

AAA Partners in Adoption, Inc.
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Alpharetta, GA 30004
(770) 844-2080

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR AN ADOPTIVE HOME STUDY EVALUATION

APPLICATION FOR SERVICES:

Any person or married couple (residents of Georgia) desiring to apply for an adoptive home study evaluation will receive an application packet. The adoptive applicant(s) then forwards to AAA Partners in Adoption, Inc., (AAA PIA) a written application for the purpose of entering into a contract with AAA PIA to perform the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation. The application must be signed and dated. (See Application for Home Study Evaluation)

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF FEE STRUCTURE:

Adoptive Home Study Evaluation Fee:

An Adoptive Home Study Evaluation fee of \$900.00 is due and payable in three payments. (\$300.00 is due and payable on the first visit, \$300.00 is due and payable on visits two and three). THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Expedited Home Study Fee:

A home study may be expedited (subject to the approval of the agency director) for no additional fee.

Copies of the Home Study:

AAA PIA will provide the adoptive applicant(s) a total of 4 copies of the home study to be forwarded to agencies, attorney, etc. Additional request for copies of the home study for the adoptive applicant(s), attorney or additional placement agencies will cost \$10.00 per copy. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE

Post-Placement Fee:

A fee of \$150.00 is due and payable at the time of each post-placement visit. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Home Study Update Fee:

A fee of \$400 is due and payable at the time of the home visit when a home study is updated. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Subsequent Adoption Home Study Fee:

For adoptive families who have completed an AAA PIA Home Study in the past three years, a fee of \$600.00 is due and payable when the completed Subsequent Adoptive Home Study Application for a subsequent adoption is submitted. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Fee for Mileage and Travel Time:

A transportation fee will be assessed for those applicants beyond a 50 mile radius from Atlanta or the assigned Caseworker's residence. This fee will be computed and collected at the home visit. The mileage fee is \$.45 cents per mile. THIS FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

Express Mailings:

AAA PIA utilizes Federal Express only for express mailings. Adoptive applicants, who want a document to be express mailed, must provide a Federal Express account number or credit card number.

Receipt for Services:

The applicant(s) will receive a receipt for monies paid to the Agency.

Purchase of Services Related to Independent Adoptions:

Families may enter into a purchase of services agreement with AAA PIA for services related to their adoption process. The services may include, but are not limited to, counseling services with a birth parent, family counseling, etc. The fee for such services shall be \$50.00 per hour, plus \$.45 cents per mile, reimbursement for the Caseworker's out-of-pocket expenses and/or AAA PIA's out-of-pocket expenses. (See Purchase of Services Agreement).

FEE REFUND POLICY:

Fees paid for services rendered are non-refundable.

ORIENTATION FOR APPLICANT:

Once an application has been submitted by prospective adoptive parents and prior to the approval of the application, orientation information shall be supplied for the applicant(s), including but not limited to:

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- a. The legal procedures involved in adoption.
- b. .The minimum requirements for an adoptive home and the procedures for the home study
- c. The selection and placement process
- d. The process children use to locate birth parents, and the process birth parents use to locate children
- e. The Agency's grievance procedures

THE ADOPTIVE HOME STUDY PREPARATION AND PROCESS:

AAA PIA will acknowledge acceptance of the application in writing and when the application can be activated.

The Adoptive Home Study Evaluation is the process by which the family unit engages with AAA PIA staff to determine the readiness of their home for the placement of an adoptive child or children. A key element of this process is the preparation of the family for the placement, including education, support and contact with other adoptive families. This process is a contractual agreement entered into voluntarily. Either party may terminate the process at any time. The termination of the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation process shall be acknowledged by the written and signed notification to the other party.

The Adoptive Home Study Evaluation process is comprised of the following components:

AAA PIA shall make a written evaluation of each pre-adoptive family prior to the approval of the Adoptive Home Study Evaluation. This study of the applicant(s) for adoption services shall include, as a minimum, three visits. One shall be in the home. The applicant(s) and any other individuals who live in the home shall be seen and interviewed at this home visit.

Applicant(s) shall be interviewed together as well as separately.

Verification by means of certified copies of birth, marriage and divorce records as well as current health status, GBI criminal history records' check, etc., will be provided to the AAA PIA by the applicant(s).

The family will complete, as one of the requirements, a personal profile questionnaire. This written questionnaire is to be completed and returned to the Caseworker prior to the second visit. All other required documents must be returned to the Caseworker before the home visit can be scheduled.

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A minimum of four letters of recommendation will be provided to AAA PIA. Two references will be from non-relatives. A letter of reference from a relative in the husband's family and a letter of reference from a relative in the wife's family must also be provided. The relatives providing reference letters may not reside in the home with the adoptive family. If a prospective adoptive applicant has worked with children in the past five years, a reference must be obtained from that employer.

The AAA PIA staff shall provide a written report at the conclusion of the personal visits with the applicant(s) and Caseworker and the completion of the aforementioned requirements and verifications. Four copies of the Home Evaluation will be provided to the adoptive applicants.

