

Iowa Department of Human Services
Relative Home Study Outline

Summary of Dates of Consultation

- ◆ Dates of home visits
- ◆ Dates of phone contacts with the family
- ◆ Dates and description of contacts with collateral sources to complete home study (including a short description of the collateral contacted and the purpose of the contact)

Description of Adults Being Evaluated

Adults being evaluated = adults in the home who have parenting responsibility.

Background History (each adult)

- ◆ Relationship with their own parents and siblings while growing up and currently
- ◆ Genogram (optional activity)
- ◆ Current ages and location of parents and siblings
- ◆ Describe any significant family experiences (e.g., death, marriage, divorce, physical/sexual/emotional abuse and/or neglect, etc.) and the impact on you

General Character

Discuss the following points with each adult, soliciting examples to support responses.

- ◆ How do you show affection and care for others?
- ◆ Are you willing to accept feedback from others?
- ◆ How do you manage your anger and cope with stress or frustration?
- ◆ How do you solve problems?
- ◆ How do you handle crisis situations?
- ◆ How do you cope with separation and loss?
- ◆ Any special interests, hobbies, and community activities?
- ◆ Religious affiliation, if any? If yes, how often do you attend religious services?

Health

- ◆ Describe current health status
- ◆ Describe any historical health issues
- ◆ Current prescribed medications and storage of medication in the home

History of Substance Abuse, Mental Health, or Domestic Violence

- ◆ Discuss any history of substance abuse, domestic violence, or mental health issues
- ◆ Have you participated in any counseling or mental health or substance abuse treatment? If so, when and what was the outcome?
- ◆ How have you coped with your emotions around these issues?

Education

- ◆ Level of education (schools attended and date of completion). If applicant did not graduate high school, please explain.
- ◆ Describe your experiences as a student (extra-curricular activities, behaviors, academic)

- ◆ What value does your family place on education?
- ◆ What is the applicant's knowledge of and availability of educational programs in the community?
- ◆ Are you willing to advocate for a child? (Communicate with teachers, cooperate with behavior plans, complete paperwork, etc.)
- ◆ Have you ever home-schooled, or do you plan to in the future?

Marital History

- ◆ Date and place (verify for adoptive applicants)
- ◆ Courtship (how and when they met, what attracted them to each other)
- ◆ Adjustment to marriage
- ◆ What roles does each of you have in your household?
- ◆ How do you make decisions? Give an example.
- ◆ How do you handle disagreements? Give an example.
- ◆ Leisure activities (Do you spend time together as a couple?)
- ◆ Stability of the relationship (How long have you been together? Have there been any separations? Have you ever received counseling? What was the outcome?)
- ◆ Assessment of family's marital stability (include applicant's views, opinions of references, and worker observations)
- ◆ If single, describe any significant past relationships. What are your views on being single and/or married?
- ◆ How will you provide a role model of the opposite gender?
- ◆ If previously married, date of previous marriage and divorce
- ◆ Description of previous marriages and reason ended
- ◆ Do you have any contact with your previous spouse or previous relationships?
- ◆ If you have children together, what is the status of the relationship between your children and their other parent (including amount of contact, payment of child support, etc.)?
- ◆ What type of relationship do you have with your children from previous marriages or relationships?
- ◆ How do you take responsibility for any children living outside your full-time care (amount of contact, payment of child support, etc.)?

Employment History

- ◆ Work history and reasons for leaving jobs
- ◆ Current job title and description (include degree of satisfaction, future job plans, work schedule, number of hours worked each week, and flexibility for time off)

Financial History

- ◆ Adjusted gross income (verify)
- ◆ Type of health, homeowner's, auto insurance coverage (verify auto insurance)
- ◆ History of bankruptcy
- ◆ Financial decision-making (who, how, why)
- ◆ Sufficiency of family's income to meet a child's basic needs

Stability of Residence

- ◆ Assess both the stability of their current living situation and their pattern of residential stability

Children, Extended Family, and Other Persons Living in the Home

A non-parenting adult could be an extended family member or other person in the home who will not have direct parenting responsibility for the identified children.

