


**Adopting Through
The State of Alaska
Office of Children's Services**

Presented by The Alaska Center for Resource Families




ACRF offers support, information and training to all of Alaska's resource families (foster, adoptive, relative caretakers and guardianship families).

We welcome families regardless of race, age, sex, marital status, religious beliefs, physical disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

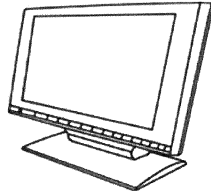
Class Guidelines

- Sign in through chat box
- Step Forward, Step Back
- Respect each other during discussions and respect confidentiality
- Take care of your needs
- Find the handouts and slides at www.acrf.org



Netiquette

- Speak clearly and aim your voice to your mic.
- We like to see you! Set your camera so we can see your face.
- Keep yourself muted unless speaking
- Use the chat box to ask questions, or message one of the hosts for support
- If you are on the phone, you will be encouraged to respond by unmuting.



Adoption Learning Path for People interested in Adopting from Foster Care

- Core Training for Resource Families
- Adopting through OCS
- Building Families Through Adoption
- Family Profile

Contact the Alaska Center for Resource Families for more information.

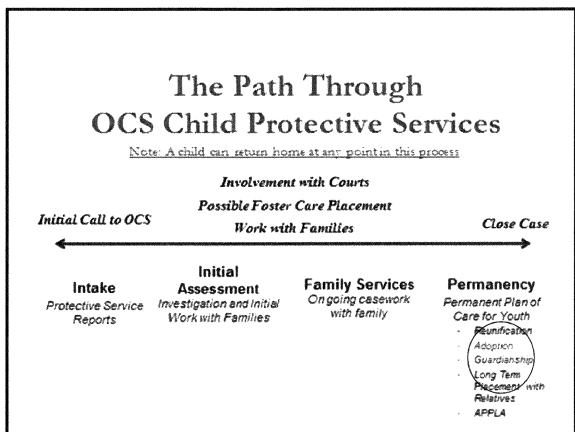




Adopting from the Office of Children's Services

What Does It Mean to Adopt From the Foster Care System?

- Children come into care due to abuse, neglect or abandonment.
- Reunification efforts have NOT been successful.
- Parental rights are terminated (voluntarily, through a consent to adopt, or involuntarily).
- Adoptive family assumes all legal rights and responsibilities.
- State may be able to offer subsidy assistance.



Termination of Parental Rights

- Parental rights of birth parents must be terminated or consented to before legally being given to someone else.
- Parental rights may be terminated through a trial or they may choose to voluntarily relinquish.
- Birth parents can also make a plan of adoption through a Consent to Adopt or stipulate to permanency in ICWA cases.

When the Case Plan Goal Changes to Permanency through Adoption

- Relative Search
- ICWA Considerations
- May consider the current foster care placement
- May recruit a family through PARKA, Heart Gallery or Northwest Adoption Exchange
- For placement, need positive adoption home study and/or become a licensed foster home
- 6 month minimum of supervision by OCS required before adoption can be finalized.

Heart Gallery of Alaska

- www.heartgalleryak.com
- Currently lists children who are legally free
- Offers a chance to learn more about adopting children through the State of Alaska
- Follows the Adoption Learning Path
- Alaska children are also listed on the Northwest Adoption Exchange (www.nwae.org) and AdoptUSKids.org

When the Case Plan Goal Changes to Permanency through Guardianship

- Adoption is preferred choice for children 10 years or younger.
- Youth 14 or older must give consent to guardianship
- Still intended to be permanent, not intended to delay reunification. Parents' rights do not have to be terminated in a guardianship.
- Parents and others can petition the court to challenge or dismiss guardianship. Annual reports need to be filed.
- Subsidy can provide financial support post guardianship.
- Medicaid for Guardianship is not guaranteed and is explored on an individual basis.



