

# CATHOLIC CHARITIES

## INFANT ADOPTION PROGRAM MANUAL

### POLICIES

#### **I. ADOPTION SERVICES OFFERED:**

Catholic Charities is licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services to place children for adoption in the state of Iowa.

**Philosophy:** Catholic Charities philosophy about adoption is embodied in the belief that all children should have permanent homes. The agency's goal is to assist birth parents who have chosen to place their child in an adoptive home in making decisions on the child's behalf and in the child's best interests which culminate in the child receiving a permanent home through adoption.

The agency's responsibility is to complete the adoptive placement as quickly as possible while constantly considering the child's needs. This means that once the decision for adoption has been made, there should be consistent and continuous follow-through with as few interruptions in the process as possible, thus increasing the child's capacity for permanent adoption.

Adoption also is viewed as a method for family building. Services are offered the adoptive family during the placement and post-placement periods, and thereafter, to support the adoptive family as it prepares for a new family member and to help the family, over time, to integrate the child it adopts into becoming a full member of the family. This includes accepting the knowledge/information about the child's birth family and background, not only as a historical fact, but as an integral part of the child's ongoing development.

#### **A. Adoption Inquiries, Orientation, Application:**

##### **1. Infant Adoption Program:**

All persons inquiring about the Infant Adoption Program will be sent an Inquiry Packet which, will include a registration form for the initial Opportunities in Adoption Workshop. Everyone interested in adopting through Catholic Charities is required to attend a group orientation meeting for the purpose of learning about the agency's program, i.e., eligibility requirements, philosophy about adoption, general procedures for filing an application and its processing, fees, legal issues, networking agencies, etc. It is expected that each spouse attend. Upon completion of the workshop, persons may enter into an Infant Adoption Program Agreement with Catholic Charities to begin the adoption process. Completion of approved homestudy will determine the eligibility for consideration by birth parents as a potential adoptive home. In the event birth parents do not want to participate in the selection of placement, Catholic

Charities will use the eligibility date as one criterion for determining placement of infants.

**Catholic Charities will limit acceptance of adoption applications when there are significantly more applicants than there are infants available for adoption.**

## 2. Networking Agencies:

In an effort to place waiting infants, Catholic Charities may network with other agencies to place bi-racial, minority, or foreign infants.

## **B. Adoptive Placement of Children:**

Adoptions are planned for children 0 up to 2 years of age.

### **1. Healthy Infants, 0 - 2 years of age.**

This includes healthy bi-racial and/or minority infants as well as healthy Caucasian infants.

### **2. Placement of Children:**

Catholic Charities will assist birth parents to make placement decisions using a philosophy of openness and always remembering the child's best interest. Catholic Charities starts from a position of complete openness and then allow our birth families and adoptive families to decide how much contact they want and are comfortable with. Open adoption is where:

1. birth family selects adoptive family;
2. identifying information is shared;
3. contact is ongoing and mutually agreed upon;
4. peace of mind comes with mutual planning and decision-making.

The control of the adoption experience is shared by the professionals and the participants. The initial designer of the any adoption plan is the birth parents who come to Catholic Charities because of an unexpected pregnancy. If birth parents decide to plan an adoption, they will develop a plan at Catholic Charities which they believe will uniquely meet the needs of their child. At Catholic Charities, our birth parents take satisfaction in meeting society's expectation that parents make loving and responsible provisions for their children. If the birth parents do want to plan an adoption, Catholic Charities will determine the placement of the child, by committee.

Once a child has been legally relinquished through Catholic Charities, it is within the sole and total discretion of Catholic Charities to determine the placement of the child. We do recognize that an adoptive couple may have been designated by the birth parent(s) as the family they would prefer their child to be placed with but, no placement will be made unless it is determined both to be in the best interest of the child and that the potential adoptive parents are able, capable, fit and ready to assume parental responsibility.

