

A ADOPTION ADVOCATES OF GEORGIA, INC.

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Rev 11/24

Initial

Initial

Page 1 –Policies and Procedures for Adoption

APPLICATION FOR SERVICES:

Single, married or domestic partnership couples who are residents of Georgia desiring to apply for an adoptive home study evaluation may apply to the Agency. The prospective adoptive parent(s) then forwards to A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. (Agency) the signed Pre-Orientation form and the completed Home Study Application for the purpose of entering into a contract with the Agency to perform the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation or Adoption Placement. The application must be signed and dated. (Pre-Orientation, Fees and Application for Home Study Evaluation on Agency website). Additional orientation information will be discussed during the first home study meeting.

ORIENTATION INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENT(S):

Prior to the acceptance of an application or fees of any kind, the Agency shall provide information to prospective adoptive parent(s) to assist them in making an informed decision about applying to adopt. The information may be in the form of a written handout. The information shall include at least:

- (a) The Agency's adoption services;
- (b) The Agency's eligibility requirements for adoption;
- (c) A description of the procedures involved with adoption;
- (d) The Agency's fee schedule and refund policies;
- (e) The approximate time the assessment and adoption process will take;
- (f) The types of children available for adoption.

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF FEES/FINANCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLICIES:

Application Fee for Adoptive Home Study Evaluation:

There is no application fee for home study services.

Adoptive Home Study Evaluation Fee:

Domestic Home Study Fee: \$1,400. An Adoptive Home Study Evaluation fee of \$1,400.00 is due and payable in two payments. \$700.00 is due and payable on visit one, and \$700.00 is due and payable on visit three

International Home Study Fee: \$2,250. An Adoptive Home Study Evaluation fee of \$2,250 is due and payable in three payments. \$750 is due and payable on visit one, and \$750 is due and payable on visit two and \$750 is due and payable on visit three. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Expedited Home Study Fee:

A home study may be expedited for **domestic** home studies only (subject to the approval of the agency director) for a fee of 250.00. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Domestic Home Study Update Fee (Current Clients):

A fee of \$800.00 and mileage is due and payable at the time of the home visit when a home study is updated. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Domestic Subsequent Adoption Home Study Fee:

A fee of \$1000.00 is due and payable when the completed Subsequent Adoptive Home Study Application for a subsequent adoption is submitted. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Adoption Court Report:

In the case of a domestic family finalizing their adoption in Georgia, the Agency will complete the Adoption Court Report for a fee of \$250/\$500 paid by the adoptive family. Payment must be received before release of the Adoption Court Report. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Initial

Initial

Page 2 – Policies and Procedures for Adoption

POST PLACEMENT FEES:

Domestic post placement fee: \$300. A fee of \$300 plus mileage is due and payable at the time of each post-placement visit. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

International post placement fee: \$500. A fee of \$500 plus mileage is due and payable at the time of each post-placement visit. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Fee for Mileage and Travel Time:

Mileage to and from the clients home will be assessed according to the most updated IRS guidelines. This fee will be computed and collected at the home visit. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Express Mailings:

The Agency utilizes Federal Express for express mailings. For adoptive prospective adoptive parent(s) who choose to have a document express mailed, a Federal Express account number must be provided to the Agency.

Receipt for Services:

If requested, the prospective adoptive parent(s) will receive a receipt.

Copies of Documents:

Adoptive applicants will retain original copies of all documents provided to the Agency.

FEE REFUND POLICY:

Fees paid for services rendered are *non-refundable*. However, if no services were provided, a refund will be issued within (30) thirty days of written request by the prospective client.

ADDITIONAL ORIENTATION FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE APPLICANT(S):

Once an application has been submitted by the prospective adoptive parent(s), orientation information shall be supplied for the prospective adoptive parent(s), including but not limited to:

- a. The legal procedures involved in adoption
- b. The minimum requirements for an adoptive home and the procedures for the home study
- c. The selection, matching and placement process
- d. The process children use to locate birth parents, and the process birth parents use to locate children
- e. The Agency's grievance procedures

ADOPTION SERVICES:

A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. is a licensed child placing agency in the State of Georgia. The Agency provides the following services to Georgia residents: adoption placements, home study evaluation, adoption counseling, post-placement supervision and independent and private court reports. For prospective adoptive parents who are adopting a child where they are using an out of state placement agency/entity, a cooperating interagency agreement will need to be obtained by A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. and the prospective adoptive parent's out of state placement agency/entity prior to placement activities occurring in the state of Georgia.

GEORGIA LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ADOPTION:

Prospective adoptive parents agree to comply with all legal requirements for adoption in the State of Georgia.

