



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Volume:	IV	Out of Home Placement	
Chapter:	C	Adoption	12-27-2011
Subchapter:	1	General	
Issuance:	900	Adoption Registry Services to Adoptees and Their Families and Open Adoption	

Purpose 12-27-2011

CP&P-IV-C-1-900 describes:

- The CP&P Adoption Registry;
- Policies and procedures that must be followed for:
 - The release of non-identifying and identifying information regarding birth family members and the adoptive family, and
 - Requests for searches and contact with birth family members by adult adoptees and adoptive parents of a minor adopted child; and
- Forms that are used for the purposes noted above.

Authority 12-27-2011

- N.J.S.A. 9:3-52, Records of Proceedings; Filing Under Seal; Inspection; Change of Birth Record
- N.J.A.C. 3A:22, Requirements for DYFS Adoptions
- N.J.A.C. 3A:50, Manual of Requirements for Adoption Agencies
- N.J.A.C. 3A:50-5.9, Post-adoption services
- N.J.A.C. 3A:21-3.2, Additional procedures

- N.J.A.C. 3A:3-2.5, Adult adoptee

Definitions 12-27-2011

"Adoption Registry" or "Registry" means a Central Office Unit within the Office of Adoption Operations that offers services to adoptees whose adoptions were handled by CP&P or one of its predecessor agencies, and to the birth and adoptive families of these adoptees, by:

- Storing limited information about birth parents and other family members;
- Providing the adult adoptee or the adoptive parents of a minor adoptee with non-identifying information regarding the birth family and the circumstances surrounding the adoption;
- Acting as the broker for adoptees for contacts with birth family members; and
- Serving as a place for the birth parents to maintain their requests for contact with adoptees.

All requests for information from the adoption record are channeled through the Adoption Registry.

See [CP&P-IV-C-1-100](#), Definitions (Adoption Registry).

"Birth Family Member" means the birth mother, birth father, siblings, an aunt or uncle, and a grandparent. "Birth parent" and "birth family member" are used interchangeably throughout this policy.

Release of Information on Finalized Adoptions 12-27-2011

All records and information relating to the adoption proceedings are "sealed" and must be treated as such pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:3-52. All identifying information given to CP&P staff is confidential and is not shared outside the Division without consultation from the Office of Legal Affairs. If necessary, the Office of Legal Affairs seeks advice from the Attorney General.

Because of the statutory seal on the court records in an adoption, as mandated in N.J.S.A. 9:3-52, and the policy of confidentiality, CP&P responds to all requests for information from the child's adoption record in accordance with the parameters established by law.

Since CP&P and its various units are one entity, information from the adoption record may be shared by the Registry with any Local Office that becomes involved in providing services to the child, his or her siblings, and the birth family or adoptive family.

At no time is identifying information about the adoptive family shared outside of CP&P without the express written consent of the adoptive family.

Information Provided to Adoptive Parents and Adult Adoptees 12-27-2011

Adult adoptees are entitled to receive, in writing, a summary compiled by Registry staff of all available information on the characteristics and background of the adoptee and the adoptee's birth family, except:

- Information identifying the adoptee's birth family; and
- Information that may enable the adult adoptee to determine the location of the birth family.

Adoptive parents may, at any time, request available information on their adopted child. The request must be made in writing. The Adoption Registry staff shares the information, also in writing, with the same exceptions noted above. If the adoptive family prefers to receive and discuss the material in a personal interview, either Adoption Registry or the appropriate Local Office staff arranges a meeting.

Staff share the information with the minor adoptee only with the adoptive parents' permission.

If the minor wants to search for a particular individual in the birth family, the adoptive parent(s) may make a request in writing to the Adoption Registry. The Registry staff then conducts the search for the birth family member.

The adult adoptee or adoptive parent of a minor child complete the CP&P Form [14-206B](#), Adoption Registry Application (Adult Adoptee/Minor Child), to request a non-identifying summary of facts regarding an adoption and for a search for the birth family member. See CP&P [Form 14-206A and B](#), Adoption Registry Cover Letter and Application (Adult Adoptee/Minor Child), and their instructions, located in the on-line Forms Manual.

Registry staff obtains the consent, in writing, of the birth family member or the parent of a minor sibling, before identifying information is disclosed to the adult adoptee.

