



Community Based Care: Hardee, Highlands &amp; Polk Counties

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## Operating Policy & Procedure

<b>Series:</b>	Operations: Adoptions
<b>Policy Number:</b>	5-200
<b>Policy Name:</b>	Adoptions Supports and Services
<b>References:</b>	F.A.C. 65C-16, HFC Policy 3-200 COA Standard AS 13
<b>Origination Date:</b>	July 3, 2012
<b>Revised Date:</b>	July 1, 2020; December 5, 2016

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**Policy:**

Heartland for Children (HFC) supports the goal of finding permanency for children and youth by providing technical assistance and support to case management and adoptive families during and after the adoption process.

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**Procedures:****1. Pre-Adoption Support**

HFC creates and maintains recruitment tools and promotes adoption in the community by using the Adoption Gallery, HFC Website, Social Media, Family Match, Brochures, Posters and other adoption materials.

HFC provides orientation/educational sessions to families who are interested in adopting a child from the child welfare system. HFC provides preparatory training (i.e., Adoption 101) for potential adoptive parents. HFC screens potential adoptive parents by conducting an initial phone interview to determine their appropriateness for the Adoption 101 training course. The Department approved adoptive parent training must be provided to and successfully completed by all prospective adoptive parents except licensed foster parents and relative and non-relative caregivers who previously attended the training within the last five (5) years, or have the child currently placed in their home for six (6) months or longer and been determined to understand the challenges and parenting skills needed to successfully parent the children available for adoption from foster care. The Case Manager conducting the home study must clearly document in the adoptive parent home study the reasons why the relative or non-relative caregiver will not be required to complete adoptive parent training. Families are referred to outside agencies if they are only interested in adopting infants and/or children with no special needs.

The Adoption 101 Training series for prospective adoptive parents includes but is not limited to completion of the following components:

- Background checks
- Reference checks
- State approved Adoption 101 training curricula
- Homework and other documentation

- Medical clearance

Upon successful completion of the Adoption 101 Training, the HFC Adoption Specialist completes adoption home studies on Adoption 101 participants who do not have an identified child in their care. The HFC Adoption Specialist will provide approved home studies within five (5) business days of completion to the Case Management Organization(s). Families that completed the Adoption 101 class for purposes of a “child Specific” adoption will have their training records forwarded to the child’s case manager by the HFC Adoption Specialist so that the child’s case manager can complete the adoption home study.

The HFC Adoption Specialist works in partnership with the subcontracted Case Management Organizations (CMO) to match available children with families who have an approved home study. Home Studies will be provided to the CMOs and other agencies as requested.

When a family is matched with a child, that family may be referred for services or additional training as deemed appropriate by the CMO. The HFC Adoptions Department maintains a Lending Library and provides information regarding adoption support groups to assist potential adoptive families with resources.

The HFC Adoption Specialist strives to contact adoptive families within 30 days of the adoption finalization to inquire if Post-Adoption Services are needed.

The HFC Adoptions Specialist or designee attends adoption finalizations and provides the CMO with an adoption resource canvas bag or backpack filled with educational materials for the family and information about post-adoption support services.

## **2. Financial**

HFC does not charge fees to adoptive families for adoption services that have been approved by HFC.

HFC, its personnel, and independent contractors do not accept or provide financial or other consideration beyond reimbursement for services. Prospective adoptive parents interested in making donations can be advised to do so after the adoption has been finalized.

Financial related supports provided to meet the needs of the families include, but are not limited to, assistance with medical services not covered by Medicaid or other funding sources, respite services, pro-social activities, etc.

### **A. Adoption Subsidy Assistance**

Adoption subsidy files are reviewed by the HFC Adoption Specialist prior to being submitted to HFC Rev Max unit for Title IV-E determination. In all cases in which an enhanced subsidy rate is being requested, HFC requests documentation from the Case Manager to support the reason for an enhanced subsidy. HFC forwards all enhanced subsidy requests to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) designee for further review and approval.

Adoption Subsidy payment dates are provided to each family at adoption finalization. Updated Adoption Subsidy payment dates are mailed annually to each family receiving adoption subsidy payments. These dates are also listed on the HFC website.