Address the following for each child currently living in the home:

- ◆ Personality – how do they see themselves and how would their parents describe them?
- ◆ Any special needs of children and how those needs are being addressed
- ◆ The child's understanding of possible changes in the family due to the placement of identified child
- ◆ School adjustment, grades, problems, and progress in school

Address the following for any extended family member or other adult person currently living in the home:

- ◆ What is their relationship to the identified child?
- ◆ Describe their personality
- ◆ Describe what their role and interactions will be with the identified child
- ◆ Describe their relationship with other persons in the home

Family Relationships Within the Home

Discuss the following with **all** persons living in the home:

- ◆ How do family members relate to each other? For instance, how do family members interact with one another, show affection, and communicate with one another?
- ◆ Are there any problems or conflicts in the home?
- ◆ What activities do they do as a family?
- ◆ Discuss family relationships with any adult children who do not live in the home. Where do they live, what do they do for a living, and how often do you have contact with them (if applicable)? Do any of your adult children present any safety concerns or risks to children?
- ◆ Discuss family relationships with any other children who do not live in the home. What is the reason they do not live with you and how often do you have contact with them?

Family Child Rearing Practices and Discipline Techniques

- ◆ Who will be the primary caretaker?
- ◆ Give an example of the applicant's parenting style (nurturing, structured, etc.)
- ◆ What is your understanding of child development and the stages a child goes through developmentally?
- ◆ If the child is behind developmentally, how will you meet the child's developmental needs and work with the child toward meeting developmental milestones/abilities?
- ◆ What are some family rules in the home? (i.e., going to bed at a certain time, picking up after selves, being respectful, etc.)
- ◆ What forms of discipline do you plan to use when parenting the child?
- ◆ What are some behavioral issues of children you feel you can manage? Are there any behaviors you feel you could not tolerate in your home?

- ◆ How would you respond to child behavioral problems (such as a child who lies, a child who swears, a child who wets the bed, a child who sexually acts out, a child who shows aggression, a child who uses drugs or alcohol, etc.)? Include any behavioral challenges specifically indicated regarding the identified child or children.
- ◆ Considering the other children in your home, how will the child the family is considering for placement impact or be impacted by the other children?
- ◆ What safety concerns will need to be addressed for the family's children or the child being placed due to the needs or behaviors of any of the children?
- ◆ Do you have any experience in dealing with child behavioral problems? Discuss experiences and how they have dealt with the behavioral problems in children.
- ◆ Any experience raising a child other than your own (include current or former stepchildren)
- ◆ Assessment of attitudes toward and ability to deal with the child's special needs, if any
- ◆ Child care arrangements if child placed in this home

Home, Neighborhood, and Community

Description of the home including:

- ◆ Sleeping arrangements for all household members and where the identified children will sleep and keep their belongings
- ◆ Smoke detector locations
- ◆ Medication location
- ◆ Firearms or weapons location and storage
- ◆ Cleanliness of the household
- ◆ Adequacy of the food supply for additional children
- ◆ Any safety hazards, or that the home is free of safety hazards
- ◆ Fire exits and a family safety plan (in the event of a fire, tornado, and blizzard)
- ◆ Describe the schools that the children would be attending

Outdoor Space

- ◆ Amount of space available for play or recreational activities
- ◆ Play equipment
- ◆ Any hazards or that the area is free from hazards

Family's Attitudes Toward Placement and Attitudes About Working With DHS and Service Providers

Discuss the attitudes of all persons in the home, with emphasis on the parenting adults regarding the following topics.

Family Motivation

- ◆ Family's motivation for wanting the identified children placed in their home
- ◆ When is the last time the family has had contact with the children?