Registry staff sends the CP&P [Form 14-207A](#) and B, Birth Family Search Cover Letter and Adoption Registry Release (Birth Family Member), requesting that the birth family member:

- Indicate on the Adoption Registry Release (Birth Family Member) whether he or she is willing to have contact with an adult adoptee or adoptive parent of a minor;

- Identify the specific level of contact he or she prefers, if contact is desired; and
- Provide any medical or other significant information he or she is willing to share.

The CP&P Form [14-207A](#) also advises the birth parent that, if a response is not received by the Registry, staff may reach out to other relatives. The forms and instructions are located in the on-line Forms Manual.

If, in the opinion of the Registry staff, records indicate that the health, whereabouts, or any other factor regarding the individual being sought may be too disturbing to the minor adoptee, he or she discusses the information with the adoptive parents and makes a decision jointly with them about continuing the search.

Note: CP&P case records are not released in response to requests for birth family information.

Authorization for Release of Identifying Information about the Birth Family 12-27-2011

The Registry is a resource through which members of an adopted child's birth family can request that information about themselves be released to the adult adoptee when an inquiry is made. Whenever parental rights are being relinquished or terminated, the child's Worker actively pursues both parents' willingness to be registered with the Registry. See the CP&P Forms [14-205A and B](#), Adoption Registry Cover Letter and Application, and Adoption Registry Release (Birth Family), and their instructions located in the on-line Forms Manual.

The Adoption Registry maintains a record of those family members who have completed and signed a CP&P Form [14-205B](#) which includes the Adoption Registry Application, and Adoption Registry Release, permitting the release of identifying information to the adult adoptee upon his or her written request. Because of the importance of this information for many adoptees, Adoption Registry staff encourages the birth parents to complete and sign the CP&P [Form 14-205B](#).

Registry staff also encourages the birth parents to advise the Registry of any change in address or contact information. Staff asks them to keep the Registry informed of other changes in their lives and families, and new developments which may be significant to the adoptee, including health information. See [CP&P-IV-C-1-400](#), Parent Engagement.

Any member of the birth family may register at any time after the adoption has been finalized, and may add information to the Registry at any time, by sending letters or cards, or updating contact information. This information is filed by the Registry for release to the adoptee when he or she reaches the age of majority and requests the

information. Adoptive parents of a minor adoptee may also request release of this information to them by completing CP&P Form [14-206B](#).

Requests for Information on Birth Parents/Birth Family 12-27-2011

The adult adoptee has certain rights to non-identifying information about his or her birth family. CP&P offers as much assistance as possible to the adult adoptee, while, at the same time, applying adequate safeguards to minimize the possibility of this creating difficulty for the adoptive parents. The confidentiality and privacy rights of the birth parents must also be maintained.

Adult adoptees make written requests for information and searches for birth family members through the Adoption Registry. See CP&P Forms [14-206A and B](#) and [14-207A and B](#). If such requests are received by the Local Office, forward the request to the Adoption Registry.

Requests from Adults Who Were Adopted Through CP&P 12-27-2011

If it can be verified that a person claiming to be an adult adoptee was adopted through CP&P or one of its predecessor agencies, and a CP&P Form [14-205B](#), including the Adoption Registry Application and Adoption Registry Release, was completed and signed by a member of the adoptee's birth family consenting to the release of his or her name and address to the adult adoptee, Adoption Registry staff provides this information to the adult adoptee upon written request. In all such instances the Adoption Registry staff attempts to notify the birth family member first, prior to releasing the identifying information, to confirm that the consent is still valid.

If the record states that the person was adopted through CP&P, but the record does not contain a signed CP&P Form [14-205B](#) from the birth parent consenting to the release of identifying information to the adult adoptee, the Registry staff attempts to locate the birth parent and requests that he or she complete the CP&P Form [14-207B](#) to determine his or her current interest in establishing contact with the adult adoptee. If the birth parent:

- Is located and desires contact with the adult adoptee, the Registry staff facilitates the contact through whatever means are agreeable to both parties after receiving written confirmation of the agreement to such contact from both parties; or
- Cannot be located, or, upon being located, does not agree to establish contact with the adult adoptee, the Registry staff informs the adult adoptee of the outcome of the search efforts, and offers resources to the adoptee, as requested or deemed appropriate, such as petitions to the court for the release of identifying information, or providing information about support groups.

