

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	Adoption	Effective Date:	September 2018
	Policy Title:	Foster Parent Adoption Consideration Evaluation		
Policy Number:	11.6	Previous Policy #:	104.16 – 104.21	

CODES/REFERENCES

O.C.G.A. §49-5-281(a)(20) Bill of Rights for Foster Parents; Filing of Grievance in Event of Violations
O.C.G.A. §19-8-16(d) Investigation by Court-Appointed Agent; Criminal History Records Check for Adoption Petitioners

REQUIREMENTS

- The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall:
1. Notify the foster parent(s) of the accepted voluntary surrender of parental rights or termination of parental rights (TPR) filing via the Notification to Foster Parent(s) of Filing of Petition to Terminate Parental Rights within four calendar days.
 2. Consider the foster parent(s) as an adoptive resource for a child in foster care who has resided in their home for a minimum of 12 months and it has been determined the child cannot or should not be returned to the home of his/her parents resulting in:
 - a. The acceptance of a voluntary surrender of parental rights; or
 - b. A legal services request in the child’s interest to the Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) to prepare a petition for TPR.
 3. Conduct a foster parent consideration staffing to explore the foster parent(s) interest in adopting a child placed in their home for at least 12 months within 15 calendar days of notification from the Social Services Administrative Unit of the child’s special needs eligibility determination:
 - a. Discuss the foster parent(s) option to adopt a child that has been placed in their home for at least 12 months; and
 - b. Have the foster parent(s) acknowledge the discussion by signing the Foster Parent Affidavit for Consideration of Adopting Foster Child(ren) Currently in Home.
 4. Complete the foster parent(s) adoption consideration evaluation within 14 calendar days of receipt of the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child(ren), indicating the foster parent(s) wants to be considered as a prospective adoptive parent.
 - a. Obtain verification from the Child Placing Agency (CPA) provider that the foster parent(s) meets the basic requirement of an adoptive resource family, if completing the adoption consideration evaluation on a CPA foster parent.
 - b. Conduct a face-to-face visit with the foster parent(s) to gather the information to assist in completing the adoption consideration evaluation; and
 - c. Notify the foster parent(s) in writing of the approval or non-approval of the adoption consideration evaluation.

5. Reassess the caregiver(s) ability to continue to meet the needs of the child(ren) any time there is a change by completing the foster parent adoption consideration evaluation (e.g., a CPS investigation, policy violation(s), changes in family composition, etc.).

PROCEDURES

Consideration of Foster Parent(s) as an Adoptive Resource

The Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will:

1. Discuss with the foster parent(s) that DFCS has accepted a voluntary surrender of parental rights or is pursuing TPR on the parent(s) of the child in their home within four calendar days of verifying that a voluntary surrender of parental rights has been accepted or a TPR petition has been filed:
 - a. Provide the foster parent(s) with the Notification to Foster Parent(s) of Filing of Petition to Terminate Parental Rights. If a CPA foster parent(s) also provide a copy to the CPA provider.
 - b. Inform the foster parent(s) that the final decision of the TPR and the disposition of custody of a child is determined by the Juvenile Court Judge.
2. Conduct a foster parent consideration staffing to explore the foster parent(s) interest in adopting a child placed in their home for at least 12 months within 15 calendar days of notification from the Social Services Administrative Unit (SSAU) of the child's special needs eligibility determination (see policy [12.2 Adoption Assistance: Adoption Assistance Application](#)).
 - a. Discuss and extend the consideration to the foster parent(s) for becoming an adoptive parent(s) for the child.
 - b. Have the foster parent(s) sign the Foster Parent Affidavit for Consideration of Adopting Foster Child(ren) Currently in Home form acknowledging the discussion and consideration of becoming an adoptive resource for the child.
 - c. Inform the foster parent(s) if they would like to be considered as an adoptive resource for the child in their home, their interest must be indicated by submitting the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest In Adopting Foster Child(ren) within seven calendar days of the foster parent consideration staffing and failure to submit within the specified time frame will be considered a declination by the foster parents of the opportunity to be considered as the adoptive parent(s) to the child.
 - d. Discuss what resources are available to meet the child's needs, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or social security benefits, whether the foster parent(s) require adoption assistance payments to adopt the child, whether the child qualifies for adoption assistance benefits, and how soon after adoptive placement adoption assistance will begin.
 - e. Discuss and provide the foster parent(s) a copy of the Post Adoption Services/Adoption Assistance Benefit Handout, which provides the foster parent(s) with information on the available financial resources for the child if they adopt.
 - f. Have the foster parent(s) sign the Verification of Receipt of Information Packet Regarding Post Adoption Services/Adoption Assistance Benefits acknowledging the discussion and receipt of the adoption assistance information packet.
3. Document in the child's Georgia SHINES ADO stage on the Adoption Information Page:
 - a. The date the foster parent(s) were provided the Notification to Foster Parent(s) of Filing of Petition to Terminate Parental Rights;

- b. The date the foster parent(s) attended the foster parent consideration staffing and was provided the adoption services and adoption assistance information;
- c. The date the foster parent(s) was provided the Foster Parent Affidavit for Consideration of Adopting Foster Child(ren) Currently in Home form; and
- d. The foster parent(s) decision.

