

401 Philosophy of Adoption and Birth Parent Services

Adoption and Birth Parent Services practice is based on the following principles:

1. Every child should be able to remain with, or if placed in the Department's custody to return to, his/her biological parents. When this is not possible, it is the responsibility of the Department to explore for those children in its custody:
 - a. The suitability and commitment of relatives to adopt; and
 - b. Permanent placements with non-related adoptive families.
2. Adoption services are available to all children in the Department's custody for whom the Department has assessed that adoption is an appropriate placement plan. The Department is committed to providing a healthy environment during the period of substitute care, linking the child with a permanent family as quickly as possible and providing effective services both prior to and after finalization. The Department will place children only after prior assessment and preparation of the child, birth parents and the adoptive parents. To achieve these goals, the South Carolina Department of Social Services adoption specialist's attitude must reflect a commitment to the provision of all necessary services.
3. A relinquishment will be taken only if the Department determines that an adoptive resource is likely to be identified for the child. In rare cases, a relinquishment may be taken even if an adoptive resource is not likely, depending on the child's best interest.
4. Children may be placed in pre-adoptive homes prior to the resolution of all legal barriers, when such placements are deemed to be in the best interest of the child.
5. The Department has a responsibility to secure adoptive homes for children with special needs. The Department will utilize all available and appropriate financial assistance programs to affect the adoption of children with special needs. Priority will be given to families who state a preference in adopting children with special needs.
6. Every child free for adoption or who can be freed will not be denied the opportunity to have a permanent family due to age, religion, race, color, national origin, ethnicity, residence or handicaps. The Department is committed to seeking an adoptive family for any child for whom adoption is the permanent plan. Neither the child's nor the adoptive parent(s)' race, color or national origin will be considered in making adoptive placement decisions.
7. The culture of a child and/or prospective adoptive family shall not be used as a proxy for race, color or national origin in making adoptive placement decisions.
8. Supportive services must be made available for adoptive placements to be successful, especially those in which children with emotional and/or physical handicaps have been placed. Services will be provided which are deemed to be in the child's best interest and which meet the identified needs of the child. Supportive services will be provided by the adoption specialist and include, but are not limited to:
 - a. casework counseling
 - b. parent education
 - c. support groups
 - d. linkages to other resources

9. The Department is committed to providing services to adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents following the finalization of the adoption.
10. Children should be told of their adoption by their adoptive parents. The Department will be available to provide support in carrying out this responsibility, if requested.
11. Siblings should be placed together whenever possible. Exceptions will be considered when the circumstances indicate that separate placements are in the best interest of the siblings involved. Clear and convincing rationale must be documented if separation of siblings is recommended. This recommendation must include reference to and copies of any evaluations by allied professionals and siblings' preferences, if age appropriate. Should siblings be separated, provisions will be made for allowing some level of continued contact, if possible.
12. Children have the right to permanency through adoption on a timely basis. The Department will not delay or deny a decision to seek termination of parental rights or otherwise to free a child for adoption on the basis of race, color, or national origin nor delay or deny an adoptive placement on the basis of race, color, or national origin of the foster/adoptive parent or the child.
13. In order to enhance the permanence of the placement and ensure the wellbeing of the child, the Department will provide post-placement services between the time of the adoptive placement and the issuance of a decree of adoption.
14. The Department will not deny the opportunity to become an adoptive or foster parent because of the family's or the child's race, color, or national origin.
15. To assure safety of the children, staff must determine the composition of the household. Every member of the household must be part of the assessment process. Completed assessment must include, but is not limited to, how household members relate to one another and to the foster child. It also includes whether a member of the household is a paramour of the adoptive parent.
16. Foster parents who have been approved for adoption will be given priority consideration as adoptive parents for the child in their care if the child has been in the foster home for six months or longer, and the child is legally free for adoption, and adoptive placement with the foster family is deemed to be in the best interest of the child by the Department. Foster parents must be included in the preparation and placement process if placement is to be outside the foster home, when this is deemed to be in the best interest of the child involved.
17. Birth Parent services will be provided upon request, without regard to race, color, national origin, physical or mental condition, economic status, age or marital status. Eligibility to receive services is not dependent on the decision of birth parents to release a child for adoption. The Department will respect birth parent preferences in the selection of an adoptive family in so far as they are in the best interest of the child involved. However, birth parent preferences regarding race, color or national origin of a prospective adoptive family will not be requested or considered in selection of or placement with an adoptive resource.
18. The Department has the following general responsibilities to children:
 - a. To provide services necessary to know and understand the child and the child's needs
 - b. To provide a healthy environment during the period of substitute care
 - c. To select an adoptive family as quickly as is consistent with good planning

- d. To prepare the child and the family for placement
 - e. To provide effective post-placement services to the family
 - f. To provide post-adoption services to the family, as appropriate
 - g. To utilize funding available for purchase of adoption services from other agencies, public and private in order to increase available adoptive resources for children in the Department's custody.
 - h. To provide financial assistance when applicable and available
 - i. To support and counsel the child experiencing a disruption and to seek another adoptive placement as quickly as is consistent with good planning.
19. The Department has the following general responsibilities to birth parents:
- a. To provide information on the following options
 - i. Parenting their child with the help of supportive services
 - ii. Voluntarily placing their child in foster care on a limited basis; and
 - iii. Relinquishing their child for adoptive placement
 - b. To ensure that they have knowledge of and access to available community services that meet their needs
 - c. To assure confidentiality
 - d. To be responsive to their requests regarding placement of their child to the extent possible. However, birth parent requests for an adoptive family of a particular race, color or national origin will not be honored.
 - e. To provide counseling and support.
20. The Department has the following general responsibilities to adoptive families:
- a. To provide thorough and accurate information regarding the adoption process
 - b. To involve them in the assessment process and complete the assessment on a timely basis
 - c. To provide accurate and thorough information, to the extent known by the Department, regarding children available for adoption
 - d. To conduct reviews of the family circumstances every six months while the family is approved and waiting for adoptive placement
 - e. To provide appropriate support during the entire adoptive process
 - f. To inform them of the qualities, characteristics, problems and needs of any child they are adopting, as are known to the Department
 - g. To provide post-placement and post-adoption services that support the family following adoptive placement.

Revision Comments

Section 401, 6. has been revised to clarify that the race, color or national origin of the adoptee and/or the adoptive parent(s) will not be considered in making adoptive placement decisions. Section 401,17., 19.,D. have been revised to clarify that birth parent preferences regarding race or ethnicity of a prospective adoptive family will not be considered in selection of or placement with an adoptive resource.

A new item 7 has been added to provide that culture shall not be used as a proxy for race, color or national origin in making adoptive placement decisions.

A new item 14 has been added to provide that the Department will not deny the opportunity to become a foster/adoptive parent on the basis on RCNO.