



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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Manual Transmission Letter (MTL)

Family Programs Office: Statewide Child Welfare Policy Manual

2008 – MTL #0103-010109

01/01/09

TO: Barbara Legier, Deputy Director - Division of Child and Family Services – Central Office
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FROM: Cynthia Freeman, Social Services Chief III
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POLICY DISTRIBUTION: Enclosed find the following policy for distribution to all applicable staff within your organization:

- 0103 Adoption of Children 12 Years and Older

This policy is/was effective 11/14/2005:

Updates to the following areas have been made in this policy (policy page number/summary of change):

- This policy has been reformatted into the FPO Policy Format. This policy replaces 200 Adoption of Children 12 Years and Older.

NOTE:

- This policy has been placed into the new Family Programs Office Policy Format. Please read the policy in its entirety and note any areas of Jurisdictional Action that are additionally required by your agency to be in compliance with the policy enclosed.
- This is an **All STAFF MEMO** and it is the responsibility of the Agency Director listed above to disseminate the policy enclosed to appropriate staff within his/her organization and to ensure compliance.
- Please direct questions to Cynthia Freeman, (775)-684-4410, or via email cfreeman@dcfs.nv.gov.

0103.0 Adoption of Children 12 Years and Older

0103.1 Policy Approval Clearance Record

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Policy	This policy supersedes:	Pages: 6
Date Effective: 11/14/2005	200 Adoption of Children 12 Years and Older	
PART Review & Approval		Policy Lead:
DMG Approval	11/14/2005	Policy Lead:
Reformatted:	09/07/2007	Policy Lead: Nancy O'Neill, SSPS III
DMG Approved Revisions		Policy Lead:
DMG Approved Revisions		Policy Lead:
DCFS Administrator Approval:		Signature: On Files
Attorney General's Approval:	N/A	Signature: N/A

0103.2 Statement of Purpose

103.2.1 Policy Statement:

Agencies which provide child welfare services shall evaluate and consider adoption as a permanency option for children age 12 years and older, when it is determined the child cannot be reunited with his/her family. The agency will provide the services and support necessary to prepare and assist the youth to better understand adoption as a permanency option.

103.2.2 Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that adoption is considered for older youth, who might otherwise remain in foster care due to their age, the perception they are not adoptable, or their own reluctance to be adopted.

0103.3 Authority

Public Law 105-89 Adoption and Safe Families Act
 NRS 127, .020, .435
 NRS 432B

0103.4 Definitions

- 103.4.1 Adoption:** refers to the social, emotional, and legal process through which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family.
- 103.4.2 Adoption Exchange:** refers to an organized means of sharing information among agencies about children for whom adoptive families are not immediately available and about potential adoptive families for whom agencies do not have children waiting.
- 103.4.3 Child and Family Team:** refers to a team comprised of maternal and paternal family members, fictive kin, friends, foster parents, legal custodian, community support specialists, agency staff and other involved and committed people who join together to

strengthen and support the family and provide a plan of care that ensures the safety and well-being of the family's children.

- 103.4.4 Child Specific Recruitment:** means developing an individualized recruitment plan for a specific child based on the child's background. It may include finding relatives or close friends who will provide a home for a child or teen with whom they are already involved or care about, and among people who do not know the child but have an interest in adopting a child with special-needs. When age appropriate, the child/youth should be involved with his/her recruitment plan.
- 103.4.5 Concurrent Planning:** refers to working towards a primary permanency goal, while, at the same time, implementing an alternative permanency plan.
- 103.4.6 Consent to Adoption:** refers to the voluntary written agreement by the birth parent, an individual legally recognized as a parent, or an agency that has assumed legal custody of a child, to the adoption of a child. Children 14 years of age and over must provide written consent for his/her adoption. The consent is prepared and filed with the court by the adoptive parent's attorney.
- 103.4.7 Eco-map:** refers to a visual tool used to map and show the relationships among family members and their environment. (Refer to Assessment Process Policy).
- 103.4.8 Fictive Kin:** refers to a person not related by birth or marriage who has a significant emotional and positive relationship with the child.
- 103.4.9 Full Disclosure:** means that the birth family, child welfare agency, resource family and legal system are all informed and share pertinent information regarding the case and family history for purposes of case planning and permanency planning options.
- 103.4.10 Genogram:** refers to a graphic assessment tool or diagram used to depict family relationships over time, typically over at least three generations. It can be used to look at issues of family functioning, family structure, relationships, life events, family's feelings and attitudes. A genogram can be used to assist families to describe complicated family interrelationships and to discuss their family issues. (Refer to Assessment Process Policy).
- 103.4.11 Life Book:** refers to a therapeutic tool for working with children in care to help them understand why they entered care, to understand their experiences before and since entering care, to resolve their feelings about these experiences, and to help them to emotionally attach to a new family. The book is usually developed in the form of a scrapbook/keepsake book with pictures, drawings, and children's own narratives of their experiences and their feelings about these experiences.
- 103.4.12 Open Adoption:** refers to an arrangement that recognizes the child's connections to both the birth family and the adoptive family by supporting interaction among the birth parents, adoptive parents, and the child through correspondence, telephone calls, or personal contact, depending upon the particular situation.
- 103.4.13 Permanency Goal:** refers to the hierarchy of permanency goal options that ensures legal and emotional permanency for a child, which are, in order of priority: 1) Reunification, 2) Adoption, 3) Legal Guardianship, 4) Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative; and 5) Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. Selection of this goal requires that compelling reasons be documented to the court explaining why permanency goals 1-4 are not an option.
- 103.4.14 Shared Parenting:** refers to the concept that adults other than a child's parents share in caring for the child, either occasionally, periodically, or regularly.
- 103.4.15 Targeted Recruitment:** focuses on specific groups of children and attempts to match them with families that meet their needs.

