

AAA PARTNERS IN ADOPTION, INC.
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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR AN ADOPTIVE HOME STUDY EVALUATION

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APPLICATION FOR SERVICES:

Any person or married couple (residents of Georgia) desiring to apply for an adoptive home study evaluation will receive an application packet. The adoptive applicant(s) then forwards to AAA Partners in Adoption, Inc., (AAA PIA) a written application for the purpose of entering into a contract with AAA PIA to perform the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation. The application must be signed and dated. (See Application for Home Study Evaluation)

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF FEE STRUCTURE:

Fee Schedule for Home Studies and Post Placement Services*

Service	Fee
Home study Report – Domestic or International (Hague Approved)	\$900.00 (\$250.00 due at initial meeting, \$250.00 due at second meeting, \$250.00 due at third meeting and \$150.00 plus mileage due at home visit)
Home Study – Subsequent Adoption (Second, Third Adoption)	\$600.00 plus mileage due at home visit.
Home Study Update (Domestic and International)	\$350.00 plus mileage due at home visit.
Post Placement Supervision	\$150.00 per home visit plus mileage.
Domestic Adoption Court Report (Agency to Agency)	No charge.
Mileage	\$0.45 per mile.
Copies of Home Study Reports	4 Reports are provided, \$10.00 each additional report

*** All fees are payable when the services are rendered and are non-refundable.**

ORIENTATION FOR APPLICANT:

Once an application has been submitted by prospective adoptive parents and prior to the approval of the application, orientation information shall be supplied for the applicant(s), including but not limited to:

- The legal procedures involved in adoption
- The minimum requirements for an adoptive home and the procedures for the home study
- The selection and placement process

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The process children use to locate birth parents, and the process birth parents use to locate children
The Agency's grievance procedures

THE ADOPTIVE HOME STUDY PREPARATION AND PROCESS:

AAA PIA will acknowledge acceptance of the application in writing and when the application can be activated.

The Adoptive Home Study Evaluation is the process by which the family unit engages with AAA PIA staff to determine the readiness of their home for the placement of an adoptive child or children. A key element of this process is the preparation of the family for the placement, including education, support and contact with other adoptive families. This process is a contractual agreement entered into voluntarily. Either party may terminate the process at any time. The termination of the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation process shall be acknowledged by the written and signed notification to the other party.

The Adoptive Home Study Evaluation process is comprised of the following components:

AAA PIA shall make a written evaluation of each pre-adoptive family prior to the approval of the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation. This study of the applicant(s) for adoption services shall include, as a minimum, three visits. One shall be in the home. The applicant(s) and any other individuals who live in the home shall be seen and interviewed at this home visit. Applicant(s) shall be interviewed together as well as separately.

Verification by means of certified copies of birth, marriage and divorce records as well as current health status, GBI criminal history records' check, etc., will be provided to the AAA PIA by the applicant(s).

The family will complete, as one of the requirements, a personal profile questionnaire. This written questionnaire is to be completed and returned to the Adoption Consultant prior to the second visit. All other required documents must be returned to the Adoption Consultant before the home visit can be scheduled.

A minimum of four letters of recommendation will be provided to AAA PIA. Two references will be from nonrelatives. A letter of reference from a relative in the husband's family and a letter of reference from a relative in the wife's family must also be provided. The relatives providing reference letters may not reside in the home with the adoptive family. If a prospective adoptive applicant has worked with children in the past five years, a reference must be obtained from that employer. (References are to be sent directly to the Adoption Consultant, not the adoptive applicant). Do not send references to the Agency's main office. This may delay the process.

It is the adoptive applicant's responsibility to inform the Adoption Consultant before the home visit is scheduled of any additional documents required by their placement agency or of any specific home study format required. Examples are a short report (\$200 fee), post-placement visit letter, notarized agency license, etc.

The AAA PIA staff shall provide a written report at the conclusion of the personal visits with the applicant(s) and Adoption Consultant and the completion of the aforementioned requirements and verifications. A copy or copies of the Home Evaluation will be provided to the adoptive applicants.

Approval or disapproval of the adoptive applicants for the placement of a child or children shall be made by the "Adoptive Review Committee." This Committee shall be comprised of the Adoption Consultant for the adoptive applicants, the AAA PIA Adoption Services Supervisor and the AAA PIA Executive Director. This Committee shall review the written home study and any supporting information and data as necessary. The adoptive applicant(s) will be notified in writing as to the disposition of the Committee's evaluation.

