



A Guide
for Adults
Supporting
Children Through
Adoption



Adopt Kansas Kids

Introduction

Adoption is a tricky and sensitive subject for everyone, including the children we work with. This workbook was created to help bridge the gap between professionals and the children they serve to give our children the chance to be involved and address any emotions, questions, or concerns they might have about adoption.

What is this workbook intended for?

This workbook is geared toward children under the age of 12 that have the case plan goal of adoption to assist in introducing the topic of adoption. This topic can be emotionally difficult for children to understand. The professional or trusted adult completing this guidebook with the child should use the prompts and questions as conversation starters to get a better comprehension of the child's understanding and opinions about the adoption process. This guidebook is intended to be utilized to create stepping-stones to help make the discussion easier to navigate and give the child(ren) the opportunity to feel heard and express any emotions they might be feeling during this transitional period.

Who should complete this workbook?

This workbook is designed to be completed with any trusted adult who is willing to help the child(ren) understand the topic of adoption and can accurately record their input. This is not intended to be completed by the child alone. For cases that will need recruitment, the agency adoption resource coordinator can be included in the process of completing this workbook to assist in answering any questions or addressing any concerns that the child and their trusted adult might have. For cases where an adoptive resource has been identified, including that resource in the process of completing the workbook should be encouraged to ensure that the child and the family have clear understandings and expectations about adoption and what it means for their family!

How can I introduce this to my child(ren)?

No child or case is the same. Some items or topics in this workbook may need to be adjusted to fit each child's individual understanding, age, and developmental ability. Each section can be modified to fit each child's situation and understanding of adoption and their own circumstances.

This workbook does not have to be completed in one sitting but should be completed prior to adoption tasks or recruitment efforts being started. This exercise should be led by the child as appropriate to ensure that they are being heard and they have enough time to process the information being discussed.

Please keep in mind while completing the workbook to use inclusive language and sensitivity.

When should this workbook be used?

This workbook is intended to be utilized when it is time to introduce the idea of adoption to a child. This workbook should not be used before parental rights have been legally severed.

Next Steps

After completing the Adoption Guidebook with the child, the information in the workbook should be utilized in making the child's individual adoption plan.

- If the child discloses any concerns or hesitations about adoption, it could be beneficial to include the child's mental health professionals to address these concerns in a therapeutic setting. If the child has concerns or hesitations, there should be a more in-depth conversation between professionals involved in the case before starting recruitment or adoption case plan goals.
- If the child has an established adoptive resource, it's important to share the information discussed during the workbook completion. This should only be done if the child is comfortable with the information being shared. Furthermore, if the child is open to it, it's beneficial to have the adoptive resource participate in the conversation during the workbook completion!
- If the child does not have an adoptive resource, all of the information gathered while completing the guidebook should be shared with the agency adoption recruiter, considered, and used while completing the adoption recruitment paperwork.
- If recruitment efforts have been ongoing for a significant period, it's important to consider completing a second workbook with the child. This is to ensure that no new questions or concerns have arisen since the first workbook was completed. As the child(ren) grow, they may develop new questions or concerns that they would like addressed or they may discover new connections to add to their family tree. All of these updates are crucial in maintaining the child(ren)'s sense of safety, confidence, and ensuring their voices are heard.

Kansas Adoption Process

Please reference the glossary of terms for a definition of italicized items

- Child becomes legally free/available for adoption after parental rights are terminated or relinquished
- Adoptive Families are identified
 - If the youth does not have an identified resource, then recruitment referrals are made
- Adoptive families begin adoption application and provide supporting documentation
- The agency completes a comprehensive Adoption Family Assessment with all potential adoptive families
- The Best Interest Staffing (BIS) is held once all home studies are complete and approved
 - Youths 14 and older are asked to attend and/or provide input before a BIS
- A family is selected at the conclusion of the BIS, and the agency will inform selected and non-selected families of the decision
- Selected adoptive family will complete the file read
- The agency develops a transition plan with the youth and family
- Adoptive family meets with DCF to negotiate adoption subsidy
- Child placed with adoptive family (if not already)
- Placement adjustment period
- DCF approves, and signs consent to adopt
- The agency sends consent and supporting documents to the finalizing Attorney and an adoption finalization hearing is scheduled
- Adoption is finalized and agency provides Aftercare services for Family
- Referrals for Post Adoption Support Services are made/information is given to family for post adoption supports

Glossary of Terms

Legally Free/Legally Available—This status is achieved when parental rights are no longer intact and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has accepted the guardians' relinquishment/termination. The case can then legally proceed to adoption. There are two paths to a child becoming legally free/available: through relinquishment or termination. This is a step taken after all efforts to reintegrate the child(ren) home with the guardians have been exhausted and have not been successful. It's important to note that there is no fixed timeline for parental rights to be severed, as every case is unique and has different needs and situations.