If the adult adoptee requests non-identifying background information about the birth family, but does not want to establish contact, that information - to the extent that it is available in the record - is shared with the adult adoptee in a written summary format prepared by Registry staff.

If the adult adoptee has requested a search for his or her birth family and has not previously received non-identifying information, or is not otherwise aware of the circumstances of his or her adoption, the Registry staff generally encourages him or her to obtain and review this information prior to searching for the birth family, particularly in instances where the nature of the circumstances may affect his or her decision to search, or when the search may have a negative impact on the adult adoptee.

Requests from Adults Who Were Adopted Independently or Through Private Adoption Agencies 12-27-2011

The Registry frequently receives calls regarding adoptions that did not occur through the Division of Child Protection and Permanency or one of its predecessor agencies, but were processed through a private adoption agency or were otherwise privately arranged.

Registry staff handles these requests as follows:

- In the case of a private agency adoption, assist the caller, to the extent they are able, in identifying the agency that handled the adoption, and advise the caller to contact that agency, if it is still in operation.
- In cases where the agency that handled the adoption is no longer in operation, advise the caller to contact the surrogate court in the county where the adoption was finalized.
- If Registry staff has knowledge that the records of a closed agency are now held by another agency, staff provide the caller with the appropriate agency to contact.

Note: CP&P is in possession of some records from Spaulding for Children, an agency that no longer exists. Registry staff can provide services to those adopted through that agency.

Adoption Complaint Investigations (ACI) 12-27-2011

Up until the early 1980's CP&P, or one of its predecessor agencies, often acted as "next of friend" to the courts in cases of children placed privately in adoptive homes. CP&P conducted an Adoption Complaint Investigation (ACI) of the prospective adoptive parents and/or provided supervision of the child for a period of at least six months before the adoption could be finalized. This process assured the courts that the child

was being adequately cared for by caregivers who had not been previously studied by an adoption agency.

CP&P submitted written reports to the surrogate court. CP&P maintained a master card where the ACI was recorded, but otherwise did not retain a case recording of the adoption or information about the adoptee's birth family. See [CP&P-IV-C-10-300](#), Adoption Complaint Investigations.

In instances of ACI adoptions, the Registry is not able to provide search services to the adult adoptee, unless otherwise ordered to do so by the surrogate court, and is provided with sufficient identifying information to conduct the search. Registry staff then follows the same protocol for conducting an ACI search as it does for all CP&P cases.

If the birth family member cannot be located or refuses contact, Registry staff provide this information to the surrogate court for its use in deciding whether to release further information to the adult adoptee.

Requests from Adoptive Parents to Locate Siblings of their Adopted Children 12-27-2011

The Registry staff attempts to locate the sibling(s) of an adopted minor child after receiving a written request from the adoptive parents. See CP&P Form [14-206B](#). If the sibling being sought is a minor adoptee, the Registry staff contacts his or her adoptive parents, who have the right to accept or reject any direct contact. A written agreement from the adoptive parents of the minor sibling allows the Registry staff to facilitate contact in the manner agreed upon by both parties.

If the sibling being sought is not adopted, the adoptive parents are so advised, and told that there is a likelihood that the birth parents may also be located during the search process. The Registry staff and the adoptive parents decide, jointly, whether to continue the search, considering the impact that knowledge of, or contact with, the birth parents is likely to have on the adoptee, and the adoptive parents' ability and willingness to deal with such contact if it was to occur.

If the sibling being sought is in a CP&P resource family home, the Registry staff contacts the sibling's Worker. The Registry staff discusses with the Worker the current situation of the sibling and evaluates the impact that contact would have on both children. If the Registry staff and the Worker agree that sibling contact would be beneficial, they meet with the adoptive parent to discuss the situation. See [CP&P-IV-B-2-200](#) and [CP&P-IV-C-10-100](#), Efforts to Promote Placing Siblings Together. The decision regarding whether to facilitate contact between siblings is made by the adoptive parent.

CP&P does not disclose any identifying information regarding a birth family member without the written consent of that birth family member or the legal parents of the minor sibling. See CP&P [Form 14-205A and B](#) and CP&P [Form 14-207A](#) and CP&P [Form 14-](#)

[207B](#). In the absence of written consent, obtain a court order, as prescribed in N.J.S.A. 9:3-52.

