**Section 309.100 Preparation of Children for Adoption**

Preparation of children for adoption begins when adoption has been identified as a potential goal for the child. During this pre-placement phase, specific services are provided to the child for whom adoption is being considered.

a) The Assessment Phase

The assessment phase consists of preparation activities initiated before an adoptive home has been identified. The primary purpose of this phase is completion of an assessment to guide the identification of needs to be met and in directing intervention. Assessments already completed on the following issues should be reviewed, and if needing update, should be updated before deciding whether or not adoption is appropriate for a child:

1) assessing the child in relation to the physical, emotional, educational and social environment;

2) determining the developmental level and potential of the child;

3) gathering and assessing all pertinent information on the child and family, which includes the names and whereabouts of all known siblings, why siblings were not placed together (when applicable), and a complete review of the family history;

4) assessing whether it is in the best interests of the child to be separated from his/her siblings (when they were placed together) and, if separated, how best to facilitate contact with his/her siblings;

5) when placement of the child with his or her siblings would require that the child be removed from a current foster home, assessing if it is in the best interests of the child to remain in that foster home rather than move to a joint placement with his or her siblings;

6) assessing the child's capacity for attachment;

7) assessing the child's ability and opportunity to grieve losses;

8) assessing issues involving the child's identity;

9) assessing the child's unique qualities by focusing on the strengths and talents possessed by the child; and

10) assessing the child's understanding of the adoption process and making a determination of the child's desire to move toward an adoptive placement.

b) The Preparation for Placement Phase

This phase includes activities that are initiated after the assessment has been completed and reviewed and all the placement considerations have been assessed for applicability for a particular child. Such activities include:

1) further assessment of the child's knowledge of adoption as a permanency goal, ensuring that the child understands the selection of the family will be a joint decision between the prospective adoptive family, the child and the Department;

2) sharing descriptive information about the family with the child;

3) helping the child deal with feelings of separation and loss;

4) if, after adoption, the child will live separately from some or all of his/her siblings, how to facilitate contact with his/her siblings, including adult siblings.

5) arranging for specific recruitment activities for any child for whom an adoptive resource cannot be located.

c) Diligent Recruitment Requirements

If the child's caregiver is not a viable resource for the child, diligent recruitment efforts shall be undertaken to locate adoptive parents who are appropriate to meet the child's needs and best interests, utilizing the placement considerations described in Section 309.130, Placement Considerations. Diligent recruitment efforts include, but are not limited to:

1) locating relatives who may be willing to adopt the child or a sibling group and who the Department has reason to believe will be able to adequately provide for the child's/children's safety and welfare;

2) contacting the adoptive parent or legal guardian of a sibling of the child who was adopted or placed in private guardianship and informing them of the availability of the child for adoption;

3) a review of the Department's available adoptive resources, contacts with local adoption agencies, and specialized recruitment activities such as parent groups, appropriate religious and civic organizations and service providers, advocacy groups and agencies;

4) a review of the Adoption Listing Service to determine the availability of an appropriate family; and

5) listing the child with the Adoption Listing Service, in accordance with Section 309.40, that includes among its services an interstate search, when necessary, consisting of contacts with other states, and out of state adoption agencies and referral/advocacy agencies to find a suitable adoptive placement.

d) The Department shall not deny or delay the placement of a child for adoption when a suitable person or family who has been approved as an adoptive resource is available outside of the State, region, or county of jurisdiction.

(Source: Amended at 40 Ill. Reg. 720, effective December 31, 2015)