

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 10: Adoption/Permanency	Effective Date: August 1, 2008
	Section 3: Preparing the Child for Adoption	Version: 1

POLICY	OLD POLICY: 706.2, 709.1
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will to the best extent possible prepare a child for adoption based upon the child’s age and developmental level. DCS will utilize techniques such as one on one discussion, providing an opportunity for the child to speak with other adopted children, and making a [Lifebook](#) to name a few, in an effort to:

1. Help the child understand the termination of his or her parents’ parental rights;
2. Help the child understand and embrace the process;
3. Involve the child in planning for the adoption;
4. Help the child with the transition from foster care to adoption; and
5. Reduce the possibility of disruption.

DCS will seek input and participation from adults important to the child, when preparing the child for adoption. These may include but are not limited to the following persons:

1. Birth parent(s), if deemed appropriate;
2. Child and Family Team (CFT);
3. Resource parent(s);
4. Therapists and/or other service providers;
5. Other family members or other individuals who DCS knows has a significant relationship with the child; and
6. Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and/or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

DCS will document the process of preparing the child for adoption in the child’s case file and the Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS) case log.

DCS will inform any child aged 14 years and older that written consent must be obtained from the child for the adoption to be completed, in accordance with Indiana law.

Code Reference

[IC 31-19-9-1: Consents Required](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will have a one on one conversation with the child to explain the following to the child:

1. The reasons the child cannot return home;
2. The child's right to have a parent;
3. The meaning of adoption;
4. The adoption process and how the child will be involved;
5. Placement of siblings, if applicable;
6. Preplacement visits and placement processes if applicable;

7. Whether there is a possibility that the child will be able to remain in contact with members of his or her birth family after being adopted;
8. Whether adoption by the child's resource family is an option; and
9. Who will make the final decision about the adoption.

For all children over the age of 14 years old, the FCM will:

1. Help the child to understand the adoption process and any other alternate permanency options available;
2. Explain to the child that his or her written consent is required for the adoption to proceed;
3. Obtain the child's signature;
4. Ask the child if he or she wants to be adopted;
5. Explore the reasons behind the child's decision;
6. If the child will not consent in writing to adoption, pursue an alternate permanency option, if it is in the best interest of the child. See separate policy, [6.10 Permanency Plan](#);
7. Refer the child for adoptive services to ensure that the child clearly understands the adoption process; and
8. Revisit the topic of adoption to determine, if the child's feelings about adoption have changed.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

N/A

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Consent To Adoption SF12582/ CW 1331](#)
2. [Lifebook](#) – Available in Hard Copy

RELATED INFORMATION

Use of Lifebooks

One of the best ways to prepare children for adoption is the development of a [Lifebook](#). The child's FCM, therapist, or resource parent(s) can assist the child, if necessary, to develop a [Lifebook](#). This process can be therapeutic and help the child address the core issues of the child's life (e.g., birth family history, abuse issues, placement history, emotional transitions, adoptive family, etc.). The [Lifebook](#) may contain, but is not limited to:

1. Photographs of the child;
2. Photographs of persons and places that were significant in the child's life prior to placement in foster care and/or adoptive placement;
3. Items related to school and extracurricular activities, (e.g., report cards, certificates, art work, awards, etc.);
4. Positive messages to the child from as many important adults as possible, including, but not limited to his or her birth parents and resource parent(s); and
5. Short summaries of significant events that have occurred in the child's life.

Note: [Lifebooks](#) are property of the child and should remain with the child through any placement changes.