NOTE: An affirmative indication of interest will create a child specific Adoption Consideration Evaluation in the foster parent(s) FAD stage in Georgia SHINES if the foster parent(s) are linked to the child on the adoption information page.

Completing the DFCS Foster Parent Adoption Consideration Evaluation

Upon receipt of the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child(ren) from the foster parent(s) indicating their interest in adopting a foster child(ren) in their home, the child's SSCM will:

1. Submit a request to the Resource Development SSCM to be added as secondary to the FAD stage in Georgia SHINES.
2. Conduct a face-to-face visit with the foster parent(s) to gather information to assist in completing the Adoption Consideration Evaluation. All adults who are interested in adopting the child should be present for the visit.
3. Complete the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES focusing on the child to be adopted, including adjustment, progress in the home, and justification of whether adoption by the foster parent(s) is or is not in the child's best interest.

The Resource Development SSCM will:

1. Obtain, review, and compile the following documents and information in the order listed:
 - a. IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoption Registration Cover Letter;
 - b. A copy of the Adoption Consideration Narrative completed by the child's SSCM;
 - c. Prospective Foster or Adoptive Parent Medical Evaluation Report on the foster parent(s) dated within five years. This must be newly obtained or verified in the existing foster home record;
 - d. Results of the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) and National Crime Information Center (NCIC) criminal records check by fingerprints conducted within the last five years on anyone 18 or older residing in the home. This must be newly obtained or verified in the existing foster home record (see policy [19.8 Case Management: Criminal Records Check](#) for policy and procedures regarding criminal records);

NOTE: The Superior Court may require the foster parent(s) to submit to criminal records check at the time a petition to adopt is filed.
 - e. The foster parent(s)' current marital status, which must be accurately verified if not already contained in the record; if legally married, the couple must understand that if approved they will proceed jointly in legally adopting the child; and
 - f. A copy of the foster family case record, including:
 - i. The original foster home evaluation;
 - ii. Pre-service training (see policy [14.8 Resource Development: Pre-Service Training](#) for a complete list of required pre-service trainings);
 - iii. Each annual foster family re-evaluation;
 - iv. A copy of any child protection services report(s), the investigation and results, along with any applicable concurrence decision and resulting corrective action

plan(s) (see policy [6.1 Special Investigations: Special Investigations in DFCS and CPA Foster and Adoptive Homes](#)); and

- v. A copy of any discipline policy violation(s), assessment, result(s), and corrective action plan(s), if applicable.

NOTE: These documents are required by state law to be permanently retained in an adoption file should the foster parent(s) be approved and proceed with adoption of the child.

2. Indicate on the IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoption Registration Cover Letter the recommendation to approve or not approve the foster parent's request to adopt the child and the conversion of their foster home to an adoptive home.
3. Submit the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES to the Social Services Supervisor (SSS) for approval.

The SSS will:

1. Review the adoption consideration evaluation packet (original with all attachments) and the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES for completeness, accuracy, quality and concerns.
2. Sign and date the IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoption Registration Cover Letter indicating an approval decision on the foster parent(s)' request to adopt the child.
3. Submit the packet to the County Director/Designee for second review.

The County Director/Designee will:

1. Review and make an approval decision on the foster parent(s)' request to adopt.
2. Indicate the approval decision on the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES.
3. If the recommendation is to not approve the adoption consideration evaluation:
 - a. Determine whom, in addition to the child's SSCM, will participate in the face-to-face meeting with the foster parent(s); and
 - b. Sign the written notice indicating the denial and the reason(s) for the decision.

NOTE: Following the County Director/Designee decision on the Adoption Consideration Evaluation in Georgia SHINES the Adoption Exchange, State Adoption Unit will be notified via a Georgia SHINES alert of the completion and approval/non-approval.