Initial

Initial

ADVERTISING CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES AND/OR PROVIDING CHILD PLACEMENT SERVICES IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA:

It is unlawful for any person or entity that is not licensed by the Department as a child-placing agency to advertise that it will adopt children or arrange for or cause children to be adopted or placed for adoption. The advertisement of such services by an unlicensed person or entity, whether in a periodical, by television, by radio, or by any other public or private medium, including, but not limited to, letters, circulars, handbills, internet postings, social media or oral statements is unlawful. **Persons violating this law shall be guilty of a felony. See O.C.G.A. § 19-8-24.**

CPA Rule 290-9-2-.02(1) further prohibits engagement in child placement activities without a license, including the advertisement of those activities. However, **CPA Rule 290-9-2-.02(1)** does allow CPAs licensed in other states to engage in placement activities if it has entered into a written agreement with a CPA licensed in Georgia to cooperate in and to supervise the placement. Specifically, this rule states that “no person, facilitator, consultant, institution, society, agency, corporation or facility shall engage in child placement activities, including the advertising of such child placement activities, in Georgia unless a license has first been obtained from the Department. For purposes of this rule, Child-Placing Agencies licensed in other states and wishing to engage in placement activities, including the advertising of such placement activities, in Georgia shall also be licensed in Georgia or shall have a written agreement with a Child-Placing Agency licensed within the state to cooperate in and to supervise the placement. This agreement shall be approved by the Department prior to the placement.”

INTER-AGENCY AGREEMENT WITH A GEORGIA LICENSED CPA:

A CPA that is licensed in another state is allowed to engage in placement activities (e.g., the selection, by a person or Agency other than the child's parent or guardian, the selection of a prospective adoptive family, effecting the movement of the child into the prospective adoptive family, and preparation of a home study) in Georgia only if the CPA is also licensed in Georgia or has an approved agreement with a Georgia licensed CPA. See CPA Rule 290-9-2-.02(1). The written inter-agency agreement should include two essential components: delineation of both the cooperation between the Georgia licensed CPA and the out-of-state agency and the supervision of the placement by the Georgia licensed CPA. The agreement must clearly reflect that the Georgia licensed CPA will cooperate in and supervise the placement. Placement activities encompass all areas of a placement including, but not limited to, the selection of the prospective adoptive family, the signing of birth parent surrenders, the matching of a prospective adoptive family to a prospective adoptive child and post-placement activities such as home visits. See CPA Rule 290-9-2-.01(m). Essentially, any type of placement activity in the State of Georgia conducted by an out-of-state licensed CPA shall be in cooperation with and supervised by a Georgia licensed CPA. The inter-agency agreement must be approved by the Department's Office of Inspector General Residential Child Care Licensing (RCCL) unit prior to engaging in any child placement activities in Georgia. If approved, the Georgia licensed CPA and the out-of-state agency shall operate in conformity with the inter-agency agreement and Georgia law.

INDUCEMENTS:

Additionally, any out-of-state licensed CPA entering into an inter-agency agreement with a Georgia licensed CPA must ensure that any financial assistance, either direct or indirect, provided to a biological parent who is present in and/or residing in Georgia is made in compliance with Georgia law. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 19-8-24, any person, organization, corporation, hospital, facilitator, or association of any kind whatsoever which directly or indirectly holds out or provides inducements to any biological parent to part with his or her child shall be guilty of a felony.

CPA Rule 290-9-2-.01(bb) defines “inducements” as any financial assistance, either direct or indirect, from whatever source. The rule then specifies that the term “inducements” shall not include:

Initial

Initial

Page 4 –Policies and Procedures for Adoption

1. Payment or reimbursement of medical expenses directly related to the biological mother’s pregnancy and hospitalization for the birth of the child and medical care for such child if paid by a licensed Child-Placing Agency or an attorney,
2. Payment or reimbursement of expenses for counseling services or legal services for a biological parent related to the placement by such parent or her or his child for adoption if paid by a licensed Child-Placing Agency or an attorney,
3. Payment or reimbursement of reasonable living expenses for the biological mother if paid by a licensed Child-Placing Agency, or
4. Payment or reimbursement of reasonable expenses for rent, utilities, food, maternity garments and maternity accessories for the biological mother if paid from the trust account of an attorney, who is a member of the State Bar of Georgia in good standing. In the context of payment or reimbursement of allowable expenses to a Georgia birth parent, an inter-agency agreement shall acknowledge and specify that “child placing agency” means only a CPA licensed in Georgia pursuant to Chapter 5 of Title 49. See O.C.G.A. Section 19-8-1(5).

Additional CPA Rules to Consider Regarding Interstate Adoptions:

CPA Rule 290-9-2-.06(7)(h) allows the receiving state’s requirements to meet the Georgia requirements for services following an adoption placement. These services include post-placement home visits, verification of a safe and healthy living environment, observation of the child/parent in the home, documentation of the home visits, explanation to the family that they can engage an attorney of their choice, and assistance with completing the adoption as required by court. Specifically, this rule provides that “in an interstate adoption placement where Georgia is the state of origin, the requirements for services following an adoption placement may be met by fulfilling the requirements of the receiving state.”