A decision on approval of the adoptive applicants shall be made within 60 days of the last contact with the applicant(s) or there shall be documentation in the record to explain any delay.

A completed Adoptive Home Study Evaluation which contains a favorable recommendation does not guarantee the placement of a child or children in the applicant(s) home. Placement of a child or children is the responsibility of the

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applicant's placement source, (their USA placement agency, foreign agency, etc.). AAA PIA cannot be held responsible, either financially or in any other manner, for the outcome of the adoption process.

Adoptive applicant(s) receiving an unfavorable recommendation will be given a list of resources with which to strengthen areas which AAA PIA perceives as limitations. The Adoption Consultant will offer a minimum of one follow-up contact to help the adoptive applicant(s) adjust to the unfavorable recommendation.

A home study is a process; however, it should not continue indefinitely. A family should not apply and begin the home study process until they are ready to participate fully in the process. Fees, interviews, and documents expire at 12 months; therefore, delays during the process will result in a family having extra interviews, redoing documents, and paying additional fees.

EDUCATION OF THE ADOPTIVE APPLICANT:

Adoptive applicants adopting an international infant or child will need to contact their child-placing agency to determine the education requirements, if any, for their country. Otherwise, applicants planning to adopt internationally must read "Adopting an Institutionalized Child: What Are The Risks?" This article will be provided at the home study orientation.

All adoptive applicants will be given a checklist of "Topics for Discussion". Any concerns listed on "Topics for Discussion" will be discussed with their Adoption Consultant. All adoptive applicants will receive a reading packet at the home study orientation interview.

POST-PLACEMENT SERVICES:

According to regulations for the State of Georgia, AAA PIA is to conduct a minimum of two visits after placement of a child and monthly visits prior to the Petition for Adoption being filed. The first visit shall be made within 30 days of placement of the child. There shall be a minimum of two weeks between home visits for a child age 12 months and younger. There shall be a minimum of 30 days between the required home visits for a child over the age of 12 months. Post-placement visits will continue until a court date for finalization has been set. The Petition for Adoption may not be filed by the applicant's attorney until the second post-placement visit has taken place.

If a Petition for Adoption is not granted within 60 days after filing and/or no court date is set, AAA PIA shall make additional home visits at least quarterly until a final order has been entered on the Petition.

For families adopting a child from another state, the originating state and/or the placement agency may require additional post-placement visits. If the adoptive family is finalizing their adoption in a state other than Georgia, they will follow the post-placement requirement of the other state.

Adoptive families who have finalized their child or children's adoption in a foreign court must follow the post-placement requirements of their placement agency and the country from which their children came.

It is the sole responsibility of the adoptive family to contact AAAPIA regarding post-placement services in compliance with agency, state and/or country regulations for post-placement supervision according to the schedule of their placement agency. The adoptive applicant agrees to pay the post-placement fee for supervision services to AAAPIA. The length of the post-placement supervision varies from case to case and each applicant must cooperate and fulfill their obligations for post-placement supervision.

INTERSTATE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN:

AAA PIA shall comply with the applicable laws of that state and with the provisions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

FINALIZATION:

The adoptive family shall engage at its own cost the legal fees for the finalization of their adoption. This shall take place at the conclusion of the post-placement period. AAA PIA reserves the right to postpone finalization should it appear to be in the best interest of the adoptive child and family.

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For families who are adopting their child through an out of state agency and finalizing their adoption in Georgia, AAA PIA will prepare all documents necessary for finalization of the adoption. AAA PIA will submit these documents prior to the hearing date to the Superior Court of the County in which the family is finalizing. AAA PIA does not charge a fee for this service.

POST-ADOPTION SERVICES:

AAA PIA is available as a resource, counselor and friend on an on-going basis to our adoptive families. We welcome a continuing relationship with our families through the years. We encourage our families to participate in AAA PIA sponsored post-adoption services and activities.

SUBSEQUENT ADOPTIONS:

In most cases, an adoptive family who has completed a home study through AAA PIA and who has had the placement of a child in their home must complete finalization of the adoption prior to applying for another home study.

