

## **ADOPTION PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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### **A. AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- 1) Gateway Woods Adoption Program is a service of Gateway Woods Family Services, and seeks to perform all adoption services in a manner consistent with scripture [2 Tim 3:16-17].
- 2) Gateway Woods Family Services will maintain their child-placing license complying with all licensing requirements and a yearly review in the state of Indiana.
- 3) Gateway Woods Family Services is a non-profit licensed agency in the state of Indiana and will maintain professional liability insurance with a limit of \$1,000,000 per occurrence.
- 4) Social Workers licensed in the state of Indiana in our Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Program will keep their license current with the required annual continuing education (CEU) training hours and a licensed social worker will sign or co-sign all international home studies. All Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will complete 20 hours of training annually relevant to adoption.
- 5) All adoptive parents and adopted children's files will be kept confidential in locked files and/or locked storage rooms, and identifying information both verbally and in writing will not be given to other agencies, attorneys, or anyone outside of Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption staff without the consent of the parties involved.
- 6) Gateway Woods Family Services will not be involved knowingly with any adoption agency or service provider that is involved in any illegal practice such as child abduction, or child buying. (See Prohibition on Child Buying Policy.)
- 7) Gateway Woods Family Services will not provide adoption services including the placement of children for any current Gateway Woods employee or board member. Gateway Woods Family Services will not give preferential treatment to any contributor, agent, consultant, independent contractor, and close friend or relative of an employee of Gateway Woods Family Services. A home study evaluation will not be assigned to an adoption staff employee who is a close relative or friend of the prospective adoptive parent(s).

### **B. HOME STUDY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- 1) All home studies will comply with the state laws of Indiana. An international home study will also comply with the USCIS requirements, sending country requirements and placement agency requirements.
- 2) Gateway Woods Family Services does home studies and post adoption visits only for families in Indiana. Generally these adoptive families live in the central to northern region of Indiana.
- 3) Any prospective adoptive parent or parents must be at least 21 years of age.
- 4) Gateway Woods only provides adoption services for husband and wife couples that have been married for at least two years [Gen 2:24, Matt 19:4-6, Eph 5:31].
- 5) The prospective adoptive parents must attest to being Christians, regularly attend a Christian church, commit to living a moral life according to scripture, and commit to raising their adopted child or children in a Christian lifestyle and a Christian church [Deut 6:6-7, Prov 22:6, Eph 6:4].
- 6) Any prospective adoptive parent or parents must first make an inquiry by direct telephone contact to the Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff and complete an application before an office interview is scheduled. Any prospective adoptive parent or parents must attend an office interview at Gateway Woods, and be provided with a written Grievance Policy. This Grievance Policy states the protocol for any complaint regarding the adoption services in making every effort to work with an adoptive family toward a mutual solution. Before the home study process can proceed the prospective adoptive parents must sign an Adoption Services Fees statement with estimated fees and expenses and a Private Adoption Purchase of Service Agreement which states when and

how fees and expenses must be paid and the how refunds will be paid and that the adoptive family must report to Gateway Woods any significant changes in the household. The Adoption Purchase of Service Agreement also states that Gateway Woods Family Services will provide a rough draft of the home study within 60 days (30 days if an expedited home study) of the home visit or last home study interview, whichever is later, unless the prospective adoptive parent or parents fails to complete their required paperwork and adoption training for the home study. The Adoption Purchase of Service Agreement states that the prospective adoptive family must enlist the services of a primary provider for every international adoption. Gateway Woods will verify that the primary provider is Hague Accredited by checking the who accredited/approved list on the IAAME website <https://www.iaame.net/accreditation/accredited-approved-agencies-persons/> and see that exempt or supervised provider agreements are in place and signed.

