



Waiting Child Services Program Participation Agreement

This Agreement for Participation in Adoption Center of Illinois at Family Resource Center's Waiting Child Services Program is between _____ ("Participants") and Adoption Center of Illinois (ACI)*.

Upon reading this Agreement, Participants who choose to join ACI's Waiting Child Services Program (referred to herein as the 'WCS Program' or 'this program') are required to initial each page of this Agreement, sign the last page, and return the Agreement to ACI along with their Phase II fee. The current fees for this program are set forth in the WCS Program Overview and Fee Structure.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this agreement is to define the services provided to Participants within the WCS Program, establishing understandings and mutual agreements.

This program is designed to assist Participants in navigating the complexities of the adoption process, supporting their goal to adopt a child or children from the foster care system across the United States, including Illinois. Children adopted through this program typically range in age from two to sixteen. *ACI provides these services as *Family Resource Center*, under the umbrella of ACI's parent agency, an Illinois licensed Child Welfare Agency.

Participants are strongly encouraged by ACI to engage and retain their independent legal counsel to address any questions regarding adoption and the associated legal risks.

IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM, PARTICIPANTS MUST UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

Participating in this program involves both financial and emotional risks. Participants acknowledge their obligation to compensate ACI for its services irrespective of the program's outcome.

ACI cannot and does not guarantee the success of our collaborative efforts or the reliability of information provided by other agencies regarding a child. Therefore, ACI advises Participants to conduct thorough research when evaluating any potential adoption opportunity.

ACI has informed Participants that children in the foster care system have experienced significant trauma and often have emotional, behavioral, physical, and developmental challenges. ACI has informed Participants that trauma can impact brain development, ability to regulate emotions, and ability to form healthy attachments. ACI has informed Participants

_____/_____
INITIAL HERE

that these children will likely require trauma-informed supportive services to help them process their past and feel safe in Participant's home. ACI has informed Participants that there is usually a honeymoon period after a child has been placed into their home, which may be followed by a testing phase. Participants are required to have completed DCFS PRIDE training and a minimum of 10 hours of adoption-specific training prior to entering into this program.

Participants are aware that additional training may be required to ensure they are prepared to support a particular child or children.

This program calls for Participants to accept a high degree of contact with other agencies and case managers (These agencies could be public or private; i.e. Vermont Department of Children and Families, Children's Home and Aid, etc.). This may include, but is not limited to, contact by telephone, email, video conference, or one or more face-to-face meetings with other agency representatives and children.

Specific services that ACI will provide to Participants include:

1. Initial Consultation with the WCS Program Coordinator: Initial review of Participants' completed Home Study and consultation to fully understand the types of potential adoption situations that would be considered an appropriate match.
2. Assistance Identifying Adoptable Children: ACI staff networks and develops relationships with resources in the Illinois foster care system as well as with case workers outside of Illinois. The WCS Program Coordinator works with these adoption professionals to help identify children who may be a good match with Participants. Additionally, the WCS Program Coordinator will support Participants to register for online websites (i.e. AdoptUSKids) that provide information on children available for adoption so they are notified when meeting their preferences are added to the site.
3. Communication with Participants: Calls from Participants will be returned within two business days. Additionally, the WCS Program Coordinator will notify Participants within two business days when they receive updates regarding children that Participants have inquired about. There will be ongoing communication between ACI staff and Participants throughout their involvement in the program.
4. Communication with Placing Agencies: When requested, the WCS Program Coordinator will forward Participants' Home Study and family profile to the caseworker of an identified child or children. Once a child is determined to be a potential match with Participants, the WCS Program Coordinator will serve as the primary liaison to share information about the prospective adoptive family with the child's caseworker and to assist the Participants to learn more about the child or children. The WCS Program Coordinator will serve as the point person in conference calls, group staffings, etc. ACI's Executive Director will be in communication with the sending state/agency to complete a contract for this placement and corresponding services.