CPA Rule 290-9-2-.02(2) addresses persons or entities who may not advertise adoption services. The rule states that “no person, organization, corporation, hospital, facilitator, or association that is not a Child-Placing Agency, a prospective adoptive parent with a valid, approved pre-placement home study report, or an attorney who is a member of the State Bar of Georgia representing a prospective adoptive parent with a valid approved pre-placement home study report shall advertise that the person, organization, corporation, hospital, facilitator, or association will adopt, arrange for or cause children to be adopted or placed for adoption as provided in O.C.G.A. Section 19-8- 24.”

CPA Rule 290-9-2-.01(v) defines a “facilitator” as “an individual or Agency who is engaged in the matching of biological parents with adoptive parents. This term does not apply to a person or Agency who refers biological parents, prospective adoptive parents and children to licensed ChildPlacing Agencies for adoption services.”

ADOPTIVE HOME STUDY PREPARATION AND PROCESS:

The Agency will acknowledge acceptance of the application in writing and when the application can be activated.

The Adoptive Home Study evaluation is the process by which the family unit engages with Agency staff to determine the readiness of their home for the placement of an adoptive child or children. A key element of this process is the preparation of the family for the placement, including education, support and contact with other adoptive families.

This process is a contractual agreement entered into voluntarily. Either party may terminate the process at any time. The termination of the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation process shall be acknowledged by the written and signed notification to the other party.

Initial

Initial

Page 5 –Policies and Procedures for Adoption

The Adoptive Home Study evaluation process is comprised of the following components:

Parenting Ability: The prospective adoption parent(s) must give evidence of a mutual desire and love for children. They must be able to provide for the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the child being adopted.

Health: Prospective adoption parent(s) must be in good physical and mental health as determined by a doctor's examination. They must be able to physically and emotionally undertake the responsibility of parenthood. If prospective adoption parent(s) are under the medical care of a specialist, an additional letter is required. The letter will include diagnosis, prognosis and list prescribed medications.

Financial Stability: The applicants must have sufficient income to meet the expenses incurred by adding another family member. They must also be able to make reasonable provision for future financial stability. Medical insurance coverage is required.

Housing: The applicants' home must provide adequate space and living conditions necessary to promote the health and well-being of the family members and meet state standards, when applicable. Ownership is not required.

Pregnancy: If a pregnancy does occur during the process and prior to the placement of a child, the prospective parents' application may be placed on hold.

Working Parents: If both parents work outside the home, one of the parents should be able to remain at home with the child for a reasonable amount of time following the placement. (The exact length of time can be discussed with a social worker at the time of the home study. A general rule we suggest is that one parent take six to eight weeks, usually the allotted amount of maternity leave provided by most companies. FMLA standards require adoptive parents the same amount of leave.) This is to provide for the nurturing and security of the child, while he/she assimilates into the home. When the parent returns to work, there must be a plan for responsible child care so that the security of the child can be sustained.

Prior History of Criminal History: Criminal background checks will be conducted for each adult member of the family. Any criminal history in your past should be addressed with an agency representative prior to making an application.

The Agency shall make a written evaluation of each prospective adoptive parent(s) prior to the approval of the Adoptive Home Study Report. This study of the prospective adoptive parent(s) for adoption services shall include, as a minimum, three visits. One visit shall be in the home. The prospective adoptive parent(s) and any other individuals who live in the home shall be seen and interviewed at this home visit. At the home visit, a safety standards assessment will be conducted by the Caseworker while touring the home. Prospective adoptive parent(s) will provide the Caseworker access to the location of first aid supplies, **functional** carbon monoxide detector(s) and smoke alarm(s), gun safe (if applicable), operable/easily accessible fire extinguishers and hazardous materials and chemicals.

If there is a pool or body of water on or adjacent to the prospective applicant(s) home, additional safety measures may be required prior to approval of the home study. Many young children under the age of 5y who drown are not in their swimsuits and not supposed to be in the water. Children have a natural curiosity and attraction to water. Preventing access to swimming pools for small children is essential.

Initial

Initial

Page 6 –Policies and Procedures for Adoption

Recommended additional water safety measures:

Install a four-sided pool fence that completely separates the house and play area of the yard from the pool area. The fence should be at least four feet high. Use self-closing and self-latching gates that open outward with latches that are out of reach of children.

After the children are done swimming, secure the pool so they can't get back into it.

Consider additional barriers such as automatic door locks or alarms to prevent access or notify you if someone enters the pool area.

Keep rescue equipment (such as a shepherd's hook or life preserver) by the pool.

Remove floats, balls and other toys from the pool after use so that children are not tempted to reach for them.

Additional Home Study requirements:

Prospective adoptive parent(s) shall be interviewed together as well as separately to discuss the questionnaire.

Verification by means of certified copies of birth, marriage and divorce records as well as current health status, GBI criminal history records' check, etc., will be provided to the Agency by the prospective adoptive parent(s).

The family will complete, as one of the requirements, a biographical detailed questionnaire. This questionnaire is to be completed and returned to the Caseworker prior to the second visit. All other required documents must be returned to the Caseworker before the home visit can be scheduled.

