

Iowa Adoption Selection Staffing Process

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Adoption Selection Staffing Process is designed to secure permanent families for children who have been removed from the care of their parent due to abuse or denial of care, cannot be reunited with their parent, and where termination of parental rights has occurred. Adoption provides the child(ren) and new parents with the same legal rights and responsibilities as if the child(ren) were born into the adoptive family.

When HHS is appointed guardian of a child(ren) following the termination of parental rights, HHS has both the duty and the authority to select an adoptive placement for that child(ren). In order to fulfil this duty, HHS must hold a conference pursuant to Iowa Administrative Code section 441-200.4(3) during which HHS selects an adoptive family for an identified child(ren). At the conference, known as an Adoption Selection Staffing, each interested family with an approved Adoption, or Interstate Compact home study will be considered. The team members of the Adoption Selection Committee will determine which family will be able to best meet the needs of the child(ren) going forward. The Adoption Selection Staffing Process is conducted with the ultimate goal of selecting an adoptive family that will be in the child(ren)'s best interests.

Adoption Selection Staffing Process Guiding Principles:

- The Adoptive Selection Staffing Process will value the best interest of the child(ren) above all else.
 - The Selection Committee will consider placement priority as outlined in Iowa Code § 232.117 which includes:
 - An adult relative of the child(ren), including but not limited to adult siblings or parents of siblings
 - Fictive kin, defined as an adult person who is not related to the child within four degrees of consanguinity (blood) or affinity (marriage) to the child(ren) in care but who has an emotionally significant relationship with the child(ren) or the child(ren)'s biological family.
 - A child-placing agency or other suitable private agency, facility, or institution which is licensed or otherwise authorized by law to receive and to provide care for the child(ren)
- The adoptive family selected for a child(ren) must be based on a thorough assessment of each child's current and potential developmental, medical, emotional, educational needs
- The child(ren)'s need for family connections will be valued.

Separation of siblings should be avoided. When separation is necessary to protect the well-being of one or more children in the sibling group, all reasonable efforts must be made to maintain contact between siblings.

The adoptive family selected will be able to nurture and accept the child(ren) as a fully integrated member of the family.

The Adoption Selection Staffing Process consists of two potential paths. The first path is utilized when there is one family with an approved Adoption or Interstate Compact home study interested in

adopting. The second path is utilized when two or more families with approved Adoption or Interstate Compact home study express interest in adopting particular child(ren).

One Adoption Selection Staffing process will be utilized for all children in a sibling group whose families are being evaluated for selection for adoption together. There is not a need complete the Adoption Selection Process for each individual child in a sibling group when the children are being adopted collectively.

The single-family path requires the Adoption Selection Committee Team to consist of the Adoption Supervisor and a minimum of two Adoption Social Work Case Managers (SWCM). One the of Adoption SWCM's must be the assigned Adoption SWCM.

The multiple family path requires the Adoption Selection Committee Team to consist of the Adoption Supervisor and a minimum of two Adoption Social Work Case Managers (SWCM). One the of Adoption SWCM's must be the assigned Adoption SWCM. The prior on-going SWCM is a required member the adoption selection committee for the multiple family path. This participation is mandatory, if the SWCM is still employed with HHS. The prior Social Work Supervisor (SWS) is an optional member; however, must participate in the entirety of the process or not at all. The Social Work Administrator (SWA) may elect to be part of the team if there is more than one family seeking to adopt the child(ren) and the SWA may select additional HHS staff to serve as members of the Team on a case-by-case basis.

The Adoption Selection Committee Team should strive to complete the Adoption Selection Staffing Process in 60 days or less absent special circumstances.

Single Family Path

When there is one family with an approved Adoption or Interstate Compact home study who is interested in adoption, the Adoption Supervisor and assigned Adoption SWCM will complete all of the following:

- Schedule a Selection Staffing date.
- Obtain on-going Social Worker Case Manager (SWCM) and SWCM Supervisor input as to how the child(ren) has adjusted to living in the home, the needs of the child(ren) and the family's preparedness to address those needs.
- Offer opportunity to provide written statement or verbal input from Guardian ad Litem (GAL)
- Review child study and home study.
- Confirm a relative search was completed for maternal and paternal relatives and is documented in the case file. If a search was not completed ensure one is done as outlined in Iowa Code 232.84.
- Request input from interested parties, which may include but are not limited to Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), child therapist, tribe, and the child(ren) if age appropriate.
- Review concurrent planning notes, if applicable.
- Ensure ICWA compliance.
- Once complete, the assigned Adoption SWCM will send the information gathered to the Adoption Selection Committee Team five days prior to the Adoption Selection Staffing date.

During the scheduled selection staffing, the Adoption Selection Committee Team will:

- Review all provided information.
- Discuss the child(ren)'s needs and the prospective family's ability to meet those needs.
- Gain consensus among team members that the family selected is the family most likely to meet the needs of the child(ren). A consensus decision is one that is reached through negotiation and compromise. Any disagreements are discussed and debated, and the ultimate decision is reached when all parties can subscribe to an unanimously acceptable resolution.
- Complete the Adoption Staffing Summary (HHS form 470-0774), including decision and send to service area SWA for review.

