



# Lutheran Family Service

*For Nothing is Impossible with God*

## **Summary of Lutheran Family Service Policies and Practices:**

### **Who We are:**

Lutheran Family Service is licensed by the Illinois Department of Child & Family Services to place children for adoption in the state of Illinois.

Lutheran Family Service's philosophy about adoption is embodied in the belief that all children should have permanent homes. The agency's goal is to assist birth parents in making a life affirming plan for their child(ren). The agency will help birth mothers make decisions on the child's behalf and in the child's best interests which may culminate in the child receiving a permanent home through adoption.

### **What we Do:**

The agency's responsibility is to complete the adoptive placement as quickly as possible while constantly considering the child's needs. This means that once the decision for adoption has been made, there should be consistent and continuous follow-through with as few interruptions in the process as possible, thus increasing the child's capacity for permanent adoption.

Adoption also is viewed as a method for family building. Services are offered to the adoptive family before the placement, during the placement and post-placement periods, and thereafter, to support the adoptive family as it prepares for a new family member and to help the family, over time, to integrate the child it adopts into becoming a full member of the family. This includes accepting the knowledge/information about the child's birth family and background; not only as a historical fact, but as an integral part of the child's ongoing development.

## **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ADOPTING AN INFANT:**

- Applications are accepted for heterosexual couples who have been married at least three years. Single applicants are not accepted.
- Adoptive parents do not have to be childless and infertility is not required. However, there are exceptions if the applicants become pregnant, adopt a child from an entity other than Lutheran Family Service. (See complete Policy and Procedures Manual)
- Applicants must reside in the state of Illinois at the time of request. If applicants move out of state, the applicants must withdraw in most cases, unless the move was to Iowa, where Lutheran Family Service is also licensed.
- Adoptive families must be active members of a Christian congregation (as defined by Lutheran Family Service with the Apostles Creed as a guide).

### **Domestic Adoptive Studies:**

As a licensed child placing agency, Lutheran Family Service serves as an advocate to assure the child awaiting permanent placement is placed in an adoptive family that will enable the child to grow into a healthy, mature adult.

A Pre-Placement Investigation, sometimes referred to as a "home study" is carried out in which adoptive applicants are studied, assessed and evaluated for their suitability, commitment and readiness to become parents through adoption.

Pre-Placement Investigations are completed by qualified staff. Applicants are seen face to face on a minimum of two occasions. At least one interview is held in the applicant's home. All members of the household will be interviewed on at least one occasion.

The applicants' medical health be approved by the agency's Director of Life Ministries verifying that the applicant is free of any serious chronic pre-existing health problem, which would jeopardize life expectancy and ability to adequately parent a child. Results of a tuberculosis test must be listed on the form.

The applicants are given the agency's medical form entitled, Adoptive Applicant Health Assessment, for their physician to complete and return to the Director of Life Ministries. This form will be given out prior to the first home study interview. The Director of Life Ministries or other qualified case workers will review this report for approval or disapproval. If the applicant's medical report has

insufficient and/or vague information, Director of Life Ministries may request the agency to obtain additional information from the applicant's physician.

Applicants, their children, and anyone 18 years or older living in their home must complete an Illinois Criminal Background Check, FBI fingerprint check, Illinois Sex Offender Registry Check and National Sex Offender Registry Check. Child Abuse background check on all members of household age 13 and older for every state they have lived in for past five years including Illinois.

All applicants must have four references. Three references are required to be non-family and one reference is required to be the pastor of their congregation.

All adoptive families must prepare a profile book about themselves. Its purpose is to acquaint the birth parents with their special uniqueness as individuals and as a couple.

All applicants must be covered by health insurance. All applicants must provide Lutheran Family Service with their most recent tax return, copy of marriage license (divorce decree if applicable) and birth certificates. All couples will be required to provide employment verification.

Families and individuals who are not approved for placement of a child for adoption have the right to appeal that decision with the agency and the Department of Children and Family Services. The right to appeal extends to all adverse decisions made by the agency.

The adoption file is the property of Lutheran Family Service. Should any client want to have their file released to another licensed child placement agency, Lutheran Family Service will consider the request provided all fees for services have been received.

Lutheran Family Service will accept adoptive home studies approved by another agency or adoption specialists on a case by case basis. Applicants must meet the requirements of Illinois State Code regarding adoption as well as the following Lutheran Family Service requirements:

- Heterosexually married for at least 3 years
- Active in a Christian Congregation (as defined by Lutheran Family Service with the Apostles Creed as a guide)

## **Adoptive Placement of Children:**

### **Placement Process:**

Lutheran Family Service will assist birth parents to make placement decisions using a philosophy of openness and always remembering the child's best interest. Lutheran Family Service educates participants about the benefits of open adoption when appropriate and then allows our birth families and adoptive families to decide how much contact they want and are comfortable with.