A minimum of five letters of recommendation will be provided to the Agency. Three references will be from non-relatives. Two letters of reference must be from family members. The relatives providing reference letters may not reside in the home with the adoptive family. If a prospective adoptive applicant has worked with children in the past five years, an additional sixth reference must be obtained from that employer. (References are to be sent directly to the Agency, not the adoptive prospective adoptive parent(s).

It is the adoptive applicant's responsibility to inform the Caseworker before the home visit is scheduled of any additional documents required by their placement agency or of any specific home study format required. Examples are revisions to international Home Study Report (\$250 fee), post-placement visit letter, notarized agency license, etc.

The Agency staff shall provide a written Home Study Report at the conclusion of the visits with the prospective adoptive parent(s) and Caseworker and the completion of the aforementioned requirements and verifications. A copy or copies of the Home Study Report will be provided to the adoptive prospective adoptive parent(s).

The "Review Committee" shall make approval or disapproval of the prospective adoptive parent(s) for the placement of a child or children. This Committee shall be comprised of the Caseworker for the adoptive applicants, the Agency Adoption Services Supervisor, and the Agency Director. This Committee shall review the written home study and any supporting information and data as necessary. The adoptive prospective adoptive parent(s) will be notified in writing as to the disposition of the Committee's evaluation.

A decision on approval of the adoptive applicants shall be made within 15 days of the last contact with the prospective adoptive parent(s) or there shall be documentation in the record to explain any delay.

Initial

Initial

Page 7 –Policies and Procedures for Adoption

A completed Adoptive Home Study Report, which contains a favorable recommendation, does not guarantee the placement of a child or children in the prospective adoptive parent(s) home. Placement of a child or children is the responsibility of the applicant’s placement source, (their USA placement agency, foreign agency, etc.). The Agency cannot be held responsible, either financially or in any other manner, for the outcome of the adoption process.

Adoptive prospective adoptive parent(s) receiving an unfavorable recommendation will be given a list of resources with which to strengthen areas, which the Agency perceives as limitations. The Caseworker will offer a minimum of one follow-up contact to help the adoptive prospective adoptive parent(s) adjust to the unfavorable recommendation.

A home study evaluation is a process; however, it should not continue indefinitely. Prospective adoptive parent(s) should not apply and begin the home study process until they are ready to participate fully in the process. Fees, interviews, and documents expire at 12 months; therefore, delays during the process will result in a family having extra interviews, redoing/updating documents and paying additional fees.

EDUCATION OF THE ADOPTIVE APPLICANT:

Prospective adoptive parent(s) adopting an international infant or child will need to contact their child-placing agency to determine the education requirements for their country. All prospective adoptive parent(s) are encouraged to complete adoptive parenting training through Adoption Learning Partners. The state of Georgia requires prospective adoptive parents to complete a minimum of 10 (ten) hours of training during the home study process. Adoption Learning Partners provides online training and webinars that are affordable and easy to access.

adoptionlearningpartners.org

POST-PLACEMENT SUPERVISION SERVICES:

According to regulations for the State of Georgia, the Agency is to conduct a minimum of (2) two visits after placement of a child and monthly visits prior to the Petition for Adoption being filed. The first visit shall be made within 30 days of placement of the child. There shall be a minimum of two weeks between home visits for a child age 12 months and younger. There shall be a minimum of 30 days between the required home visits for a child over the age of 12 months. Post-placement visits will continue until a court date for finalization has been set. Unless otherwise instructed, all post placement visits are to occur in the adoptive home.

The agency will document participation of each placement home’s quarterly fire drills in the post placement supervision reports. During the home study process, the agency will document the placement of the home escape route and agreed upon meeting place outside of the home.

If a Petition for Adoption is not granted within 60 days after filing and/or no court date is set, the Agency shall make additional home visits at least quarterly until a final order has been entered on the Petition.

For adoptive families adopting a child from another state, the originating state and/or placement agency may impose additional post-placement requirements. If the adoptive family is finalizing their adoption in a state other than Georgia, they will follow the post-placement requirements of the other state.

Adoptive families who have finalized their child or children's adoption in a foreign court must follow the post-placement requirements of their placement agency and the country from which their children came.

Initial

Initial

Page 8 –Policies and Procedures for Adoption

It is the sole responsibility of the adoptive family to contact the Agency regarding post-placement services in compliance with agency, state and/or country regulations for post-placement supervision according to the schedule of their placement agency. The adoptive applicant agrees to pay the post-placement fee for supervision services to the Agency. The length of the post-placement supervision varies from case to case, and each applicant must cooperate and fulfill their obligations for post-placement supervision.

INTERSTATE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN:

The Agency shall comply with the applicable laws of that state and with the provisions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, O.C.G.A. Chapter 39-A.

FINALIZATION:

The adoptive family shall engage at its own cost the legal fees for the finalization of their adoption. This shall take place at the conclusion of the post-placement period. The Agency reserves the right to postpone finalization should it appear to be in the best interest of the adoptive child and family.

