

FAMILY OPTIONS

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SERVICE PROCEDURES

1. Information Session

Make an appointment for an information group meeting (no charge) or an individual adoption consultation (fee charged).

2. Application (see fee schedule)

Submit completed application and the applicable fee to Family Options.

3. Home Study Services

After your application is processed, you will be sent the questionnaire (home study or home study update as applicable). Complete the entire packet *as specified* and return to Family Options along with all requested documentation and fee. Upon receipt of the questionnaire, a caseworker will contact you to arrange the visit.

A home study is valid in New Jersey for a period of 18 months from the time of completion. Any major changes to the family or home may constitute the need for an update (new family member, change in residence, health status, etc.). Out-of-state adoption agencies may require annual updates; all other updates to your existing home study are valid for a period of 18 months from the time of completion.

The **Home Study Approval consists of 3 components**. They are as follows:

A. Meetings

At least one meeting will be conducted in your home. The caseworker will individually interview all household members. Joint interviews will also be conducted with applicants. The written home study will then be submitted to the Social Work Supervisor for review.

B. Clearances (see fee schedule)

Every member of the household over the age of 18 must complete a Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) fingerprint background check and Child Abuse Registry Information (CARI) name check. Instructions are provided in the home study packet.

C. Educational Course (see fee schedule)

All home study applicants are required to attend Family Options' **6-½ hour** Adoption Educational Course, *Ready, Get Set, Grow* prior to home study approval.

Applicants adopting again are required to attend Family Options' **2-½ hour** Adoption Educational Course prior to home study update approval. The Attendance at *Advanced Strategies for Adoptive Parents* for these applicants is required unless *Ready, Get Set, Grow* was not previously attended. **Ready, Get Set, Grow will be required instead if not previously attended.**

These workshops are designed to address the unique needs and issues of the adoptive family and provide the opportunity to meet other waiting parents. Seating is limited so registration is required. It is recommended that enrollment occurs at the time of initial application to Family Options.

4. **Approval**

After clearances have been received, the educational requirements are met and the Social Work Supervisor has reviewed your home study, you will be notified that your home study is complete and if approval is granted.

5. **Portfolio Consultation** (see fee schedule)

Upon your home study approval, you may contact the office to request a portfolio family packet. Once you return the completed packet and portfolio fee the consultation can be scheduled. At this consultation, you will be given guidelines and valuable insight for developing a portfolio as well as advice on networking and advertising. Portfolio policy and procedures will also be reviewed.

It is the client's responsibility to verify that they meet the Portfolio Family Program requirements.

6. **Portfolio Filing**

All signed portfolio documentation and the filing fee must be received prior to filing. Once you have filed your portfolio you are considered *active*. Advertising for identified placements may begin. A portfolio must be on file with Family Options before we can respond to identified advertisements. Please provide Family Options with information regarding the advertisements (content, source, length of time in circulation).

7. **Placement** (see fee schedule)

For Direct Infant Placements, the agency will contact the adoptive family as soon as a birth family indicates interest in working with them, at which time a non-refundable placement retainer is required from the adoptive family. The balance of the placement fee should be made available within six weeks prior to the expected placement or sooner.

For Identified and Enhanced Identified Placements, a non-refundable retainer is required as soon as Family Options becomes involved with the identified situation. The balance of the placement fee should be made available within six weeks prior to the expected placement or sooner.

The hourly fee is assessed for any situation not resulting in a placement; any portion of the placement retainer not expended by the hourly rate will be applied to a future placement retainer. The entire placement fee is refundable for unsuccessful placements resulting from a birth parent having a change of heart.

8. **Supervision** (see fee schedule)

Upon placement, supervision of the adoptive family will be required by Family Options for a minimum of six months. This supervision will consist of bi-monthly meetings in your home. All household members should be available for these visits.

9. **Finalization** (consult an attorney)

During this supervisory period, you should contact an attorney to arrange for adoption finalization. A list of recommended attorneys is available through Family Options. Please inform our office of the name and address of your attorney and the county in which you will be filing for finalization. The agency will forward the paperwork necessary for finalization to the court and to your attorney at the end of the supervisory period.

You may be required to update your clearances prior to finalization. Please contact Family Options during supervision to request this information.

If at any time during the procedure you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.