Completing the CPA Foster Parent Adoption Consideration Evaluation

Upon receipt of the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child(ren) from the foster parent(s) indicating their interest in adopting a foster child(ren) in their home, the child's SSCM will:

1. Provide a copy of the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child(ren) form to the CPA Case Worker within seven calendar days of receipt.
2. Make a request to the CPA Case Worker to obtain and compile the following documents within 30 days to verify the CPA foster parent(s) meets the basic requirements of an adoptive resource family:
 - a. IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoption Registration Cover Letter;

- b. Prospective Foster or Adoptive Parent Medical Evaluation Report on the foster parent(s) dated within five years. This must be newly obtained or verified in the existing foster home record;
 - c. Results of the GCIC and NCIC criminal records check by fingerprints conducted within the last five years on anyone 18 or older residing in the home. This must be newly obtained or verified in the existing foster home record (see policy [19.8 Case Management: Criminal Records Check](#));
- NOTE:** The Superior Court may require the foster parent(s) to submit to a criminal record check at the time a petition to adopt is filed.
- d. The foster parent(s)' current marital status, which must be accurately verified if not already contained in the record, if legally married, the couple must understand that if approved they will proceed jointly in legally adopting the child;
 - e. A copy of the foster family case record including:
 - i. The original foster home evaluation;
 - ii. Pre-service training (see policy [14.8 Resource Development: Pre-Service Training](#) for a complete list of required pre-service trainings);
 - iii. Each annual foster family re-evaluation (see policy [14.13 Resource Development: Family Re-Evaluation](#));
 - iv. A copy of any child protection services report(s), the investigation and result(s), along with any applicable concurrence decision and corrective action plan(s) (see policy [6.1 Special Investigations: Special Investigations in DFCS and CPA Foster and Adoptive Homes](#)); and
 - v. A copy of any discipline policy violation(s), assessment and result(s), and corrective action plan(s).
3. Submit a request to CPA home Resource Maintainer to be added as a secondary to the FAD stage in Georgia SHINES.
 4. Conduct a joint face-to-face visit with the CPA Case Worker and foster parent(s), to gather information to assist in completing the Adoption Consideration Narrative. The focus of the visit should be on the child to be adopted including adjustment, progress in the home, and justification whether adoption by the foster parent is or is not in the child's best interest. All adults who are interested in adopting the child should be present for the visit.
 5. Obtain a written recommendation from the CPA Case Worker regarding the foster parent(s) capacity to meet the short and long-term needs of the child(ren) based on their observations and interactions with the foster parent(s) and collateral contacts.
 6. Complete the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES.
 7. Submit the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES to the County Resource Development SSCM.

NOTE: The CPA maintains supervision responsibility for any other foster care children placed in the home.

The CPA Case Worker will:

1. Upon receipt of the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child(ren) from the DFCS SSCM, compile the requested documents to verify that the CPA foster parent(s) meet the basic requirements of an adoptive resource family.

2. Provide a written recommendation to the child's DFCS SSCM regarding the foster parent(s)' capacity to meet the short and long-term needs of the child(ren) based on their observations and interactions with the foster parent(s) and collateral contacts.

The Resource Development SSCM will:

1. Submit a request to the CPA Resource Maintainer for the home to be added as secondary to the FAD stage in Georgia SHINES.
2. Review the information and documents submitted by the CPA Case Worker for completeness to ensure that the foster home meets all of the requirements for approval as an adoptive home.
3. Indicate on the IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoption Registration Cover Letter:
 - a. The approval decision of foster parent's request to adopt the child; and
 - b. The conversion of their foster home to an adoptive home, if applicable.
4. Submit the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES to SSS for an approval determination.

The SSS will:

1. Review the original adoption consideration evaluation packet (with all attachments) and the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES for completeness, accuracy, quality and concerns.
2. Indicate an approval decision regarding the foster parent(s)' request to adopt the child on the IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoption Registration Cover Letter and sign and date.
3. Submit the packet to the County Director/Designee for second level review.

The County Director/Designee will:

1. Review and make an approval decision on the foster parent(s)' request to adopt the child.
2. Indicate the approval decision on the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES.
NOTE: Following the County Director/Designee's decision on the Adoption Consideration Narrative in Georgia SHINES, the Adoption Exchange, State Adoption Unit will be notified via a Georgia SHINES alert of the completion and approval/non-approval.
3. If the recommendation is to not approve the adoption consideration evaluation:
 - a. Determine whom, in addition to the child's SSCM, will participate in the face-to-face meeting with the foster parent(s); and
 - b. Sign the written notice indicating the denial and the reason(s) for the decision.

Foster Parent Adoption Consideration Evaluation Decision Notification

If the recommendation is to approve the adoption consideration evaluation of the foster parent(s) the child's SSCM will:

1. Notify the foster parent(s) of the approval in writing within 14 calendar days of the receipt of the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest In Adopting Foster Child(ren).
2. Provide a copy of the approval notification to the family's county (if different than the child's county) and CPA, if applicable.
3. Proceed with the adoptive placement planning and schedule a time to make a full presentation of the Child Life History to the foster parents) (see policy [11.5 Adoption: Child Life History](#) for practice and procedures).