Requests from Adult Adoptees to Locate Siblings 12-27-2011

Upon written request of an adult adoptee, the Registry staff attempts to locate his or her siblings. See CP&P Form [14-206A and B](#) and CP&P Form [14-207A and B](#). If the sibling being sought is an adopted minor, the Registry staff contacts the sibling's adoptive parents, who have the right to accept or reject any direct contact. Registry staff obtain the written agreement of both parties to allow the Registry staff to advise each party of the name and address of the other.

- If the sibling being sought contacts the Registry staff and agrees to contact with his or her sibling, the Registry staff facilitates contact in the manner to which both parties agree by written consent.
- If the sibling being sought contacts the Registry staff and does not agree to a meeting, the Registry staff advises the searching sibling of the other's rejection of such contact and that the Registry cannot be of further assistance in the search. If possible, the Registry staff obtains for the case record a written confirmation from the sibling being sought, stating his or her refusal to be contacted by the adult adoptee. See CP&P Form [14-207A and B](#).
- If the sibling being sought is a minor supervised by CP&P, the Registry staff discusses the request with the supervising office, to determine if contact would be in the best interest of the minor sibling. The Registry staff decides whether to facilitate contact.

Registry staff considers the adopted adult's psychological adjustment, age, the previous relationship between the siblings, and other significant factors in the decision-making process. If contact with an adult sibling who was not adopted is being sought, the Registry staff attempts to establish contact with that sibling. However, the adult adoptee is advised that, in the searching process, the possibility exists that the birth parents may be located or involved with the sibling being sought. The adult adoptee is free to decide whether or not to continue the search.

Requests from the Adoptee's Birth Family 12-27-2011

If the birth parent or other members of the adoptee's birth family contacts CP&P, in writing, to secure information about the adoption of the child, the Registry staff:

- Confirms whether or not the child was adopted; and

- May provide a written summary of non-identifying information about the child's adoptive family. Information that may lead the birth family to the identity and/or location of the adoptive family must not be shared.

The Adoption Registry staff sends the CP&P [Form 14-205A and B](#), which contains the Adoption Registry Application and Adoption Registry Release, to the birth family member, if a completed CP&P [14-205B](#) is not on file. Registry staff encourage the birth family member to complete, sign, and return the form to the Adoption Registry with any other pertinent information about the birth family (e.g., the names of additional family members, family medical history, etc.). Staff gives significant medical information to the adoptive parents as it is received from the birth family, toward the adopted child's enhanced health care and health care planning.

The Registry staff advises the birth family member that CP&P will not search for the adoptee on their behalf, but will place the CP&P Form [14-205B](#), along with any other information submitted, in the Adoption Registry file and enter pertinent information into the Automated Registry System, a data base which is restricted to use only by Registry staff. The information will be released by the Registry staff to the adult adoptee upon his or her written request.

Requests to Locate Birth Parents from Adults Who Were Surrendered for Adoption But Never Adopted 12-27-2011

If CP&P records show that the birth parents are aware that their surrendered child was not adopted, the Registry staff shares all available information with the inquirer (i.e., the surrendered child, who is now an adult) after receiving his or her written request. Since there was no adoption, there is no statutory seal prohibiting the release of information.

However, if CP&P records indicate there was no contact with the birth parents following the surrender of the child, and the parents might logically assume that their child had been adopted, the Registry staff initially responds to the request as if it were from an adult adoptee.

- If the birth parents cannot be located after a search by the Registry staff, the Registry staff releases all available information to the inquirer.
- If the birth parents are located, the Registry staff makes the initial contact on behalf of the inquiring person. The Registry staff advises the birth parents that the inquiring person wishes to establish contact, that he or she was never adopted, and that CP&P has no authority to conceal the name and address of the birth parents.

Proof of Identity 12-27-2011

In order to comply with the revised Manual of Standards for Adoption Agencies (N.J.A.C. 3A:50), proof of identity must be obtained from any birth family member, adult

adoptee, or adoptive parent on behalf of an adopted minor, requesting information from the Adoption Registry.

Upon completion of the Registry Application, Adoption Registry staff advise the person that a copy of a valid photo identification is required before any information is released.

