

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Adoption/ Post Adoption Practice Guidelines

Purpose: Both CFS Agencies and private adoption agencies complete adoption work. Private agencies bill for services and during Covid 19 this practice guideline will allow for alternative service delivery, while ensuring the safety of families, organizations and program staff, based on public health information. All CFS agencies who support adoption work, including subsidy requests, are subject to these interim guidelines.

Adoption Regulation Requirements: All the requirements and timeframes set out under the Adoption Regulation, including medical reports, child abuse registry checks, prior contact checks and criminal records checks, continue to apply in order for prospective adoptive families to be approved. This means adoption placements, except for relinquishing at birth, will be delayed until COVID-19 public health directives regarding physical distancing have been lifted.

Home Visits: Effective immediately, no home visits for homestudy assessments of prospective adoptive clients will occur until further notice. In the interim, agency staff can continue to complete homestudy interviews with clients by telephone and, Skype or another video calling platform. Agencies cannot approve prospective adoptive families until a home visit has been completed.

Homestudy Updates: Until further notice, these may be completed via telephone, Skype, etc., without a home visit. However, the lack of a home visit due to COVID-19 must be documented in the homestudy update. An exception to this policy is where, since the last study/update, a family has moved to a new residence or substantially renovated the residence where they resided at the time of their last homestudy/update period. In this case, a home visit to the new/renovated residence is required, and must be deferred until further notice.

Adoption Placement – Division 1 (Permanent Ward): The Central Adoption Registry, until further notice, will not be providing referrals for permanent ward or approved adoptive applicants. If there is an urgent case situation, please email postadoption@gov.mb.ca to request assistance.

Division 2 (Private): Completing these placements is considered essential, as birth parents are planning for their newborn infants to be adopted and the children are to be placed within 48 hours. The public health protocols must be followed in regards to contact with birth parents and prospective adoptive parents in completing a Division 2 adoption placement.

Division 3 (Intercountry): Child proposals will be processed, but trips by families to their child's country of origin are suspended until further notice. If the Manitoba Central Authority approves the child proposal, it will be forwarded to the appropriate Manitoba adoption agency to share with prospective adoptive applicants. Prospective adoptive parents will continue to be required to have the child's medical information reviewed by a physician, via a telephone appointment, prior to their accepting the child proposal.

Division 4 (Defacto), Division 5 (Extended Family) and Division 6 (Parent's Own):

The completion of these adoptions are suspended until further notice. Children will remain living with their prospective adoptive families during this time.

Education Seminars: These are suspended until further notice.

Post Adoption Services: The Post Adoption Services website has been updated to advise that Post Adoption Registry staff will respond to clients in alternate ways to reduce in person contact. Clients should be advised to make inquiries via the toll free telephone number (1-855-837-5542) or via email address (postadoption@gov.mb.ca). Face to face appointments may be arranged for essential issues only and all Public Health protocols must be followed,

Further, the requirement of a witness on the Post Adoption registry forms will be waived until further notice. Clients may send in forms by email or mail with their identifying information only and **Do Not Require a Witness**, due to COVID-19.

Adoption Financial Assistance: These requests are considered essential and will continue to be processed electronically. Administrative burden has been reduced as follows:

- **Ongoing Assistance:** Ongoing assistance will be extended 60 days upon request, if the date of expiration occurs between March 1 - July 1, 2020. Adoption workers are required to notify by email (postadoption@gov.mb.ca) the names of the families, child names and the per diem rates for an extension of 60 days.
- **Special Services Assistance:**
 - **Prescription requests:** Prescription requests/renewals will continue to be processed according to usual procedures.
 - **Therapy requests:** Therapy requests/renewals will be approved/renewed with evidence the therapy is being provided via phone or digital platform such as Skype. The therapist is required to provide an email to the child's case manager of how they will be providing service to the clients.
 - **Dental requests:** All services are cancelled until further notice. In emergency situations, case managers are to provide adoptive families insurance coverage and the dental billing via email to postadoption@gov.mb.ca for processing.
 - **Psychological Assessments:** Suspended until further notice. If there is an urgent case situation, please email postadoption@gov.mb.ca.
 - **Mileage/ accommodation requests:** Suspended until further notice. If there is an urgent case situation, please email postadoption@gov.mb.ca.