- 7) The Prospective adoptive family also signs a Request for Child Protection Services History Check, Consents for Release of Information and a Photo Permission form with the choice to grant or not grant permission for photos. The prospective adoptive parents must also provide a Financial Profile with documentation of all income, a Physical Examination or Health Statement completed by a physician for each adoptive parent and all household members, and an Adoptive Parent Questionnaire for each parent regarding their background, parenting and other information relating to adoption before a home visit is scheduled. The prospective adoptive parent(s) must earn a family income of at least 125% of the poverty guidelines of USCIS for their state or country of residence.
- 8) One or more home visits must take place before any home study is written which includes a tour of every room in the home to assess the safety and appropriate space for an adopted child(ren), an individual interview with every member of the household, and joint interviews with the prospective adoptive parents concerning their marriage and adoption issues. At the home visit the prospective adoptive parents will be asked if they ever had an unfavorable home study. Also at the home visit each adult over the age of 18 must state if he or she has a history of abuse or neglect, or has any criminal arrests or convictions. If the prospective adoptive parents or other adults in the home answer “yes” to any of the above questions, the home study social worker will make a complete assessment including information on their rehabilitation or past counseling, and determine if they will give a favorable recommendation for adoption in light of this information. Adoption issues such as risks and delays in inter-country adoption, the type of children available for adoption, guidance in decision-making, etc. will be discussed at the home visit.
- 9) Any prospective adoptive parent or parents are required to attend adoption training. In domestic adoption the prospective adoptive parents are required to attend Adoption Training through Gateway Woods Family Services. This training can be waived if the adoptive parents have extensive knowledge of adoption related issues or they have had equivalent training. In international adoption the prospective adoptive parents must complete the required number of Hague-approved training hours and on subject matters mandated by the country of the prospective adoptive child, USCIS and the primary provider agency before completion of the home study. This training can be completed through Gateway Woods’ Hague-approved Training or other Hague approved courses. This is stated in the Adoption Purchase of Service Agreement.
- 10) Before the home study is written Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff must obtain the family’s financial profile with documentation of income, a physical exam or health statement for all members of the household, and four references. These references must include a reference from the prospective adoptive family’s pastor, a family member, and two non-relatives. Exceptions will only be made in extenuating circumstances. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff must also obtain abuse/neglect checks in Indiana for household members 14 years of age or older and all other states household members resided in past the age of 18 years for international

adoption and all states household members resided in past the age of 18 years for the last 5 years in domestic adoption. In addition Gateway Woods must obtain Indiana State Police checks and local police checks for all household members over the age of 18 years and a check on the National Sex Offender Registry for all household members over the age of 14 years.

- 11) The Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff that prepares the home study will only recommend prospective adoptive parents that are emotionally, physically, and mentally able to care for children. If there is a question of emotional or mental stability Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff may require a psychological evaluation, or if there is a question of physical stability Gateway Woods Adoption Staff may require further medical evaluations and tests before making this determination. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff that prepares the home study will make a recommendation for the adoption of children including the number of children, age range, gender, health and consideration of children with special medical or developmental needs. This recommendation is based on all of the written background Information, background checks, references, medical information, financial information, a home visit, and extensive individual and joint interviews.
- 12) The adoptive parent or parents will review a draft of their home study before the final home study is completed. The adoption placement agency for an international adoption will also review a draft of their home study before the final home study is completed.
- 13) All international home studies will be notarized along with other required paperwork. It is the prospective adoptive parents' responsibility to have these documents apostilled or certified as required by the sending country of the adoption.
- 14) The prospective adoptive parents, the adoption placement agency, and/or the courts will be provided with one or more original home studies with the child-placing agency license and a social work license attached. The prospective adoptive parents are responsible to forward the home study with their application to USCIS and for their dossier.
- 15) The adoptive parents have a duty to disclose any significant changes of their family circumstances to Adoption Staff of Gateway Woods Family Services within 15 days. This includes a change in residence, marital status, change of employment and finances, change of criminal history, and addition, removal, or death of any children or adults in their household. A Home Study Update or an Amendment will be then be sent to the U.S. Courts or USCIS, and the Adoption Placement Agency, if applicable. If the family desires to change the age, number of children, gender, special needs, adoption placement agency or country adopting from Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will then evaluate their request and consult with their Adoption Placement Agency, if applicable. If approved, the Adoption Case Manager will send a Home Study Addendum or Home Study Update to the U.S. Courts, or USCIS, and the Adoption Placement Agency, if applicable. The prospective adoptive parent(s) are required to inform Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff when a Home Study Update is needed, which is every 12 months for a domestic home study and every 15 to 18 months for an international home study.

### **C. DOMESTIC PLACEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- 1) After completion of a home study, prospective adoptive families must prepare a family profile to be on the Domestic Adoption Waiting List for placement through the Gateway Woods Adoption Program. This list is in chronological order according to the date the family profile is turned into the office. Prospective adoptive parents will be taken off of the waiting list after an adoptive placement and/or if they have not updated their home study within two years from their home study or last home study update completion date. Prospective Adoptive Parents can be on our waiting list again after an approved home study for a second adoption or an approved home study update but their placement on the waiting list will coincide with their current home study completion date.