Other Forms 12-27-2011

- CP&P [Form 14-205A and B](#), Adoption Registry Cover Letter and Application, and Adoption Registry Release (Birth Family)
- CP&P Form [14-206A and B](#), Adoption Registry Cover Letter and Application (Adult Adoptee/Minor Child)
- CP&P [Form 14-207A and B](#), Birth Family Search Cover Letter, and Adoption Registry Release (Birth Family Member)

Related Policy 12-27-2011

- [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#), section entitled Requests for Adoption-Related Information
- [CP&P-IV-C-1-100](#), section entitled Definitions
- [CP&P-IV-C-1-400](#), section entitled Parent Engagement
- [CP&P-IV-C-1-600](#), section entitled Adoption Registry and Records

Open Adoption

Definition 9-11-87

Increasingly the cloud of secrecy is being lifted from the adoption process, and for many this new "openness" has led to a richly rewarding adoption experience. In simple terms, open adoption is the loosening of the strict practice of anonymity now imposed on adoptive families, adoptees and birth families. The spectrum of open adoption runs from the sharing of non-identifying information to full disclosure of all information and on-going face to face contact between the principals in the adoption triad. Open adoption possibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Full disclosure of non-identifying information to all parties. In addition to the sharing of the Individual and Family Assessment Outline (26-53c Part B) with the adoptive family, the adoptive child receives age appropriate information on the adoptive and birth families, and the birth family receives non-identifying information about the adoptive family. The sharing of

information with the birth family may include participation in the selection process of the proposed adoptive family.

- Full disclosure of non-identifying information to all parties, exchange of photographs and some form of direct or indirect communication between adoptive and birth families such as an exchange of letters, telephone conversations and/or a face to face visit without an exchange of last names or other identifying information.
- Full disclosure of non-identifying information and partial disclosure of identifying information. In addition to a face-to-face meeting between birth and adoptive families, some mechanism is established for on-going communication, either directly or through an intermediary, that preserves, for all parties, the right to regulate on-going contact.
- Full disclosure of information with an on-going relationship between the adoptive family, birth family and child developed independently by the principals of the adoption triad. In some instances this may include incorporating the birth family as an extension of the adoptive family.

Adoptive Applicant 9-11-87

During the pre-service training, the applicant is educated regarding how children come to need adoption planning. Part of this education includes a discussion of a child's need to have clear, straightforward information about his biological roots which may, on occasion, include specific, identifying information about his biological heritage. The applicant is encouraged to explore his own feelings and attitudes about discussing this information with his adopted child.

The child's "need to know" will likely take different forms as the child grows up and the adoptive parent is educated to be sensitive to the child's changing informational needs. Some adoptees never want comprehensive information about their birth families while others experience strong desires or needs to have some form of direct contact.

But for many children who enter adoptive homes beyond the infancy or toddler stage, the connection to the biological family has already been made and specific identifying information is already known to the child. Thus, the adoptive parent is ill-advised to attempt to impose an air of secrecy on information or relationships already known to the child. As the child adjusts to the adoptive home, there may be an increased need to sort out relationships and memories in order to understand them better. The sorting out process may include frank discussion between the child and the adoptive parent, questions by the child that require the assistance of the Central Office Adoption Unit, or renewed or continued contact between the child and members of the birth family (siblings, parents, extended family, and former foster family).

The home finder reviews open adoption with the adoptive applicant and includes a discussion of the applicants' willingness to accept open adoption and the degree of openness they can accept in the home study.

Birth Family 9-11-87

Whether by voluntary or involuntary relinquishment, the loss of a child is a traumatic and unforgettable experience. Many parents, especially birth mothers, undergo a significant depressive reaction each year on the anniversary of their child loss. Although the Division cannot fully allay the potential depression nor alter the circumstances that make adoption the best case plan for the child, the Worker may be able to offer the birth family a greater role in the selection process of an adoptive home and thus enable them to play a positive role in determining their child's future and raise the birth family's level of confidence that the child's best interest will be served.

When assessing the level of participation the birth family may have in the selection process, the Worker should have in mind the following considerations:

- the birth parent is psychologically competent to participate in the selection process;
- participation in the selection process is in no way a condition of the relinquishment procedure;
- the case goal is not foster parent adoption.

As appropriate, the Worker should also discuss with the birth family their willingness and ability to participate in some level of an open adoption. If the child to be placed for adoption is young, the concept of open adoption may have to be discussed in general, philosophic terms. However, if the child is older and already has a relationship with some members of the birth family, the specific and anticipated needs of the child should be reviewed with the birth family. The willingness of the birth family to participate in an open adoption and the degree to which the birth family will consider open adoption should be carefully recorded in the Individual and Family Assessment, CP&P Form [26-53c](#).

