

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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ADOPTION POLICIES

The **best interests of the child** is paramount in all ACF adoption related decisions, while taking into account and respecting the wishes of prospective birth and adoptive families.

ACF recognizes that **time is of the essence** in all adoption related procedures.

Home Study - The eligibility and adoptive capacity of prospective adoptive parents must be officially certified before adoption proceedings are started. The adoption process is completed according to Florida laws and the laws of the clients' state or country of residence.

Non-Discrimination - ACF makes adoption available to all children whose personal and family situation warrants it, without prejudice against their social situation, physical features, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, physical or mental health disorders.

Residency - Applicants must meet the adoption residence requirements of their home state or country.

Citizenship - Applicants are expected to meet the adoption citizenship requirements in the state or country in which they reside.

Marital Status - Advocates for Children and Families does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of marital status. Birth parent and country preferences will be honored.

Age - Advocates for Children and Families does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of age. Birth parent and country preferences will be honored.

Health - Applicants should be in good health and have a reasonable life expectancy. Health limitations will be considered on an individual basis. A current medical report will be required as part of the adoption home study.

Religion - Advocates for Children and Families does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of religion. Birth parent and country preferences will be honored.

Financial Status - In the financial evaluation of applicants, the key issue is the family's ability to manage and plan for financial stability now and in the child's future. Income must be sufficient to meet the needs of the existing family and the new child.

Housing - Housing must be adequate to meet the needs of all of the family members.

Adoption Expenses - Adoption related services involve the protection of children in a vulnerable position. ACF does not participate in or condone any adoption

arrangement that involves abuse, trading or trafficking in human life. Adoptive parents are expected to fully fund the cost of the adoption for professional services rendered and costs incurred, and we reserve the right to make adjustments and waivers under special circumstances.

Adoptability of Child - Before determining the legal adoptability of a child, ACF conducts or receives evidence of a preliminary psycho-medico-social study of the child and birth family. ACF then ensures that a child is legally adoptable. Legal and psychosocial adoptability are determined before starting adoption proceedings.

Adoption Preparation - ACF provides preparation for adoption to prospective adoptive families, including exposure to the short- and long-term implications of adoption on his/her life and on the child's life, as well as support for meeting the child and/or the child's biological family. At least ten (10) hours of specialized training is required.

Identifying Information - about children for adoption, birth families, and adoptive parents will be held in strict confidentiality absent permission granted. When deemed necessary to the best interests of the child, the publication of personal data will be issued by appropriate means, to recipients chosen for their ability or interest in problem solving, but will not be made available to a wide and unspecified public through channels such as the internet.

Life Book -ACF recognizes that a child must be kept informed and consulted about any life plan for him or her, in a manner appropriate to his/her age and degree of maturity. Regardless of age, a Life Book containing all information and photographs available at the time of placement accompanies a child into an adoptive home.

Siblings - When siblings are available for adoption, ACF does not separate them. If separation does occur under extraordinary circumstances, provision is made for siblings to remain in contact, and information is shared accordingly.

Reunion - ACF respects the potential desire of adoptees to search for origins. Accordingly, ACF collects and maintains identifying information about every completed adoption and preserves such information in electronic and hard copy form. Potential reunions are facilitated with sensitivity to the desires of all parties by qualified adoption professionals.

National Solutions - ACF recognizes that national solutions (biological family reintegration or intra-country adoption) may take precedence over international solutions (inter-country adoption). Inter-country adoption will be considered as a birth parent choice on a case by case basis on particular facts and circumstances.

Armed Conflict or Natural Disasters - ACF recognizes that adoption is not a step to consider in situations or countries where armed conflict prevails or among victims of natural disasters. The guideline for considering an adoption solution for displaced children under these circumstances is two years, or a sufficient time for competent authorities to ensure that no member of the child's family or community is still living and wishing to care for the child.

Free Flow of Information - ACF cooperates and freely shares information with the central authority and professionals in sending and receiving states when matching children with families in intra- or intercountry adoption.