The Agency will prepare the required Domestic Court Report for a fee of \$250/\$500, payable by the adoptive client (in an agency adoption) and documents necessary for finalization of the adoption. The Agency will submit these documents prior to the hearing date to the Superior Court of the County in which the family is finalizing.

POST-ADOPTION SERVICES:

The Agency is available as a resource, counselor, and friend on an on-going basis to our adoptive families. We welcome a continuing relationship with our families through the years. We encourage our families to participate in Agency sponsored post-adoption services and activities.

SUBSEQUENT ADOPTIONS:

An adoptive family who has completed a home study through the Agency and who has had the placement of a child in their home, must complete finalization of the adoption prior to applying for another home study.

Subsequent Home Studies:

When a family is applying to adopt again after an initial placement has been made with that family, a subsequent home study shall be completed, which may contain the original home study for information which has not changed since that study, but must at a minimum include additionally:

1. At least one additional home visit since the time of the previous placement;
2. The applicant's current employment status;
3. Updated medical reports;
4. Changes in family composition;
5. Any changes in types of children requested;
6. An evaluation of the prospective adoptive parent(s)' adjustment to parenthood; and 7. A re-evaluation of parenting skills, knowledge, and techniques.

Initial

Initial

UPDATE OF HOME STUDY:

A domestic home study is current for one year from the approval date written on the signature page of the home study report. Depending on foreign country requirements, an international home study is generally considered current for a period of eighteen months from the approval date on the Home Study Report. For prospective adoptive parent(s) pursuing an international adoption, the need for an update shall be determined by their placement agency, BCIS, and the country from which they are adopting. It is the sole responsibility of the prospective adoptive parent(s) to contact the Agency to update the adoption home study four weeks prior to the expiration of a domestic home study and two months prior to the expiration of an international study. Failure to contact the Agency in a timely manner may result in additional work for the Agency and therefore additional charges to the adoptive prospective adoptive parent(s) may be assessed.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:

All applicants shall have the right of appeal of grievances. Applicants agree not to engage an attorney and/or enter into litigation. Should a difference arise between an applicant and the Caseworker, such differences must be settled in the following manner:

Grievances should first be discussed with the Caseworker involved. If the difference is not resolved, the applicant should inform the Caseworker in writing as to the nature of the grievance within two working weeks. At that time, the applicant should request a conference with the Adoption Supervisor. The Adoption Supervisor will meet with the applicant at the Supervisor's office within two working weeks of the date of receipt of the applicant's written grievance request.

If resolution is not reached within two weeks after the applicant meets with the Supervisor, the nature of the grievances shall be presented, in writing, to the Executive Director by the applicant. The Adoption Supervisor and the Caseworker will also report, in writing, the results of their findings to the Executive Director. The Director will arrange a meeting, within two weeks, with the applicant, the Caseworker, and the Adoption Supervisor. The Executive Director will render a decision, in writing, to the applicant, the Adoption Services Supervisor, and the Caseworker, usually within two weeks after the conference. The decision of the Executive Director is final.

If this procedure does not result in an agreeable resolution, the applicants may choose to participate in an objective, professional mediation service and abide by the recommended resolution. The adoptive applicants will pay for these mediation services.

ESTABLISHING, MAINTAINING, AND STORAGE OF AGENCY RECORDS AND REPORTS:

All current records will be available for review by the appropriate Department. The Agency shall maintain records and submit on a timely basis reports required by such Department.

The Agency shall maintain adoption records pertaining to each child and family. A permanent listing with identifying information of all children accepted for post-placement services will be stored on a computer database. Backup files are stored safely as a hardcopy only. All finalized or closed files and all legal documents will be housed in the administrative office of the Agency until the adoption is finalized and/or case closed. These records are to be maintained in fireproof, locked file cabinets. Once the adoption is finalized and/or case closed, the adoption records will be disposed through shredding and incineration. From that time hence, the Agency will not be able to retrieve these documents for adoptive families. Clients must keep copies of all their documents. Documents provided to the Agency by the prospective adoptive parent(s) become an official part of the Agency adoption record and are the sole property of the Agency.

Initial

Initial

REPORTING OF INCIDENTS OF CHILDREN UNDER POST-PLACEMENT SUPERVISION:

1. The Agency shall require the prospective adoptive parent(s) to report to the agency within 24 hours whenever a child receiving services through the agency requires medical treatment or hospitalization, death, suicide attempts, closure to the home due to disaster or emergency situations such as fires or severe weather, or emergency safety interventions resulting in any injury. **(See Behavior Management Techniques)**
2. The Agency shall submit to the Department of Family and Children’s Services and the Residential Child Care Licensing (RCCL) electronically or by facsimile a detailed investigative report within five (5) work days, whenever the agency becomes aware of the incident, which results in injury to a child requiring medical treatment beyond first aid that is received by a child as a result of or in connection with any behavior management technique.
3. The Agency shall take appropriate corrective action when it becomes aware of or observes the use of prohibited forms of behavior management techniques. Documentation of the incident and the corrective action taken by the agency shall be maintained in the case records of the child and family.
4. If the Agency has reason to believe that a child in care has been subjected to child abuse, it shall cause a report of such abuse to be made to the child welfare agency providing protective services as designated by the Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services, or in the absence of such agency to an appropriate police authority or district attorney in accordance with the requirements of O.C.G.A, Sec. 19-7-5. A copy of such report shall also be filed with RCCL.

