

THE ADOPTION HOME STUDY



*A Guide to Home Study Investigations for Prospective
Adoptive Parents in New York State*



Produced by Family Connections, Inc. (September 2023)

An Authorized New York State Adoption Agency
and Hague Accredited

156 Port Watson Street, P.O. Box 5555

Cortland, New York 13045

607-756-6574

info@adoptfamilyconnections.org

www.adoptfamilyconnections.org

A GUIDE TO THE GUIDE

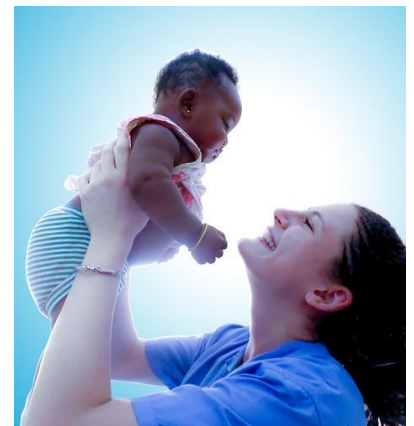
Who Needs to Complete a Home Study?	3
What are Some Tips for a Successful Home Study?.....	4
What is the Purpose of a Home Study?	5
What are the Home Study Qualifications for Prospective Adoptive Parents?	7
What are the Components of a Home Study?	12
What to Expect with a Home Visit?	15
What is the Home Study Process and Typical Time for Completion?	16
What is the Home Study Investigation Report?	18



WHO NEEDS TO COMPLETE A HOME STUDY?

Any individual or couple who wishes to adopt a child (birth through 21 years domestically; birth through 16 years internationally) must successfully complete a home study investigation and be approved as an adoptive parent(s). Please note that international country requirements may require couples to be married. Persons intending to adopt a child through any of the following adoption processes must have a home study investigation conducted:

- ☐ **Kinship Adoption** - The adoption of child who is biologically related to the prospective adoptive parent(s) (e.g. niece, nephew, grandchild) in the United States or in a foreign country.
- ☐ **Step-Parent Adoption** - The adoption of the child(ren) of a spouse.
- ☐ **Second Parent Adoption** - The adoption of the child(ren) of a partner.
- ☐ **Public Domestic System Adoption** – The adoption of a child(ren) who is in the care of the foster care system, who has been legally freed for adoption, and whose foster parents do not wish to adopt him/her.
- ☐ **Private Domestic Agency Adoption** – The adoption of a baby with the support and guidance of an authorized/licensed adoption agency. The agency searches, locates, and matches you with a birth parent(s). The birth parent(s) voluntarily surrender their custodial rights to the adoption agency who then places the child in your home for the purpose of adoption. In an agency adoption, the birth parent(s) have 30 days in which to rescind their surrender of the child. The adoptive family receives legal custodial rights to the child upon adoption finalization in the courts.
- ☐ **Private Domestic Independent Adoption** – The adoption of a baby privately through an agreement between a birth parent(s) and adoptive family. The adoptive family searches, locates and matches with a birth family by themselves. The adoptive family supports the adoption plan



and makes arrangements for the adoption with private attorneys. The birth parent(s) voluntarily surrender their custodial rights to the child and the adoptive family is granted guardianship until the adoption is finalized in the courts. In a private independent adoption, the birth parent(s) have 45 days in which to rescind their surrender of the child.

- **International (aka Inter-country) Adoption** – The adoption of a child(ren) from a foreign country. Not all children living in foreign countries will be eligible for adoption.

WHAT ARE SOME TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL HOME STUDY

It is understandable that the home study investigation process and required paperwork can seem intimidating to prospective adoptive parents. Most prospective adoptive parents are very nervous about the home study investigation. To help calm the nerves ...

- Employ the services of an authorized adoption agency with expertise in home study investigations
- Have an adoption agency and social worker complete your home study investigation whom you trust and feel comfortable with and confident in
- Work with an adoption agency and social worker who has experience in the type of adoption you are planning (e.g domestic infant, international, special needs)
- Remind yourself that the home study investigation is not only to ensure the safety of a child in your home but to also prepare you and support you as you become an adoptive parent
- Know that your social worker and adoption agency want you to be successful and are there to help you through the process

Some prospective adoptive parents can be overwhelmed by the home study investigation process and paperwork requirements. To help work through the process ...