0103.5 Procedures:

To ensure compliance with NAC 127.435, the agency shall provide appropriate services, based on the age of the child, to prepare him/her for adoption. Services provided must include, but are not limited to, emotional counseling, collection of relevant materials regarding the child's history, collection of personal items, and discussion of the family selected for adoptive placement before placement occurs.

Youth, age 14 years and older, must provide written consent to their adoption (NRS 127.020). The preparation and counseling outlined in the policy is designed to better prepare the youth to make this decision.

A. Case Work Principles:

1. Adoption is the preferred permanency goal when it is determined that a child cannot be reunited with his birth family. Legal adoption is preferred because it offers the highest level of physical, legal and emotional safety and security for each child within a family relationship. Considering a new family may prove challenging for some children, particularly older children who have greater knowledge of and commitment to their birth families. The case worker must explain the benefits of permanency and adoption and actively engage the youth in the planning process before ruling out the possibility of adoption. Counseling and child sensitive recruitment efforts must be used to facilitate the process.
2. A caseworker's conversations with youth about adoption issues shall be consistent with the principles of positive youth development: genuine usefulness (having something to contribute; power (having control over his/her future); competence (being able to do something well); belonging (being part of the community) -- and will be consistent with the developmental needs and understanding of the individual youth.
3. Consistent with the principles of concurrent planning, the worker will contact family members who might have interest, as well as obtain pertinent information such as names, addresses, and telephone numbers of people they think may have interest in the well being of the teen. The worker will also ask the youth to identify those individuals who he or she perceives as supportive.
4. A caseworker must be aware of issues that may interfere with their conversations about permanency through adoption. Workers who are able to set aside their own biases and work through ambivalences about teen adoption can better help the youth consider the importance of this form of permanency for his life, both now and in the future.

B. Working with the youth:

1. Workers will introduce to the youth the need for permanent connections with caring adults and the concept of adoption; and take advantage of all opportunities during visits and collateral contacts, to engage the teen in conversations about this important permanency planning requirement.
2. Introductory conversations will take place where the teen is assured privacy and can be comfortable to ask and answer questions.
3. Workers should slowly introduce the concept of adoption so that the youth does not reject the possibility without understanding what adoption can mean in his life. Workers should allow for disagreement and look for areas of agreement in their conversations with youth.
4. Areas to initially explore with the youth include:

- Remembered and fantasized relationships
 - Hopes and dreams for his future
 - Fears, including the fear of rejection or attachment
 - The strength and positive attributes he brings to his future
 - The youths' experience of the system and what he has come to expect from it.
5. The youths' current developmental level and ability to understand adoption issues. This could include identifying any typical youth development issues that may impact the youth's responses including value development, identity experimentation, increased independence from family, peer influence, development of sexual identity, and development of more adult relationships with family and other adults.
 6. His/Her feelings about his readiness for the future including life skills, education, vocational training and who he thinks could assist and support him in meeting his goals.
 7. Talk to the youth about adults with whom he has had meaningful relationships, both present and past. Identify the youth's current and past networks by using helpful tools such as an eco-map, genogram, and life book.

