
ADOPTION PLACEMENT POLICIES & PROCEDURES (per WAC 388-73-216)

Family Recruitment

Because of the desire of Antioch Adoptions to see the Church body as a wellspring of loving and stable families for children, we seek to encourage the Christian community to be involved in the adoption process. Adoptive families from evangelical churches are recruited through presentations, classes, Sunday school curricula and other means, and will be trained and supported throughout the process and beyond.

Placement Philosophy

No placement will be delayed because of race.

An adoption will not be delayed or denied on the basis of the race, color, or national origin of the adoptive parent or the child involved. However, Antioch Adoptions may consider the cultural or ethnic background of the child and the willingness and/or capacity of prospective adoptive parents to address the needs of a child of a different culture, particularly that of an older child. (This provision shall not apply to or affect the application of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1901 et seq.)

Birthparents will be assisted.

Antioch Adoptions will carefully assess situations that present birth parents that are capable of and willing to successfully fulfill their parental role or can be helped to do so in a timely manner. Assessment of this kind will be made before adoptive placement is pursued. Antioch Adoptions will assist these birth parents through the resources in the Second Step program. For birth parents that are not capable and/or willing to properly fulfill their parental role, voluntary adoptive placement will be pursued with them.

Open Adoption

Antioch Adoptions holds to a philosophy of mutuality when it comes to open adoption. The level of communication between adoptive and birth families, through discussion and weighing of pros and cons is ultimately determined by each party – the adoptive and birth families. In circumstances where Antioch Adoptions feels that continued contact with the child's birth family is in the child's best interest we will evaluate the adoptive family's willingness to have the child maintain contact with members of the child's birth family, and seek to place said child in a home where his or her best interests can be addressed.

In DSHS/DCFS Foster Adopt program, Antioch Adoptions will encourage families to support the communication agreements set up by the court at the

time of a birth parent relinquishment. Antioch Adoptions recruit and evaluate families for placements in the DCFS Foster Adopt program that will provide visits and maintain appropriate contact with the birth parents of the child(ren). Antioch Adoptions will evaluate the adoptive family's willingness to have the child maintain contact with other members of the child's birth family, and seek to place foster children in a home best suited to meet the child's needs.

Child and Family Assessment Criteria

Antioch Adoptions will evaluate potential adoptive parents for a child in relation to the adoptive parents':

- (i) Capacity and readiness for parenthood; and
- (ii) Emotional and physical health; and
- (iii) Ability to meet the physical, social, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of the child.

Antioch Adoptions while considering any racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage needs that might be present of the child being placed, will simultaneously prevent discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin against any of its clients.

Antioch Adoptions will ensure that the child's best interest is met by requiring that a number of factors be taken into consideration when making adoptive placement decisions:

(a) When making a child adoptive placement decision, Antioch Adoptions will emphasize the best interests of the child, taking into account the particular child, parents, extended family, and circumstances. Antioch Adoptions will take into consideration the following factors:

- Relationship of family members to child
- Sibling placement status
- Physical and emotional needs of child
- Age
- Sex
- Any already established ethnic/cultural identity
- Placement background
- Availability of placement resources for timely placement
- Continuity and stability of the child's foster care placement and child's psychological attachment to foster family

(b) Antioch Adoptions will make all adoptive placement decisions on a case-by-case basis to take into account the particular child, adoptive parents, and circumstances.

(c) Antioch Adoptions may not make the decision based solely upon such factors as racial, ethnic, and cultural identity unless it is in the best interest of

the child to be placed, taking into account the particular child, parents, and circumstances. (See WAC 388-73-044 for placement involving an American Indian child.)

(d) We reserve the right to assess a potential adoptive family's existing values and beliefs, financial status, motivations, attitudes, and behavioral issues such as alcohol use, extra-marital relationships, and others. Denial or disqualification for these matters will be openly and honestly shared with you.