CLIENT’S RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEEPING DOCUMENTS CURRENT:

Supporting home study documents are current for only one year from the date on the individual documents (e.g., medicals, CPS forms, GBI reports, reference letters, pet vaccinations, sewage and water approval, employment letters), depending upon the requirements of individual placement agencies, states, or countries. Even though the home study may not have expired at the time of a referral for the placement of a child, the supporting documents may in fact have expired and will need to be resubmitted to the placement agency.

Important: There is no feasible way for the Agency to know the following:

- 1) When a referral from a placement agency will be made
- 2) If at the time of referral, client’s documents are current
- 3) Changes in document requirements of placement agency, another state or another country

It is the sole responsibly of the prospective adoptive parent(s) to contact their placement agency prior to the one-year anniversary of the documents to determine whether or not updated documents need to be submitted by the prospective adoptive parent(s) to the placement agency in order to meet the requirements of the placement agency, the state, or country from which the prospective adoptive parent(s) are adopting.

CRIMINAL HISTORY FOR ADOPTIVE CLIENTS:

All prospective adoptive parent(s) must be forthcoming and honest about a criminal charge. If a prospective adoptive parent(s) has ever been fingerprinted (except for a job, a hunting license, or gun permit), the GCIC report will show this as an arrest. It is understood by the prospective adoptive parent(s), that no matter what they have been told by a police officer or an attorney, if they were ever fingerprinted as a result of an arrest, in a law enforcement matter, this information will show up on a GBI or FBI background and must be disclosed on the Home Study Application and Adoptive Parent Questionnaire.

Initial

Initial

Page 11 – Policies and Procedures for Adoption

This includes charges made by the prospective adoptive parent(s) when underage, expunged records, and dropped charges. Failure to disclose arrests may result in termination of the home study evaluation process being conducted by the Agency. It is understood that if the prospective adoptive parent(s) are pursuing an international adoption, BCIS may hold up the processing of Form I-800 for six (6) months and that they have the right to deny the I-800, if they so choose, for failure to disclose a criminal charge.

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

Discipline Policy – A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc.’s policy prohibits the use of corporal or unusual punishment on a child in the home. To ensure the safety and well-being of the children placed in (my/our) home, (I/we) agree to the following:

- Refrain from the use of any corporal or unusual punishment on a child placed in (my/our) home, including, but not limited to the following: spanking, slapping, switching, shaking, pinching, biting, twisting, or pulling; tying with rope, withholding food, force feeding, denying mail, denying appropriate contacts with family, denying contact with worker; degrading child or child’s family, or humiliating child; creating fear, anger and anxiety, locking child in a room, closet or outside the home; group punishment or delegating older children to administer punishment; destroying the child’s property and any other practices which may physically or emotionally damage the child.
- When managing children’s behavior, use the suggested alternative methods (or other effective means of discipline) made available by, A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc.’s Policies and Procedures Manual
- Seek on-going information/training to build and enhance (my/our) child behavioral management skills.
- Immediately inform the agency of the need for assistance in managing the behavior of any child placed in (my/our) home, prior to finalization of adoption.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT/TECHNIQUES:

A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc, is committed to the philosophy that effective behavior management is based on consistency and effective communication of expectations and consequences. The long-term goal of behavior management is to teach children self-control and self-discipline. The type of behavior management is determined by the age of the child, the child's individual needs and personality, emotional make-up and past experience.

Child training, behavior management and emergency safety interventions may be administered by the prospective adoption parent(s) when appropriate. Distraction, reasoning, "Time-out", and cause and effect learning techniques are all effective means for teaching a child self-control skills. Corporal punishment is never an appropriate form of discipline.

The following forms of behavior management shall not be used by a prospective adoptive parent(s):

1. Assignment of excessive or unreasonable work tasks
2. Denial of meals or hydration
3. Denial of sleep
4. Denial of shelter, clothing, or essential personal needs
5. Denial of essential services
6. Verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation
7. Restraints or manual holds
8. Seclusion or confinement of a child in a room or area which may reasonably be expected to cause physical or emotional damage to the child; or

Initial

Initial

Page 12– Policies and Procedures for Adoption

9. Seclusion or confinement of a child to a room or area for periods longer than those appropriate to the child’s age, intelligence, emotional makeup and previous experience, or confinement to a room or area without the supervision or monitoring necessary to ensure the child’s safety and well-being.
10. Children shall not be permitted to participate in the behavior management of other children.

Agencies shall submit to the Department electronically or by facsimile a report within 24 hours, whenever the Agency becomes aware of an incident, which results in any injury to a child requiring medical treatment beyond first aid that is received by a child as a result of or in connection with any behavior management or emergency safety intervention.