- **Organize:** Make a list of the required steps in the process and the required home study documents. Take this list and organize it by who needs to complete the step or document (e.g. father, mother, adult household member, reference, medical provider) and when it needs to be completed.
- **Assign Tasks:** The home study process is for the whole family and no one person should be responsible for the process or paperwork. Give each person (e.g. mom, dad, adult household member) their own responsibilities and assign them tasks to complete (e.g. make medical appointments, obtain bank records, complete adoption paperwork).
- **Prioritize:** The home study provider can provide the family with information regarding the time it takes to complete a task (e.g. it can take 2 weeks to get a fingerprint appointment or it may take a month or more to obtain a child abuse history report or getting a passport can take 6 weeks or more). Then decide what to do first, second, third, etc.
- **Group:** Completing the required steps and paperwork in one setting is an impossible task. So once organized and prioritized, divide up the requirements and work on it in groups. For example, one night contact references to request recommendation letters, the next day write the autobiography, then gather financial documents, and so on.
- **Set Goals and Deadlines:** Determine when you wish to complete your home study investigation and then set small goals and deadlines for each task to ensure that you finish your home study investigation within the timeframe you planned (of course plan for unexpected paperwork delays).



MOST IMPORTANTLY, ENJOY THE PROCESS! A home study investigation is the first step in a family's adoption journey, and it should be an educational and enlightening experience. It is a wonderful beginning that will bring the joy of a child into a forever, loving family.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A HOME STUDY?

The home study investigation process has multiple purposes:

- 1. To prepare the prospective adoptive parents for the addition of a child(ren) to their family through adoption.**

The home study social worker will discuss such things as child development, attachment, initial child transition into a family, life-long adoption matters, trans-racial and trans-cultural adoption issues, separation and loss, the impact of institutional care on a child's medical and developmental needs, open adoption relationships with birth parents, undiagnosed conditions, limited social/medical/genetic history, etc. The social worker will also refer the family to required adoption training, provide a listing of appropriate adoption literature, and connect the family to adoption support networks and/or other families who have adopted in the same manner as their adoption plan. The social worker can suggest or refer the family for extra training they feel is necessary.



- 2. To ensure that an adopted child would be safe and nurtured in the prospective adoptive parents' home.**

The social worker is responsible to ensure that any child placed in the family's home for adoption will be loved and safe. The social worker will assess the prospective adoptive family's:

- a. Parenting skills
- b. Home for safety (e.g. smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detector, secured firearms, protected pool, discuss child-proofing plans) and appropriate space for a child(ren).

- c. History of child abuse and maltreatment
- d. History of criminal activity
- e. Financial stability
- f. Social, family, and educational history
- g. Family and social network of support for adoption and parenting
- h. Stability of marriage and/or partnership
- i. Health status
- j. Other risk factors



3. To explore your adoption plan so the adoption agency can properly assist your family and so the home study investigation report can accurately state your adoption wishes.

The social worker will discuss with the family their plans for adoption regarding gender of child(ren), age of child(ren), ethnicity of child(ren), country of origin, and any special needs of the child(ren). This will allow the social worker to help the family choose an adoption plan that is the “right fit” for their family. This will also ensure that the home study investigation report will properly approve the family for their specific adoption plan.

4. To understand the essence of who you and your family are so that the adoption agency can support your needs and the home study investigation report effectively reflects who you are.

The social worker will assess the family’s social and educational history, family structure, parenting history, availability of support networks (family, friends, and adoption support groups), and knowledge of adoption. This will help the social worker provide necessary support and education to the family. It will also ensure that the family’s home study investigation report appropriately reflects the family.

5. To prepare the prospective adoptive parents for the adoption process.

The home study social worker will explore with the family the adoption process (domestic or international), the risks and unknowns inherent in adoption, expenses, potential challenges, and possible delays associated with adoption.

For domestic adoptive families, the social worker will also discuss the adoption procedures (e.g., surrender of custody, placement, adoption finalization), family profile development, outreach to birth parents, building open adoption relationships, meeting potential birth parents, matching with birth parents, hospital planning, placement, post-placement supervision, post adoption contact and on-going relationships with birth parents.

For international adoptive families, the social worker will also discuss the adoption procedures involved with international adoption including, working with an international adoption placement agency, Citizenship and Immigration Services approval, dossier development, child referral, travel to country, adoption of child, immigration into the United States, and post-adoption supervision.