Adoptive Applicants Minimum Length of Time in Marriage

Based on biblical and practical principles, as well as current research, Antioch Adoptions holds the belief that a healthy, permanently married mother and father is the ideal foundational situation for children. To this end, every effort will be made to recruit intact, healthily married Christian homes for adoptive placements, giving each child that is intentionally placed the best chance possible to have all that is needed to thrive in every way.

In addition, with this understanding, we strive to develop as adoptive families those couples that have a demonstrated stable marriage. Therefore, the minimum consecutive length of time that a potential adoptive couple must be married is two years.

In addition, for those couples that have experienced prior divorces we require that divorced couples be in their current marriage a minimum of two years plus an additional year for each divorce. For example, if each party has been divorced in the past once then they must demonstrate marital stability by being married four years or if only one party has been divorce twice, then again the couple must again demonstrate four years of marital stability.

Married adoptive applicants will be eligible for the adoption application process after they have been married for a minimum of 2 years. If there is a history of divorce for either or both partners, the minimum is 3 years of marriage.

Single Unmarried Adoptive Applicants

Based on biblical and practical principles, as well as current research, Antioch Adoptions holds the belief that a healthy, permanently married mother and father is the ideal foundational situation for children. To this end, every effort will be made to recruit intact, healthily married Christian homes for adoptive placements, giving each child that is intentionally placed the best chance possible to have all that is needed to thrive in every way.

A single unmarried applicant who approaches Antioch Adoptions with a desire to adopt will be considered for acceptance into the special needs program on a case-by-case basis. Such adoptions shall be exceptions rather than the norm. A single unmarried applicant will not be considered for infant adoption.

Even though we do not believe that a single parent situation should be intentionally created for a child, we do believe that single parents, according to biblical standards, are to be supported, cared for, and empowered to succeed by the Body of Christ. As is required for married applicants, the following is a non-exhaustive list of criteria required for unmarried applicants:

- (1) Demonstrated ability to provide for the spiritual, emotional, physical, relational, financial, and time needs of a child. This can be demonstrated through activity as a foster care provider, past experience such as having parented other children, occupational experience, child mentorship or other involvement.
- (2) Demonstrated ability to provide a positive, consistent, and influential mother *and* father figure in the child's life.
- (3) Demonstrated stability in personal relationships.
- (4) Demonstrated purity (according to Biblical standards) in personal relationships.
- (5) Demonstrated outside support system for both the applicant and the child.
- (6) Other criteria that is required of married applicants, as applicable.

Denial or Disqualification Criteria

We at Antioch Adoptions have as our base Christ and his teachings. We seek guidance through prayer and Biblical scriptures. We support open honesty and promote personal integrity in our mission. If at any point in the adoption process we believe or learn that a family has in any way mislead, or omitted information this will serve as immediate disqualification from our program.

Automatic denial and disqualification would occur for issues of:

- Substance abuse/addiction
- Severe and untreated mental health issues
- Prior loss of parental rights
- Domestic violence
- Founded allegations of child abuse and neglect
- Anti-stalking orders
- Felony criminal convictions
- History of pedophilia
- Arrests for any sexual misconduct
- Any circumstance for denial mandated by Washington State Law

Failure to disclose and discuss history of bankruptcy, domestic violence, substance abuse treatment, civil litigation in progress, restraining orders or criminal arrests,

misdemeanor, DUI, arrests for possession of illegal substances even if there is deferred sentencing, any assault convictions, juvenile justice history, loss of parental custody or visitation rights will also disqualify an application from the program.