Approval or disapproval of the adoptive applicants for the placement of a child or children shall be made by the "Adoptive Review Committee." This Committee shall be comprised of the Caseworker for the adoptive applicants, the AAA PIA Adoption Services Supervisor and the AAA PIA Executive Director. This Committee shall review the written home study and any supporting information and data as necessary. The adoptive applicant(s) will be notified in writing as to the disposition of the Committee's evaluation.

A decision on approval of the adoptive applicants shall be made within 14 days of the last contact with the applicant(s) or there shall be documentation in the record to explain any delay.

A completed Adoptive Home Study Evaluation which contains a favorable recommendation does not guarantee the placement of a child or children in the applicant(s) home. Placement of a child or children is the responsibility of the applicant's placement source, (their USA placement agency, etc.). AAA PIA cannot be held responsible, either financially or in any other manner, for the outcome of the adoption process.

Adoptive applicant(s) receiving an unfavorable recommendation will be given a list of resources with which to strengthen areas which AAA PIA perceives as limitations. The Caseworker will offer a minimum of one follow-up contact to help the adoptive applicant(s) adjust to the unfavorable recommendation.

EDUCATION OF THE ADOPTIVE APPLICANT:

All adoptive applicants will receive a reading packet at the home study orientation interview.

All adoptive applicants will be given a checklist of “Topics for Discussion”. Any concerns listed on “Topics for Discussion” will be discussed with their Caseworker.

POST-PLACEMENT SERVICES:

For families pursuing a private adoption in the state of Georgia, a post-placement visit(s) and report may or may not be required by the Court prior to finalization.

For adoptive families adopting a child from another state, the placement agency or Court will determine the post-placement requirements.

For a family adopting a child through AAA PIA, a minimum of two post-placement visits are required.

It is the sole responsibility of the adoptive family to contact AAA PIA regarding post-placement services in compliance with the placement agency, state or Court requirements. The adoptive applicant agrees to pay the post-placement fee for supervision services to AAA PIA.

INTERSTATE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN:

AAA PIA shall comply with the applicable laws of that state and with the provisions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, O.C.G.A. Chapter 39-A

FINALIZATION:

The adoptive family shall engage at its own cost the legal fees for the finalization of their adoption. This shall take place at the conclusion of the post-placement period. AAA PIA reserves the right to postpone finalization should it appear to be in the best interest of the adoptive child and family.

AAA PIA will prepare the required Court Report at no additional fee (in an agency adoption) and documents necessary for finalization of the adoption and will submit these documents prior to the hearing date to the Superior Court of the county in which the family is finalizing.

POST-ADOPTION SERVICES:

AAA PIA is available as a resource, counselor, and friend on an on-going basis to our adoptive families. We welcome a continuing relationship with our families through the years. We encourage our families to participate in AAA PIA sponsored post-adoption services and activities.

SUBSEQUENT ADOPTIONS:

An adoptive family who has completed a home study through AAA PIA, and who has had the placement of a child in their home must complete finalization of the adoption prior to applying for another home study.

UPDATE OF HOME STUDY:

A domestic home study is current for one year from the approval date. It is the sole responsibility of the adoptive applicant to contact AAA PIA to update the adoption home study six weeks prior to the expiration of a domestic home study. Failure to contact AAA PIA in a timely manner may result in the home study expiring and the adoptive family losing out on a potential adoption situation.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:

All applicants shall have the right of appeal of grievances. Applicants agree not to engage an attorney and/or enter into litigation. Should a difference arise between an applicant and the Caseworker, such differences must be settled in the following manner:

Grievances should first be discussed with the Caseworker involved. If the difference is not resolved, the applicant should inform the Caseworker in writing as to the nature of the grievance within two working weeks. At that time, the applicant should request a conference with the Adoption Supervisor. The Adoption Supervisor will meet with the applicant at the Supervisor's office within two working weeks of the date of receipt of the applicant's written grievance request.

If resolution is not reached within two weeks after the applicant meets with the Supervisor, the nature of the grievances shall be presented, in writing, to the Executive Director by the applicant. The Adoption Supervisor and the Caseworker will also report, in writing, the results of their findings to the Executive Director. The Director will arrange a meeting, within two weeks, with the applicant, the Caseworker, and the Adoption Supervisor. The Executive Director will render a decision, in writing, to the applicant, the Adoption Services Supervisor, and the Caseworker, usually within two weeks after the conference. The decision of the Executive Director is final.

If this procedure does not result in an agreeable resolution, the applicants may choose to participate in an objective, professional mediation service and abide by the recommended resolution. The adoptive applicants will pay for these mediation services.