The birth family may agree to full disclosure of identifying information, they may want total anonymity or they may choose any gradation between the extremes. The birth family may agree to face to face, on-going contact with the child and adoptive parents, contact only through an intermediary, contact only with the adoptee after the child reaches the age of majority, no contact at all or any variation of a contact program. However, the birth family must understand that any contact program is subject to the needs of the child and the discretion of the legal adoptive parents and that no contact program will be imposed on adoptees or on adoptive parents against their will. The birth family may express a willingness to participate in some form of open adoption and they may express a preference that the adoptive parent(s) is also willing to participate in

some form of open adoption. However, relinquishment is never conditioned by a promise of open adoption and a child's placement in an adoptive home is never solely predicated on the willingness of the adoptive parent(s) to accept open adoption.

To avoid potential misunderstandings, it is generally preferable to initiate the discussion of open adoption with the birth family after legal parental rights have been severed.

Adoptee 9-11-87

According to statute, adoption records are sealed and identifying information about the participants in an adoption is held in strict confidence. Yet, when there is agreement between the parties of the adoption triad, CP&P will attempt to assist in some form of contact. See Contact Between Birth Family and Adoptive Family, below. A minor adoptee may not obtain CP&P assistance in open adoption activity without the consent of the legal adoptive parent(s). Therefore, it is critical that the potential needs of an adoptee to know information about the biological family is carefully explained to adoptive parents during pre-service training and adoption supervision.

Similarly, if the child has an existing relationship with some member of the biological family at the time of the adoptive placement, the Worker must attempt to assess the child's continuing or future need for contact with the biological family. The child's best interest might be served through: continued visitation with a sibling(s), foster parent(s), grandparent(s), etc.; the periodic exchange of letters, photographs, or telephone calls with a biological relative; or the periodic need for in-depth non-identifying conversations about the biological family so that the child's sense of reality and self-worth are regularly reinforced. The Worker may attempt to make the assessment of the child's needs through life book work, psychological evaluations or direct observation of and conversation with the child. The information is recorded in the Individual and Family Assessment, CP&P Form [26-53c](#) and is used in the selective process of an adoptive family. In the instance of a foster home adoption, the Worker works with the foster family to assist them in accepting and providing for the degree of openness necessary to a successful adoption placement.

Selection Process 9-11-87

When it has been determined that the birth family will have a role in the selection process of an adoptive home, the Worker engages the birth family in discussions about desirable qualities, personal attributes and characteristics in the adoptive family. The birth family should be directed toward clarifying the values that would be desirable in an adoptive family rather than designating specific physical or financial criteria that the adoptive family should meet. The birth family might want the child to be placed in a home where there are other children but should be discouraged from providing a specific prescription for the adoptive family constellation.

The procedure for selecting an adoptive family must be clearly explained to the birth family with specific emphasis on the following points:

- participation in the selection process is not a condition of relinquishment - they are two separate and distinct acts;
- the birth family's preferences will be considered in the selection process but they may not be strictly followed if it means a delay in placing the child for adoption;
- the birth family may review with the Worker three potential selected families for the child and should rank the homes in order of preference;
- except in unusual circumstances, a selection must be made from the three potential adoptive families;
- CP&P will attempt to pursue the birth family's first choice but cannot guarantee that placement with that particular family will ensue;
- CP&P will advise the birth family of any changes in the selected placement plan and include the birth family in any further selection process, if possible, but will not delay the placement needs of the child if the birth family is unavailable;
- for some special needs children, a choice of three potential adoptive homes may not be possible;
- at all times the best interests of the child will be the most compelling prerequisite in selecting an adoptive family even if the best interests are in conflict with the expressed wishes of the birth family.

When the birth family has been fully advised of the selection process, the Worker records the qualities or characteristics preferred for the adoptive family on the Individual and Family Assessment, CP&P Form [26-53c](#), and makes a notation on the cover memo to the Central Office Adoption Unit that this will be an OPEN ADOPTION. The Adoption Unit then selects the three most appropriate potential adoptive homes within a six month span of the earliest application date incorporating, to the extent possible, the expressed preferences of the birth family, and submits the home studies to the child's Worker.