DISQUALIFICATION PROCEDURE:

If the decision has been made to disqualify a family from continuing with our program, the following procedure will be followed:

- (1) The recommendation to disqualify will be discussed with the team of adoption caseworkers who will grant additional perspective on the issue.
- (2) If disqualification is recommended, the Director will review recommendation.
- (3) The family will be notified verbally and in writing and then given an opportunity to discuss the concern or to voluntarily withdraw.
- (4) If disqualification is still necessary, the family will be given written notification of the disqualified status and the reasons for it.
- (5) Assistance for the family with a continued adoption attempt will depend on the disqualification circumstances:
 - a. If disqualification is for reasons of internal ANTIOCH ADOPTIONS policy, the family will be referred to another adoption agency, organization, or attorney.
 - b. If disqualification is based on a breach of external state or federal adoption policy, the family will not be given a referral, but may purchase their home study (if already completed). Families will be notified that if they are disqualified for these reasons, their home study will not be valid with other agencies, but they do have the right to purchase a copy.

Every effort will be made to assess qualification status as early in the process as is possible. The Board of Directors will be notified of any families that are going to be asked to withdraw or who will be disqualified, and will be notified of the reasons for the disqualification.

Prior Substance Abuse or Addiction

Antioch Adoptions recognizes the inherent potential for individuals to overcome, recover, and reclaim their life and lifestyle, which is free from a past or prior history of substance abuse or addiction. Antioch Adoptions will reserve the right to withdraw on application any individual with current evidence, past history or arrest record, which illustrates abuse of, or addiction to alcohol, drugs, controlled or uncontrolled substances.

It is because alcohol and drugs have the ability to de-stabilize and influence the health, safety, and well-being of a child that we make this policy. However, each individual's personal situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. At a minimum, any individual with a history of abuse/addiction will have to demonstrate five years of sobriety and a current clean and sober lifestyle. Because relapse is a part of recovery, individuals will have to be able to demonstrate an active recovery program either through participation with AA or NA or another like abstinence support group. In addition, they may be required to have a current drug and alcohol assessment.

In summary, because denial plays a large part in the addiction abuse process, Antioch Adoptions reserves the right to deny or withdraw any family or individual from the program if they at anytime in the adoption process, demonstrate a problem, behavior or event which may indicate substance use or abuse issues which may impact the health, safety, welfare and well being of a child or in anyway destabilize the families ability to function.

Issues of Substance Abuse or Addition, Felony Convictions, or Other Disqualifying Conditions

Antioch Adoptions recognizes the inherent potential for individuals to overcome, recover, and reclaim their life and lifestyle, which is free from a past or prior history of disqualifying conditions. Antioch Adoptions strives to develop strong, stable, and healthy functioning families who are able and willing to meet the needs of a child(ren) long term. However, each individual's personal situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Specific cases or situations may go forward after the following conditions have been met:

- Family and Antioch Adoptions staff have consulted with Antioch Adoptions attorney regarding the disqualifying nature of the indecent, event or condition. The family will pay this expense at the time the consultation takes place.
- If on the advise of our attorney they believe the family remains a potential adoptive family, Antioch Adoptions will go forward to train and homestudy this family, with the provision that their homestudy must then be submitted by the attorney to the court for 'pre-approval' prior to any search for placement. The family will pay/retain the attorney, and pay all expenses prior to the attorney going forward.
- Court approval of the homestudy, Pre-placement Report, does not secure anything but an action of pre approval, the family may still be 'unlicenseable to foster' and may not be chosen as an adoptive placement by other parties.

Antioch Adoptions will still reserve the right to withdraw any individual or family from the agency if the identified situation becomes problematic, or an impediment to adoption. This policy is in place to assist, on those very few occasions, families who wish to adopt and have a current or past event or condition of a disqualifying nature.

Mental Health Diagnosis, Past History and Current Stability

Antioch Adoptions recognizes the inherent potential for individuals to overcome, recover, and stabilize their life and function in a healthy manner with a current or prior mental health diagnosis. Antioch Adoptions strives to develop strong, stable, and healthy functioning families who are able and willing to meet the needs of a child(ren) long term.

