



# Adoptions: Well Planned and Well Supported

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# Adoption



- Building families via adoption
- Immense responsibility of shaping other's futures
- Child welfare adoptions come with an element of trauma that most often include at a minimum internal prevailing feelings of discomfort for the child
- Many adoptions succeed or fail based on the way they start, the support we provide, and procedures we maintain
- Parent-led-attachment model, targeted at getting off to a good start
- Self-disclose to build your relationship with the family
- Relationship, relationship, relationship- it all happens within relationships

# Key Features of Adoptive Parent

- Secure or earned secure, nurturing and playful
- Trauma informed
- The Whole-Brain Child informed
- Are physically and emotionally available for family
- Connected to and supported by like minded family, friends and community
- Seek and value support of professional community
- Make time to take breaks and get recharged
- Passionate about advocating for their family/children

# Features of Less Than Secure



- Childhood trauma unresolved
- Distanced or estranged from family of origin
- Failing to maintain longstanding relationships
- Remote living arrangements
- Frequent failed relationships, divorces
- Frequent moves
- Frequent job changes
- Limited social interaction within community

# Attachment Styles Can Change



- Less than secure becomes secure by working through weak or traumatic childhood relationships with caregivers- Earned Secure
- Less than secure learns features for Secure by paring with Secure
- Secure becomes less than secure due to childhood loss, trauma and maltreatment
- Secure becomes less than secure by choices made such as substance abuse and or addiction

# Parent Led Attachment-Forecast Tool



- Designed to focus attention on the parents role in establishing connection to the child
- Recognizes behavioral challenges are a direct result of a harmful past
- Focuses on gaining voice, building trust and disarming fear
- Parent identifies connecting and empowering activities
- Identifies strategies to prevent dysregulation, playful engagement, offering choices, sharing power, saying yes as often as possible
- Avoiding saying no
- Identifies potential challenging behaviors
- Strategies to address misbehavior when they occur-IDEAL
- Activities go into Adoption Plan of Service



# Assessments

- Physical Exam
- Developmental
- Psychological
- CANS
- SRDI
- Any other recommended assessments
- Currency dates on exams per regulations

# Child Factors to consider



- Strength, talents and interests
- History of physical and sexual abuse
- History of neglect or abandonment
- Diagnosis and degree of presenting behaviors
- History of non-family setting placements
- Psychotropic medication(s)
- Place with or away from siblings
- Racial, cultural and religious factors
- Birth order in family of origin and in adoption



# Matching Procedures

- Recruitment of adoptive parents for children
- Review of submitted adoptive parents
- Notice of staffing for lead adoptive parent
- Prepare for staffing
- Staffing for lead adoptive parents
- Lead parent identified
- Notes from staffing to adoptive parent
- Case record review

# Presentation Staffing



- Hosted by CM and Supervisor in the office with CASA, Ad-Litem and caregiver
- HSEGH review presented for the adoptive parent
- Foster Parents, CASA and Ad-Litem add to the conversation
- Adoptive Parent asks questions and interacts with the child's team
- Subsidy support levels provided by CPS
- Discuss how the caregiver can reinforce and support child in between visitations
- Draft a pre-placement schedule near the end of the meeting
- Parent confirms their commitment to the adoption 24 hours following Presentation staffing
- CPS will use the family album to introduce the family to the children prior to the first pre-placement visit
- CPS asks the child if they chose the adoptive parent

# Presentation Staffing



- Parent Factors:
- Are there any significant unanswered questions?
- If significant new information was reported, do you or the parent think the fit is still there?
- What changes does the parent anticipate in their daily routines?
- Do they plan to use FLMA or leave early on in placement to help the child and family settle in?

# Adoption Preparation



## ***6923 Assessing the Child's Readiness***

### **6923.1 Reviewing the Case-Record and Conducting Interviews, CPS February 2017**

- The first step in planning for a child's adoption is assessing the child's readiness to be adopted. To assess the child's readiness, the child's caseworker must:
  - review the child's case record (which includes the birth family's record); and
    - interview;
    - the child;
    - the child's siblings;
    - the child's substitute caregiver;
    - educational, medical, and mental-health professionals who have worked with the child; and
    - when appropriate, other individuals who have significant relationships with the child.

# Adoption Preparation



## **6923.2 Objectives**, CPS February 2017

- The objectives of the caseworker's case-record review and personal interviews are to:
  - verify that the child is legally free for adoption;
  - assess the child's emotional and psychological readiness for adoptive placement;
  - assess the child's needs, and determine what parenting characteristics will meet them;
  - assess the child's need for placement with his siblings;
  - support preparation of the HSEGH report (see [6921](#) Completing the Health, Social, Educational, and Genetic History (HSEGH) Report); and
  - develop information for recruiting adoptive parents.

