 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		96
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Approved:	James Morse, Commissioner	Effective: 7/1/04 FINAL
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Purpose

Most adoptions of children in custody are by their foster parents. Initially, these children joined their foster families on a regular foster care or legal risk basis. Therefore, the collaboration between caseworkers, resource coordinators and adoption social workers to find homes for children greatly affects their long term well-being. This policy outlines the expectations for that collaboration.

Policy

The decision to place a child in a particular permanent home has critical and lasting impact on the child's well-being. A child's permanent family should be chosen with care, from the widest practical pool of families. Participants in the decision, including the potential adoptive parents, should have comprehensive information about the child's background, current needs, and projections about his or her future functioning. Topics for discussion are included in Appendix B.

The decision to place a child with a potentially permanent family may be made at any time during the child's stay in custody, based on the:

- degree and chronicity of parental incapacity;
- severity of abuse/neglect to the child or a sibling;
- history of protective service involvement with the parents;
- child's prior placement history (voluntary or involuntary);
- length of time in out-of-home placement; and
- the age of child.

Social Worker Tasks

- When a child needs a permanent home, convenes a meeting with the resource coordinator and the adoption social worker, and any other appropriate parties. Provides participants with written documentation on the child (see Appendix A).
- With participants, discusses child's history and current needs (see topics, Appendix B),

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identifies and prioritizes available families. Decides who will contact and meet with the family. If no appropriate family is available, develops strategy to locate a home for the child;

- Meets with both prospective foster parents (unless a single parent) in a potential permanent family. Discusses full details available about the child's history, current needs, prognosis for future functioning and legal status.
- Reviews written reports and evaluations with prospective foster parents. Documents on FS-A-409 Documentation of the Child's History.
- If no family makes a commitment to the child, reconvenes the meeting to discuss further strategies, which may include a referral to Match Meeting.
- If Match Meeting is scheduled, distributes written materials (see Appendix A) to Adoption Workers and Adoption Coordinator for their review at least one week before the scheduled Match Meeting.


Adoption Worker Tasks

- Participates fully in all discussion about children needing permanent homes.
- Assists social worker as requested in discussing children with families, preparing for Match Meeting, etc.

Appendix A: Required Documents for Match Discussions

The following will be shared with staff participating in discussions about potential permanent homes for children in custody, and with any family considering the permanent placement of a child:

- Available Child Form (FS-A-323);
- Foster Home Questionnaire (FS-A-350);
- Placement History (FS-A-248);
- original and supplemental Disposition Reports;
- psychological and medical reports;
- child's I.E.P. , if any
- picture of child; and,
- if obtainable, Information About the Birth Parent form (FS-A-343).

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Appendix B: Topics for Discussion

- History from birth, including neglect, physical and sexual abuse;
- Relationship with parents, family members and others;
- History of separations from family or other attachment figures, including reasons for separation;
- Anticipated ability to attach to new parenting figures;
- Temperament and personality, including positive characteristics and favorite activities;
- Academics, including behavior and need for special services;
- Legal status, anticipated barriers to TPR, including possible appeals.
- Relationship to current caretakers, including potential role of current caretakers in transitional activities;
- Geographical restraints to placement from a casework and legal point of view;
- Type of family with which this child might do best;
- Current and projected visits with parents, siblings and others;
- Significant medical history, including current medications; and
- Known social and medical history of birth family.

Appendix C: Permanency Planning Considerations

- If the child cannot return home, have relatives now been identified who can meet this child's present and future needs?
- If the child has siblings in care, what is the plan for them? Are they placed in the same home or another setting? Does the child have an attachment to siblings that is psychologically important and should affect decision-making for this child?
- Has the foster family continued to meet licensing standards?
- How long has the child been with this foster family (in relationship to the child's sense of time)?
- Are all family members committed to the child's continuing placement with them?
- If the foster parents are older or have chronic health problems, how will these issues affect the child?
- Have there been significant changes in the foster family structure or relationships that affect fostering this child?
- Is the child emotionally attached to the family? What is the nature of the relationship

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between the child and the foster family?

- Does the child see him or herself as a member of the foster family? Does he or she view the family as a secure, stable part of his or her life?
- Are parenting skills and discipline practices appropriate to this child's individual development and needs (physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural and spiritual) over time?
- Are the foster parents able to balance the needs of all family members.

- If concerns have arisen about any of the above, either by division staff or the foster family, what resources can be identified to assist the family? If such resources have been utilized, what were the results?
- Do the foster parents understand what problems the child may experience in the future, and are they prepared to deal with them?
- Does the family accept the child's background and history, including future implications of this history? Do they treat confidential information about the child with respect and discretion? Do they help the child to understand difficult aspects of his or her background?
- Has the foster family cooperated with the case plan and the child's visits with family? What is their relationship with the primary parents? If the relationship is difficult, how do they handle this, particularly with the child?
- How do present or projected placements of other foster children in this home impact on this child?
- If the child were to move, is he or she able to form an attachment to a new family?