It is because mental health conditions have the ability to de-stabilize and influence the health, safety, and well-being of a child that we make this policy. However, each individual's personal situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

At a minimum, any individual with a history of a mental health diagnosis will have to provide documentation from a therapist or healthcare provider of current stability and ability to undertake the rigors and stresses of parenting. Because reoccurrence of symptoms can be a part of a mental health diagnosis, individuals will have to be able to demonstrate or report an active plan to maintain their current good mental health.

They may also be required to have a current assessment or psychological evaluation.

However, Antioch Adoptions reserves the right to deny or withdraw any family or individual from the program if they at anytime in the adoption process, demonstrate a problem, behavior or event which may indicate that due to their mental health condition the health, safety, welfare and well being of a child or in anyway destabilize the families ability to function.

Resolution of Issues

We understand that at times conflict, disagreement, or misunderstandings will arise over our professional decisions or practice. If a family has a concern or an issue to discuss, they can seek resolution or reconciliation through our ministry Director who will consult with Antioch Adoptions Board of Directors when needed.

PROCEDURE:

- All Adoption Home study denials and disqualification from our program will automatically be reviewed by the Executive Director, and reported to the Board of Directors.
- If a family disagrees with a decision made, they may complete a "Resolution of Issues Form" which will be reviewed by the Executive Director.
- All families will be made aware that they have the right to appeal the decision before the Board of Directors if they so choose.
- All families interested in appealing a decision made by the adoption staff will be made aware that they have the right to obtain and present a written outside recommendation to be reviewed by the board of directors along with the Resolution of Issues form.

Adoption Disclosure Policy

Antioch Adoptions will transmit to the adoptive parent or parents at time of the child's placement a report containing all available medical, social, and psychological information about the child and the child's birth parents. Antioch Adoptions' report will not contain information that might identify the birth parents. The adoptive parent or parents will sign one copy of the report, signifying receipt of the information. Antioch Adoptions will retain this signed copy in the child's permanent record.

Confidentiality Policy

Trust and the ability to form trusting relationships with others serve as a cornerstone for our interactions with you and all of our families. Confidentiality is vital to maintaining trust. Initially families will be sharing information and personal history with us. They will also share personal experiences, financial information, medical and marital history. Outside of circumstances by which we are required by law to break confidentiality, we will in all cases keep this information confidential and share it with only those whom the family has provided a release empowering us to do so.

Transfer of Adoptive Home study to a New Agency

Antioch Adoptions does not assess fees for services provided to families in the ministry. However, if you leave the ministry, seeking adoptive services elsewhere, any requests for records, pre-placement reports etc. will be available only on a fee for service basis. Generally, in fee for service adoptions, assessments are charged. Each fee is concurrent. (For example if you wish to take your pre-placement elsewhere you will pay Antioch Adoption \$2,000.) Please keep in mind these fees do not reflect the actual cost per adoption, but what we feel is reasonable to charge a family who chooses to leave the ministry and take the work they have completed at that point.

Application/Administration fees	\$500.00
Training and class fees	\$500.00
Pre Placement report fee	\$1000.00
Placement fee	\$500.00
Post Placement report and service fee	\$1000.00
Legal fees \$250.00/hour	variable, approximately

Changes in Approach to Adoption

There are three main approaches to adoption: Independent, Private Organization/Agency, and State adoptions. **Independent adoption** is a placement process that is done with the assistance of an attorney only. The attorney takes care of basic paperwork and filings, and may assist in the child matching process, however, the responsibility of locating a child available for adoption lies mostly in the hands of the family. Families are encouraged to be proactive about their desire to adopt and advertise themselves in as many places as possible once an independent social worker court approved to do home studies has approved the home study. **Private adoptions** are done through an organization or an agency that provides private social workers who assist with training, preparation, home study approval, and child

matching / post placement services. Families are encouraged to engage themselves in the preparation and child selection process through the organization. **State adoption** is the adoption of foster/waiting children. The process of training, preparation, home study approvals and child matching / post-placement services are often completed through state adoption offices, but may also be completed by private organizations.

