosed includes, but is not limited to:

- genetic parents information, including:
  - ethnicity;
  - physical description;
  - age at the time of the child's birth;
  - education and achievements;
  - occupations;
  - hobbies and talents; and
  - pertinent medical history (discretion shall be used in sharing information about psychiatric care, mental illness, rape, incest, venereal disease, etc.);
- information about any siblings, including their sexes and ages at the time of the adoptee's birth;
- information about grandparents and other relatives, such as physical descriptions, occupations and education; and
- if possible, a description of the child and his or her experiences before being placed in the adoptive home.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §45a-751, et. seq.

**Request for Information in Medical Emergencies**

When a telephone request is received for medical information about an adoptee because of a medical emergency, the OChYP worker shall request that the doctor or therapist immediately send a written release of information, signed by the adult adoptee or the adoptive parent of a minor adopted child.

If there is no written release and a court order is necessary to release the information, the OChYP worker shall contact the Probate Court or Superior Court where the adoptee was adopted.

**Adoption Reunion Registry**

The Department shall maintain an Adoption Reunion Registry. The purpose of the Adoption Reunion Registry is to document the consent or refusal to consent to the release of information which may identify the registrant. The registry shall contain:

- voluntary consents;
- refusals of consents; and
- revocations of consent.

The following people may register with the Adoption Reunion Registry:

- a genetic parent who was a party to the proceeding for the termination of parental rights;
- an adult adopted person, an adult adoptable person, an adult adopted genetic sibling of an adoptable or adopted person, or an adult non-adopted genetic sibling of an adoptable or adopted person;
- lineal ascendants and descendants of a deceased genetic parent;
- an adoptive parent for the purpose of obtaining medical information which affects an adopted person; or
- a person claiming to be the father who was not a party to the proceeding for the termination of parental rights.

**Cross reference:** DCF-3060, "Adult Adoptee Request for Information", DCF-3061, "Contact Preference and Reunion Registry for Genetic Parents, DCF-3062, "Request for Adoption Search (Birth relative) and Reunion Registry.

**Legal reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §45a-755.

**Medical Information to be maintained**

DCF shall maintain a registry for medical information about adopted persons received from a genetic parent or blood relative of such adopted person.

Upon receipt of medical information, the OChYP worker shall notify the adopted person of the availability of such information. If the adopted person is a minor, the OChYP worker shall notify the adoptive parent of the availability of the information.

The OChYP worker shall not provide any information tending to identify the parent or blood relative without the consent of the respective parties, except as otherwise authorized by statute.

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**Requests for searches** The OChYP search consultant shall conduct a search for birth parent(s), birth relatives or adult adoptees as requested by an adult adoptee, adoptable person or birth parents in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. §45a-743 through 45a-757.

If there is a match of consents, whereby the registrants agree to the releasing of identifying information to each other, the department shall notify each registrant of the name, address and other identifying information as provided by the other registrant.

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**Definitions** **Adopted person** means a person who was adopted under the laws of Connecticut or who was adopted in another jurisdiction, but whose birth parents have had their parental rights terminated in Connecticut.

**Adoptable person** means a person who has not been adopted, but whose birth parents have had their parental rights terminated under the laws of this state.

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**When Proof of ID is Returned to DCF** When an eligible applicant requests identifying information and/or a meeting with his/her birth parent(s), sibling(s), or adopted child, the OChYP worker shall explain the procedures as required by law. The OChYP worker shall:

- obtain and review the closed adoption record(s) to determine if there has been any Adoption Reunion Registry contact with the person being searched since the parental rights were terminated ; and
- check the Adoption Reunion Registry to determine consent, withdrawal of consent or refusal to have contact or release information.

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**Personal Interview** The adult adoptee or birth parent must have a personal interview with an OChYP worker. If the person lives out of state, an adoption agency or licensed counselor in the area where they live may conduct the interview. The OChYP worker will send a letter to the agency identifying the subject matter to be covered during the interview.

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**Interview with Adult Adoptee** Topics for discussion in the interview include:

- what the adoptee already knows of his/her adoption and birth family;
- the adoptee's childhood;
- the adoptee's current life situation;
- the adoptee's motivation for searching now;
- the adoptee's expectations about their birth family;
- what kind of contact would the adoptee initially prefer (i.e. letter, telephone call or personal contact);
- what does the adoptee expect from or hope for their birth family (i.e., just information or on-going contact); and
- is the adoptee prepared.

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**Interview with Adult Adoptee**

The adoptee needs to be prepared for the following possibilities:

- the birth parents:
  - may be deceased;
  - may not be able to be located; and
  - have the right to refuse contact with the adoptee;
- the adoptee:
  - may find contact disappointing and/or difficult; and
  - may need some help in understanding the birth parents' feelings when the child became available for adoption and what this present contact may mean to them;
- if appropriate, may need help to understand the adoptive parents' feelings about the search.

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**Interview with Birth Parent**

Before an attempt is made to contact the adoptee, it is important to ascertain a sense of the stability and maturity of the parent.

The adoptee and birth parents have the right to consent or refuse to have contact.

Some of the areas and issues to be addressed in the interview with the birth parent are as follows:

- motivation;
- the sense of urgency;
- the appropriateness of the search;
- the current life situation/style of the parent;
- the parent's recollection regarding the circumstances of the TPR and adoption;
- the parent's expectations of a reunion;
- the possibility that the adoptee may not wish contact (i.e. rejection);
- implications for the adoptee and the adoptive parents;
- the current family's understanding of the situation; and
- support of the search.

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**Request for Probate Court Information**

If the person being searched cannot be located within the mandatory ten (10) hours allotted for the search, the searcher can petition Probate Court for release of identifying information.

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**Meeting Between Participants**

The meeting may take place in the DCF office; or, the participants may, after verbal or written correspondence, decide to arrange the meeting themselves without a third party being involved.

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### Meeting Between Participants

When involved, the OChYP worker will:

- introduce the adoptee and birth relative to one another;
  - remain for the meeting if the parties want the worker to be:
    - present
    - available after the meeting; and
    - offer further meetings with either the adoptee or birth relative, if requested.
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### Denial of Request

If the request for identifying information is denied by the Department, the requester shall be advised that he or she may petition the probate court.

**Legal Reference:** Conn. Gen. Stat. §45a-752.

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