



Answers to the most frequently asked questions about your home study

WHAT IS A HOME STUDY? HOW WILL IT BE USED?

The home study is both a process and a document required by the government for every adoption to make sure that your home is a safe and healthy place for a child and that you are well-prepared to become parents – in your case, to one or more special needs children. In fact, the home study report will specify the number and type of special needs children you are approved to adopt. As you know from the packet you have received, the home study includes documentation such as birth and marriage certificates, tax and income records, police and child protective services record checks. People who know you well will supply references. You will fill out a questionnaire about your background, parenting practices and reasons for adopting.

At least three visits are required, either at your home or at our office, to interview you and all members of your household, and to be sure your home has no safety hazards for a child. Your adoption worker (AW) will write a report based on all the information received, whether through the interviews or the documents. This report will be reviewed by the case workers of any children you express interest in and by the court where your adoption is filed.

After placement, further reports are usually required, depending on the state where you adopt, to insure that all is going well. These are called post placement reports, and will also be filed with the court and possibly sent to the child's case worker as well, depending on the state where you adopt.

HOW LONG DOES A HOME STUDY TAKE?

The final home study report can only be completed when we have all your documents, your police and child protective services record check results have been returned to us, you have attended all sessions of the Foundations training, and we have met with you in your home. So, part of it depends on you — how long it takes you to assemble your paperwork and get it in. Part of it depends on how quickly you can complete your Foundations training. And, part of it depends on how long your police and child protective services checks take.

At Heart Gallery Adoption Agency/A Family for Every Child, once we have all your paperwork and the record checks are in process, we can usually schedule your first home visit within a week or two. We prefer to have our final home visit after your last Foundations session has occurred.

So, with all that in mind, the quickest home studies may be complete in about two months, while the longer ones may take as long as six or eight months.

NOW THAT WE HAVE FOUND YOUR AGENCY AND AGREED TO WORK TOGETHER, ISN'T THERE SOME WAY TO SPEED UP THE HOME STUDY PROCESS?

Many families ask us this! They have been waiting a long time to become parents, or they feel like now that they've made the decision to adopt from foster care, they want to be ready RIGHT NOW! Let us just say first that we are confident that everything will happen in the right time for the right child or children to come into your home and family. Also, it's a good thing to take the time to learn a lot through the home study and training process. Give yourself permission to let this be a process of self-examination so that in the end you make great decisions for your family.

That being said, there's no point in dawdling! There are several things you can do:

1. Because the records checks can take quite a while and are out of our control, we recommend you start your home study process by going right away to get your fingerprints taken. There is usually a fee that may need to be paid in cash, and some places require an appointment, so be sure to find out before you toddle on down there. Send the fingerprint cards to us, along with the required form from your Parent Packet (with your part filled out and signed, of course), and we will complete our part of the form and send them in right away. Unless we accept these from you in person we will also need a photocopy of the front and back of each person's driver's license.

Be sure you do not slow down the process by forgetting someone. All people over age 16 living in your home at the time of placement must be fingerprinted, sign a release and have a records check completed.

2. Pick a Foundations training and get signed up immediately. Wouldn't it be a drag to find you had missed a training by one or two days just because you hadn't checked for dates as soon as possible? Go to this link:
<http://www.lanecountyheartgallery.org/HeartGallery/TRAININGS/SchedulesTrainings.html>

You may attend any of the following trainings:

- Christian Family Adoptions, which has no fee
- Boys and Girls Aid, which costs \$50 per person.
- Local DHS training - scroll down to the lower part of the page, where you will see Oregon's DHS districts listed. Each district offers training for prospective adoptive families. Click on the underlined part to see the district's training information.

It's important to know that *all of these trainings are based on the same curriculum and all meet the requirements for adopting from Oregon foster care.* Pick any of them, including a DHS training in a district you don't live in, depending on how their schedule and location meets your needs. Some people like getting it all done at once through the weekend trainings. Others find that taking one or two classes a week allows them to think things through and process the material more effectively.

3. Medical forms: If either parent has not had a physical within the last six months, call your doctor and get it scheduled immediately.

WHAT WILL THE HOME VISITS BE LIKE?

Your AW will need to tour your entire home, plus your yard or property. The tour is not meant to be a white glove inspection, so there's no need to alphabetize your canned goods or steam-clean the garage floor! Your home just needs to be ordinarily clean. The primary concern is safety, and the state has developed a checklist we use. That way, we can make sure everything is safe for a child and ensure any safety issues are addressed before the home study process is complete. The AW will interview couples together, and will need to interview each member of the household individually as well.

WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS WILL WE BE ASKED?

We do have a long list of questions to ask you! They will be somewhat similar to the kinds of questions in your Parent Packet. Some are required by the state, and some are questions we developed to get to know you well. In addition, we will want to clarify any concerns or questions that arose from reading your documents or from previous interviews. Remember, our job is to become your advocates and assistants in the adoption process, so the better we know you, the better job we can do! Beyond this, we want to understand what is important to you about the child or children you adopt. So, we will ask questions to help you clarify that in your own minds and also to make sure we understand your direction.

WILL WE BE FOSTER CERTIFIED WHEN THE HOME STUDY IS COMPLETE?

No. In Oregon, only DHS can provide foster certification. Certification will be provided by DHS through an expedited process once your family has been selected for adoption. We would be glad to discuss this with you further if you would like more information.