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SAMPLE

Foster and adoptive parents assisted the Prime Contractor in developing the information identified below. The information is written from the family's perspective. Affiliates / Counties should assure that the information is included in their family orientation packets

Orientation

What families can expect in the process

The adoption process has many facets. Adoption itself seems very simple - there are children who need a permanent home and families who want to adopt them - so it seems logical that adoption could move quickly and clearly to finalization! The real process of family preparation, matching and finalization, however, is not simple and can be much more time consuming. Matching children with the family best able to integrate and parent them is complex. Guaranteeing the best match for the prospective parents, the child, the newly formed family takes time, tenacity and attention to detail.

The initial process usually goes like this:

- ε Within 30 days of your family expressing an interest in adoption, the agency will forward an informational packet, request criminal record and child abuse clearances, and set up a time when they can meet with you to address any initial concerns or questions. ..
- ε You will be asked to submit a formal application.
- ε You will be invited to attend adoptive family preparation training. Your agency will meet with you singularly or in groups with other prospective adoptive parents. This training can take 6-8 weeks.
- ε Your agency will interview you and your spouse (if applicable) separately and together. Other individuals who reside in your home will also be interviewed.
- ε A home visit will be scheduled. Your agency will send a caseworker to your home to examine whether the home is safe and meets the child's basic needs.
- ε Your caseworker will write your family profile. This document is a summary of all the information gathered about you during the training period, interviews and home visit. This written report identifies parent's characteristics, circumstances and strengths.
- ε Within 30 days of completing your application and training process, the family profile will be completed. The agency will then decide if the strengths of your family meet the needs of the children within the Statewide Adoption Network. They will either accept your family profile, which means that the agency will attempt to match your family

with a child, or they will not accept the profile and direct you to alternative adoption opportunities. . They will meet with you personally to discuss their decision.

Once a family is approved, the matching process begins.

- ε Many of PA's "waiting" children are registered on The Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange web site at www.adoptpakids.org. Pictures and a brief description of available children can be found there. Your agency will register your family with the exchange. The Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange works in concert with the child's worker, your caseworker and you, the family, in the matching process.
- ε Once you are matched with a child, you will begin visitation. The purpose of visiting is to begin to build a relationship between you and the child. Your caseworker will help you plan visits. Every agency has their own process of introducing a child to a family. Some children will be ready for placement in the home shortly after meeting a family; others will need more time to get acquainted before making the move. It is very important that everyone involved in the placement process work together to help the placement succeed.
- ε After the visitation period, it is time to formally place the child into your home and prepare for the finalization of the adoption.
- ε The finalization of your child's adoption is a legal proceeding so you will need to secure a lawyer. Your agency may be able to help you with this selection. Your lawyer will file a Report of Intention to Adopt with the court. This document notifies the court that the family intends to adopt a particular child.
- ε Your lawyer will also file an adoption petition with the court. This petition is the formal request that a hearing be scheduled to finalize the adoption.
- ε The adoption finalization hearing is scheduled and the judge decides, usually on the same day, whether the adoption is legally finalized. The adoptive parents, the child and the caseworker responsible for the placement must attend the hearing.

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