

# PERMANENCY PLANNING

## Adoption

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### Policy

All children shall have permanency which includes an enduring family relationship. One of the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) permanency goals for children who are separated from their legal parents is adoption.

Adoption occurs following the termination of parental rights of the birth parents. It is the establishment of a legally recognized, lifelong relationship between adoptive parents and the child through a court order which establishes the legal relationship for the child to become full and permanent legal members of another family.

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### Definitions

Adopted person refers to a person who was adopted under the laws of juvenile matters in superior court, and whose birth parents have had their parental rights terminated.

An 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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### Adoption Services

Specific adoption services provided by central office foster care staff include the following:

- maintaining the child and family registries
  - recruiting for special needs children available for adoption via the Heart Gallery, web-based recruitment sites, child specific recruitment events or activities, through collaboration with the Dave Thomas Foundation's Wendy's Wonderful Kids Program
  - maintaining the DCF website highlighting every child for whom legal permission has been granted for media recruitment
  - maintaining the Adopt US Kids web site (for Connecticut children)
  - providing training opportunities for families on the adoption registry who are waiting to be matched for a child
  - 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 foster care, provide the following services:

- consultation to regional office staff in planning for children whose goal is a subsidized transfer of guardianship and adoption by reviewing subsidy packets and providing guidance related to the various permanency outcomes
- locates adoptive family resources
- conducts family search and engagement to locate potential permanency resources
- conducts rapid permanency reviews on cases based on permanency reports and
- provides information on adoption practice, policy, procedures and statutes.

The following requests and inquiries shall be directed to the staff at central office:  
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### Responsibilities (continued)

- forms requiring the Commissioner's signature for adoption hearings
- requests for adoptive family home studies registered on the registry
- adult adoptee and/or biological family requests for non-identifying or identifying information
- 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 is the statutory parent shall be registered for adoption in DCF's computer system.

A child (whose parents' rights are not yet terminated) may also be registered within DCF's computer system to identify an adoptive home when the prognosis for reunification is poor and a match for a permanent home is needed.

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

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### Registration with Photo Listing Service

The permanency resource exchange unit maintains a photo-listing service which shall be accessible by all child care and child-placing agencies and other organizations concerned with adoptions. The purpose of the photo listing services is to recruit adoptive families for children who qualify.

All children for whom the Commissioner 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
- 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 DCF 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 or has approved a permanency plan of termination of parental rights and adoption.

DCF 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:** C.G.S. sections 17a-42 through 17a-46

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### Registration of Families

Families which are licensed or approved for adoption shall be registered in DCF's computer system and maintained on the adoption registry by staff in the permanency resource exchange unit.

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### Registration of Families (continued)

The foster care licensing worker shall send the home-study and family registration form to the Permanency Resource Exchange, for DCF licensed families.

The Permanency Resource Exchange supervisor shall enter family registrations from private agencies when families are seeking to adopt off the adoption registry. The Permanency Resource Exchange supervisor shall create the private adoption agency family in the DCF computer system for placement and payment purposes.

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### Families Registered

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

- families licensed by the DCF who seek to adopt a child in care, and
  - families approved by licensed in-state private child placing agencies to adopt a child in care.
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### Inquiries

The regional foster care and central office staff shall provide a timely and informative response to all individuals who contact for foster or adoption information.

The regional foster care worker or the central office staff shall:

- obtain preliminary information to identify the caller's interests and to answer general questions about adoption
  - explain special needs adoption and DCF'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.
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### Records of Adoptions

Central office foster care maintains information on all adoptions completed in Connecticut. Records have been maintained since 1943. Probate Court notifies central office of adoptions finalized in the state by a private, licensed child placing agency.

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### SEARCH: Requests for Non-Identifying Information

Adult adoptees request for information about their birth families shall be managed by central office foster care. Non-identifying Information is provided with a:

- valid driver's license
- valid picture ID, or
- a notarized letter verifying their identification

If it is determined that a private agency handled the adoption, the SEARCH worker shall provide the requestor the necessary information to contact the corresponding adoption agency.

**Legal reference:** C.G.S. sections 45a-743 through 45a-757

Information that may be disclosed includes, but is not limited to:

- genetic parents' information, including:
  - ethnicity

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**SEARCH:  
Requests for  
Non-  
Identifying  
Information  
(continued)**

- 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 their experiences before being placed in the adoptive home.

**Legal reference:** C.G.S. sections 45a-751, et. seq.

**Request for  
Information  
in Medical  
Emergencies**

When a request is received for medical information about an adoptee because of a medical emergency, central office foster care 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, central office foster care shall contact the Probate Court or Superior Court where the adoptee was adopted.

**Adoption  
Reunion  
Registry**

DCF 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 are identified as authorized applicants when seeking information regarding an adoption:

- an adult adopted, or adult adoptable, person
- any biological parent of an adult adopted, or adult adoptable, person (including any father claiming to be the father who was not a party to the TPR proceedings)
- any adult biological sibling of an adult adopted, or adult adoptable, person
- if the adopted, or adult adoptable person is deceased, any adult descendant, including legally adopted descendants.

The following people may register with the Adoption Reunion Registry for providing medical information:

- a genetic parent who was a party to the proceeding for the termination of parental rights

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#### Adoption Reunion Registry (continued)

- 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 right.

**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:** C.G.S. section 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, central office foster care shall notify the adopted person of the availability of such information. If the adopted person is a minor, the SEARCH worker shall notify the adoptive parent of the availability of the information.

The central office foster care shall not provide any information to identify the parent or blood relative without the consent of the respective parties, except as otherwise authorized by statute.

#### Requests for Identifying Information

Central office foster care 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 C.G.S. sections 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, DCF shall notify each registrant of the name, address and other identifying information as provided by the other registrant.

#### When Proof of ID is Returned to DCF

When an eligible applicant requests identifying information and/or a meeting with their birth parent(s), sibling(s), or adopted child, central office foster care shall explain the procedures as required by law.

Central office foster care 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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#### **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.

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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.

When involved, central office foster care 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, as requested.
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#### **Denial of Request**

If the request for identifying information is denied by DCF, the requester shall be advised that he or she may petition the Probate Court.

**Legal Reference:** C.G.S. section 45a-752

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