C. Working with the Youth's Resource Network

1. Ask the current caretaker if he would consider adopting the child. If not, find out why the current caretaker is saying "NO" to adoption and if their needs can be met so that they can say "YES".
2. Make a thorough search of the case record to discover adults who have shared parenting of or had past relationships with the youth that the youth has not identified. Those who should be considered include:
 - Siblings and other relatives;
 - Birth parents;
 - Coaches, teachers, mentors;
 - Parents of friends;
 - Friends, former neighbors of parents or other caretakers;
 - Placement staff;
 - Current or former foster parents, respite care providers or other caretakers, including caretakers of siblings who do not live with the youth;
 - Current or former neighbors;
 - Therapists;
 - Other responsible adults whom the youth identifies he can trust or respect; and/or
 - Other adults who might have suggestions on finding a family.
3. Make contact through phone calls, emails, internet search, etc. Remember to ask questions about others they know who might have an interest in a relationship with the youth and get their full names, addresses and phone numbers if possible.

4. Identify a group of people who appear committed to the youth and engage them in the Child and Family Team to identify resources for the youth, including people the youth has forgotten or failed to identify. Look for people who disappeared when abrupt transitions happened who would like to be re-involved with family.
5. Obtain commitment from caring adults to visit the youth and be involved in planning for his future.
6. Engage and prepare others for child's permanence if there is a strong negative response from any of these people, explore it and get agreement that at the very least, they will not get in the way of an adoption if the youth finds a permanent connection.

D. Other options:

1. Involve the youth in a support group to discuss adoption.
2. Talk to the youth about recruitment, how it works and how he can help. Make a referral to the adoption recruitment specialist or to Wednesday's Child (as appropriate).
3. Suggest events and activities for the youth that promote permanency through adoption, such as teen adoption parties and writing their adoption profiles.
4. Have youth help create their own media to recruit for themselves, such as providing the opportunity for the youth to speak at recruitment events and adoption informational meetings, and making or appearing in videos.
5. Work with the special-needs recruitment staff to develop a targeted recruitment plan.
6. Youth must be involved and have input in their adoption planning process. Their involvement must be guided and supported by the case worker and others responsible for their care. Many do want to be adopted, even if they initially say no. The worker must believe that permanency through adoption can be achieved for teens.

0103.6 Jurisdictional Action:

103.6.1 Development of Internal Policies: N/A

103.6.2 Timelines: N/A

103.6.3 Tools and Forms: N/A

103.6.4 Documentation:

Case File Documentation (paper):

File Location	Data Required
N/A	N/A

UNITY Documentation (electronic):

Applicable UNITY Screen	Data Required
Case Notes Window #CFS085	Within 5 working days of obtaining information

- 103.6.5 Supervisory Responsibility:** Supervisors shall conduct quarterly case reviews, in accordance with the statewide Quality Improvement Framework, to ensure compliance with the policy.

0103.7 State Responsibilities

103.7.1 Participants in Policy Development

- A. **FPO Staff:** Adoption Specialist
- B. **Jurisdictional Representatives:** Representative from each Region
- C. **Stakeholders:** AG, Policy Workgroups, FPO Administrators, FPO Managers, and FPO Specialists.

103.7.2 Technical Assistance

- A. **Requesting Technical Assistance:** N/A
- B. **Relaying TA Information:** N/A
- C. **Evidenced Based Practice:**

103.7.3 Clearance Process

- A. As a state policy, this must be approved by DCFS administration prior to dissemination outside of the FPO office.

103.7.4 State Oversight

- A. The state has the responsibility to ensure that all FPO state and collaborative policies follow the revised policy format as outlined in this policy.

0103.8 Policy Cross Reference

0103.8.1 Policies:

1001 Diligent Search Process and Placement Decisions
0204 Case Planning
0601 Documentation

0103.8.2 Resources and References

Adoption and Adolescents, A handbook for preparing Adolescents for Adoption, Virginia Sturgeon 2003

Child Welfare League of America Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services, (2000)
Engaging Youth and Those Around Them in Discussions About Permanency, Bob Lewis and Sue Badeau, June 2003

Information Packet: Child Specific Recruitment, National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning, Kristine Schueger 2002

Permanency-What is it? And why do I need to talk about it? Virginia Sturgeon Toolbox No. 3 – Facilitating Permanency for Youth, Gerald P. Mallon 2005

0103.9 Attachments: N/A