

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 10: Adoption/Permanency	Effective Date: November 1, 2014
	Section 3: Preparing the Child for Adoption	Version: 2

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will prepare a child for adoption based on the child's age and developmental level. DCS will utilize one-on-one discussion, provide an opportunity for the child to speak with other adopted children, and make a [Lifebook](#) in an effort to:

1. Help the child understand the termination of his/her parents' parental rights;
2. Help the child understand and embrace the adoption process;
3. Involve the child in planning for the adoption;
4. Help the child with the transition from foster care to adoption; and
5. Reduce the possibility of disruption.

DCS will seek input and participation from adults important to the child, when preparing the child for adoption. These may include but are not limited to the following:

1. Birth parent, if deemed appropriate;
2. Members of the Child and Family Team (CFT);
3. Resource parent;
4. Therapists and/or other service providers;
5. Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and/or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA); and
6. Other family members or individuals who have a significant relationship with the child .

DCS will document the process of preparing the child for adoption in contacts in the case management system.

DCS will discuss informed consent with any child aged 14 years and older and explain that written consent must be obtained from the child for the adoption to be completed in accordance with Indiana law.

Code Reference

[IC 31-19-9-1: Consents required](#)

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will have a one-on-one conversation with the child to explain the following (if age and/or developmentally appropriate):

1. The reasons the child cannot return home;
2. The child's right to have a parent;
3. The meaning of adoption;
4. The adoption process and how the child will be involved;
5. Placement of siblings, if applicable;
6. Visitation with siblings, if applicable

7. Preplacement visits, if applicable;
8. Whether there is a possibility that the child will be able to remain in contact with members of his or her birth family or other individuals who have had a significant role in his or her life after being adopted;
9. Whether adoption by the child's resource family is an option; and
10. Who will make the final decision about the adoption.

For all children over the age of 14 years, the FCM will:

1. Ask the child if he or she wants to be adopted;
2. Explore the reason behind the child's decision;
3. Help the child to understand the adoption process, as well as, the other alternate permanency options available;
4. Explain to the child that his or her written consent is required for the adoption to proceed;
5. Refer the child for services to help prepare the child for adoption (e.g., individual counseling, home-based services, etc.);
6. Obtain the child's signature on the adoption consent form;
7. Obtain the child's signature on the [Indiana Adoption Program Informed Consent for Recruitment \(SF 54901\)](#) if the child is being referred to an Adoption Liaison for recruitment. See policy [10.7 Adoption Services](#) for additional information.
8. Pursue an alternate permanency option if the child will not consent in writing to adoption and it is in the best interest of the child. See policy, [6.10 Permanency Plan](#) and [Practice Guidance](#), and
9. Periodically revisit the topic of adoption to determine if the child's feelings about adoption have changed.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

When a Teen Says "No" to Permanency¹

When a Teen Says "NO" to Permanence, what he may be really saying is:

- "Adoption is for babies, I am not a baby"
- "I am ready for independence, I don't need more adults telling me what to do"
- "I need to protect myself from being hurt again"
- "I don't want to change my name"
- "I don't want to lose my connections with my birth family, foster families, etc."
- "I'm scared to death"

When adults give teens the power to say "NO" to permanent family connections, what the teen hears is:

- "You are not lovable"
- "No one would want you anyway"
- "There is no hope for your future"
- "You are not important enough for me to exert myself trying to find you a family"

If a teen says "NO" to permanency, this is an excellent starting point to help the teen begin to understand what his needs and fears are and to work with him or her on a plan for permanency.

¹ Adapted from Casey Family Programs and Sue Hoag Badeau (2009). Permanency Values Training: Who Wouldn't Want a Family? Handout 8: When a Teen Says No, Adapted from NY Longest Waiting Children Project.

Teens need to be reassured (and it needs to be true) that they do not have to give up their past in order to get a future. Things to think about include:

- Issues around names
- Open adoption or other avenues to maintain birth family connections
- Connections with foster families

Use of Lifebooks

One of the best ways to prepare children for adoption is the development of a Lifebook. The child's FCM, therapist, or resource parent may assist the child, if necessary, in developing a Lifebook. This process may be therapeutic and help the child address the core issues of the child's life (e.g., birth family history, abuse issues, placement history, emotional transitions, adoptive family, etc.). The Lifebook may contain, but is not limited to:

1. Photographs of the child;
2. Photographs of persons and places that were significant in the child's life prior to placement in foster care and/or adoptive placement, including siblings;
3. Items related to school and extracurricular activities, (e.g., report cards, certificates, artwork, awards, etc.);
4. Positive messages to the child from important adults including, but not limited to his or her birth parents and resource parent(s); and
5. Short summaries of significant events that have occurred in the child's life.

Note: [Lifebooks](#) are property of the child and should remain with the child through any placement changes.

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Consent To Adoption \(SF 12582\)](#)
2. [Lifebook](#) – Available in Hard Copy
3. [Indiana Adoption Program Informed Consent for Recruitment \(SF 54901\)](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks come pre-packaged and can be ordered by contacting the Program Manager for Adoption. The FCM may also contact his or her Regional Adoption Liaison to place an order for Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks. The Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks will be mailed to the FCM in the DCS local office.

Note: The **pre-packaged** Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks are not mandatory for the FCMs to use. The FCM, therapist, family member or foster parent may create a unique Lifebook and/or Adoption Workbook for a child using a photo album, scrapbook materials, or any creative idea that would be most meaningful for that child.

DCS currently has the following types of pre-packaged Lifebooks and Adoption Workbooks (described by Adoption World Publishing²):

My Adoption Workbook is a kid-friendly workbook that guides the social worker and child through the adoption process. This workbook provides a sensitive, but forthright explanation of

² [Adoption World Publishing](#) (2014)

separation, followed by hands-on activities to help prepare a child for change and work through the process.

Nothing raises a child's anxiety more than the unknown. **"My Adoption Workbook"** carefully guides the child and social worker through the entire process from separation to post-adoption. Exercises are designed to reduce the fears and to promote a healthy child-to-parent relationship. Special emphasis is given to helping the child:

- Explore fears or fantasies;
- Work through abuse, trust and love issues;
- Build self-esteem;
- Handle new situations; and
- Adjust to change.

The One & Only Me is a book that helps foster, adoptive, and other troubled children connect to their current situation, as well as, their beginnings. This book creates a living history for children dealing with a chaotic past.

The Real Me teen Lifebook is a tool to use when working with teens. The teenage years are a challenge even in the best situations. For teens in foster care or living in a group setting, the uncertainties about the future can cause additional stress and worry. The chapter *What My Future Holds* provides a framework that youth can use to process the many issues they face. It also prompts them to gather the necessary documentation for job hunting.