



Waiting Child Services Program Participation Agreement

This Agreement for Participation in Adoption Center of Illinois at Family Resource Center's Waiting Child Services Program is between _____
("Participants") and Adoption Center of Illinois (ACI)*.

If, after reading this Agreement, prospective adoptive parents decide to enter into ACI's Waiting Child Services Program (herein referred to as "WCS Program" or "this program"), they should initial each page of this Agreement, sign the last page, and return the Agreement to ACI with their Phase II fee. Current fees for this program are set forth in the WCS Program Overview and Fee Structure.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this agreement is to define ACI's Waiting Child Services Program and what services are provided to participating prospective adoptive parents. This agreement outlines basic understandings and serves to detail mutual agreements regarding ACI's WCS Program

This program is only one of the adoption programs offered by ACI. Participation in this program does not prevent Participants from being active in any other adoption program.

This program is designed to help Participants navigate through the adoption bureaucracy in support of their desire to adopt a child or children from the foster care system from any state within the United States, including Illinois. Children adopted through this program have ranged in age from two to sixteen. *ACI is able to offer these services as Family Resource Center, ACI's parent agency, is an Illinois licensed Child Welfare Agency.

Participants are encouraged and advised by ACI to seek and retain their own independent legal counsel to address any questions about adoption and the legal risks related to adoption.

IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM, PARTICIPANTS MUST UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

This program calls for Participants to accept a high degree of contact with other agencies or case managers (These agencies could be public or private; i.e. Vermont Department of Children and Families, Children's Home and Aid, etc.). This may include, but is not limited to, contact by telephone, email, through a webpage, or one or more face-to-face meetings with other agency representatives and children available for adoption.

For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that there is no guarantee that Participants' efforts will be successful, this program has the potential for significant emotional disappointment on the part of Participants as there are no guarantees that a child acceptable to Participants can be identified and/or, if found, will be selected by the child's case worker as an adoptive placement. Participants should only enter this program with an understanding and willingness to assume these risks.

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There are financial risks and emotional risks associated with this program. Participants agree to pay ACI for its services regardless of the ultimate outcome of these efforts. Therefore, it is conceivable that funds will be spent and time consumed without ever having the desired result of adopting a child or children.

ACI cannot and does not guarantee that our joint efforts will be successful or that the information provided about a child by other agencies is reliable. It is for this reason that ACI recommends Participants do their due diligence in gathering information about any potential adoption situation.

ACI has informed Participants that children available for adoption through the various child welfare agencies frequently have significant behavioral, psychological, psychiatric, physical or intellectual challenges and these children may present serious difficulties subsequent to being placed with Participants. ACI has informed Participants that many of these children have significant trauma histories that impacted their brain development, capacity to regulate their emotions, and ability to form healthy attachments. ACI has informed Participants that these children will likely require trauma-informed supportive services to help them process their past and feel safe in Participant's home. ACI has informed Participants that there is usually a honeymoon period after a child has been placed into their home, which may be followed by a testing phase. Participants are required to have completed DCFS PRIDE training and a minimum of 10 hours of adoption-specific training prior to entering into this program. Participants are aware that additional training may be required to ensure they are prepared to support a particular child or children.

Specific services that ACI will provide to Participants include:

1. Initial Consultation with the WCS Program Coordinator: Initial review of Participants' completed Home Study and consultation to fully understand the types of potential adoption situations that would be considered a good 'fit.'
2. Assistance Locating Eligible Children: ACI staff networks and develops relationships with resources in the Illinois foster care system as well as with case workers outside of Illinois. The WCS Program Coordinator works with these adoption professionals to help identify children who may be a good match with Participants. Additionally, the WCS Program Coordinator will support Participants to register for online websites (i.e. AdoptUSKids) that provide information on children available for adoption so they are notified when meeting their preferences are added to the site.
3. Communication with Participants: Calls from Participants will be returned within two business days. Additionally, the WCS Program Coordinator will notify Participants within two business days when they receive updates regarding children that Participants have inquired about. There will be ongoing communication between ACI staff and Participants throughout their involvement in the program.
4. Communication with Placing Agencies: When requested, the WCS Program Coordinator will forward Participants' Home Study and family profile to the caseworker of an identified child or children. Once a child is determined to be a potential match with Participants, the WCS Program Coordinator will serve as the primary liaison to share information about the prospective adoptive family with the child's caseworker and to assist the Participants to learn more about the child or children. The WCS Program Coordinator will serve as the point person in conference calls, group staffings, etc. ACI's Executive Director will be in communication with the sending state/agency to complete a contract for this placement and corresponding services.