Multiple Family Path

When more than one family with an approved Adoption or Interstate Compact home study is interested in adoption, the Adoption Supervisor will:

- Notify the service area SWA multiple families are interested in a child(ren) available for adoption. The Adoption Selection Staffing Process will be started which will include interviews with each potential family.
- Invite SWA to participate. If the SWA opts to become part of the team, they will be an equal member of the committee, with equal decision-making authority along with other Adoption Selection Committee Team members.
- The Adoption Selection Committee Team is comprised of Department staff. It is appropriate and acceptable to consider inviting the child(ren)'s assigned Guardian ad Litem (GAL) to participate in the family interview portion of the Adoption Selection Staffing Process. The Department conducts the interviews with the families and will use standard questions for both families. GALs are permitted to ask questions. Families are permitted to have their own legal counsel present for the interview process. At the conclusion of the interview, the Department Adoption Selection Committee Team members will conduct the deliberation and make decisions for the adoptive placement. The GAL is not included in the deliberation portion of the process.

The Adoption Supervisor and assigned Adoption SWCM will complete all of the following in preparation for the Adoption Selection Staffing Process:

- Offer opportunity to provide written statement or verbal input from Guardian ad Litem (GAL) addressing the following questions:
 - Describe your observations of this child(ren) in their current placement?
 - Describe your interactions with the alternative placement and observations of the child(ren) in other alternative placement(s)?
 - Share anything that you wish the committee to know about making this decision.
- Review child study and home study.

- Ensure a relative search was completed for maternal and paternal relatives and is documented in the case file.
- Review concurrent planning notes, if applicable.
- Request input from interested parties, which may include but are not limited to Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), child therapist, tribe, and the child(ren) if age appropriate.
- Schedule a staffing date and set up interviews with families.
- Send [Family Guide to Adoption Selection Interview Process](#) to each family.
- Assigned Adoption SWCM will send all information gathered to the Adoption Selection Committee Team 5 days prior to interviews and selection meeting.

The Adoption Selection Interview: The interview is for the Adoption Selection Committee Team to meet with each of the prospective families, separately, to explore whether the family interviewed is the best family for this child(ren). Components of the interview are as follows:

- A designated lead member of the Adoption Selection Committee Team will conduct a welcome and introductions of all participants. A statement of purpose will be provided as well as a thank you for the family participants commitment to the child(ren) and the process.
- Confidentiality expectations will be discussed. Form [470-5641, Adoption Selection Meeting Agreement on Confidentiality](#) must be signed by all participants
- A brief overview of the child(ren) will be provided. The presentation may include the child(ren)'s legal status and a clear, but concise description of the child(ren)'s condition, including any changes or updates since the child(ren)'s Social History was completed. The child(ren)'s desires in an adoptive family should be noted if applicable. Any special requirements established for the child(ren) by the child(ren)'s court status should be discussed
- Families will be asked questions regarding their current situation and motivation to adopt using form [470-5615, Adoption Family Interview Questions](#).

The Adoption Selection Committee Team will:

- Conduct interviews with families individually.
- Secure a signed Confidentiality Agreement to protect the identified child(ren)'s information, signed between all parties present.
- The Adoption Selection Committee Team will use the same set of statewide-standardized questions for each interested family. During the interview process, the members of the Adoption Selection Committee Team may ask additional questions specific to an identified family.

Upon completion of all interviews, the Adoption Selection Committee Team will:

- Discuss the child(ren)'s needs and each prospective family's ability to meet those needs.
- Should conflict or policy questions arise during the team discussion of the potential families and the SWA is not a member of the team, the Adoption Selection Committee Team will contact the SWA for guidance.

- Come to consensus among team members that the selected family is best suited to adopt the child(ren). A consensus decision is one that is reached through negotiation and compromise. Any disagreements are discussed and debated, and the ultimate decision is reached when all parties can subscribe to an unanimously acceptable resolution.

Upon reaching a decision, the assigned Adoption SWCM or Adoption Supervisor will:

- Notify families of the decision made by Adoption Selection Committee Team within two business days and document the method, time, and date of contacts.
- Assigned Adoption SWCM or Supervisor will send placement notification to the family not selected within two business days of the date all parties were initially notified, using form 470-5645 Kinship Adoption Placement Decision Notification or [470-3617, Adoption Placement Decision Notification](#)
- Notification will be sent to the child's team (GAL, placements, therapist etc.) regarding the decision and transition plan if needed. Any changes to the plan after implementation need to be documented and sent to relevant parties/child's team for their knowledge and consideration.
- The Supervisor or assigned Adoption SWCM will inform the SWA all proper notifications have been made and documentation is in the record.
- Document the selection decision on form [470-0774, Adoption Staffing Decision](#). Form 470-0774 reflecting the consensus of the Adoption Selection Committee Team and placed in the child(ren)'s permanent case record.
- Form 470-5615, Adoption Family Interview Questions will also be placed in the child(ren)'s permanent case record.
- If the adoptive home selected is the home the child(ren) is currently residing in, efforts will be started to move the adoption process forward as outlined in Adoption Staff Responsibilities in this manual.
- If the child(ren) is moving from current placement to a selected adoptive placement, the assigned Adoption SWCM will complete a plan for the transition of the child(ren) to the selected family home within five business days. The plan for transition will be provided to the GAL, selected family and approved by the Adoption Supervisor.