Indian Child Welfare Act

- A Federal Law passed in 1978 establishing placement preferences for Indian or Alaska Native children in foster care and in adoptive placements
- Requires Active Efforts to reunite families
- Gives tribes right to intervene and have voice in child protection cases and permanency decisions

Placement Preferences Under ICWA for American Indian or Alaska Native Children

<p>Foster Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First: Member of child's extended family • Second: Foster home licensed, approved or specified by the Tribe • Third: Indian FH licensed or approved by a non-Indian licensing authority • Fourth: An institution for children approved by an Indian tribe or operated by an Indian organization which has a program suitable to meet the Indian child's needs. 	<p>Adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First: A member of the child's extended family • Second: Other members of the Indian child's tribe • Third: Other Indian families
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Preparing Your Family for Adoption

Overview of Path to Adopt from OCS

- Orientation and Training
- Licensing (or Positive Home Study)
- Placement of Child for Purposes of Adoption
- Adoption Home Study
- Adoption Subsidy Discussions
- Disclosure Meeting
- Hiring an Attorney and Setting a Court Date
- Finalization

The Adoption Home Study

- We get to know you better
- Required for OCS adoptions (even for relatives)
- Better prepares your family
- A tool to introduce you to caseworkers

Home Study Options

Permanent Families Contract

- Referral is made to contractor
- No charge to family
- To be used for public agency adoptions only
- Referral may be made when a specific child's goal in your home becomes adoption
- 90 Days to complete

Home Study Options

Private Home Study

- You hire and pay for home study
- Can use for any adoption
- May be reimbursed if adopting from a State agency
- Must be completed by a credentialed home study writer.
- If not child specific, a new child specific home study will need to be completed

What Will the Home Study Writer Do?

- Will ask biographical questions
- Conduct home visits (2) and interviews
- Considers the information in the Criminal Background checks, collateral interviews, financial background, and references
- Reviews the Home Study with you.
- Writes a final document.

The Home Study Includes...

- Description of your family
- Description of child you are able and willing to parent
- Description of strengths and areas for growth
- Discussion of any barriers
- Discussion of personal history, parenting ideas, and motivations for adoption

When the Home Study is Complete...

- Writer reviews home study with family
- Final study provided to the OCS Permanency Planning Specialist. Reviews and signs off.
- Caseworker reviews home study to see if the family can meet child's needs.

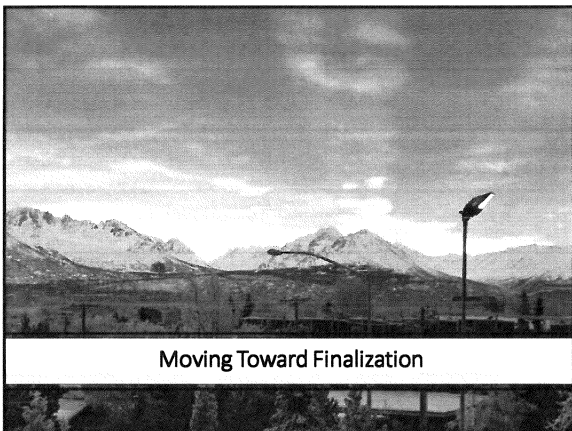



Preparing Children for Adoption

- Understand what the plan is for the child.
- Introduce the idea of adoption to your children and the foster child to be adopted .
- Use books, stories or therapist to help children understand; include a lifebook.
- Tell the child the truth in a gentle, age appropriate way.
- Repeat the information often.
- Expect a wide range of feelings.



