

0103 Adoption of Children 12 Years and Older

Policy Approval Clearance Record

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Statewide Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Policy <input type="checkbox"/> DCFS Rural Region Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> New Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Modified Policy – Reformatted 11/2018 <input type="checkbox"/> This policy supersedes:
Date Policy Effective:	11/14/2005
Attorney General Representative Review:	N/A
DCFS Deputy Administrator Approval	N/A
DMG Original Approval	11/14/2005
DMG Approved Revisions	N/A

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Policy Statement and Purpose: Agencies which provide Child Welfare Services shall evaluate and consider adoption as a permanency option for children age twelve (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.

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

AUTHORITY

Federal: [Adoption and Safe Family Act P.L 105-89](#);
NAC: [NAC 127.435](#);
NRS: [NRS 127.020](#); [NRS 432B](#);

DEFINITIONS

Adoption: 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.

Adoption Exchange: 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.

Child and Family Team: A team that is comprised of maternal and paternal family members, fictive kin, friends, foster parents, legal custodian, community support specialists, agency staff and other interested people identified by the family and agency who join together to empower, motivate, and strengthen a family, and collaboratively develop a plan of care and protection to achieve child safety, child permanency, and child and family well-being.

Child Specific Recruitment: 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.

Concurrent Planning: Working towards a primary permanency goal, while, at the same time implementing and alternative permanency plan.

Consent to Adoption: 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.

Eco-Map: A visual tool used to map and show the relationships among family members and their environment.

Fictive Kin: A person not related within the 5th degree of consanguinity by birth, marriage or adoption; such as a family friend or neighbor who has a significant emotional and positive relationship with the child.

Full Disclosure: The birth family, resource family, child welfare agency 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.

Genogram: 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.

Life Book: 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.

Open Adoption: 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.

Permanency Goal: The hierarchy of permanency goal options that ensure legal and emotional permanency for a child, which are in ascending 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 (OPPLA). Selection of this goal requires that the child be at least sixteen (16) years old and compelling reasons be documented to the court explaining why permanency goals 1-4 are not an option.

Shared Parenting: The concept that adults other than a child's parents share in caring for the child, either occasionally, periodically, or regularly.

Targeted Recruitment: Focuses on specific groups of children and attempts to match them with families that meet their needs.

STANDARDS/PROCEDURES

Procedures:

1. 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.
2. Youth, age fourteen (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.

3. Case Work Principles:

- a. Adoption is the preferred permanency goal when it is determined that a child cannot be reunited with their 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 caseworker 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.

4. Working with the youth:

- a. 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.
- b. Introductory conversations will take place where the teen is assured privacy and can be comfortable to ask and answer questions.
- c. 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.
- d. Areas to initially explore with the youth include:
 - I. Remembered and fantasized relationships
 - II. Hopes and dreams for their future
 - III. Fears, including the fear of rejection or attachment
 - IV. The strength and positive attributes he brings to his future
 - V. The youth's experience of the system and what he has some to expect from it.
- e. The youth's 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.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.

5. Working with the Youth's Resource Network

- a. Ask the current caretaker if they 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 they can say "YES".
- b. 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:
 - I. Siblings and other relatives;
 - II. Birth parents;
 - III. Coaches, teachers, mentors;

- IV. Parent of friends;
 - V. Friends, current or former neighbors of parents or other caretakers;
 - VI. Placement staff;
 - VII. Current or former foster parents, respite care providers or other caretakers including caretakers of siblings who do not live with the youth;
 - VIII. Therapists;
 - IX. Other responsible adults whom the youth identifies he can trust or respect; and/or
 - X. Other adults who might have suggestions on finding a family.
- c. 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.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Obtain commitment from caring adults to visit the youth and be involved in planning for his future.
 - f. 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.
6. Other Options:
- a. Involve the youth in a support group to discuss adoption.
 - b. 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).
 - c. Suggest events and activities for the youth that promote permanency through adoption, such as teen adoption parties and writing their adoption profiles.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Work with the special-needs recruitment staff to develop a targeted recruitment plan.
 - f. Youth must be involved and have input in their adoption planning process. Their involvement must be guided and supported by the caseworker 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.

Timeline: N/A

Documentation: This policy pertains to UNITY documentation only.

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 five (5) business days of obtaining information

JURISDICTIONAL ACTION

Development of Internal Policies: N/A

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

STATE RESPONSIBILITIES

The state has the responsibility to ensure that all state and collaborative policies follow the revised policy format as outlined in this policy. As a state policy, this must be approved by DCFS administration prior to dissemination outside of the FPO office.

POLICY CROSS REFERENCE

Policies:

[0204 Case Planning](#)

[1001 Diligent Search Process and Placement Decisions](#)

History and Updates: This policy supersedes policy 200 Adoption of Children 12 Years and Older, effective 11/15/2005. This policy was reformatted on 9/7/2007 and again 11/18/2018.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A