____/____
INITIAL HERE

5. Social Work Support and Placement Planning: After a match is confirmed, ACI staff will have ongoing communication with Participants and the child’s caseworker to monitor the process, provide support on a practical level, and be available as a sounding board to Participants as they proceed with the process. ACI’s Director of Program Development will recommend/require additional training courses to Participants as needed and work with Participants to identify supportive resources for this particular child or children. NOTE: Sending state/placing agency controls the timeline for each step in the placement process.
6. Interstate Placement: Should Participants’ efforts lead to the successful placement of a child or children from outside of Illinois, ACI will work diligently to meet the requirements established by the Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children (ICPC). The ACI Home Study Worker will provide monthly post-placement supervision and monitoring visits until the adoption is finalized. NOTE: The process and timeline of each case will be dependent on the circumstances of that particular case.
7. Continuation of Efforts: If the potential adoption of a child or children does not occur, ACI will support the family to understand all of their options. If/When Participants feel ready, ACI will continue to assist them to identify and investigate other potential children waiting for adoption.
8. Continuation of Support: Even after Participants successfully adopt a child or children from the foster care system, they are always welcome to contact ACI for assistance identifying supportive services for the family and/or child or children. Additionally, ACI encourages families to continue to attend educational courses at ACI.

Please note – this is a very general overview of the process. The procedures will vary depending on the state, county, caseworker, recruiter, and particular child. The WCS Program calls for a high level of flexibility, the ability to address the special needs of each child, and the willingness to embrace the unpredictable.

PROGRAM ETHICS & UNDERSTANDINGS

This program is designed to establish a cooperative relationship between Participants and agencies that are responsible for children who are waiting to be adopted. Participants understand they should uphold commitments made to a child’s caseworker.

Participants are encouraged to advocate for themselves by investigating and obtaining information about waiting children available for adoption.

Prospective Adoptive Parents Deciding to Discontinue Service & Proper Notice: A decision to discontinue service on the part of the Participants must be put in writing and sent to ACI either by letter or email communication. Taking the action described above constitutes “proper notice” to the agency by Participants of their decision to discontinue participation in this program.

Please note that ACI reserves the right to suspend or discontinue services to any party at any time and for any reason. At its sole discretion, ACI may determine it is not advisable or in a child or children’s best interests to continue to facilitate the implementation of an adoption plan.

Communication with ACI Staff: Each prospective adoptive parent brought into this program will be assigned to the WCS Program Coordinator. This Coordinator is distinct from Participants’ Home Study Worker and has different responsibilities. Participants understand that they must inform ACI staff immediately about significant changes regarding the health of a child placed through this program (i.e. child needs to be hospitalized, is participating in an outpatient program, etc.) until the adoption has been finalized.

____/____
INITIAL HERE

Participants are advised to keep ideas, suggestions and concerns in writing between regular contacts with their designated Waiting Child Program Coordinator. Participants are also encouraged to communicate with ACI's Executive Director or Director regarding any concerns or questions in regard to this program.

It is ACI's expectation that Participants will, even in the face of emotional intensity and raised anxiety, be patient and civil in their communication with ACI.

REQUIREMENTS:

Participants must have completed DCFS PRIDE training, have a valid Home Study, and have an active Illinois Foster Family Home License (FFHL) issued by the state of Illinois to participate in the Waiting Child Services Program.

HOW TO PROCEED:

To confirm understanding of this Agreement, please sign in the space below and initial all pages. Please return the Agreement to Adoption Center of Illinois with the Phase II payment.

You are welcome to contact ACI's Executive Director, with any questions or concerns.

_____	_____	_____
Signature Prospective Adoptive Parent	Print Name	Date

_____	_____	_____
Signature Prospective Adoptive Parent	Print Name	Date

For Adoption Center of Illinois at Family Resource Center:

Leigh Pollworth, MSW
Domestic Program Supervisor