WHAT ARE THE HOME STUDY QUALIFICATIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS?

An adoption home study investigation explores the following characteristics of prospective adoptive parent(s):

- ✓ Capacity to give and receive affection
- ✓ Ability to provide for a child's physical and emotional needs
- ✓ Ability to accept the intrinsic worth of a child
- ✓ Ability to risk and share the child's past
- ✓ Ability to understand the impact of the separation and loss that the child has experienced through adoption
- ✓ Capacity to have realistic expectations and goals
- ✓ Flexibility and ability to change



- ✓ Ability to cope with problems, stress and frustration
- ✓ Feelings about parenting an adopted child
- ✓ Ability to make a commitment to a child placed in the home
- ✓ Ability to use community resources

In New York State, home study investigations review the following criteria to determine the eligibility of an individual or couple to be approved as adoptive parents. Please understand that for international adoption, prospective adoptive parents may also need to meet the criteria established by the United State's Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the federal Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, and criteria required by the country from which they are planning to adopt.

1. Age of Prospective Adoptive Parents

At least one of the prospective adoptive parents must be at least 18 years old for domestic adoption. International country requirements for minimum age of prospective adoptive parents may be different. The individual(s) should have a reasonable expectation to live until the child's majority. The agency seeks to determine whether the applicant is likely to be able to provide care for an adopted child until the child's majority and whether an applicant has the energy, flexibility, and other abilities to successfully fulfill these parental responsibilities in the best interests of adoptive children. An applicant may be rejected where the agency's adoption study indicates a lack of such abilities.

2. Health of Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

Prospective adoptive parent(s) shall be in such physical condition that it is reasonable to expect him/her to live to the child's majority and to have the energy and other abilities needed to fulfill the parental responsibilities. A report of a physical examination (NYS form OCFS-5200D Medical Form) disease, infection, or illness or any physical or mental health condition(s) which might affect the proper care of an adopted child, shall be required by the home study provider.

3. Marital Status of Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The marital status of the prospective adoptive parent(s) is not a factor in the acceptance or rejection as adoptive parent(s). However, one married partner may not adopt without the other. Two unrelated qualified adults (of different or same gender) living together can be approved as adoptive parents. A single person can be approved as an adoptive parent. Please note that some international countries will not allow same sex couples to adopt.

4. Fertility of Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

Prospective adoptive parent(s) may not be rejected for adoption because of his, her or their fertility (capacity to have biological children). Applicant couples who wish to adopt because of a belief that one or both of them are infertile shall not be required to provide proof of infertility. The significance of fertility as it relates to the desire to adopt shall be explored in the adoption process.

5. Family Composition of the Prospective Adoptive Family

Prospective adoptive parent(s)' family size and composition is considered as it relates to the ability of a family to care for another child and the quality of life that will be offered to an adoptive child. The presence or absence of children or other adult household members (e.g. grandparents, adult children) in the prospective adoptive home shall not be a basis for rejecting prospective adoptive parent(s) or according to international country requirements.

6. The Health and Safety of the Home of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The prospective adoptive parent(s)' home will be inspected for safety and appropriate space for a child(ren). The social worker will assess the sleeping and living space that will be available for the child. The social worker will also include the presence of working fire and carbon monoxide detectors, the proper storage of potential child hazards (e.g. medicine, cleaning supplies), the secured placement of firearms (if any), the safe lock and alarm systems for a pool,



and other child-proofing safeguards (e.g. gated stairs, outlet covers, cabinet locks). In accordance with NYS OCFS Form 5200E Safety Review.

7. Sexual Orientation or Gender of Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

Prospective adoptive parents may not be discriminated against or rejected as adoptive parents on the basis of sexual orientation or gender.

8. The Religion of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The religious beliefs of the prospective adoptive parents may not be discriminated against or considered in their approval or disapproval as adoptive parents.

9. The Race of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The race and ethnicity of the prospective adoptive parents may not be discriminated against or considered in their approval or disapproval as adoptive parents.

10. The Financial Status of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The home study investigator (social worker) considers the prospective adoptive parents' ability to budget their resources (income, assets, and liabilities) in such a way that a child placed with them can be reasonably assured of minimum standards of nutrition, health, shelter, clothing, and other essentials. An applicant whose budgeting and money management skills appear deficient to assure such minimum standards shall be referred to any available resources, which might improve these skills. No prospective adoptive parent shall be rejected as adoptive parent(s) based on low income. However, for prospective adoptive parents wishing to adopt internationally they must maintain an income greater than 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or have assets that ensure the child's financial stability.