- **Parental Rights Relinquishment**—This is when a legal guardian of the child(ren) voluntarily relinquishes their rights to the child(ren). Once a relinquishment is filed and accepted by the judge, the guardians' rights are severed immediately. A guardian cannot appeal a relinquishment after it has been accepted.
- **Parental Rights Termination (PRT/TPR)**— Parental rights termination is when the legal guardians of the child(ren)'s rights have been legally severed by the courts. This will happen at a scheduled PRT/TRP court hearing.
 - **Appeal**— After a Parental Rights Termination (PRT/TPR) has taken place, parents have the right to appeal this decision within 30 days of the hearing. A PRT/TRP is not considered valid until the 30-day appeal period has passed with no appeal being filed. Parents can appeal a case once at the district court level, and once at the supreme court level. It's crucial to understand that the state cannot legally proceed with an adoption until the appeal period has passed, or if an appeal was filed, the appeal has been addressed in court and denied.

Recruitment Referral – if a child does not have an identified adoptive resource, a referral will be made to Adopt Kansas Kids to begin the process of identifying an adoptive resource for the child.

Sibling split—A sibling split might be completed by the case team when it is determined by a child's permanency team that it would be in his/her best interest to be permanently separated from his/her siblings who also have case plan goals of adoption after all attempts to maintain the siblings together have proven unsuccessful. This document will be reviewed by all professionals involved in the place for approval before becoming effective.

Adoption Application—Any family interested in being assessed as an adoptive resource for a child will be required to complete a potential identified adoptive resource application. The application will include information such as contact information, household members, and agency affiliation. Families may also be required to provide supporting documentation such as a budget, health assessments, fingerprint checks, etc.

Adoptive Family Assessment - also known as a home study, is a critical part of the adoption process. This assessment, conducted by an assigned foster care agency worker, thoroughly evaluates the family's safety, sustainability, and ability to care for a child(ren) with special needs. It involves a walkthrough of the home and interviews with household members. The resulting report, which includes information about each adult's background and health, financial information, family functioning, parenting styles, and information about any other children in the home, is a comprehensive understanding of your family's readiness for adoption.

Best Interest Staffing (BIS)— Reference [Appendix 5S Best Interest Staffing Brochure](#)

"When children in the custody of the Secretary of the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) are available for adoption, a meeting is held to make decisions about the family who will adopt them. This meeting is called a Best Interest Staffing (BIS), as the goal is to meet the best interest of the child by selecting the family who can best meet the child's needs. Required participants are the child welfare case management provider and another individual who knows the child well."

File Read—After being selected in a BIS, the family will be invited to read the child(ren) 's file. This includes all documentation gathered since the case was opened. This gives the family the opportunity to read the child's history as well as the biological or first family history that was provided. The purpose of this is to give the adoptive resource insight into the child's background and any potential medical or mental health concerns to be aware of.

Transition Plan - Professionals will work with the youth's current placement and selected adoptive family to plan contact and visits to help the child and family get to know each other before placement occurs.

Adoption Subsidy – Reference [Appendix 6B Adoption Assistance Brochure](#)

“Adoption assistance is available to families adopting children with special service, support, and/or resource needs. The family and DCF will meet to discuss adoption assistance. The type and amount of subsidy are negotiated with the prospective adoptive parents. Consideration is given to the child's specific needs, the family's community resources and support services, and available resources.”

Placement Adjustment Period – Children of different developmental levels and families with varying experience/training will require unique adjustment periods prior to proceeding with finalizing the adoption. The child's case team professionals will assess the child and family's progress at least monthly and more often if needed. The child's case team professionals shall facilitate the development of a plan that provides for a mutually agreed-upon adjustment period.

Consent—The child's case team professionals will assess the child and family's readiness to move forward with permanent placement throughout the placement adjustment period. Once ready, the child's case team will request consent to adopt from DCF. Once DCF issues consent, approvals will be sent to the attorney that the family has chosen to file the official petition for adoption with the courts and schedule a finalization date!

Adoption Finalization Hearing – A court hearing will take place to legally finalize the adoption.

Aftercare Services –Aftercare services are provided to assure the safety and stability of the child and to assist all family members in connecting with community providers to improve family functioning and may include information and referral of other services, education (e.g., parenting skills, advocacy skills with school systems, etc.), clinical and therapeutic services, access to material resources and access to community-based supportive networks (e.g., support groups, recreational activities and respite care).

Post Adoption Support Services – The Kansas Post Adoption Resource Center provides no-cost services such as advocacy, family retreats, peer to peer support groups, education and training opportunities and more.

If you have further questions after reviewing this guidebook, please contact the child's case team.