The birth family is encouraged to choose the adoptive family for their child. The birth parents should view all available and appropriate adoptive family profiles. If a birth family chooses, a meeting with the adoptive family and birth family should be arranged. It is best if this selection and meeting process occurs before the birth of the child. A birth mother should also complete the Hospital and Birth Experience form that details what her wishes are for the birth and hospital process for her, the baby, and the adoptive family.

Once the birth mother has delivered, she has the option to place the child directly with the adoptive family. When the birth parents leave the hospital, they must sign a temporary release of custody and provide a social and medical background report. The birth mother cannot sign a Release of Custody until 72 hours from the time of the child's birth. Additionally, the birth mother and birth father who have signed the Release of Custody have no revocation period. The birthmother must sign her release of custody in front of the judge in her county of residence.

The adoptive parents are to be informed by their caseworker that the birth parents have a conditional right to revoke this release if they can present clear evidence to the Court that there is good cause for revocation. This condition exists until the judge enters an Order for Termination of Parental Rights. This usually occurs when the child is approximately six weeks old, depending on how soon the hearing can be put on the court docket.

### **POST-PLACEMENT SUPERVISION OF FAMILY:**

Supervision of the adoption placement will follow the law in which the state the infant is placed.

In Iowa visits are required at 30- 90- and 180-days (minimum), in Illinois there will be at least one visit per quarter with a minimum of two visits before finalization of adoption.

In Iowa the agency is automatically the Investigator.

In Illinois the agency will be ordered to investigate during the Interim hearing most likely.

If a child born in Illinois is placed with an Iowa pre-adoptive family the assigned caseworker supervises the child and the adoptive parents for six months; from the time of placement or until the adoption is legally finalized. This six-month period is required by law. There must be a minimum of three visits, of which two must be in the home. The first visit must be within 30 days, the second within 90 days, and the final visit before granting consent to adopt, at about six months.

The purpose of the supervision is to assure that the child is adequately cared for, is developing normally, both physically and emotionally. It is also to provide the adoptive parents support as they assume the parenting role; support the relationship they have with the birth family; to assess their and their family's adjustment and bonding with the child; to assist the family with further integrating their actual experience at this stage of adoption with their fantasy about it; to anticipate and prepare for any concerns about the life long process of adoption; and to make a final evaluation. Possible referrals will be given if needed.

The following areas should be addressed in the post-placement supervisory visits:

- Integration and interaction of the child with the family.
- Changes in the family functioning which may be due to the placement
- Social, emotional adjustment of the child and school adjustment of a child who is attending a school.
- Child's growth and development since placement with the adoptive family.
- Changes that have occurred in the family since the placement.
- Family's method of dealing with testing behavior and discipline.
- Behavioral evidence of the degree of bonding that is taking place and the degree to which the child is becoming a permanent member of the adoptive family.

Observations made during the home visits shall be recorded in the family's adoptive file and used by the agency in making written recommendations to the court regarding finalization of the adoption.

## **16.0 CLIENT GRIEVANCE POLICY**

### **16.1 Grievance Defined**

#### **16.1.1 Reasons for Grievance**

Clients who feel they have been treated unfairly, unjustly, or have been the object of discrimination based upon sex, national origin, or handicap by any member of LFS Staff in providing services may file a grievance.

### **16.2 Client Right to File a Grievance**

#### **16.2.1 Filing A Grievance**

Any client who wishes to file a formal grievance should request a copy of the form "Resolution of a Formal Grievance - Client". A copy of the grievance form may be obtained from any LFS office.

**Complaints may be filed with the Company using the Client Formal Grievance Form on the following page:**

Assistance in filing a complaint is available by calling the following telephone number: 1-515-251-4900.

## Client Formal Grievance Form

Please write a detailed description of your problem including dates, times, individuals involved, etc.?

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How have you attempted to resolve this grievance informally with the person(s) with whom you have the problem?

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If you have not tried to resolve the grievance informally, what prevented you from doing so?

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What are you requesting the supervisory staff member to do about the problem that you are presenting?

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Please mail the completed form to the attention of the Executive Director, Lutheran Family Service,  
409 Kenyon Rd, Ste C., Fort Dodge, IA 50501.

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Client Signature

Date

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Caseworker Signature

Date

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Director of Life Ministries Signature

Date