- ◆ If family has not had recent contact with the children, what is the reason? How do they plan to make the children feel comfortable with them?
- ◆ What is the family's willingness to allow the child to maintain connections with the child's previous placements, such as a former foster home or relative home placement?
- ◆ What are the applicants' feelings about the identified child's background and parents and their understanding of why the child was removed?
- ◆ How will the applicant be able to set aside personal feelings about the child's background and parents, and effectively work in partnership with the parents, if the child is placed in their home?
- ◆ What role will the family be willing to play in the child's life regardless of where the child is placed?

Willingness to Work in Partnership and Advocate for Child's Safety, Well-Being, and Permanency

- ◆ Explain how the family will be able to work with the child's parents, extended family members, DHS, and service providers, if the child was placed in their home
- ◆ Family's willingness to cooperate with DHS around ongoing monitoring and supervision of the child's placement
- ◆ Family's willingness to support the child's visitation arrangements with parents or other family members, including sibling visitations
- ◆ If an absent parent unexpectedly becomes involved in the child's life, how will the relative handle this? Will they be willing to support contact per DHS expectations?
- ◆ Family's ability to enforce any visitation restrictions regarding the child's parents or other relatives. How will they protect the child from specific threats to safety that lead to removal from their birth parent's care?
- ◆ Discuss how family will be able to keep appropriate boundaries during supervised visits and their ability to overcome potential visitation barriers
- ◆ What is the family's understanding of the child's permanency goal?
- ◆ Discuss how the family will be able to work toward the child's current permanency goal
- ◆ If the child is of a different, race, ethnicity, or cultural heritage, how does the family intend to maintain cultural identity and connections?

Impact on Family

- ◆ What is the family's understanding of changes in their lifestyle (home environment, job, relationships, etc.), that would result from the placement of a child?
- ◆ Who does the family identify as their support system, and how will they provide support to the family?
- ◆ Explain your willingness and ability to transport the child to visits, appointments, school activities, etc.
- ◆ If the family is unable to help with transportation, who will be able to assist you with transportation?

References

*Obtain six individuals from the family who will act as a reference for the family. Of these six only one may be a family member. The other references may be, but are not limited to, neighbors, teachers, community members, clergy, friends, or co-workers. **You must at a minimum obtain three written references from the six names provided.***

Include the respondent's impressions of:

- ◆ General character of the family
- ◆ Describe the individual's or couple's strengths
- ◆ Describe how this individual or couple expresses anger and frustration
- ◆ Ability of the adult caretakers to get along with other, especially children
- ◆ What methods of discipline does the applicant use?
- ◆ Ability of the adult caretakers to give affection and care
- ◆ Describe what adjustments would need to be made if the child/children were placed in their home
- ◆ Describe the supportive people in the applicant's life that could assist them in their parenting role. List who they are.
- ◆ If married, please describe their marital relationship and how they provide support to each other
- ◆ Would the respondent leave their own child in the family's care for an extended period of time
- ◆ Does this couple or individual have any areas in which they could improve?
- ◆ Describe any past or present problems this individual or couple has had with alcohol, drugs, gambling, or mental health issues
- ◆ Any other concerns

Commitment to Safety

Summary of Background Checks

Name and date of:

- ◆ Iowa child abuse record checks
- ◆ Iowa criminal history record checks
- ◆ Iowa sex offender record checks
- ◆ Fingerprints

Summary and Recommendations

- ◆ Summarize family's strengths and needs
- ◆ Indicate areas where support or instruction will be needed if placement is made
- ◆ A thorough discussion of the recommendation to deny the placement of the child based on concerns discovered during the course of the study **OR**
- ◆ A recommendation for placement Including any conditions or restrictions that would affect placement (such as modification to the home, securing child care arrangements, specific services to be provided, contact between the family and the child's parents, etc.)

Completion and Signatures

- ◆ Signature of home study worker and date
- ◆ Agency
- ◆ Address
- ◆ Worker phone number
- ◆ Signature of supervisor and date