If the recommendation is to not approve the adoption consideration evaluation of the foster parent(s), the child's SSCM will:

1. Consult with the Adoption Exchange, State Adoption Unit prior to notifying the foster parents of the decision.
2. Conduct a face-to-face meeting with the foster parent(s) and CPA representative (if applicable) to discuss the decision within 14 calendar days of receipt of the Foster Parent(s) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child(ren).
NOTE: The County Director/Designee will determine whom, in addition to the child's SSCM shall participate in the meeting. It is recommended a SSS be present.
3. Notify the foster parent(s) and CPA (if applicable) in writing of the outcome and the reason(s) for the decision. The notification must be signed by the County Director/Designee.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The purpose of the foster parent consideration staffing is to share Information with the foster parent(s) to assist them in making an informed decision regarding their interest in becoming an adoptive parent to the specific child. If a foster parent is married, both have to be willing to proceed with the adoption of the child and be a party to the petition. If separated both parties will need to be included on the petition to adopt the child or a legal divorce will be obtained prior to being able to proceed with adopting the child as an individual.

When the foster parent(s) has expressed interest in becoming an adoptive resource a foster parent adoption consideration evaluation must be completed to assess the foster parent(s)' ability to meet the long and short term needs of the child. Additionally, the protective capacities demonstrated by the foster parent(s) in relation to the child's particular vulnerabilities should be assessed and take into consideration whether an adoptive placement with the foster parent(s) is in the best interest of the child. For guidance, review the structured narrative guideline available in Georgia SHINES under the Foster Parent Conversion tab. The foster parent adoption consideration evaluation should be used to reassess whether the caregiver(s) continue to be able to meet needs of the child any time there is a major change (e.g., a CPS investigation, policy violation(s), changes in family composition, etc.). If the foster parent(s)' adoption consideration evaluation was not approved and the foster parent(s) filed a grievance the Adoption Exchange, State Adoption Unit must be informed of the grievance.

Adoption Assistance

Adoption Assistance is funding used to facilitate the adoption of children with special needs who might otherwise not be adopted. Adoption assistance is assistance provided on behalf of an eligible child to offset the costs associated with adopting and meeting the on-going needs

of the child. Adoption assistance can be provided in the form of payments, medical coverage and reimbursement of non-recurring expenses.

Child Placing Agency (CPA)

A CPA is an agency that provides foster and adoptive placement services for children in foster and adoptive resource homes for individualized care, supervision and oversight. CPAs are responsible for assessing the placement regarding the appropriateness of the room, board and watchful oversight that the prospective foster and adoptive families will provide. The CPA's employees and their foster and adoptive parents work as a team to provide a stabilizing and nurturing environment that promotes safety, well-being and permanency.

Special Needs Determination

A child identified as a child with special needs must meet specific federal and state factors or conditions. To be eligible for Title IV-E adoption assistance, the child must qualify as a child with special needs and Title IV-E eligibility criteria. Special needs determinations are made by DFCS' Social Services Administration Unit (SSAU) in accordance with policy [12.1 Eligibility - Adoption Assistance Payments, Medicaid & Non-Recurring](#).

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Adoption Consideration Evaluation - Georgia SHINES Job Aide](#)

[IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoptive Registration Cover Letter](#)

[IMPACT Family Evaluation Family Approval and Adoptive Registration Cover Letter \(Instructions\)](#)

[Foster Parent Affidavit for Consideration of Adopting Foster Child\(ren\) in Home](#)

[Foster Parent Affidavit for Consideration of Adopting Foster Child\(ren\) in Home \(Spanish\)](#)

[Foster Parent\(s\) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child\(ren\)](#)

[Foster Parent\(s\) Notification of Decision Regarding Interest in Adopting Foster Child\(ren\) \(Spanish\)](#)

[Notification to Foster Parent\(s\) of Filing of Petition to Terminate Parental Rights](#)

[Notification to Foster Parent\(s\) of Filing of Petition to Terminate Parental Rights \(Spanish\)](#)

[Post Adoption Services/Adoption Assistance Benefit Handout](#)

[Post Adoption Services/Adoption Assistance Benefit Handout \(Spanish\)](#)

[Prospective Foster or Adoptive Parent Medical Evaluation Report](#)

[Verification of Receipt of Information Packet Regarding Post Adoption Services/Adoption Assistance Benefits](#)

[Verification of Receipt of Information Packet Regarding Post Adoption Services/Adoption Assistance Benefits \(Spanish\)](#)