The Agency shall take appropriate corrective action when it becomes aware of or observes the use of prohibited forms of behavior management, as specified in sections 06(10)(c) 2. through (xi) or inappropriate emergency safety interventions. Documentation of the incident and the corrective action taken by the Agency shall be maintained in the case records of the child and family.

Prospective adoptive parent(s) shall be made aware of each child’s known or apparent medical and psychological conditions and family history, as evidenced by written acknowledgement of such awareness, to ensure that the prospective adoptive parent(s) have adequate knowledge to deliver safe and healthy care to the child.

The Agency shall require the prospective adoptive parent(s) to report to the agency within 24 hours whenever a child receiving services through the Agency requires medical attention as a result of or in connection with the use of a behavior management techniques or emergency safety interventions.

EMERGENCY SAFETY INTERVENTION POLICY:

The population of prospective adoptive families contracting with A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. for home study evaluation services would not be seeking to adopt a child or children who require training for a specific Emergency Safety Intervention technique (ESI). However, if a prospective adoptive family desires to adopt a child whose social and/or medical background indicates that he or she would have risk factors indicating the need for ESI training of the adoptive family, the home study evaluation will address the family’s readiness, preparedness, and successful training of chosen ESI method(s). The ESI training of the adoptive family will be the responsibility of the placement agency. A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. will work with the placement agency to ensure the proper training of ESI methods.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN:

A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. is committed to the safety of the children under its supervision. In the case of an emergency situation which may affect the care of children, an effective disaster plan has been created that identifies emergency situations and outlines an appropriate course of action.

In the case of local or widespread weather emergencies or natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, ice or snow storms, or floods, adoptive families will have a plan of safety in place. This plan will entail an evacuation plan or designated area in the home, family member or nearby emergency facility to seek shelter during such events.

1. Manmade disasters such as acts of terrorism and hazardous materials spills;
2. Unanticipated interruption of service of utilities, including water, gas, or electricity, involving any placement homes within a local or widespread area;

Initial

Initial

Page 13 – Policies and Procedures for Adoption

3. Loss of heat or air conditioning in the placement home;
4. Fire, explosion, or other physical damage in the placement home; and
5. Pandemics or other situations where the community's need for services exceeds the availability of placement homes and services regularly offered by the agency.

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, clients are encouraged to follow the guidelines and recommendations of the appropriate government agencies.

Contact information for public health and community resources:

CDC-Atlanta
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30333
(404) 639-3311

Georgia Department of Human Services
47 Trinity Ave, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30344
(877) 423-4746

Agency emergency contact:

Ashley A. Byers
Executive Director
(770) 778-2751

FIREARM SAFETY IN THE HOME:

Prospective adoptive parent(s) will disclose ownership of firearms and their existence in the home. Said firearms must be safely secured in a locked gun safe and inaccessible to any minors in the home. This is required prior to the approval/reapproval of the home as a placement resource for children. The home visit cannot take place until all firearms have been safely secured.

If there are no firearms in the home at the time of the home study, the prospective adoptive parent(s) agree to inform the Agency if any firearms are to be kept in the home in the future or during the post-placement supervisory period or prior to finalization of a domestic adoption.

IMMUNIZATION OF CHILDREN:

The Agency requires that all children already in the home and children being adopted to be immunized. Please contact the Director with any questions about this policy. In some cases, a prospective adoptive family may request a religious exemption form if their religious beliefs prohibit vaccinations.

POLICY ON INFANT SLEEP POSITION:

A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. is committed to the reduction of infant deaths due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). To this end, we require all adoptive families who adopt children under the age of one year to adhere to the following preventive measures and to sign a statement to this effect.

Initial

Initial

Page 14 – Policies and Procedures for Adoption

- a. ALWAYS place the baby on his/her back to sleep.
- b. Place the baby on a firm mattress; remove all pillows, quilts, bumper pads, sheepskins, stuffed toys and other soft items from the crib.
- c. Do not have the infant sleep in the parent's bed or share their crib with another sibling.
- d. Dress the baby in a sleeping garment instead of covering him with a blanket. Swaddling is acceptable.
- e. Do not let babies sleep in a room where smoking is allowed.

The above measures have been provided by the National SIDS Foundation & Infant Death Program Support Center.

INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN (ICPC) :

If you and the birth parents are in different states, then your adoption will need to comply with the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC). This law, effective in every state, says that you will not be permitted to bring the child to your home state until you get approval from the Compact Administrators in both states. In order to obtain ICPC approval to travel outside the state of the child's birth with the child, you must have a completed home study and obtain the other legal documents required by both states. Specific requirements for approval, and the length of time to review, vary from state to state. It is illegal to return to your home state with the child before the Compact Administrators in both the "sending state" (state of child's birth or residence) and "receiving state" (your home state) approve the placement. You should be prepared to stay in the sending state waiting for ICPC approval for 14 days after the birth, but the period may be more or less, depending on the details of your case. Failure to comply with ICPC requirements may jeopardize your adoption.