11. Employment and Education of Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The employment, education, or volunteer activities of the prospective adoptive parents will be explored during the home study investigation but may not be a factor in the approval or rejection of an individual as an adoptive parent.

12. The Parenting and/or Child Care Experience of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The home study investigator (social worker) will explore the prospective adoptive parents' experience as parents or with caring for or educating other children. If the prospective adoptive parent(s) lack parenting skills or knowledge of childcare, the social worker will offer them opportunities to increase experience, knowledge and skills (e.g. individual instruction, literature, face-to-face or on-line training, networking with experienced adoptive parents, etc). However, no prospective adoptive parent will be rejected as adoptive parents solely on the basis of a lack of such experience.



13. The Social Networks and Community Support of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The prospective adoptive parents' ability to locate and take advantage of human support (family, friends, church, etc) and organizational resources (e.g. medical services, therapies, educational resources, support groups, etc) to strengthen their capacity as parents will be assessed by the social worker.

14. The Child Abuse and Maltreatment History of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The home study investigator will acquire child abuse and maltreatment history reports for each prospective adoptive parent and all other adult household members (e.g. adult children, grandparents). For prospective adoptive parents planning to adopt domestically or internationally child abuse and maltreatment

history reports will be obtained from each State and country in which the prospective adoptive parents and adult household members have resided since their 18th birthday.

If the prospective adoptive parent(s) and/or adult household member has been or is currently the subject of an indicated (aka founded) child abuse and maltreatment report, the home study provider agency shall determine on the basis of the information it has available whether to approve or reject the individual as an adoptive parent. If the agency disapproves the individual(s) as an adoptive parent(s), giving the indicated child abuse report as a reason, the individual shall be informed of his/her right to a fair hearing. Such fair hearing would be for the purpose of deciding whether the indicated report is sustained by a fair preponderance of the evidence and, if so, whether such person has been rehabilitated so that the health, safety, and welfare of a child will not be endangered if such person's application for adoption is approved. Some indicated reports will automatically disqualify you being approved.

16. The Vulnerable Persons Abuse or Maltreatment History of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The home study investigator will screen each prospective adoptive parent and all other adult household members (e.g. adult children, grandparents) for the abuse or maltreatment of vulnerable persons (i.e. persons with special needs) through the Vulnerable Persons' Central Register administered by the New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs.



If a prospective adoptive parent or adult household member has been or is currently found responsible for serious or repeated acts of abuse and neglect in programs subject to the jurisdiction of the New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs, the Agency shall determine on the basis of the information it has available whether to approve or reject the prospective adoptive parent(s). If the Agency disapproves/rejects the prospective adoptive

parent, giving the indicated report as a reason, the prospective adoptive parent shall be informed of his/her right to a fair hearing. Such fair hearing would be for the purpose of deciding whether the indicated report is sustained by a fair preponderance of the evidence and, if so, whether such person has been rehabilitated so that the health, safety, and welfare of a child will not be endangered if such person's application for adoption is approved.

17. The Criminal History of the Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The home study investigator will acquire state, national, and international criminal history reports for each prospective adoptive parent and all other adult household members (e.g. adult children, grandparents). For prospective adoptive parents planning to adopt domestically or internationally criminal history reports will be obtained from the New York State Office of Children and Families Services (via the New York Division of Criminal Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation) and from any country in which the prospective adoptive parents and adult household members have resided since their 18th birthdays. In addition, each prospective adoptive parent and adult household member must sign and have notarized a Sworn Statement of Criminal History disclosing any incidences of criminal activity.

Family Connections also requires prospective adoptive families obtain an FBI Identity History Check on themselves and submit the results to the agency.

If a prospective adoptive parent or adult household member has a criminal history or is currently under investigation for an alleged crime, the home study provider agency shall determine based on the information it has available whether to approve or reject the individual as an adoptive parent. If the agency disapproves the individual(s) as an adoptive parent(s), giving the individual's criminal history as a reason, the individual shall be informed of his/her right to a fair hearing. Such fair hearing would be for the purpose of deciding whether the indicated report is sustained by a fair preponderance of the evidence and, if so, whether such person has been rehabilitated so that the health, safety, and welfare of a child will not be endangered if such person's application for adoption is approved.

