

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 10: Adoption/Permanency	Effective Date: November 1, 2014
	Section 2: Assessing the Child's Readiness for Adoption	Version: 2

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will ensure that any child with a permanency plan of adoption will be assessed to determine his or her readiness and willingness to be adopted. This assessment will include, but is not limited to:

1. A review of the child's case record including the birth family history; and
2. Personal interviews with the following:
 - a. The child, if age and developmentally appropriate,
 - b. The child's siblings, if applicable,
 - c. The child's resource parent,
 - d. Educational, medical, and mental health professionals who have worked with the child,
 - e. The child's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/Guardian ad Litem (GAL), and
 - f. Other individuals who have a significant relationship with the child.

DCS will utilize the Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting and/or the Case Plan Conference to assess a child's readiness for adoption and address issues of separation and attachment.

DCS will ensure the child's [Lifebook](#) is reviewed and will assist with updating the information and/or prospective adoptive family with any pertinent family history and pictures, if available, of the child's birth family or any other significant places or individuals important in the child's life.

Code Reference

N/A

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will (based on the child's age and developmental level):

1. Develop an individualized plan for the child to ensure services are implemented to help prepare the child and/or adoptive family for adoption. This plan will be developed during a CFT meeting and may include, but is not limited to the child, mental health provider, resource parent, informal supports, and CASA/GAL;
2. Utilize the resource parent and CFT to assist with assessing the child's knowledge of adoption, explain termination of parental rights and the adoption process with the child, and answer any questions the child may have.
3. Ensure a referral is completed for a mental health assessment by an independent provider specializing in adoption, if appropriate;
4. Assess the need for a therapist or counselor to help the resource parent address any concerns related to the adoption of the child;
5. Refer the child and/or resource parents to a therapist or counselor that specializes in adoption, if the assessment indicates a need;

6. Ensure the child has the opportunity to review and update his or her [Lifebook](#);
7. Discuss with prospective adoptive family the possibility of post-adoption visitation privileges for the child with the child's biological family and significant others;
8. Assess whether it is appropriate for the child to have a [good-bye](#) visit with his or her birth parents and/or other significant relatives if post-adoption visitation is not appropriate;
9. Assess the child's needs and prepare a [10.B Tool: Child Social Summary](#) that gives a comprehensive and balanced picture of the child; and
10. Document all assessment results in the child's case file and in contacts in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Assist the FCM in ensuring that all necessary assessments are completed and documented in the case management system in a timely manner;
2. Ensure that all necessary referrals are made in a timely manner; and
3. Provide the FCM with guidance and recommendations regarding post-adoption services.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Importance of Preparation and Assessment of the Child

In an effort to reduce the number of adoption disruptions and dissolutions, DCS must adequately assess and prepare children and prospective adoptive parent for the adoption process and assist them in establishing and maintaining strong support systems.

Children need to grieve the loss of the birth family, therefore the FCM should discuss termination and adoption with the child, if age and developmentally appropriate, to give the child an opportunity to openly discuss his or her feelings. The FCM should consult with the child's therapist, if applicable, to determine the best approach for such a conversation with the child. Involving the resource parent and the CFT, if applicable, to help support the child's feelings of loss may also be helpful in this process.

When a Teen Says "No" to Permanency¹

When a Teen Says "NO" to Permanence, what he may be really saying is:

- "Adoption is for babies, I am not a baby"
- "I am ready for independence, I don't need more adults telling me what to do"
- "I need to protect myself from being hurt again"
- "I don't want to change my name"
- "I don't want to lose my connections with my birth family, foster families, etc."
- "I'm scared to death"

When adults give teens the power to say "NO" to permanent family connections, what the teen hears is:

- "You are not lovable"
- "No one would want you anyway"
- "There is no hope for your future"
- "You are not important enough for me to exert myself trying to find you a family"

¹ Adapted from Casey Family Programs and Sue Hoag Badeau (2009). Permanency Values Training: Who Wouldn't Want a Family? Handout 8: When a Teen Says No, Adapted from NY Longest Waiting Children Project.

If a teen says "NO" to permanency, this is an excellent starting point to help the teen begin to understand what his needs and fears are and to work with him or her on a plan for permanency. Teens need to be reassured they do not have to give up their past in order to get a future.

Things to think about include:

- Issues around names
- Open adoption or other avenues to maintain birth family connections
- Connections with foster families

Good-bye Visits

A decision as to whether or not a good-bye visit should be scheduled should be made after consulting with the CFT and the child's counselor/therapist (if applicable). The child's age and emotional development should be considered in the decision.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Lifebook](#) – Available in Hard Copy
2. [10.B Tool: Child Social Summary](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks come pre-packaged and may be ordered by contacting the Program Manager for Adoption. The FCM may also contact his or her Regional Adoption Consultant to place an order for Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks. The Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks will be mailed to the FCM in the DCS local office.

Note: The **pre-packaged** Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks are not mandatory for the FCMs to use. The FCM, therapist, family member or foster parent may create a unique Lifebook and/or Adoption Workbook for a child using a photo album, scrapbook materials, or any creative idea that would be most meaningful for that child.

DCS currently has the following types of pre-packaged Lifebooks and Adoption Workbooks (described by Adoption World Publishing²):

My Adoption Workbook is a kid-friendly workbook that guides the social worker and child through the adoption process. This workbook provides a sensitive, but forthright explanation of separation, followed by hands-on activities to help prepare a child for change and work through the process.

Nothing raises a child's anxiety more than the unknown. "**My Adoption Workbook**" carefully guides the child and social worker through the entire process from separation to post-adoption. Exercises are designed to reduce the fears and to promote a healthy child-to-parent relationship. Special emphasis is given to helping the child:

- Explore fears or fantasies;
- Work through abuse, trust and love issues;
- Build self-esteem;
- Handle new situations; and
- Adjust to change.

² [Adoption World Publishing](#) (2014)

The One & Only Me is a book that helps foster, adoptive, and other troubled children connect to their current situation, as well as, their beginnings. This book creates a living history for children dealing with a chaotic past.

The Real Me teen Lifebook is a tool to use when working with teens. The teenage years are a challenge even in the best situations. For teens in foster care or living in a group setting, the uncertainties about the future can cause additional stress and worry. The chapter *What My Future Holds* provides a framework that youth can use to process the many issues they face. It also prompts them to gather the necessary documentation for job hunting.