UPDATE OF HOME STUDY:

A domestic home study is current for one year from the approval date. An international home study is usually current for a period of eighteen months from the approval date. For adoptive applicants pursuing an international adoption, the need for an update shall be determined by their placement agency, BCIS, and the country from which they are adopting. It is the sole responsibility of the adoptive applicant to contact AAA PIA to update the adoption home study six weeks prior to the expiration of a domestic home study and three months prior to the expiration of an international study.

PROCEDURE FOR AAA PIA ENTERING INTO A PURCHASE OF SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH ANOTHER PROVIDER OF SERVICES:

AAA PIA may enter, to the extent that the providers are willing, into a purchase of a service agreement to finance services in behalf of the client with, but not limited to the following:

Foster homes, Physicians, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Hospitals, Clinics, Lawyers, and Consultants of a wide variety of services.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:

All applicants shall have the right of appeal of grievances. Applicants agree not to engage an attorney and/or enter into litigation. Should a difference arise between an applicant and the Adoption Consultant, such differences must be settled in the following manner:

Grievances should first be discussed with the Adoption Consultant involved. If the difference is not resolved, the applicant should inform the Adoption Consultant in writing as to the nature of the grievance within two working weeks. At that time, the applicant should request a conference with the Adoption Supervisor. The Adoption Supervisor will meet with the applicant at the Supervisor's office within two working weeks of the date of receipt of the applicant's written grievance request.

If resolution is not reached within two weeks after the applicant meets with the Supervisor, the nature of the grievances shall be presented, in writing, to the Executive Director by the applicant. The Adoption Supervisor and the Adoption Consultant will also report, in writing, the results of their findings to the Executive Director. The Director will arrange a meeting, within two weeks, with the applicant, the Adoption Consultant, and the Adoption Supervisor. The Executive Director will render a decision, in writing, to the applicant, the Adoption Services Supervisor, and the Adoption Consultant, usually within two weeks after the conference. The decision of the Executive Director is final.

If this procedure does not result in an agreeable resolution, the applicants may choose to participate in an objective, professional mediation service and abide by the recommended resolution. The adoptive applicants will pay for these mediation services.

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ESTABLISHING, MAINTAINING, AND STORAGE OF RECORDS AND FILES:

AAA PIA shall maintain adoption records pertaining to each child and family. All finalized or closed files and all legal documents will be housed in the administrative office of AAA PIA until the adoption is finalized and/or case closed. These records are to be maintained in fireproof, locked file cabinets. Once the adoption is finalized and/or case closed, the adoption records will be converted to a non-paper format. From that time hence, AAA PIA can only retrieve documents for adoptive families by a court order. Adoptive applicants must keep copies of all their documents.

Documents provided to AAA PIA by the adoptive family become an official part of the AAA PIA adoption record and are the sole property of AAA PIA.

CLIENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEEPING DOCUMENTS CURRENT:

Supporting home study documents may be current for only one year from the date on the individual documents (e.g., medicals, CPS forms, GBI reports, reference letters, pet vaccinations, sewage and water approval, employment letters), depending upon the requirements of individual placement agencies, states, or countries.

Even though the home study may not have expired at the time of a referral for the placement of a child, the supporting documents may in fact have expired and will need to be resubmitted to the placement agency.

Important: There is no feasible way for AAA PIA to know the following:

When a referral from a placement agency will be made
If at the time of referral, client's documents are current
Changes in document requirements of placement agency, another state or another country

It is the sole responsibility of the adoptive applicant to contact their placement agency prior to the one-year anniversary of the documents to determine whether or not updated documents need to be submitted by the adoptive applicant to the placement agency in order to meet the requirements of the placement agency, the state, or country from which the adoptive applicants are adopting. The adoptive applicant may access AAA PIA's medical and CPS forms to be updated from AAA PIA's website. (Exception: Applicants adopting through a Texas Placement Agency must have certain documents updated every six months.)

CRIMINAL HISTORY FOR ADOPTIVE CLIENTS:

All adoptive applicants must be forthcoming and honest about a criminal charge. If an applicant has ever been fingerprinted (except for a job, a hunting license, or gun permit), the GCIC report will show this as an arrest. It is understood by the adoptive applicants, that no matter what they have been told by a police officer or an attorney, if they were ever fingerprinted in a law enforcement matter, this information will show up on a GBI or FBI check. This includes charges made by the applicant when underage, expunged records, and dropped charges.