In New York State, any individual who has been convicted of crimes involving violence, or endangering the welfare of a child are automatically disqualified as an adoptive parent.

Important Note: Pursuant to New York State adoption law, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services requirements, the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption and the federal Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, applicants who wish to become adoptive parents and all adult household members (older than 18



years) in a prospective adoptive home must agree to disclose with candor and honesty all information pertinent to their adoption and personal history as required for their approval as adoptive parents. Adoptive parent applicants and any adult members of the household have a duty to disclose and must: give true and complete information to the home study provider; disclose any arrest, conviction, or other adverse criminal history in the U.S. or abroad, even if the record has been expunged, sealed, pardoned, or the subject of any other amelioration; and disclose other relevant information, such as physical, mental or emotional health issues or behavioral issues.

Failure to be truthful or fully disclose pertinent information could result in the denial of approval as adoptive parent(s). Furthermore, this duty to disclose is an ongoing duty and continues through the finalization of adoption and immigration of child (if applicable). Approved adoptive parents and all adult household members in an approved adoptive home must agree to disclose pertinent information fully and honestly to this agency on an on-going basis during and after their adoptive placement. Failure to be truthful or fully disclose pertinent information could result in the approval as adoptive parent(s) being revoked.

Please understand that the criteria described within this Guide determines the eligibility of an individual or couple to be approved as adoptive parents *in New York State*. Every state has its own eligibility standards for adoptive parents. If you live outside of New York State, please consult your state's adoption regulatory agency for information regarding qualifications of adoptive parents.

Family Connections, Inc., an authorized New York State adoption agency, recognizes that every individual and family is unique. Thus, if you have specific questions regarding your family's eligibility to become approved as adoptive parents, please contact our agency at 1-607-756-6574 or info@adoptfamilyconnections.org. We would be happy to explore your qualifications as adoptive parents.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF A HOME STUDY?

To successfully complete a home study investigation, prospective adoptive parents must complete an array of tasks, including:

Face-to-Face Interviews of the prospective adoptive parent(s), children in the home, and adult household members (persons living in the home age 18 years and older) by an adoption Social Worker. The number of interviews is determined by the specific requirements of the family's planned adoption. The social worker will ask the prospective adoptive family questions regarding:

- Reasons for making an adoption plan
- Adoption plan specifics - number of children, age of child(ren), gender, ethnicity, special needs of child (if applicable), country from which adopting
- Plans for family leave, child care and/or schooling after the child(ren) arrives home
- Previous adoptions and/or home study investigations
- Parenting history and/or experience with children
- Parenting beliefs and discipline techniques



- Each prospective adoptive parent's childhood and extended family relationships
- Each prospective adoptive parent's education and work history
- Each prospective adoptive parent's hobbies and interests
- History of child abuse or maltreatment (victim or offender)
- History of crime (victim or offender)
- History of drug or alcohol use
- History of mental health challenges
- History of physical health issues
- The family's religious beliefs
- Marriage(s), partners, or other adult relationships; if married or have a partner - the status of the relationship and how the couple makes decisions and resolves conflicts
- Each adult household member's social history and feelings about the adoption
- Each child's understanding and feelings about their parents' adoption plan
- Family, friend and community support for adoption
- Prospective adoptive family's community (e.g., schools, parks, medical services, etc)

Home Visit(s) / Home Safety Assessment will be conducted by an adoption Social Worker to ensure the prospective adoptive family's home is suitable and safe for a child(ren). The number of home visits is determined by the specific requirements of the adoption. Please refer to "What to Expect with a Home Visit" on page 15 of this Guide for specifics regarding the home safety assessment.

Child Abuse and Maltreatment History Reports, Vulnerable Persons Abuse and Maltreatment History Reports and Criminal History Reports (as discussed previously on pages 10-12)

New York State Required Documents

- Self-Assessment Form (OCFS 5200A)
- Adoptive Parent Application (OCFS 5200B)
- Adoption Registry (OCFS 5200C)
- Medical Form (OCFS 5200D)
- Resource Characteristics (OCFS 5200I)
- NYS Reference Forms (OCFS 5200H)



- Safety Review Form (OCFS 5200E)
- Household Composition & Relationship Form (OCFS 5200F)
- Genogram (OCFS 5200G)
- Final Assessment & Determination (OCFS 5200J)

Medical Reports for the prospective adoptive parent(s), adult household members, and children in the home must be provided to the home study provider. For each individual living in the home, the medical provider must report on:

- the general health of the individual
- expected life expectancy of the individual (normal or shortened)
- the absence of communicable disease(s)
- chronic medical conditions and their potential impact on the individual's capacity to parent a child (if any)
- physical health concern(s) that may affect the proper care of a child
- mental health condition(s) and their relation to parenting ability
- medications

An Analysis of the Financial Resources of the prospective adoptive family will be conducted. The prospective adoptive parent(s)' must provide proof of income, assets and liabilities. They must also indicate their monthly net income and monthly liabilities. In addition, proof of health insurance and life insurance is required.

