

From: Scott Corcoran [scott@afamilyforeverychild.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2013 4:28 PM
To: scott@afamilyforeverychild.org
Subject: State Adoption: Matching and Placement Decision
Attachments: Committee Timeline.pdf



Dear

Many states have a process called "committee" or "selection staffing" to decide which family will adopt a child or sibling group. A child's caseworker must choose three to five certified adoptive family home studies for consideration. After a caseworker reviews a family's home study and decides they are a good match, the family will receive additional information about the child, their background, and special needs. This additional information may not be complete, however, but it will give the family an idea if they want to proceed with the committee or staffing.

After the families are selected by the caseworker and all families have reviewed the information, a committee or staffing meeting will be scheduled. A family's adoption worker will attend this committee or staffing meeting either in person or via conference call.

When the families have been selected and committee or staffing meeting set, many states will allow the families to interview the current foster family, talk with doctors and therapists, and in some cases teachers or day care providers. When this is permitted it is an opportunity for the potential adoptive family to gain more insight about the child's history and possible needs.

Many states also ask for a Family Book (also known as a "Life Book" or "Welcome Book") to be created for the purpose of giving it to the child when the decision has been made. The family book is usually a simple photo display of the home, bedroom, neighborhood, school, pets, and family members. Family books are often reviewed by the committee or staffing panel and can play a role in the family selection process.

When the committee or staffing meeting is held there are usually three to five uninvolved caseworkers or community members serving on the selection panel. This group holds a meeting with the adoption social workers, the child's caseworker and any other interested parties to determine which of the families would be the best placement. Generally, there is also a selection of a second family who will serve as a back-up placement in the event the first family withdraws.

When an adoptive family is selected the full disclosure file will be given to the adoptive family and a waiting period will be entered. The waiting period is designed so any non-selected family may appeal the decision. The selected adoptive family also has the opportunity to review the full file and decide if there is any reason the child has more needs than they were expecting. The waiting period also gives the caseworker an opportunity to set up a transition plan with the foster family.

It is important to find out how **your** state handles selection and placement. In some states the process may vary from one county to another. Most often, potential adoptive parents will learn how their state places children during training. It is a good idea to know how your state presents the children needing adoptive families and how your state selects adoptive parent placements. You will find a committee timeline handout attached to this email that goes over how Oregon holds the committee process. Please keep in mind this is just a guideline, and again the process can vary state to state, county to county.

This is, perhaps one of the most confusing and frustrating parts of the state adoption process. We come to the decision to adopt children from the foster care system knowing there is great need and get to a point where it actually feels like a competition. It is a strange and stressful period of time for the potential adoptive family. This part of the process is even more difficult because outsiders and others cannot understand how adopting a waiting child or sibling group could become competitive. But, this is exactly what it feels like at this point to the hopeful adoptive family.

Nora Sharp
Matching Assistance Coordinator
A Family for Every Child

