

## **Placement Protocol on county Staff Fostering and Adopting Alameda County Dependent Children**

### **Overview**

Alameda County Social Services Employees, who are not Department of Children and Family Services staff, may be considered to become county - licensed foster parents or adoptive parents for an Alameda County dependent child. Employees of the Department of Children and Family Services may become foster parents or adoptive parents through an outside foster family agency or the State Department of Social Services. Under certain circumstances, a Department of Children and Family Services employee may adopt an Alameda County dependent child if the conditions and procedures under the 'Adoption' section below are followed. This Protocol has been adopted by Alameda County Social Services Agency, Children and Family Services Department, in order to ensure that the best interests of both children and employees are served.

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### **Adoption**

It is a conflict of interest for the Alameda County Social Services Adoption Agency to assess and approve home studies for employees of the Children and Family Services Department. Alameda County employees, with the exception of DCFS staff, may apply to adopt an Alameda County dependent or freed child. The employee must complete the “Questionnaire for a County employee wishing to adopt an Alameda County Dependent” - see relevant section below to locate the questionnaire. ACSSA Adoptions may process the applications in such cases and approve the home study provided the following conditions are met:

1. There should be no actual or apparent conflict of interest. Example: A county employee adoptive parent could not be in charge of their own supervision or be responsible for making decisions (in their county function) that would influence their adoptive parent function or earnings.
2. County employees will not receive any advantage or preference in becoming adoptive parents or in obtaining adoptive placements. DCFS employees can be considered for the adoption of a child from Alameda County ONLY under the following circumstances:
  - The court has determined that Adoption is the permanent plan and/or the child is legally freed. There is no relative available for placement for the child.
  - The child cannot be placed with his/her siblings in their existing placement(s).
  - The current resource family does not want or is unable to adopt the child.
  - There is no approved or waiting family that is available to adopt the child.
  - The employee has been referred to get an adoptive home study through a licensed adoption agency other than Alameda County DCFS' Adoption Agency.

In addition to the above, when the applicant for adoption is the assigned Child Welfare Worker (CWW), the CWW must inform his or her Supervisor of his or her intentions. The assigned worker's Supervisor or Program Manager and the Department's Executive Team will conduct an internal review to determine whether there is an actual conflict of interest and whether there has been any conflict of interest in the provision of services.

### **Licensing**

Alameda County Social Services employees, with the exception of DCFS staff, will be considered to become county-licensed foster parents. The employee will complete the PRIDE training. In addition to the standard qualifications, the following factors will be considered if a foster care licensing applicant is also a county employee.

1. There should be no actual or apparent conflict of interest. Example: A county employee foster parent may not be in charge of his or her own supervision or be responsible for making decisions (in his or her county function) that would influence their foster parent function or earnings.
2. County employees will not receive any advantage or preference in becoming a foster parent or in obtaining foster care placements.
3. Alameda County shall not license a Children and Family Services employee. This conflict is based on a MOU signed by the state and Alameda County. Employees shall be referred to the state's regional office. Once licensed by the state, such employees cannot accept placements of dependent children of Alameda County unless written permission is received from the Director of Children and Family Services.

### **Placement of Dependent Children**

The following policies apply to the placement of an Alameda County court dependent in the home of an employee:

1. Alameda County Social Services employees, with the exception of DCFS staff, may become licensed or approved for placements for Alameda County dependent children. When a dependent child of Alameda County Juvenile Court is placed in the home of any current DCFS employee, the family must be licensed or certified by an alternate licensing source, (i.e. the Community Care Licensing District Office). Supervision of this placement must be performed by another county.
2. Employees of Alameda County Children and Family Services Department must be licensed or approved by another county child welfare agency or a private Foster Family Agency in order to have a dependent child of Alameda County placed in their home. In addition the following policies apply:
  - An Alameda County Child Welfare Worker will assigned to the case/child.
  - The case will be marked sensitive in CWS/CMS.
  - A Child Welfare Worker in the same unit as the employee in whose home the child is placed will not carry the case.
  - Any investigation due to allegations of abuse or neglect on an employee of the Department of Children and Family Services will be conducted by a neighboring county.

3. DCFS employees who have dependent relatives in care must be approved by the standard relative approval process. The assessment must be completed outside the employee's unit. The dependent child's case must be marked sensitive.
4. An employee will be assessed for conflict when there is a consideration of legal guardianship or a permanent relational connection per this policy.

### **Placement of Dependents in High Profile Homes**

There is an appearance of conflict when elected or appointed county executives, Board of Supervisors, and Department heads are considered for placement of a dependent child. Under these circumstances, consultation with county counsel is required to deal with individual situations before any placement decision is made.

### **Questionnaire for employees who wish to adopt an Alameda County dependent child**

Attached is a mandatory questionnaire to be completed by DCFS employee adoptive applicants and any adopting partner when the adoptive child is an Alameda County dependent child. Answers to these questions are presented to the Department Executive Team for an internal review to assess conflict of interest. When the employee notifies his or her Supervisor of the intention to adopt, as required, the Supervisor will provide this questionnaire to the employee. The employee will return the completed questionnaire to the Supervisor, who will consult with the Adoptive Home Study Supervisor, and notify the Adoption Program Manager who will initiate the internal review referenced above. Please open the Questionnaire, print and provide to DCFS employee. [Please contact Alameda County Department of Children and Family Services for a copy of the Questionnaire.]

Alameda County Social Services  
Department of Children and Family Services

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