# Preparing The Child



## **6924 Preparing the Child**, CPS February 2017

- A child's caseworker must begin preparing the child for adoption at least three months before placing the child with a prospective adoptive family. Ordinarily, the child's caregiver helps the caseworker prepare the child.

### **6924.1 Purposes**, CPS February 2017

- The purposes of preparing the child for adoption are to:
  - help the child understand the termination of his parents' parental rights;
  - help the child understand and accept adoption;
  - involve the child in planning for the adoption;
  - help the child adjust to the adoption; and
  - reduce disruption of the adoption.

# Preparing The Child



## **6924.2 Preparation, CPS February 2017**

- The preparation must be based on the child’s needs. It must include helping the child:
  - know and understand himself and his history;
  - understand the difference between biological, foster, and adoptive parents;
  - express hopes and fears about adoption, including fears of disruption;
  - separate from people he is close to, and grieve their loss;
  - form new attachments; and
  - work on his “life book” in order to address issues of separation and attachment.

## **6924.3 Documentation, CPS February 2017**

- The caseworker must document the process of preparing the child in the child’s case record.

## **6925 Professional Assessments, CPS February 2017**

- The caseworker must ensure child has received required professional assessments before adoptive placement. The extent of the professional assessment required depends on the age, history, and special needs of the child being considered. The professional assessment must always include a medical examination by a licensed physician.
- If the child's age is 0 to 18 months old, the professional assessment must also include an evaluation by a professional credentialed in the area appropriate to the child's needs if:
  - There is history of abuse, neglect, or failure to thrive; or
  - The child is physically or mentally disabled or developmentally delayed.
- If the child's age is over 18 months old, the assessment must include an evaluation by a licensed psychiatrist, psychologist, or other appropriately licensed or credentialed professional.
- Required assessments must be current within:
  - 30 days of placement if the child is less than 18 months old;
  - three months of placement if the child is 18 months to 4 years old; and
  - six months of placement if the child is five years old or older.
- CPS must provide any testing that an assessment recommends for the child. CPS must document the assessments and results in the child's record. If professional assessments have been completed since the child was placed in the home, CPS is not required to repeat them.



# 6926 Preparing the Child's Records for Presentation to Prospective Adoptive Parents, CPS February 2017

- Texas Law requires that CPS provide a redacted copy of the case record to the potential adoptive parent before the adoption placement.
- **Case Record Redaction**
- The caseworker must prepare the child's case record for redaction, according to Records Management Group (RMG) protocol, once a family is identified.
- The caseworker must:
  - ensure the file is up to date before redaction;
  - ensure all external documents are scanned; and
  - provide RMG with the adoptive family names.
- For additional information on redaction policies see the Records Management Group Handbook 3000 Disclosure of DFPS Records, and 3200 Request for Records for the Purpose of Adoption

# 6920 Planning for a Child's Adoption

## **6921 Completing the Health, Social, Educational, and Genetic History (HSEGH) Report,** CPS February 2017

- The caseworker must complete a health, social, educational, and genetic history (HSEGH) report before placing a child for adoption with anyone other than the child's stepparent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle by birth, marriage, or prior adoption.

### *Texas Family Code*

- The HSEGH is intended to be a central repository for all known health, social, educational and genetic history of a child for whom CPS is attempting to find an adoptive placement. CPS uses it to provide potential adoptive parents with information about the child's history and needs.
- The child's caseworker must complete an initial HSEGH report no later than 45 days from the date that all parental rights to the child were terminated.
- The caseworker must update the report with new information about the child or the child's placement needs. At a minimum, the caseworker must update the report:
  - every 24 months if an adoptive placement has not occurred; and
  - within three months before the adoptive placement is made.

# 6922 Completing the Adoption Readiness Summary (ARS), CPS February 2017

- Form 2647 Word Document Adoption Readiness Summary (ARS) is designed to assess the child's psychological readiness for adoption. It also contains information about the child's eligibility for adoption assistance.
- The caseworker must include a copy of the ARS in the case record.
- The caseworker must complete the Adoption Readiness Summary within three months before the adoptive placement is made.
- The caseworker's supervisor must sign and date the completed HSEGH report and the ARS.