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ESTABLISHING, MAINTAINING, AND STORAGE OF RECORDS AND FILES:

AAA PIA shall maintain adoption records pertaining to each child and family. All adoption files will be housed in the administrative office of AAA PIA until the adoption is finalized and/or case closed. These records are to be maintained in fireproof, locked file cabinets. Once the adoption is finalized and/or case closed, the adoption records will be converted to a non-paper format. From that time hence, AAA PIA may not retrieve these documents for any person or entity. Per Georgia adoption code law, finalized adoption documents can only be unsealed by court order. This regulation is required for the protection and confidentiality of the adoptive parents, adoptive child, and birth parents. **Therefore, adoptive applicants must keep copies of all their documents.**

Documents provided to AAA PIA by the adoptive family become an official part of the AAA PIA adoption record and are the sole property of AAA PIA.

CLIENT’S RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEEPING DOCUMENTS CURRENT:

Supporting home study documents may or may not be current for only one year from the date on the individual documents (e.g., medicals, CPS forms, GBI reports, reference letters, pet vaccinations, sewage and water approval, employment letters), depending upon the requirements of a placement agency in another state.

Even though the Georgia home study may not have expired at the time of a referral for the placement of a child, the supporting documents may in fact have expired and will need to be resubmitted to the placement agency.

Important: There is no feasible way for AAA PIA to know the following:

- 1) When a referral from a placement agency will be made
- 2) If at the time of referral, client’s documents are current
- 3) Changes in document requirements of placement agency from another state.

Even though the Georgia home study may be current, it is the sole responsibility of the adoptive applicant to contact their placement agency prior to the one-year anniversary of the documents to determine whether or not updated documents need to be submitted by the adoptive applicant to the placement agency in order to meet the requirements of the placement agency, or the state from which the adoptive applicants are adopting. The adoptive applicant may access AAA PIA’s forms to be updated from AAA PIA’s website.

CRIMINAL HISTORY FOR ADOPTIVE CLIENTS:

All adoptive applicants must be forthcoming and honest about a criminal charge. If an applicant has ever been fingerprinted (except for a job, a hunting license, or gun permit), the GBI and/or FBI reports will show this as an arrest. It is understood by the adoptive

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applicants, that no matter what they have been told by a police officer or an attorney, if they were ever fingerprinted in a law enforcement matter, this information will show up on a GBI or FBI check. This includes charges made by the applicant when underage, expunged records, and dropped charges. **Please note that a criminal record does not preclude a favorable approval of the home study**

DISCIPLINE:

AAA Partners in Adoption, Inc. is committed to the philosophy that effective discipline is based on praise and communication. The long-term goal of discipline is to teach children self-control and self-discipline.

The type of discipline is determined by the age of the child and the child's individual needs and personality. Distraction, reasoning, and "time-out" are all effective means for teaching a child self-limiting skills.

FIREARM SAFETY IN THE HOME:

The following policy on firearms is a mandate of the state of Georgia, not the express opinion of AAA PIA. The adoptive applicants must make AAA PIA aware of the existence of all firearms kept in the home. Said firearms must be safely secured in a locked gun case and inaccessible to any minors in the home. This is required prior to the approval/reapproval of the home as a placement resource for children. The home visit cannot take place until all firearms have been safely secured.

If there are no firearms in the home at the time of the home study, the adoptive applicants must agree to inform AAA PIA if any firearms are to be kept in the home in the future prior to finalization of a domestic adoption or during the post-placement supervisory period.

IMMUNIZATION OF CHILDREN:

AAA PIA requires that all children in the home and children being adopted to be immunized for protection against **major** diseases. Certain recent recommended vaccinations are not required, but are left to the determination of the adoptive family or their pediatrician. Families may utilize a 'slow down' schedule for vaccinations, according to their pediatrician's requirements.

PREGNANCY

We agree to notify AAA Partners in Adoption immediately if we become pregnant at any time while the home study is in progress or at any time before a child's placement in our home. In the event of such an occurrence, AAA PIA would counsel the family as to whether the timing is right to continue with an adoption. We understand that each

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addition to a family requires a period of adjustment and understand that the agency’s goal is making sure both the biological and the adopted child have enough time for bonding before the other child is added to the family. **Becoming pregnant during the adoption process does not preclude the pursuit and completion of an adoption.**

POLICY ON INFANT SLEEP POSITION:

AAA Partners in Adoption is committed to the reduction of infant deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). To this end we require all of our adoptive families who adopt children under the age of one year to adhere to the following preventive measures and to sign a statement to this effect.

- a. ALWAYS place the baby on his back to sleep.
- b. Place the baby on a firm mattress, remove all pillows, quilts, bumper pads, sheepskins, stuffed toys and other soft items from the crib.
- c. Do not have the infant sleep in the parent’s bed or share their crib with another sibling.
- d. Dress the baby in a sleeping garment instead of covering him with a blanket. Swaddling is o.k.

The above measures have been provided by the National SIDS Foundation & Infant Death Program Support Center.

I have read, understood, and will comply with the Policies and Procedures of AAA Partners in Adoption, Inc.

Adoptive Father **Adoptive Mother** **Caseworker** **Date**

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