**Only approved families will be included in the profiles given to birth parents. Payment of fees by a potential adoptive family does not guarantee approval or placement of a child.**

**C. Adoptive Studies:**

Catholic Charities' Infant Adoption Program will do home studies for;

- Potential adoptive parents who have signed our adoption program application;

**4. Right to Appeal:**

Families and individuals who have been non-approved for placement of a child for adoption have the right to appeal that decision with the agency and the Department of Human Services. The right to appeal extends to all adverse decisions made by the agency.

**5. Home Study/Adoption File:**

The adoption file is the property of Catholic Charities. Should any client want to have their file released to another licensed child placement agency, Catholic Charities will consider the request provided all fees for services have been received. Catholic Charities will not release home study or adoption file documents or copies of originals to the client. Catholic Charities will provide the home study document to the client for review for accuracy. Additionally, agency personnel will go over a client's file in the office at their request.

**6. The payment of fee for a home study does not ensure approval for adoption.**

**D. Post-placement Services - Infant Adoption Program:**

**1. Post Placement:**

Once a child has been placed with a family, a minimum of six months post-placement supervision is required. No less than two face-to-face visits with the adopted child in his/her adoptive home is required by Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities also requests the family provide the following:

- Written post-placement reports by the family at one month, three months, and five months following placement;
- Three statements by the child's physician about the health and development of the adopted child within the six month post-placement period.

**2. Individual and Family Counseling:**

Any member of an adoption triad, (adoptive parents, person adopted, or birth parents) may request individual or family counseling or be referred from another agency or professional for that purpose. It is not necessary that Catholic Charities was previously involved in the adoptive placement in order to provide such counseling services. The counseling may focus on adoption issues or other individual and/or family problems affected by adoption. The fee for this service is the same as for all other individual and family counseling. Casework services may continue after the birth parents have decided what they want to do regarding their child.

## **II. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ADOPTING AN INFANT:**

### **A. Age:**

Applicants must be 25-45 years of age.

The age of the applicants at the time the agency receives a written request becomes the date which, establishes whether or not the applicants have met the age requirement to adopt.

### **B. Marital Status:**

The applicants must be legally married. Applicants must be married for two years at the time of application.

### **C. Family Composition:**

Adoptive parents do not have to be childless and infertility is not required. However, the following guidelines apply;

1. A family is active with Catholic Charities once they have submitted an application has been filed and the appropriate fees paid.
2. In the event an applicant for the Infant Adoption Program becomes pregnant, the agency must be notified immediately. The applicants will be placed on inactive status. If the pregnancy is unsuccessful, the applicant may return to the same status as existed prior to the pregnancy.
3. If the couple has a child born to them or adopts a child from an entity other than Catholic Charities, the agency must be notified. The couple will then be put on an inactive status. One year following the birth or placement the applicant may return to the same status as existed prior to the birth or placement.
4. The process of re-applying for adoption of another child after having a child placed by Catholic Charities, may begin one year following the placement of the previous child.

### **D. Residence:**

Applicants must reside in the state of Iowa at the time of request. Catholic Charities will not place a child with an adoptive family that moves out-of-state prior to placement of a child. Catholic Charities will try to secure an agency in the other state to work with them.

**E. Religion:**

It shall be the general policy of this agency to make adoptive placements within Christian homes, but recognizing that it is the mission of the Christian Church to serve all people in the world, the services of this agency are available to all that come to us. We believe the religious faith of the couples should be expressed in their family life, and church membership is considered an important indicating factor.

**III. TRANSFERS OF APPROVED ADOPTIVE HOME STUDIES:**

**A. Catholic Agencies:**

Catholic Charities has an informal agreement with most of the Catholic Charities agencies in the country to honor approved home studies of couples who move from one state to another. The policies of the receiving agency take precedence over the policies of this agency. There may be exceptions to this based on the other state's adoption laws.

**B. Non-Catholic Agencies:**

- Catholic Charities does not accept adoptive home studies approved by another agency or adoption specialist.
- Should any client want to have their home study released to another licensed child placement agency or adoption specialist, Catholic Charities will consider the request provided all fees for services have been received

**IV. APPROVED COUPLES WITHDRAWING FROM INFANT PLACEMENT:**

Approved couples who withdraw from the program forfeit all fees paid the agency at the time of withdrawal.