The Worker then reviews the three home studies and conducts an oral presentation of the potential homes to the birth family. If, in the judgment of the Worker, the birth family is capable of reading, understanding, and making a reasonable interpretation of written material, the Worker may completely block out all identifying information and allow the birth family to read the Adoptive Home Summary Outline. No identifying information about the potential homes is shared with the birth family. Through discussion and a careful assessment of the child's best interest, the birth family and Worker prioritize the

potential homes. The Worker then pursues the selection within 10 days of receiving the potential homes.

Procedures Related to Birth Family Participation in the Selection Process
9-11-87

Responsibility	Action Required
Worker	1. Assess the appropriateness of birth family participation in the selection process. If appropriate then proceed as indicated below. If not appropriate, proceed as in CP&P-IV-C-10-100 .
Worker,Family	2. Legally clear the child for adoption according to law and policy regardless of open adoption considerations. 3. Review the current or anticipated needs of the child and prepare a list of the preferred qualities or characteristics of the adoptive family.
Worker	4. Record the birth family's preferences regarding an adoptive family on the Individual and Family Assessment and make a notation on the cover memo to Central Office Adoption Unit that this will be an "Open Adoption."
Central Office Adoption Unit	5. Review the Individual and Family Assessment and select the three most appropriate homes within a six month span of the earliest application date incorporating, to the extent possible, the expressed preferences of the birth family. Forward the possible homes to the child's Worker.
Worker	6. Carefully review the potential homes and prepare for the presentation of the potential homes to the birth family. If any of the potential adoptive families is unwilling to participate in an open adoption, the birth family is so advised. The Worker may, nonetheless, orally present a non-identifying, general description of the potential adoptive family to the birth family.
Worker, Family	7. Discuss and evaluate the potential adoptive homes and prioritize homes according to the child's best interests within ten days.
Worker	8. Pursue placement of child in the selected adoptive home according to CP&P-IV-C-6-100 .

Contact Between Birth Family and Adoptive Family **9-11-87**

The nature and extent of contact between the birth and adoptive family can take any form and must be mutually acceptable to all parties involved. Prior to an adoption selection, it is incumbent upon the Worker for the child and the home finder for the adoptive applicants to review with their respective clients the potential extent to which they might be willing to participate in an open adoption. See Adoptive Applicant, above. However, no final decisions can be made until the specific circumstances of the relevant parties are assessed. For instance, an adoptive applicant might be philosophically in agreement with the open adoption concept but would not be willing to have a face to face meeting if the birth family lived in the same county as they did.

The potential parameters of open adoption participation are identified in the home study and Type of Child Acceptable form for the adoptive applicant and on the Individual and Family Assessment for the birth family. This information is used by the Central Office Adoption Unit in making the most appropriate selection for the child.

Once a selection has been made, the Worker and birth family develop and sign CP&P Form [26-81](#), Case Plan Assessment, defining the parameters of the open adoption. A separate CP&P Form [26-81](#) is developed and signed by the adoptive family and home finder. Copies of both documents are filed in the child's case record and the adoptive family's record.

Direct Contact Between Birth Family and Adoptive Family 12-2-2013

If agreeable to both parties, the birth family and adoptive family may agree to a face-to-face meeting. Generally, this meeting will start out maintaining the confidentiality of identifying information already established. An exchange of identifying information may occur at the meeting but should not be a pre-condition of it.

Furthermore, the face-to-face meeting should not be set up as part of the selection process. It is not an opportunity for the birth family to evaluate potential adoptive parents nor is it an opportunity for the adoptive family to size up the birth family and thereby decide whether or not they want the child. The face-to-face contact should be designed as an informational exchange that enhances the ability of both birth and adoptive families to meet the child's needs.

Neither birth family nor adoptive family should believe that they will have an opportunity to "change their mind" as a result of this meeting.

The face-to-face meeting should be set up in a non-threatening environment that promotes comfort and provides for confidentiality. The child's Worker will generally participate in all or part of the meeting. Provision of any identifying information is exclusively the prerogative of the individual; the adoptive parent may or may not choose to provide self-identifying information despite the revelation of self-identifying information by the birth family.

The meeting may be set up at any point in the selection/placement process, but it is generally preferable to schedule the meeting on or after the actual placement date.