NETWORKING VS. SOLICITATION:

It is illegal in most states and unethical for adoptive families to advertise via publication, internet or social media to solicit expectant moms. Adoptive families are permitted to network in the community and let friends and family know they are adopting. If an adoptive family knows someone who wants to place, they are welcome to refer them to the Agency for services.

Examples of Solicitation: Posting on a public website, social media, newspaper or public means of communicating about your plans to adopt a way that encourages a response from a potential expectant parent, offering financial assistance of any kind in order to encourage an expectant parent to choose adoption or consider your family for an adoption placement, or sending your profile to pregnancy centers or other public facilities to solicit a potential expectant parent.

Examples of Appropriate Networking: Discussing your plans to adopt with family, friends and acquaintances, Sharing about Lifeline and ministry to parents with personal and professional contacts or advocating for adoption and providing adoption resources when natural connections are made.

A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc.'s role in adoption is to find families for children and not children for families. Acting with the rights and welfare of children in mind, A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. is committed to act in such a way to ensure the prohibition of child buying and child trafficking. A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. takes all actions possible to ensure that domestic adoptions take place in the best interests of the child. As a part of this, A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. has procedures in place to prevent the abduction, exploitation, sale or trafficking of children. A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc. prohibits all employees and agents from giving money or other consideration, directly or indirectly, to a child's parent(s), other individual(s), or an entity as payment for the child or as an inducement to release the child for adoption. He or she

Initial

Initial

Page 15 – Policies and Procedures for Adoption

understands that giving money as payment for a child or as an inducement to release the child will result in immediate termination of services.

CHILD TRAFFICKING POLICY:

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines and procedures for preventing, identifying, and responding to child trafficking within the adoption process. This policy ensures the safety and well-being of all children under the care of the agency.

This policy applies to all employees, prospective adoptive parents, volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, and individuals assisting in the adoption process associated with A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc.

Child Trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes, but is not limited to, prostitution, forced labor, slavery, servitude and removal of organs.

A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc is committed to preventing child trafficking and ensuring that all children are protected from exploitation. The agency will take all necessary measures to identify and prevent child trafficking and to respond appropriately to any instances of trafficking.

Thorough background checks and screenings will be conducted for all prospective adoptive parents, employees, volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, and individuals assisting in the adoption process through the use of verified databases and sources to ensure the integrity of the information.

Regular training sessions on child trafficking for all staff, volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, and prospective adoptive parents will cover identification, prevention and reporting of child trafficking.

The agency will regularly review and update policies to comply with multi-state laws and regulations, both state and federal law.

A. Identification

1. Risk Assessment:
 - Conduct regular risk assessments to identify potential vulnerabilities in the adoption process.
 - Implement measures to mitigate identified risks.
2. Monitoring and Reporting:
 - Establish a system for monitoring the well-being of children throughout the adoption process.
 - Encourage reporting of suspicious activities or concerns by staff, volunteers, adoptive parents, contractors, subcontractors, and the public.

B. Response

1. Immediate Action:
 - If child trafficking is suspected or identified, immediate steps will be taken to ensure the child's safety.
 - Notify law enforcement and child protective services as required by law.
2. Investigation:
 - Conduct an internal investigation in coordination with law enforcement to gather facts and evidence.

Initial

Initial

Page 16 – Policies and Procedures for Adoption

- Maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of all parties involved during the investigation.
- 3. Support and Rehabilitation:
 - Provide appropriate support and services to victims of child trafficking, including medical care, counseling, and legal assistance.
 - Ensure that victims are placed in safe and supportive environments.

C. Subcontractors and Individuals Assisting in Adoption

1. Contractual Obligations:
 - All subcontractors and individuals assisting in the adoption process must sign agreements that they will adhere to this policy and all relevant laws and regulations.
 - Contracts will include clauses that allow for immediate termination in case of non-compliance with this policy.
2. Screening and Vetting:
 - Subcontractors and individuals assisting in the adoption process must undergo the same background checks and screenings as employees and volunteers.
3. Training:
 - Subcontractors and individuals assisting in the adoption process will be required to participate in training sessions on child trafficking.

D. Confidentiality

All information related to child trafficking cases will be handled with strict confidentiality. Only authorized personnel will have access to sensitive information, and disclosures will be made only to the extent necessary to protect the child and comply with legal requirements.

E. Review and Compliance

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure its effectiveness. Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all employees, volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, and individuals assisting in the adoption process. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or services.

This policy is intended to provide a comprehensive framework for the prevention, identification, and response to child trafficking within the adoption process. It reflects the agency’s commitment to the safety and well-being of all children in its care.

*Staff, contractors, volunteers, foster parents, and prospective adoptive parents must follow written policies and procedures of A Adoption Advocates of Georgia., Inc.

We/I have read, understood, and will comply with the Policies and Procedures of A Adoption Advocates of Georgia, Inc.

Adoptive Parent

Adoptive Parent

Caseworker

Date

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