
OVERVIEW

A majority of families who adopt children from the foster care system are foster parents or relatives. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) believes that whenever possible children should be placed with/adopted by relatives and with siblings. When a child does not have an identified family, it becomes increasingly important for a child placing agency to complete diligent relative search efforts.

However, recruitment activities must be ongoing to locate other individuals or couples seeking to adopt children. Recruitment efforts may include information sharing through experienced adoptive families, public service announcements, photo-listings and public and private agency events.

ONGOING RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Child placing agencies, both MDHHS and contracted adoption agencies, must develop and maintain an ongoing program to recruit adoptive families for children. Contracted adoption agencies must follow recruitment guidelines outlined in the existing contract. It is essential that recruitment efforts focus on the demographics of children available for adoption. Recruitment of families should take into consideration the following child demographics:

- Ages and developmental needs.
- Racial and ethnic identity.
- Sibling relationships.
- Special needs.

CHILD-SPECIFIC RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Child-specific recruitment is the most effective strategy to find an adoptive family for a child. The child-specific recruitment plan must be based on the child's specific needs and efforts must focus on finding an adoptive family that will provide a stable home for the child.

The child-specific recruitment plan may include locating relatives or friends who have an established positive relationship with the child, photo-listing on state and national websites, and recruitment through distribution of information about a specific child.

If an adoptive family has not been identified for the child at the time of adoption referral, a written, child-specific recruitment plan must be developed within 60 calendar days of the date that the adoption agency accepts the child's case. The child must also be registered for photo-listing on the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) within 60 calendar days of the date that the adoption agency accepts the child's case. A copy of the recruitment plan must be provided to MARE with the photo-listing information.

The child-specific recruitment plan must be used as a working document and updated at a least annually to reflect:

- Child's interests and skills.
- Changes in the child's needs.
- Characteristics of family to meet the child's needs.
- Completed recruitment activities in the past 12 months.
- Planned recruitment activities.

The adoption worker must review the *Let's Talk* booklet from the MARE with children who are age nine and older. This booklet provides the worker with child specific recruitment tools. The adoption worker and child should determine together which recruitment tools will be utilized based on the child's wishes and input.

The child-specific recruitment plan and signed "Let's Talk" booklet must be submitted at least annually to MARE and uploaded into the Recruitment hyperlink in MiSACWIS.

Recruitment Plan Review

Child-specific recruitment plans must be discussed in a face-to-face case review meeting on a quarterly basis for children without an identified adoptive family. Quarterly reviews of the plan must continue until the child is placed with a family who plans to permanently care for the child and who has signed the [DHS 4809, Intent to Adopt](#). The schedule of case review meetings is as follows:

- Within the first three months of the child's goal changing to adoption, a face-to-face case review meeting must occur between the adoption worker and the adoption supervisor.
- Between three and six months of the child's goal changing to adoption, a face-to-face case review meeting must occur and include at a minimum:

- Adoption worker.
 - Adoption supervisor.
 - Adoption Permanency Specialist (with MARE).
- Between six and nine months of the child's goal changing to adoption, a face-to-face case review meeting must occur and include at a minimum:
 - Adoption worker.
 - Adoption supervisor.
 - Adoption Permanency Specialist (with MARE).
- Between nine and twelve months of the child's goal changing to adoption, a face-to-face case review meeting must occur and include at a minimum:
 - Adoption worker.
 - Adoption supervisor.
 - Adoption Resource Consultant (ARC) or an expert engaged by MDHHS with expertise in permanency and adoption processes and planning.

This review must occur between nine and twelve months of the child's goal changing to adoption and must be held at least quarterly basis thereafter until the child is placed with a family who plans to permanently care for the child and who has signed the [DHS 4809, Intent to Adopt](#). Documentation of recruitment efforts must be maintained in the child's adoption record.

Note: A newly assigned adoption worker must review the child-specific recruitment plan within 7 calendar days of case assignment with at minimum: adoption supervisor, permanency resource monitor and/or adoption resource consultant assigned to the case. The above schedule of case review meetings does not restart with the assignment of a new adoption worker.

PROGRAM STATEMENT/ INQUIRY

Adoption agencies (both MDHHS and contracted adoption agencies) are required to provide a written statement of the agency's adoption program to each individual who inquires about adoption. [DHS Publication 255, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Adoption Program Statement](#), must be provided to all prospective adoptive families as the written statement of the MDHHS adoption program. The adoption eligibility criteria in DHS

Publication 255 apply to all applicants interested in adoption of MDHHS-supervised wards. The eligibility criteria for adoption of MDHHS-supervised wards must not be more restrictive than the criteria in DHS Publication 255, when a contracted adoption agency is providing MDHHS adoption services.

Contracted adoption agencies may provide separate private adoption program information, in addition to DHS Publication 255, for potential applicants who are interested in both the private adoption program and the MDHHS adoption program.

The adoption program statement must include:

- Types of adoptions performed by the agency; including whether the agency accepts children released under the safe delivery act.
- Services provided by the agency.
- Eligibility requirements for adoptive families.
- Procedures and criteria for selecting a prospective adoptive parent.
- Participation of the biological parent(s) in the selection of the adoptive family and the extent to which the agency permits or encourages the exchange of identifying information or contact between biological and adoptive parents.
- Description of post-adoption services provided by the agency.
- Schedule of fees – agencies must not charge families for services provided to adopt a child from the foster care system or must reimburse the family no later than when the adoption is finalized.
- Statement that adoptive parents have the right to independent legal representation.
- Geographical area covered.

LEGAL BASIS

State

Licensing Rule, R400.12702

Licensing Rule, R400.12706 (3)

POLICY CONTACT

Questions about this policy item may be directed to the [Child Welfare Policy Mailbox](#).