# Preplacement Visitation



- Designed to build a foundation for relationships to grow on
- We can ensure the parent understands the tremendous amount of anxiety the child is under
- To much too soon can be overwhelming and cause attachment injuries
- Avoid highly stimulating environments such as arcades, theme parks, family reunions, and social gatherings
- Skip Church at least a week unless the child asks to go
- Parents are to build the child's voice, offer choices and share power
- Parent's email summary at the end of each days visit-with photos

# Preplacement Visitation



- Redirect the adoptive parent if they get off track- playful engagement
- Too many new people is very problematic
- Disarming fear and building trust and making connection is the goal
- Correcting strategies IDEAL Response
- Golden opportunity- the child's first major dysregulation
- Parents apologies- repairing relationship when mistakes are made
- Re-dos and do-overs
- Help the child be an expert- their local park
- Too much too soon = emotional dysregulation = maladaptive behaviors = attachment injuries=100% of the time

# Preplacement Visitation



- On the child's initiative
- At a pace comfortable with the child's age and developmental level
- Adjustments along the way
- It's always easier to schedule more visits rather than to adding more if needed
- Ice breaker games on the developmental level of they child
- Uno, tick-tack-toe, jacks, pick up sticks,
- Some photos on each visit, don't overdo it
- Transition gift
- Album for each child- they keep with them
- Best time for placement

# Preplacement Visitation



- First visit- ADO CM attends
  - At foster home for a couple hours
  - Introductions
  - Review Album- give photo to keep
  - Have them show you their room and their favorite toys
  - Use activity book to learn the child's interests
  - Play simple ice breaker game
  - Keep topics low on an emotional level
  - Take photos but don't over do it, ask for permission, have them take some
  - After an hour or so go outside and play in the yard
  - Physical activity burns off anxiety
  - Ask what safe touch they would like-high five, hug, pat on back
  - After adoptive parent leaves the social worker processes the visit with the child

# Preplacement Visitation



- Second visit
  - Starts at foster home-allow a little acclimating time
  - 3 to 4 hours close proximity- neighborhood park first then meal
  - Continue to encourage the child to use their voice
  - Begin sharing power and offering choices
  - Let the child be the expert in something of their choosing
  - Game of kick ball, hike and bike trail, playground
  - Integrate children already in the family
  - Connecting activities
  - Let the child be the expert on what to do for lunch
  - Ask about favorite and least favorite foods



# Preplacement Visitation



- Third visit
  - Pick up at foster home- each time ask the foster parents how the child seems to be managing the visitation process
  - Duration- most of the day
  - Accommodations for naps, snacks, and meals
  - One-on-one time
  - Schedule in some down time, play calming music in the background
  - Children's museum
  - Connecting activities

# Preplacement Visitation



- Fourth visit
  - All day visit at adoptive home- give the child a tour of the entire home and yard
  - Plan the day to be home-based
  - Plan, shop, and prepare a meal
  - Arts and crafts activity- how's your motor running
  - Physical activity
  - Some down time, play calming music in the background
  - Keep stimulation levels low
  - Photos from previous pre-placement visit on wall- on night stand
  - Connecting activities

# Preplacement Visitation



- Fifth visit- ADO CM home visit
  - Weekend visit at adoptive home- first overnight activities
  - Plan the day to be home-based
  - Plan, shop, and prepare a meal
  - Drive through tour of community, school, park, church, Pediatrician office
  - Physical activity
  - Some down time, play calming music in the background
  - Keep stimulation levels low
  - Connecting activities

# Preplacement Visitation



- Sixth visit
  - Weekend visit at adoptive home
  - Plan the day to be home-based
  - Walk the child around school and church
  - Arts and crafts activity
  - Physical activity
  - Then some down time, play calming music in the background
  - Keep stimulation levels low
  - Connecting activities

# First Overnight- Giving Voice



- Normally on a weekend- lots of free time to spend in and around the home
- No new people
- Much like a quarantine
- Meal planning, shopping, and preparation as a family activity- giving child their voice in their new home
- Younger children can stir, cut tube cookies, peel banana's for fruit salad
- Make setting the table a fun activity- let them be an expert
- Do some research on YouTube- how to set a table
- Let them select their family chore- relate it to helping the family run well

# First Overnight- Disarming Fear



- Fun games, board and video like Wii tennis, bowling
- Make something in arts and crafts that can commemorate their first night with the family
- Ask the child what they need to feel safe
- Ask what you can do to help them feel
- safe- show locking door or setting alarm
- Do they need a flash light, night light, soothing music
- Would they feel more comfortable with the door open
- Do they prefer to share a room
- Make a plan if they wake up afraid or can't get back to sleep
- Does the child need snack items to keep with them

# First Overnight- Building Trust



- Playful engagement
- Go over house rules for respecting boundaries and privacy
- Go over no physical discipline and Rules of The House
- Clarify bedtime routines
- Ask about their normal night time routine
- Determine where they need parent's assistance
- Let them pick 2 bedtime stories-one from each parent
- Show them how to use the monitor to call you
- Practice having them call for help, let them time the response time

# Post Placement Support to Family

- Available and easy to communicate with- in person, by phone, text and email
- Kind, nurturing and playful
- Trauma informed
- The Whole-Brain Child informed
- Physically and emotionally available for family
- Connected to and supported by knowledgeable adoption professionals
- Seek and value support of professional community
- Make time to take breaks and get recharged
- Passionate about advocating for their family/children