

## HOME STUDY UPDATE GUIDE: TRANSITION TO ADOPTION

When you are working with a foster family who is interested in adoption, it is recommended that you have at least two meetings with the foster family. One of the meetings should include all members of the household. Following are suggested activities for each meeting.

### MEETING 1

- Review each section of the family's home study that was completed for foster home licensure. Update the information as needed.
- Obtain signed permission to conduct another criminal record check (the waiver section of form 595-1396).
- Provide families with the *Home Study Update Worksheet* and ask the family to review it and prepare to discuss their responses at the second meeting.
- Discuss with children (birth, foster, adopted) in the home:
  - Their feelings about adoption.
  - Anticipated adjustments.
  - What adoption means.
  - Difference between having an adopted sibling and a foster sibling.

Note: This discussion can occur during the first or second meeting.

### MEETING 2

Discuss the family's responses to the work sheet questions. This process will provide you with an opportunity to assess the family and educate the family about the differences between being a foster parent and an adoptive parent. Section Q of the *Home Study Format*, RC-0025, may be used as a discussion guide. Following are key points to cover with the family during the meeting:

**Legal Responsibilities:** Emphasize that after adoption the parents' guardianship responsibilities are the same as if the child was born to them. Also, they can sign for anything needing a parent or guardian's authorization.

**Decision Making:** Discuss the impact of the change in decision making authority since after adoption the DHS no longer makes decisions regarding the child. Ensure that the family has reviewed the child's medical and background information. Answer any questions the family might have about the child's background.

**Emotional and Psychological Impact:** Discuss:

- The family's possible ambivalence about adoption.
- The shift from a temporary situation to a permanent situation (shift from family reunification to termination of parental rights and adoption).
- The child's fear of commitment and ambivalence to adoption.
- The child grieving over the loss of the birth family.
- Ways to positively maintain birth family identity, such as contact with siblings or other relatives.

When you meet with the entire family, ask each child in the home about:

- Their feelings regarding adoption.
- Anticipated adjustments.
- The meaning of adoption.
- Differences between having an adopted sibling and a foster sibling.

Note: This discussion can occur during the first or second meeting.

**Financial Obligation:** Explain the difference between the family foster care support system and the adoption subsidy program. Explain to the family what services, maintenance, and special services the child is eligible for under the adoption subsidy program.

**Anticipated Adjustments:** Explain to the family that the child may test their commitment prior to finalization by acting out. Discuss with the family the possibility that their child might want to search for birth parents or other relatives and how to address.

**Support System:** Assist the family in identifying areas where support might be needed. Also, assist the family in developing a list of community resources that are available to provide assistance and support to the family specifically related to the child's special needs.