- 2) Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption staff will provide family profiles to birth mothers desiring to place their child(ren) domestically unless the birth mother specifically does not desire to choose an adoptive family from profiles. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will work cooperatively with the birth parent(s) in providing information concerning the prospective adoptive parents of their choice, but not give confidential information such as last names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the prospective adoptive family.
- 3) Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption staff will provide the chosen prospective adoptive parents with as much information as known regarding the birth mother and birth father's background including medical and genetic histories. The adoptive parents then will decide if they want to proceed forward with this potential adoption.
- 4) Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will arrange and monitor a meeting between the chosen adoptive parents and the birth parent(s) unless the birth parent declines meeting the prospective adoptive parents. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will then ask both parties if they desire to proceed forward with the potential adoptive placement. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will continue to monitor contacts between both parties during the pregnancy.
- 5) Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Program will facilitate financial assistance for living costs to a birth parent(s) up to the \$4,000 limit after the birth parent(s) signs the Adoption Deception Notice explaining the laws in Indiana on accepting payment. The prospective adoptive parents shall reimburse Gateway Woods up to \$4,000 for any living expenses provided the birth parent. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will provide counseling to the birth parent(s) before and after the birth, assist the birth mother in obtaining services such as Medicaid and provide transportation if needed for pregnancy related appointments such as pre-natal physician appointments.
- 6) Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Program will usually only facilitate financial assistance by paying for services directly rather than giving direct cash assistance to birth parents.
- 7) The prospective adoptive parents will sign a Private Adoption Placement Agreement before they are officially matched with a born or unborn child(ren). The placement payments and time frame for each payment is stated in the agreement. This contract also states the responsibilities of Gateway Woods Family Services, and the adoptive parents' financial obligations including possible additional costs such as birth parent(s) living expenses, a contested adoption, etc.
- 8) After the birth parent(s) signs the Consent to Adoption, the prospective adoptive parents will sign a Consent for Physical Custodianship form stating that Gateway Woods Family Services has legal custody and the adoptive parents have physical custody of the adopted child(ren) until the adoption is finalized. In this agreement the adoptive parents are physically and financially responsible for all their adoptive child(ren)'s care including any medical expenses.
- 9) If the birth parent(s) decides not to place her child(ren) for adoption, Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will make sure the matched adoptive parents are informed, and provide counseling afterwards to deal with their grief. Gateway Woods Family Services will require payment for services that were rendered and adoption living expenses that were paid, and will reimburse the prospective adoptive family for any previous payment beyond these expenses.
- 10) The attorney contracted with Gateway Woods Family Services will provide all of the legal documents for the adoption, and legal representation for the adoption. The attorney fees will be included in the Gateway Woods Family Services placement fee except for attorney fees beyond routine adoption fees such as legal representation for a contested adoption.
- 11) Gateway Woods Family Services writes a Medical/Social History of the adoptive child for the courts. Court records, a custodianship form, and a medical/social history forms and reports are kept in the child's file and are distributed to the Court after the consents for adoption are signed.

**D. INTERNATIONAL PLACEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- 1) Gateway Woods Family Services does not presently provide placement services for children adopted internationally but if placement services are provided in the future Gateway Woods Family Services will follow the guidelines of the IAA and INA federal guidelines in placement policies.
- 2) All prospective adoptive parents must sign an adoption services contract before placement of any child, which includes a liability waiver for placement.

**E. POST ADOPTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

- 1) Gateway Woods Family Services will provide post placement supervision, post placement visits and reports as required by the court in the United States, and adoption placement agency and/or sending country. These visits and reports will be completed before the finalization of the adoption for domestic adoptions and before the required deadline dates established by the sending country for international adoptions. This usually consists of at least three post placement visits and reports.
- 2) Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will also be available by phone or e-mail to answer any questions or provide counseling to any adoptive parent or parents concerning their adopted child or children's behavior during and after the post placement visit period. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will also recommend evaluations and/or other services to assist with the adopted child's transition into the home, and behavioral, developmental and/ or medical issues of the adopted child or children. Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will also provide supportive services including information on local adoption support groups or contact information of experienced adoptive families.
- 3) Gateway Woods Family Services Adoption Staff will report any problems or concerns during the home visits or meetings to the adoption placement agency.
- 4) If there is a disruption or dissolution of the adoption, Gateway Woods Adoption Staff will work cooperatively with the adoption placement agency to ensure that the best interests of the child or children are served at all times. (See disruption and dissolution policies and procedures.)
- 5) When all post placement and post adoption services have been provided, the Adoption Case Manager completes a closing summary and places it in each client file. Adoptive family files and child files are closed at the same time. The Adoption Case Manager then gives the file to the Administrative Assistant who places the closed case records in a separate locked storage area. See case record retention procedures 96.42a in the Hague Self-study Manual.

**F. OTHER**

Applicants may apply for a waiver of certain provisions of this policy. Applications for waiver must be made in writing, include justification for the request, and be approved by both the Adoption Program Manager and the Executive Director. No waiver will be taken of any Biblical prohibition.

7/1/20