The Adoption Case Manager provides the family with a copy of the signed subsidy agreement. Upon request, the HFC Adoption Specialist can also provide Adoption Subsidy documentation for any financial concerns or inquiries.

If an adoptive family reports they should be receiving Adoption Subsidy prior to finalization but are not, HFC's Adoption Specialist will review and determine if the family is entitled to an Adoption Subsidy.

**B. Adoption Subsidy Increase**

A request for an adoption subsidy increase may be made by the adoptive parent and submitted to the HFC Adoption Specialist. Increases beyond the basic subsidy rate require additional documentation on the child's special needs and a letter from the adoptive family and/or Case Manager justifying the need for the increase. An increase in the subsidy after the initial subsidy agreement was approved can only be requested due to increased needs related to conditions of the child that were identified as current or future needs prior to the adoption placement or the circumstances of the family have changed in order to meet the increased needs of the child.

**C. Adoption Subsidy Terminated**

If subsidy is terminated due to the death of an Adoptive Parent and a current caregiver desires to adopt the child, the HFC Adoption Specialist will refer the family to a designated service provider for an adoptive home study to be completed. Upon receipt of a positive home study, the HFC Adoption Specialist will complete a subsidy file and submits to Rev Max. The HFC Adoption Specialist will obtain all required signatures and submit paperwork to the identified Adoption Attorney for Adoption Finalization.

**D. Additional Expenses**

If an adoptive family has unexpected hardships and requests assistance, then the HFC Adoption Specialist will review the requests for monetary assistance, such as one-time mortgage payments, help with electric bill, etc.

The HFC Adoption Specialist or designee reviews all financial requests with the HFC Chief Operating Officer for approval. If the request is approved, the HFC Adoption Specialist provides the financial request and approval to the HFC Resource Specialist for completion of the authorization process-or provides the financial request, approval and check request to Accounts Payable for payment of the post adoption service.

**E. Educational Tuition Exemptions**

At the time of the adoption finalization, the Adoption Case Manager provides the adoptive family with a college tuition waiver. After finalization, the Adoption Specialist can provide a copy of the college tuition waiver for families who have adopted through the State of Florida in Circuit 10 after May 5, 1997.

**3. Post-Adoption Services**

Post-adoption services promote child and adult well-being, family functioning and stability. The child's extended family and other community members should be considered as valuable resources when arranging post-adoption services. When the case involves a known American Indian/Alaskan Native child, resources offered by the tribe or local Indian organization are also considered. Applicants are treated equitably and are informed about what services will be available and when. HFC's provides a wide array of supportive services to adoptive families, which include training, information and referrals, case management services, and assistance with accessing appropriate services for the adopted child, and the family. When services are limited to specific types of adoptive families, HFC is committed to coordinating and securing resources outside of the Circuit to meet the special needs of children and adoptive families.

HFC's Adoption Team assists with supports and community linkage to families prior to and post adoption finalization. HFC is required to contact an adoptive family one year from their adoption finalization date to offer post-adoption services. In addition, HFC's Adoption Team strives to contact

families within 30 to 90 days of adoption finalization to inquire if current supports are effective and/or to inquire if Post-Adoption Services are needed.

The HFC Adoption Specialist conducts Post-Adoption Surveys with adoptive families who have accessed post adoption services through HFC to assess and determine if there is a need for additional post-adoption services.

Post-adoption services can be accessed through the community by the adopted person/adoptive family and/or by service referral made by the HFC Adoption Specialist to include: assessments, information and referral, case management, early interventions for developmental delays, educational services, counseling, mental health treatment and crisis intervention services, family preservation and stabilization services, peer support, community transportation systems, respite and out-of-home care services.