Families who choose to work with Antioch Adoptions have chosen to work with a **private organization**. If at any point, a family would like to change their approach to adoption, they may do so at any time. However, different approaches -- such as an *independent* approach and a *private* approach with Antioch Adoptions -- cannot be taken simultaneously. If a family chooses to approach adoption independently, the record will be transferred to their desired attorney with a transfer fee from the previous outline of fees.

If the family chooses an independent adoption and asks Antioch Adoptions to provide the post placement report, Antioch Adoptions will assess a fee for this service at the same rate as a transfer of agency. Antioch Adoptions will not be responsible for the services to the birth parent, the medical history, or the social history of the birth parent in this independent adoption. The family will need to access this information from the birth parent directly or through their attorney contacting the birth parent. The family will need to access the birth and labor records through their attorney. Antioch Adoptions will be responsible for writing the post placement report once this information is secured by the family or their lawyer.

Foster Care

Antioch Adoptions does not license homes for foster care nor do we take custody of any children. However, we do encourage families who are interested in foster care to seek such licensing through our Ministry Partners, and to that end will provide appropriate referrals.

PROCEDURE: For parents who wish to pursue a broader search for children, Antioch Adoptions will facilitate a foster care to adoption ("foster-adopt") process as another child-search option.

- (1) Families interested in the foster-adopt process will be directed to their local Olive Crest office, or DLR (Division of Licensed Resources), or other approved private agency, to apply for and complete the foster-care licensing program. Families will not make their own referral, rather the Placement Coordinator will make a referral once the homestudy process is complete.
- (2) When both certifications (homestudy and foster license) are complete, these families will be prepared for children in the custody of the state that may be in process of parental rights termination, or aggravated circumstances cases. These placements are chosen and presented to Olive Crest, other private agency, or DLR for placement by Antioch Adoptions. These placements will be monitored by Antioch Adoptions, the private foster care agency, and DCFS.

- (3) Antioch Adoptions will facilitate and screen for these families and act as guides to early permanency (adoption) once the children have become legally free, at which time Antioch Adoptions will complete the adoption and finalization.

Post-Placement Finalization and Services

Antioch Adoptions will visit the home of all adoptive placements at least once in the first 10 days of placement and an additional face-to-face visit each 30-66 day period thereafter until the adoption is finalized. Upon filing of the petition for adoption, Antioch Adoptions will make recommendation to the court on the advisability of finalizing the adoption.

Antioch Adoptions will be available for consultation with the adoptive family after finalization of the adoption.

Antioch Adoptions will maintain a permanent, sealed record of each person for whom it has accepted permanent custody. This record will contain all available identifying legal, medical, and social information. Access to the identifying information will not be given without a court or legislative order if the person has been adopted. In the event Antioch Adoptions closes, Antioch Adoptions will make arrangements for the permanent retention of these records and will inform the Division of Children and Family Services Adoption Program Manager.

Relative Placements

Relative placement is the adoption of a child into the family of a relative (ex: grandparents adopting their grandson, or a couple adopting their nephew). Antioch Adoptions does not provide relative placement services. However, we do minister to family members who are considering adoption or custodial guardianship of a family member on a case-by-case basis, helping them to decide on the best course of action for the child, and providing appropriate resources or referrals.

Post Adoption

Following the finalization of an adoption, Antioch Adoptions will schedule a Post Adoption interview. The meeting will cover a review of the importance of storing the decree, the SS number, and adoption subsidy contact information if applicable. By Washington State Law, all adoption records of the courts and agencies are sealed following an adoption.

Antioch Adoptions recommends that families close their foster licenses following a finalization if they are not going to be actively serving foster children. Families can continue to provide respite care to support other foster families within their private agency. Families keeping their foster license open are required to meet the minimum training standard as outlined by DLR or their private foster agency. The family's private foster care agency will be notified of the family's decision to either close their license or remain open for respite care.