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5. Social Work Support and Placement Planning: After a match is confirmed, ACI staff will have ongoing communication with Participants and the child's caseworker to monitor the process, provide support on a practical level, and be available as a sounding board to Participants as they proceed with the process. ACI's Director of Program Development will recommend/require additional training courses to Participants as needed and work with Participants to identify supportive resources for this particular child or children. NOTE: Sending state/placing agency controls the timeline for each step in the placement process.
6. Interstate Placement: Should Participants' efforts lead to the successful placement of a child or children from outside of Illinois, ACI will work diligently to meet the requirements established by the Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children (ICPC). The ACI Home Study Worker will provide monthly post-placement supervision and monitoring visits until the adoption is finalized. NOTE: The process and timeline of each case will be dependent on the circumstances of that particular case.
7. Continuation of Efforts: If the potential adoption of a child or children does not occur, ACI will support the family to understand all of their options. If/When Participants feel ready, ACI will continue to assist them to identify and investigate other potential children waiting for adoption.
8. Continuation of Support: Even after Participants successfully adopt a child or children from the foster care system, they are always welcome to contact ACI for assistance identifying supportive services for the family and/or child or children. Additionally, ACI encourages families to continue to attend educational courses at ACI.

Please note – this is a very general overview of the process. The procedures will vary depending on the state, county, caseworker, recruiter, and particular child. The WCS Program calls for a high level of flexibility, the ability to address the special needs of each child, and the willingness to embrace the unpredictable.

PROGRAM ETHICS & UNDERSTANDINGS

This program is designed to establish a cooperative and harmonious relationship between Participants and agencies that are responsible for children who are waiting to be adopted. Participants understand they should uphold commitments made to a child's caseworker.

Participants are encouraged to advocate for themselves by investigating and obtaining information about waiting children available for adoption.

Prospective Adoptive Parents Deciding to Discontinue Service & Proper Notice: A decision to discontinue service on the part of the Participants must be put in writing and sent to ACI either by letter or email communication. Taking the action described above constitutes "proper notice" to the agency by Participants of their decision to discontinue participation in this program.

Please note that, as in all adoption situations, ACI reserves the right to suspend or discontinue services to any party at any time and for any reason. At its sole discretion, ACI may determine it is not advisable or in a child or children's best interests to continue to facilitate the implementation of an adoption plan.

Communication with ACI Staff: Each prospective adoptive parent brought into this program will be assigned to the WCS Program Coordinator. This Coordinator is distinct from Participants' Home Study Worker and has different responsibilities. Participants understand that they must inform ACI staff immediately about significant changes regarding the health of a child placed through this program (i.e. child needs to be hospitalized, is participating in an outpatient program, etc.) until the adoption has been finalized.

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Participants are advised to keep ideas, suggestions and concerns in writing between regular contacts with their designated Waiting Child Program Coordinator. Participants are also encouraged to communicate with ACI's Executive Director or Director of Program Development regarding any concerns or questions in regard to this program.

It is ACI's expectation that Participants will, even in the face of emotional intensity and raised anxiety, be patient and civil in their communication with ACI.

REQUIREMENTS:

Participants must have completed DCFS PRIDE training, have a valid Home Study, and have an active Illinois Foster Family Home License (FFHL) issued by the state of Illinois to participate in the Waiting Child Services Program.

HOW TO PROCEED:

To confirm understanding of this Agreement, please sign in the space below and initial all pages. Please return the Agreement to Adoption Center of Illinois with the Phase II payment.

You are welcome to contact ACI's Executive Director, Jane Turner, or Teresa Bernu, LCSW, Domestic Program Supervisor, with any questions or concerns.

_____	_____	_____
Signature Prospective Adoptive Parent	Print Name	Date

_____	_____	_____
Signature Prospective Adoptive Parent	Print Name	Date

For Adoption Center of Illinois at Family Resource Center:

Jane B Turner, ACSW
Executive Director

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