



## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

**Chapter 10:** Guardianship and Adoption

**Section 04:** Resource Parent's Role in Preparing the Child for Guardianship or Adoption

**Effective Date:** April 1, 2022

**Version:** 5

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### POLICY OVERVIEW

Children need caring adults who support the permanency plan, work to achieve permanency, and acknowledge that the child's questions and feelings are normal and acceptable. The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) partners with the resource parent to prepare the child for the guardianship or adoption process.

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### PROCEDURE

DCS will communicate with and include the resource parent in the planning and implementation of the guardianship or adoption placement process. DCS will support the resource parent decision regarding their pursuit of guardianship or adoption (if applicable), if DCS agrees that it is in the best interest of the child.

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Have a discussion with the current resource parent to determine if the resource parent plans to pursue guardianship or adoption of the child. See 10.C Tool: Differences Between Guardianship and Adoption and 10.A Tool: Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)/Adoption Checklist for additional guidance if adoption is the plan;
2. Include the resource parent in planning, implementing, and supporting the child through the guardianship or adoption process;
3. Utilize the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting and/or Case Plan Conference to develop a permanency transition plan (see policies 5.07 Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings, 5.08 Developing the Case Plan/Prevention Plan, and 10.09 Pre-Placement Visits/Permanency Transition Plan);
4. Seek a recommendation from the child's therapist and/or CFT members to plan for an age and developmentally appropriate discussion with the child regarding the resource parent's decision concerning guardianship or adoption;
5. Assist the resource parent in being prepared to appropriately acknowledge the child's feelings about the guardianship or adoption process and respond to the child's questions;
6. Prepare the resource parent for possible changes in the child's behavior prior to an adoption, new adoptive placement, or the establishment of a guardianship;
7. Ensure the child's Lifebook remains up-to-date; and
8. Document all discussions and actions taken in the case management system.

If the resource parent is not pursuing permanent placement of the child, the FCM will complete all steps above and:

1. Explain the adoption recruitment process to the resource parent and obtain an agreement that the resource parent will fully assist and support the child through the adoption placement process, which includes making the child available for adoption recruitment activities. See the Indiana Adoption Program Recruitment Booklet for additional assistance;
2. Share general information about the potential permanent placement with the current resource parent;
3. Encourage the resource parent to appropriately express feelings to DCS related to the child's potential permanent home. This may include, but is not limited to observations of behavior changes, school performance, or sharing of feelings the child may have expressed;
4. Offer therapeutic resources to the child and resource parent to address loss and grief, which may occur due to the child leaving the resource parent's home;
5. Recommend the resource parent communicate with the child, in an age-appropriate manner, regarding permanent placement and the benefits of finding a permanent family; and
6. Request the resource parent prepare a closure letter that may be shared with the child when a permanent family is identified.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Guide the FCM in developing and implementing the permanency transition plan;
2. Discuss with the FCM progress made in securing permanency, and address any needs of the child, resource parent, and/or prospective adoptive parent/guardian during regular case staffing; and
3. Ensure all actions that are taken, including any deviation from best practice, are documented in the case management system.

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## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Definitions

#### Case Staffing

Case staffing is a systematic and frequent review of all case information with safety, stability, permanency, and well-being as driving forces for case activities.

#### Guardian

For the purposes of juvenile law, a guardian means a person appointed by a court to have the care and custody of a child or the child's estate, or both.

#### Prospective Adoptive Parent

A prospective adoptive parent (for purposes of IC 31-19-2-15) is a person who has filed a petition for adoption of a child under IC 31-19-2-2.

#### Resource Parent

For the purposes of DCS policy, a resource parent includes a foster parent, licensed or unlicensed relative or kinship caregiver, and a pre-adoptive parent.

### Forms and Tools

- [10.A Tool: Termination of Parental Right \(TPR\)/Adoption Checklist](#)

- [10.C Differences Between Guardianship and Adoption](#)
- [Adoption World Publishing](#)
- [Closure Letters](#)
- [Indiana Adoption Program Recruitment Booklet](#)
- Lifebook – Available in hard copy from the [Adoption Consultant](#)

#### **Related Policies**

- [5.07 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) Meetings](#)
- [5.08 Developing the Case Plan/Prevention Plan](#)
- [10.09 Preplacement Visits/Adoption Transition Plan](#)

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#### **LEGAL REFERENCES**

- [IC 31-19-2-2 Adoption of minor child; petition; venue; substituting petitioner](#)
- [IC 31-19-2-15 Information provided to current foster parent and prospective adoptive parent; explanation of information; signature](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-49: "Guardian"](#)
- [IC-31-9-2-99.2: "Prospective Adoptive Parent"](#)
- [45 CFR 1355.34: Criteria for Determining Substantial Conformity](#)

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 10.04

*Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.*

### **Use of Lifebook's**

One of the best ways to prepare children for guardianship or 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, history of abuse and/or neglect, placement history, emotional transitions, and adoptive family). 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, and awards);
4. Positive messages to the child from important adults including, but not limited to, the child's birth parents and resource parent; and
5. Short summaries of significant events that have occurred in the child's life.

**Note:** Lifebook's are the property of the child and should remain with the child through any placement changes.

### **Lifebooks and/or Adoption Workbooks**

Lifebook and/or Adoption Workbooks come pre-packaged and may be ordered by contacting the regional Adoption Consultant. The Lifebook and/or Adoption Workbook will be mailed to the FCM in the DCS local office.

**Note:** The pre-packaged Lifebook and/or Adoption Workbook are not mandatory for the FCM to use. The FCM, therapist, foster parent, or a family member may assist the child in creating 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 the child.

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

***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 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 youth. The teenage years are a challenge even in the best situations. For youth 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 may use to process the many issues they face. It also prompts them to gather the necessary documentation for job hunting.

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