Families are encouraged to support their foster care agency by volunteering and helping to provide the staffing necessary for a private foster agency to host monthly foster family meetings.

Adoption Homestudy Updates

Pre-placement or Adoption Homestudies are legal for two years. An update is required every two years in order to finalize an adoption, regardless if the family already has placement or not. Antioch Adoptions provides adoption homestudy updates for families already approved by Antioch Adoptions. The family will need to fill out an Update Application, get new medical reports, and fill out new background checks.

An update is required for any family seeking a new placement following the finalization of an adoption for another child or children. The family must contact Antioch Adoptions, apply for an update, and have a completed and approved updated report before seeking a new placement. If a family is doing respite care and becomes interested in the adoption of a child, or if a birth of a sibling is a placement option, Antioch Adoptions will provide services based on an update application and approved update report.

Cost of Services

Although it is a service with expenses, Antioch Adoptions is a service without charge to our families in Washington State. To assist us in our ongoing adoption mission, we will ask for assistance from adopting families for perpetuation of the ministry and for the benefit of other families, in any or all of the following ways:

Donations toward the general mission of Antioch Adoptions:

Antioch Adoptions will cover all costs for each of our families. However, families may desire to give toward the perpetuation of the general mission monthly, annually, or through in-kind gifts such as stocks, property, or living wills.

Donations toward a Family's adoption costs:

It may be beneficial to take advantage of the federal adoption tax credit; therefore, families may choose to give toward the adoption costs incurred by Antioch Adoptions for their own adoption process. The incurred costs will be outlined in writing after the placement of the child. Each family should consult their tax attorney or C.P.A. for details of income limits etc. (*Federal Adoption Tax Credit: Any monies that are given toward specific adoption costs can be recovered in each family's personal taxes up to \$5000 reimbursable in 2001 taxes, \$10,000 in 2002 taxes. If in a certain income bracket, this may be helpful for a family's personal tax outcome.*)

Gifts of Skills, Time, or Services:

Families who have professional skills may also donate their time or services to the ministry, as may families who are willing to share their testimony in churches or for ANTIOCH ADOPTIONS events.

Families may choose to donate time to foster children by volunteering for a private foster agency. Antioch Adoptions can recommend Christian agencies serving foster children. Volunteer time includes providing child supervision during the monthly foster family meetings or assisting NWAE to host their bi-annual Kids Fest.

Reimbursement for Non-Antioch Adoptions Services:

Antioch Adoptions is a donation-based ministry, not a foundation. We do not reimburse for any services obtained prior to coming to Antioch Adoptions, or services obtained outside of Antioch Adoptions, unless otherwise specifically stated in writing.

Responding to Subpoenas and Other Official Requests

Upon receipt of a subpoena or other official request for client information, Antioch Adoptions will provide reasonable cooperation with civil authorities while also taking all appropriate steps to protect the interests of the client and the ministry. Any such subpoenas or requests will be handled in accordance with the following procedure:

1. Any subpoena or official request for client information received by the ministry or its staff will be promptly brought to the attention of the Director.
2. The client whose information has been requested will be notified of the request as soon as reasonably possible.
3. The subpoena or request will be submitted to the ministry's local counsel for review to verify that the subpoena or request has been validly issued and to explore whether there are any proper grounds for the ministry to oppose any such subpoena or request.
4. In the absence of any opposition to the subpoena or request, the Director will oversee the gathering of all documents and other information necessary to respond. Only documents and information that are specifically responsive to the subpoena or request will be gathered and produced.
5. The Director will serve as the ministry representative in the event that the subpoena or request requires a representative to appear at a deposition or other proceeding in connection with the production of any such documents or information.
6. To the extent permitted by court rules, the Director will seek reimbursement of the reasonable expenses incurred in gathering and reproducing any such documents and information. No such reimbursement will be requested if the information has been produced in response to a subpoena or other request from a client.

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