**V. ADOPTION FEES:**

It is the responsibility of the adoption specialist to be sure the appropriate fees have been paid before starting any phase of the adoption program.

**A. Infant Adoption Program:**

**1. Preliminary Application Fee:**

All couples applying to the agency for the Infant Adoption Program will be required to pay a \$100 non-refundable preliminary application fee. This fee will be payable when making a reservation for the Opportunities in Adoption Workshop. This preliminary application fee is separate from the adoption fee.

## **2. Infant Adoption Program Fee:**

- For potential adoptive families whose income is less than \$45,000, the fee will be \$12,000, and for potential adoptive families whose income is \$45,000 or greater, the fee will be \$15,000, and for potential adoptive families whose income is \$100,000 or greater, the fee will be \$20,000.
- The fees will be collected as follows:
- One-third due when the application is signed;
- One-third due upon approval of the home study;
- The final one-third due at placement.

The Infant Adoption Fee Agreement is signed by the adoptive family. It serves as a contract between the agency and the adoptive family in regard to the amount of the adoption fee and the time it is to be paid.

**The adoption fee is for services provided in processing, studying the couple, placing and supervising the placement of a child, and finalizing the adoption. It does not insure adoption approval or placement of a child.**

The applicant has the right to file a grievance with Catholic Charities concerning any agency decisions.

## **VI. INTERSTATE COMPACT RULES AND REGULATIONS:**

No interstate adoptive placement can be made without approval by the Iowa Deputy for Interstate Compacts. This applies to any child being moved from Iowa to another state and vice-versa for the purpose of adoptive placement. The Iowa Deputy for Interstate Compacts must be notified immediately.

Contact: Deputy Compact Administrator  
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children  
Iowa Department of Human Services  
Hoover Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
Ph: (515) 281-5730

## **VII. ADOPTION RESEARCH:**

The Administrative Policy regarding “Research involving clients and/or case records” is

as follows:

The agency's purpose for involvement with clients is to provide individualized services by competent staff using proven and sound practices and services. Clients normally will not be engaged in research-oriented services or activities. Any use of the client data or their experiences for studies will be conducted under the mandate that those doing research studies or reports shall not replicate or publish any information that is identifiable to a specific client. No research activities by parties other than employed staff or students completing practicum placement shall be undertaken without prior approval of the Executive Director of Catholic Charities who, prior to granting such activity, will insure the client's rights of confidentiality and provide for the receipt of prior-informed permissions for such activities by clients effected.

## **VIII. RECORDS:**

The agency shall maintain separate records for each adoptive family.

### **A. Content of Records:**

#### **Content of each adoptive family/individual shall be as follows:**

- The preliminary application
- The Infant Adoption Agreement
- Adoption checklist
- Contact memos
- The adoptive home study
- Home study tools and autobiography
- Home study review form
- Additional documentation, testing, and or services that may be requested to complete the home study process
- Additional documentation that may be necessary to complete a home study in accordance with Interstate Compact
- Release of confidential information form
- Employer verification letter
- Physician' statement of health letter
- Reference from pastor; letter and or interview
- Personal reference letters
- Criminal History Record Check/Sex offender Registry Check
- Child Abuse Check
- Medical records
- All references
- All legal documents pertaining to the adoption
- Copy of marriage license
- Copy of birth certificates
- Copy of divorce decrees or death decrees
- Financial statement

- Most recent 1040 Tax Return
- Photographs of clients and their home
- Adoption plan
- Birth family information and background report
- Summary narrative on placement decision which will include a statement that consideration was given to placing the child with a family of the same ethnic background. If this is not possible or not in the best interest of the child, the reasons shall be documented
- Information pertaining to the child
- Information on decision when a family is not chosen for placement
- Post-placement reports
- Child physician's reports
- Post-legal contacts, information

**B. Record Storage and Retention:**

All records shall be maintained forever. In the event that the agency closes the records shall be forwarded to the Department of Human Services. Closed records shall be stored in water and fire resistant files.