The Adoptive Parent(s)' Birth, Marriage, and Divorce (if any) must be verified. The prospective adoptive parents must provide their birth certificates, their marriage certificate and divorce decrees (if any) to the home study provider. They will also need to provide a copy of their Certificate of Naturalization if they have immigrated from another country.

Adoption Questionnaires will be completed by the prospective adoptive parents. The questionnaires explore the family's understanding and preparedness for the adoption process and for parenting an adopted child along with NYS OCFS 5200A Self-Assessment form.

The Adoptive Parent(s)' Family, Education, Employment, Martial, and Parenting History will be explored by the adoption Social Worker. The prospective adoptive parents will:

- 1) provide information regarding their nuclear and extended families including relationships with parents, sisters, brothers, nieces, and nephews.
- 2) indicate their educational attainments (degrees and honors)
- 3) confirm their current employment and discuss their work history
- 4) discuss their relationship (marital or life partnership) and any past marriages (if any). If a single individual, the social worker will explore current and past adult relationships if currently parenting - speak of and demonstrate their parenting skills with their current children; discuss their plans for parenting and disciplining an adopted child(ren)
- 5) if not currently parenting - speak of their experience with children and their parenting beliefs and intended techniques; discuss their plans for parenting and disciplining an adopted child(ren)

Personal References from individuals and one family member who have known the prospective adoptive family for a long period of time are required. A minimum of three positive references must be provided. The references should comment on the prospective adoptive parents' personal values, status of their marriage or life partnership, parenting history or experience with children, and suitability for adoptive parenting. The reference providers will be sent a reference form to complete for the family; NYS OCFS 5200H form.

Adoption Training will be completed by the prospective adoptive parents. The adoption Social Worker will assess each family's specific training needs. The Social Worker may provide one-on-one personal training for the prospective adoptive family and/or refer the family to group classroom training. All families working with Family Connections are required to complete on-line training that is provided, at no cost to the family, through Creating a Family. In addition, the Social Worker will provide the family with a suggested reading list of relevant adoption literature and refer the family to local adoption support networks.



For families adopting a child(ren) internationally, they will be required to complete a minimum of ten hours of training as required by the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. The training must include but is not limited to, the following topics: the process of international adoption including risks, delays, and challenges, effects of malnourishment, impact on child of leaving native country, effects of institutionalization, issues of attachment and other emotional problems, separation and loss, cultural diversity and sensitivity, adoption throughout the lifespan; medical, development and behavioral issues as it pertains to international adoption.

WHAT TO EXPECT WITH A HOME VISIT?

Every prospective adoptive family will have a home visit conducted by an adoption Social Worker to ensure the safety and suitability of the home for a child(ren). The Social Worker will tour the home to determine if the home has proper space for an adopted child(ren) and is well protected and free of potential hazards. During the home visit, the Social Worker will be looking for:



- ✓ Child proofing or a plan for child proofing if no children are currently in the home
- ✓ Fire/smoke detectors on every level of the home
- ✓ Carbon monoxide detector in the home
- ✓ Presence of a fire extinguisher
- ✓ Evacuation plan with a designated meeting area
- ✓ Potential hazards (e.g. medicines, cleaning supplies) secured and out of reach
- ✓ Stair railings
- ✓ Fenced/alarmed pool (if any)
- ✓ Gated and protected fireplaces and/or wood stoves (if any)
- ✓ Secured firearms in a locked gun safe with ammunition securely stored and locked in a separate location

- ✓ Overall maintenance of the home inside and out
- ✓ Other potential safety concerns
- ✓ Adequate space for the addition of a child(ren) to the home
 - appropriate bedroom space (e.g. size, windows, proximity to parent(s)' bedroom)
 - bathroom facilities
 - kitchen/dining area
 - recreational and relaxation space (e.g. living room, playroom)

If the Social Worker has any concerns regarding the safety of the home, the prospective adoptive parents will be given an opportunity to correct the safety hazard.