In some instances the birth and adoptive families would prefer to have telephone contact rather than a face-to-face meeting. The child's Worker may facilitate this contact by making arrangements for the telephone call.

Indirect Contact Between Birth Families and Adoptive Families Prior to Finalization 7-7-94

In some instances the birth and adoptive families agree to have contact only indirectly. Indirect contact can take many forms such as the exchange of letters or photographs or through the exchange of information via an intermediary. The Worker for the adoptive family may act as a conduit of letters, photographs or information between the individuals.

On-Going Direct or Indirect Contact Between Birth Families and Adoption Families 7-7-94

Birth and adoptive families may choose to continue contact with one another beyond the selection and placement phase of adoption. Although potential parameters of their respective interests in "open adoption" were reviewed at an earlier stage of the adoption process, birth and adoptive families may modify their interests based upon the specific information now available to them.

Unless the participants have agreed to full disclosure of identifying information, the birth and adoptive families may have need of an intermediary for the on-going exchange of information. The families may choose an independent intermediary or they may elect to have an agency representative act as intermediary. In such instances, a member of the Central Office Adoption Unit will be assigned the role of intermediary. To enable the Central Office Adoption Unit member to act as an intermediary in such cases, a copy of each service agreement, signed by the birth and adoptive family, should be forwarded, with a cover memo, to the Central Office Adoption Unit at the time the case is finalized and closed. The Central Office Adoption Unit will establish a file for each open adoption case and continue as the intermediary for the open adoption.

Either the child's or the adoptive family's Worker may assist in coordinating the initial phases of on-going contact prior to transferring responsibility to the Adoption Unit at finalization. The birth family must be alerted that any contact - correspondence, telephone communication, or actual visitation is at the discretion of the legal adoptive parents so long as the child is a minor and any contact schedule is subject to change as the perceived best interests of the child changes. When the child reaches the age of majority, any contact schedule will probably be at the discretion of the adoptee. Birth families are encouraged to define the limits of their willingness to participate in an open adoption. Birth families are encouraged to maintain with the Central Office Adoption Unit

a current listing of their whereabouts even though they are not able to initiate the contact with either the child or adoptive family on their own.

Indirect or Direct Contact in Foster Parent Adoptions 9-11-87

In the instance of a foster parent adoption the child's Worker will review with the birth and foster/adoptive families the concept of open adoption and pursue the same procedure as with a selected adoption home. Despite any expressed preferences of the birth family, the foster/adoptive family cannot be obliged to participate in an open adoption. A member of the Central Office Adoption Unit will assume the role of intermediary, if appropriate, when the adoption is finalized.

Procedures Related to Developing a Contact Schedule Between Birth and Adoptive Families 9-11-87

Responsibility	Action Required
Child's Worker	1. Assess the appropriateness of open adoption examining the needs of the child and psychological competency of the birth family participant(s) e.g., parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, etc.
Child's Worker, Birth Family	2. Review the concept of an open family adoption and attempt to define the degree to which the birth family would be willing and able to participate in an open adoption.
Worker	3a. Record the birth family's expressed flexibility on the Individual and family Assessment and make a notation regarding open adoption in the cover memo to the Central Office Adoption Unit. Or 3b. Record the birth family's expressed flexibility regarding open adoption on the Individual and Family Assessment and act as facilitator to the agreed upon contact schedule between birth family and adopting-foster family.
Adoption Home Finder	4. Review open adoption with the adoptive applicants and record the flexibility, willingness, and capability of the adoptive family to accept open adoption in the home study and on the Type of Child Acceptable form.
Central Office Adoption	5. Make appropriate adoptive selections incorporating information on open adoption.
Worker,	6. Review non-identifying data and determine the form and

<p>Homefinder, Birth Family, Adoptive Family</p>	<p>nature of the direct or indirect contact. The child's Worker will assume the role of liaison between the relevant individuals.</p> <p>7. After initial, direct or indirect contact, determine whether and to what extent the birth family and adoptive family would like to continue direct or indirect contact. When both families agree that continued indirect contact is desired, forward a copy of both service agreements, with a cover memo, when the case is closed, to the Central Office Adoption Unit so that a file may be established to continue open indirect contact.</p>
<p>Central Office Adoption</p>	<p>8. Assign staff person to act as intermediary for open adoption for either selected or foster parent adoptions to facilitate/monitor on-going direct or indirect contact between the individuals involved.</p>