Moving Toward Finalization

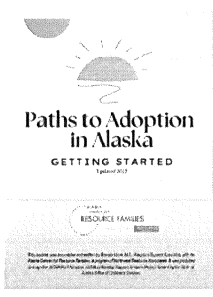
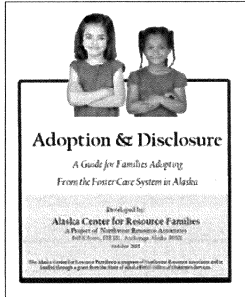


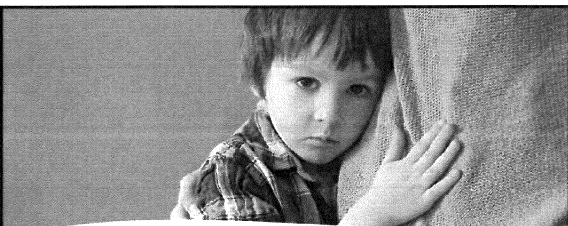


**As You Move
Toward
Finalization:
Disclosure**

- Ask for a Disclosure Meeting with Caseworker
- Ask for & get all the information you need to meet the child's needs
 - Release of Information along with a Client History Profile for past Medicaid treatment
 - Reason for Coming Into Care
 - Placement History
 - ROI for School & Education Services,
 - Request Mental Health Reports (may need release from GAL)

Preparing Your Family for Adoption
ACRF Guides



**As You Move
Toward
Finalization:
Subsidies**

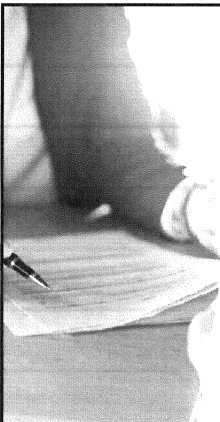
- Are based on child's special needs and family circumstances
- Can't exceed 90% foster care amount
- Are a legal agreement with the State
- Can be renegotiated after finalization at adoptive family's request
- Up to child's 18th birthday
- Usually include Federal or State Medicaid

As You Move Toward Finalization:
Subsidies, cont.

- You are contacted by State Office about the Subsidy Negotiation Process.
- Subsidies need to be approved & signed by the Director before the adoption or guardianship court hearing occurs.
- A video to help you prepare is on www.acrf.org under How To Adopt

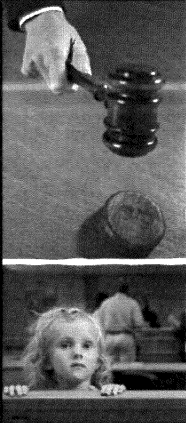
As You Move Toward Finalization:
Subsidies, cont.

- Legal documents (the Adoption packet) gathered and sent to Adoption Unit in State Office
- Eligibility determination is made (Federal or State Subsidy)
- Family gets notice of the determination
 - If not in agreement with the type of subsidy(State of Federal), an appeal can be filed
 - If not appealing, a waiver can be signed & returned to Juneau staff within the 30 day time period or time period can be allowed to expire.
 - Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)




As You Move Toward Finalization:
The Adoption Attorney

- When advised, family hires adoption attorney.
- Adoption costs reimbursable up to \$2000 per child. Your attorney can directly bill State Office.
- OCS gives legal documents to adoption attorney.
- Review Relinquishment or Consent to Adopt before you agree to its conditions.
- Attorney schedules the adoption hearing.
- Talk to attorney about child's PFDs.



**As You Move Toward Finalization:
*The Finalization Hearing***

- Attend adoption hearing
- Bring the children, family and close friends
- Hearing is only 1/2 hour long
- Bring cameras, take videos.
- **CELEBRATE!**



After the Adoption



After the Adoption

- Adoption gives you all the legal rights and responsibilities
- Typically a new birth certificate is issued
- Child's records are sealed upon finalization.
- OCS closes file.




After the Adoption, continued

Remember the details!

- Contact Social Security
- Notify schools and health provider
- Keep track of subsidy agreement

Create an Adoption Day Ceremony
Prepare for escalation of behaviors



Post-Adoption Services

- Community services are available.
- As advocates for the child, you seek out help where needed.
- Agencies other than OCS can assist.
- You are the child's best advocate.
- Reaching out for support is encouraged!

Post Adoption Support Available through ACRF

- In Anchorage, call 907-279-1799
- In Fairbanks, call 907-479-7307
- In Mat Su, call 907-376-4678
- Other areas, 1-800-478-7307
- Or Email adoptionssupport@nwresource.org