Adoptive applicants will be charged a fee of \$200 by AAA PIA for an addendum to the home study should an undisclosed charge surface.

It is understood that if the applicants are pursuing an international adoption, BCIS may hold up the processing of Form I-171 H for six (6) months and that they have the right to deny the I-171 H, if they so choose, for failure to disclose a criminal charge.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT:

AAA Partners in Adoption, Inc., is committed to the philosophy that effective behavior management is based on consistency and effective communication of expectations and consequences. The long-term goal of behavior management is to teach children self-control and self-discipline. The type of behavior management is determined by the age of the child and the child's individual needs and personality. Distraction, reasoning, "time-out" and cause and effect learning techniques are all effective means for teaching a child self-control skills. Corporal punishment is never an appropriate form of discipline.

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The following forms of behavior management shall not be used by a prospective adoptive parent(s):

- Assignment of excessive or unreasonable work tasks
- Denial of meals or hydration
- Denial of sleep
- Denial of shelter, clothing, or essential personal needs
- Denial of essential services
- Verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation
- Manual holds, chemical restraints or mechanical restraints
- Seclusion or confinement of a child in a room or area which may reasonably be expected to cause physical or emotional damage to the child; or
- Seclusion or confinement of a child to a room or area for periods longer than those appropriate to the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup and previous experience, or confinement to a room or area without the supervision or monitoring necessary to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

Children shall not be permitted to participate in the behavior management of other children.

AAA PIA shall require the prospective adoptive parent(s) to report to the agency within 24 hours whenever a child receiving services through the agency requires medical attention as a result of or in connection with the use of a behavior management technique.

AAA PIA shall submit to the Department of Family and Children's Services State Adoption Unit electronically or by facsimile a report within 24 hours, whenever the agency becomes aware of the incident, which results in injury to a child requiring medical treatment beyond first aid that is received by a child as a result of or in connection with any behavior management.

AAA PIA shall take appropriate corrective action when it becomes aware of or observes the use of prohibited forms of behavior management. Documentation of the incident and the corrective action taken by the agency shall be maintained in the case records of the child and family.

Prospective adoptive parent(s) shall be made aware of each child's known or apparent medical and psychological conditions and family history, as evidenced by written acknowledgement of such awareness, to ensure that the prospective adoptive parent(s) have adequate knowledge to deliver safe and healthy care to the child.

FIREARM SAFETY IN THE HOME:

The adoptive applicants must make AAA PIA aware of the existence of all firearms kept in the home. Said firearms must be safely secured in a locked gun case and inaccessible to any minors in the home. This is required prior to the approval of the home as a placement resource for children. The home visit cannot take place until all firearms have been safely secured.

If there are no firearms in the home at the time of the home study, the adoptive applicants must agree to inform AAA PIA if any firearms are to be kept in the home in the future prior to finalization of a domestic adoption or during the post-placement supervisory period.

IMMUNIZATION OF CHILDREN:

AAA PIA requires that all children in the home and children being adopted to be immunized.

PREGNANCY

We agree to notify AAA Partners in Adoption immediately if we become pregnant at any time while the home study is in progress. In that case, we understand that the agency may wish to place our home study on hold until after the birth of our child.

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POLICY ON INFANT SLEEP POSITION:

AAA Partners in Adoption is committed to the reduction of infant deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). To this end we require all of our adoptive families who adopt children under the age of one year to adhere to the following preventive measures and to sign a statement to this effect.

ALWAYS place the baby on his back to sleep.

Place the baby on a firm mattress, remove all pillows, quilts, bumper pads, sheepskins, stuffed toys and other soft items from the crib.

Do not have the infant sleep in the parent’s bed or share their crib with another sibling.

Dress the baby in a sleeping garment instead of covering him with a blanket. Swaddling is o.k.

Do not let babies sleep in a room where smoking is allowed.

The above measures have been provided by the National SIDS Foundation & Infant Death Program Support Center.

I have read, understood, and will comply with the Policies and Procedures of AAA Partners in Adoption, Inc.

Adoptive Father

Adoptive Mother

Adoption Consultant

Date