HFC links adoptive families with resources in the community for ongoing support. The HFC Adoption Specialist or designee will request additional mental health support from an Adoption Competent Mental Health Professional and/or a Mental Health Professional trained in Emotional Regulatory Healing (ERH) and/or Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) for families who are not benefiting from community resources. HFC Post-Adoption Support Services can be accessed through the receipt of a request for services from adoptive parents or community providers on behalf of the adoptive child. Upon receipt of a request, for services, HFC's Adoption Specialist or designee will verify that the child was adopted using the adoption subsidy database, Florida Safe Families Network, adoption subsidy file, or the final judgment of adoption.

HFC's Adoption Specialist or designee, along with the adopted person and/or adoptive family, jointly develops a plan that specifies steps in obtaining the needed services (i.e. mental health, medical and/or educational). Suitable resources are explored and the appropriate service providers are contacted with the permission of the adopted person or adoptive family.

Adoptive Families are responsible for providing medical, dental, school records, etc. to the post adoption service provider/agency as applicable. Adoptive Families sign a Release of Information form with the agency/provider whom they are/will be receiving services from to discuss service needs and obtain assessments/evaluations and other relevant records from the provider.

#### **4. Post Adoption Supports**

The HFC Adoption Specialist will inform and refer adoptive families to support groups and will also provide assistance with the following supports as needed:

- Family Team Conference and/or a Multi-Disciplinary Team Staffing may be held to discuss additional supports/needs
- Community Services and Supports
- Referrals for HFC contracted services
- Medicaid: families are provided assistance with identified issues
- Adoption Reunion Registry: referred for assistance with medical history and social history; [www.adoptfl.org](http://www.adoptfl.org) or by calling 1-800-96-ADOPT
- HFC Lending Library: educational material consists of books, audio devices and videos
- Medical: follows up with additional payment of unpaid medical bills that were not covered under Medicaid but were approved prior to the adoption
- Education: will contact the School Board's SEDNET (Multi-Agency Network for Students with Severe Emotional Disturbance) Coordinator and/or the HFC Prevention Education Specialist for additional services in the school
- Requests for Adoption Subsidy payment dates, amounts, etc.
- Verification of subsidy: letters and/or copies of subsidy agreements

- Request for records, with personal information redacted
- Request for updated College Tuition Waiver for youth adopted through the State of Florida in Circuit 10 after May 5, 1997.

## **5. Data Collection**

Each contracted CMO provides monthly Adoption reports or Case Reviews to the HFC Adoption Manager. These reports identify all children who are available for adoption that are receiving services from the CMO.

The HFC Adoptions Specialist or designee maintains the following information:

- TPR/Adoption database to report all projections and adoption finalizations
- Adoption Spreadsheet reporting all adoptions, including out of county services cases
- Subsidy Spreadsheet tracking timeliness of subsidy determination
- Subsidy Database tracking the number of adopted children
- Database/spreadsheet of the names of the adoptive families, type of services received and expenses of those services
- Annual Post-Adoption Reports

Report information is shared with the HFC Adoptions Program Manager, HFC Director of Adoptions and Placements and the HFC Chief Operating Officer. Reports are also shared during the HFC Management meetings.

## **6. Release of Information**

All releases of identifying information about adopted persons, birth parents, and adoptive families are conducted in accordance with Florida Law. Florida Law requires non-identifying information to be released to adoptive parents and adult adoptees but does not allow access to the record by other parties. Requests for information from closed adoption records must be written, and no information will be released by telephone. The name of the adoptive parents must be included in the letter requesting release of information and some form of identification such as photocopy of the client's driver's license or birth certificate.

Request for information from post adoption files will be provided upon verifying the name, demographics, and address of the adoptive family. A signed acknowledgement of receipt of the requested documents will be obtained.

## **7. Record Retention**

Records are retained for the period required by law. HFC's Post Adoption Services records include all documents, papers, letters and any other materials used during official business. Post Adoption Services records will be retained without expunging any information.

Closed and inactive Post Adoption Files will be maintained in the Agency Secure Knowledge (ASK) system. Existing archived Post Adoption Files will be retained until the completion of the specified retention period.

DCF, or their designee, will assume responsibilities for closed adoption records in the event HFC ceases to operate as the Lead Community Based Care Organization in Circuit 10.

Approved by:

  
Teri Saunders, CEO

7/1/20  
Date