Most prospective adoptive parent(s) are anxious about their home visit but it gives the prospective adoptive parent(s) an opportunity to plan for and envision their adopted child(ren) in their home.

WHAT IS THE HOME STUDY PROCESS AND TYPICAL TIME FOR COMPLETION?

To successfully complete a home study investigation prospective adoptive parent(s) must complete a series of tasks:

- 1) **Apply for Services:** Research, select and apply to a home study provider authorized or licensed in prospective adoptive parents' state of residence (e.g. Family Connections, Inc. in New York).
- 2) **Complete fingerprint appointments:** There will be one fingerprint appointment that will be covered by NYS OCFS and then there will be a second appointment for an FBI Identity History Check. This second report will be paid for by the prospective adoptive family.
- 3) **Complete Medical Examinations:** Have medical examinations for each prospective adoptive parent, every adult household member and every child living in the home completed and submit the medical report (NYS OCFS 5200D Medical Form) to the home study provider.

- 4) **Request Personal References:** Ask three to six friends, co-workers, clergy, including one family member who knows you well if they are willing to complete a reference (NYS OCFS 5200H Reference Form) and submit it to the home study provider. You will complete a contact information form and submit it to Family Connections who will send the forms to the reference provider.
- 5) **Complete Face-to-Face Interviews:** Participate in home study investigation interviews with the adoption Social Worker. These can be in person or virtual.
- 6) **Conduct Home Visit/Inspection:** Have the adoption Social Worker visit the home and complete an evaluation of the home's safety and suitability for a child(ren).
- 7) **Finish Adoption Training:** Complete training as indicated by the home study provider and international adoption placement agency (if any).
- 8) **Submit Home Study Documentation:** Complete and provide required home study investigation paperwork to the home study provider. In New York State, the documents may include, but are not limited to:
 - ✓ Child abuse and maltreatment informational form and release of information agreement for child abuse and maltreatment review (a release so States may provide the results of their child abuse and maltreatment history search for each prospective adoptive parents and adult household member to the home study provider)
 - ✓ Sworn statements of criminal history for each prospective adoptive parent and all adult household members
 - ✓ Medical reports for each prospective adoptive parent, all adult household members, and all children living in the home
 - ✓ One picture of family and one of the outside of the home



- ✓ Informational form containing demographic information (e.g. address, phone number, employer, family members, guardians, education, etc)
- ✓ Autobiographies for each prospective adoptive parent
- ✓ Adoption questionnaires
- ✓ Proof of adoption training (Certificates of completion from Creating a Family).
- ✓ Contact information form for reference providers
- ✓ Financial statement (income, assets, and liabilities) with documentation including current Federal Income Tax, bank statements, paystubs, etc.
- ✓ Proof of employment (paystubs, letter of employment)
- ✓ Birth certificates of prospective adoptive parents
- ✓ Marriage certificate (if any)
- ✓ Divorce decrees (if any)
- ✓ Passports and Certificate of Naturalization (if applicable) of prospective adoptive parents and adult household members, if adopting internationally.
- ✓ Duty to Fully Disclose Statement
- ✓ Driver's License

Depending upon the needs of the family, the requirements of the adoption process, the country from which the family is adopting, and the diligence of the adoptive family, a home study investigation can typically be completed within 4 months.

WHAT IS THE HOME STUDY INVESTIGATION REPORT?

At the conclusion of the home study investigation, the adoption Social Worker will write a report that will officially approve the individual or couple as adoptive parents. Typically, the report contains:

- A. **Cover Page:** Contains identifying information of the family and statement of adoption plan.
- B. **Introduction:** Statement of the purpose of the home study investigation.
- C. **Social History of Each Prospective Adoptive Parent:** Exploration of the prospective adoptive parent's family, education, physical description, hobbies, lifestyle, life experience, and employment.
- D. **Social History of Adult Household Members:** Brief history of all adult household members (if any) in the household.
- E. **Marriage or Life Partner Relationship:** The history, strengths, areas of vulnerability, problem solving, and self-evaluation of marriage or life partnership. If single applicant, discussion of past relationships and future plans.
- F. **Role Models for Child:** If single or same-sex couple, a discussion of how the prospective adoptive parent(s) will have positive role models for the child of the opposite sex.
- G. **Parenting Beliefs & Experience with Children:** Explanation of prospective adoptive parent(s) parenting philosophy and child rearing techniques (including discipline). Detail of the prospective adoptive parent(s) professional and personal experiences caring for and/or educating children. If currently parenting, an evaluation of the prospective adoptive parent(s) parenting skills and a description of each child within the home.
- H. **Motivation To Adopt:** Exploration of reasons for choosing adoption as a way to build and/or expand the family, including fertility issues or other appropriate motivations. Discussion of why prospective adoptive parent(s) are choosing a particular country from which to adopt (if international adoption).



- I. **Adoption Plan:** Detail the type of child(ren) the prospective adoptive parents wish to adopt, including gender, age, health status, development capacity, ethnicity, and cultural heritage. For domestic adoption, a further discussion regarding openness in adoption.
- J. **Family Leave and Child Care Plan:** Explanation of the prospective adoptive parent(s) plan for family leave and care for the child if both parents plan to return to work after family leave.
- K. **Guardianship:** Description of chosen guardians for the adopted child(ren).
- L. **Home And Community:** Description of home and community, including information regarding the safety of the home.
- M. **Finances:** Statement regarding income, assets, and liabilities. Statement regarding life, health, and dental insurances.
- N. **Religion:** Statement of religion of each prospective adoptive parent.
- O. **Health:** Discussion and summary of medical reports for the prospective adoptive parents(s), any children in the home, and all adult household members. Statements regarding any current or previous use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol or any current or history of psychiatric treatment.
- P. **Child Abuse & Maltreatment History Reports:** Statement as to child abuse reports received for each prospective adoptive parent(s) and adult household members.
- Q. **Vulnerable Persons Abuse and Maltreatment History Reports:** Statement as to the Vulnerable Persons' Central Register screening results for each prospective adoptive parent and adult household member.
- R. **Criminal History Reports:** Discussion of each prospective adoptive parent(s) and adult household members history of state, national, or international criminal records or the absence of such records. If a person has a

criminal record or conviction, a discussion of the incident(s) and how this changed/impacted their life.

S. Home Study History: Statement regarding the prospective adoptive parent(s) and adult household members history of previous home study investigations.

T. History Of Abuse or Violence: Discussion of the prospective adoptive parent(s) and adult household members history of being a victim or offender of abuse or violence.

U. Understanding Of International Adoption or Domestic Adoption: Exploration of the prospective adoptive parent(s) understanding of the risks and unknowns in international adoption or domestic adoption.

V. Adoption Training: Detail training completed by the prospective adoptive parent(s).

W. Post Adoption Supervision and Support: Explanation of post-adoptive placement supervision required for domestic or international adoption.

X. References: Short summary of references; a minimum of 3 references are required.

Y. Conclusion & Recommendation: Social worker summation and recommendation.

Z. Verifications: Home study provider's statement regarding legality of home study investigation.

AA. Signatures: Social worker and supervisor signatures and notary.

A Home Study Investigation Report issued by an authorized adoption agency, is a legal document that is used by the Courts (U.S. and foreign), Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the country the family is adopting from as documentation that the individual or couple has been investigated and approved as adoptive parent(s) and are qualified to adopt a child(ren). In New York State, prospective adoptive parents have the right to review the home study investigation report (if conducted by an authorized agency) prior to its approval and add an addendum to the report if warranted. Home study investigation reports issued by a Licensed Social Worker or individual/organization approved by the court may recommend a family to a court for qualification as an adoptive family but may not approve the family for adoption.



Family Connections, Inc. is a New York State authorized and Hague accredited adoption agency that provides home study investigation services for families adopting domestically and internationally. The agency has been providing services since 1994 and has extensive experience supporting families adopting infants domestically, step-children, grandchildren, children internationally, and children with special needs. Family Connections, Inc. would be pleased to support your family through the home study investigation process. To learn more about our home study services, please contact our agency at 1-607-756-6574 or e-mail us at info@adoptfamilyconnections.org.

We look forward to supporting your family's adoption plan!

Notes and Questions

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper designed for handwriting practice. It features ten identical rows of horizontal dashed lines, evenly spaced from top to bottom. Each row consists of a single continuous line of small dashes, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The paper is otherwise completely empty, with no margins, text, or other markings.