
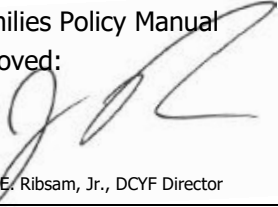


1828 CONTACT BETWEEN ADOPTED PERSONS AND BIRTH FAMILIES	
Chapter: Adoption and Post-Adoption Supports	Section: Post-Adoption Practice
	<p>New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families Policy Manual</p> <p>Policy Directive: 19-37</p> <p>Effective Date: August 2019</p> <p>Scheduled Review Date:</p>
<p>Related Statute(s): RSA 170-B</p> <p>Related Admin Rule(s):</p> <p>Related Federal Regulation(s):</p>	<p>Approved: </p> <p>Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director</p> <p>Related Form(s): FORM 1828, FORM 1829 and FORM 1830</p> <p>Bridges' Screen(s) and Attachment(s):</p>

The Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) understands that adoption is a lifelong experience and that there are times when adopted persons and their birth families may wish to reconnect. In keeping with DCYF's ongoing commitment to families, adopted persons and their birth families are offered assistance and support as they explore potential contact and how it may impact their lives. DCYF may also assist adopted persons over age 18 in exploring contact with other important connections from before they were adopted when requested to do so.

Purpose

To define DCYF's practices around supporting adopted persons and their birth families in exploring potential contact as well as to guide how DCYF may facilitate such contact.

Definitions

"Adoptive History Report" means, for the purpose of this policy, the written case history, which includes social, medical, psychological, and educational information about a child/youth who has been adopted and their birth family.

"DCYF" or the **"Division"** means the Department of Health and Human Services' Division for Children, Youth and Families.

"Post-Adoption CPSW" means, for the purpose of this policy, an employee of DCYF who is authorized by the Division to address post-adoption requests and provide support to adoptive persons and their birth families in reconnecting when it is requested by either party and both parties are in agreement.

"Relative" means, for the purpose of this policy, a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, stepparent, stepsiblings, uncle, aunt, nieces, nephews or first and second cousins related by birth to the adopted person.

Policy

- I. The Post-Adoption CPSW processes requests for information that are received regarding adopted persons and/or their birth families and helps the parties explore potential contact when one (1) party requests contact with the other.
 - A. This includes providing information to courts when court-ordered, or to [certain interested third parties](#), when provided with a written release from the adopted person/birth parent(s).

- II. Requests may be received via phone, email, or written correspondence. The Post-Adoption CPSW will:
 - A. Gather essential information relevant to the adopted person and their birth parent(s) to the extent it is known by the requesting party and complete Form 1828 Post Adoptive Services Intake; and
 - B. Provide the other party with a Form 1829 Request for Post-Adoption Services, which serves as an application for said services.

- III. Requests may be made by:
 - A. Adopted persons age 18 or older;
 - B. The adoptive parent(s) of an adopted person under age 18;
 - C. The adult guardian of an adopted person over the age of 18;
 - D. Birth parents;
 - E. Birth siblings (including half and step-siblings);
 - F. Former stepparents; or
 - G. Extended birth family such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

- IV. Requests on the behalf of another (such as the spouse or child of an adopted person) are not accepted.
 - A. The adopted person must make the request on their own behalf, although they may give permission on the application to allow the Post-Adoption CPSW to communicate with the identified person after the initial request.
 - B. An adult child of an adopted person or a parent/legal guardian of a minor child of an adopted person acting on their behalf seeking to obtain information about a deceased adopted person's medical/family history shall be directed to petition the Court for access to said records.

- V. Requests for information may also be made by a court or another agency working with either the adopted person or their birth family. The Post-Adoption CPSW shall extend professional courtesy to these entities to the extent allowable by governing confidentiality restrictions.

- VI. The reason for these requests may include:
 - A. To share or obtain medical information;
 - B. To obtain family history;
 - C. To seek some form of written or verbal communication; or
 - D. To seek face-to-face contact with the other party.

- VII. All inquiries are entered into the tracking log and remain on file until either an application for services is received or three (3) months have passed, at which time they are filed and held indefinitely.
- VIII. Once the Post-Adoption CPSW receives the signed application (Form 1829) and the required copy of either a photo ID or birth certificate verifying the requesting party's identity, or a court order/request from a qualified third party, a case is opened on Bridges under the assigned CPSW.
- IX. When the requesting party is seeking contact with the other party, the Post-Adoption CPSW contacts the requesting party and discusses the following:
 - A. Their motivation for the contact;
 - B. The type of relationship anticipated/desired;
 - C. Consideration of potential outcomes, such as:
 - 1. Inability to locate the other party;
 - 2. The other person is located, but does not wish to provide information and/or have contact; or
 - 3. The other party is found to be deceased; and
 - D. How contact may affect them and/or their immediate family.
- X. When an adopted person is considering contact with birth family, the Post-Adoption CPSW shall [request a copy of the Adoption File](#), review it, and [redact](#) identifying information as appropriate from the Adoptive History.
 - A. The Post-Adoption CPSW then provides a copy of the redacted Adoptive History to the adopted person with instructions to contact them as to how they wish to proceed.
 - B. If the Post-Adoption CPSW has concerns that contact could be detrimental to the adopted person, the Post-Adoption CPSW shall discuss these concerns with the adopted person prior to sending the redacted Adoptive History Report, however the history is still provided so as to allow the adopted person to make an informed decision.
- XI. When the adopted person wishes to continue the process of making contact after reviewing the Adoptive History Report, the Post-Adoption CPSW shall move forward with attempting to locate/notifying the other party and shall support the adopted person through the process.
- XII. Once a request for Post-Adoption Services has been received, the Post-Adoption CPSW begins the search process. Efforts to locate the adopted person, birth parent(s), or relative(s) are initiated by the Post-Adoption CPSW and may include the use of such tools as:
 - A. NH Bridges and New HEIGHTS;
 - B. The Division of Records Administration (Archives);
 - C. Internet resources;

- D. Telephone listings;
 - E. The NH Department of State Division of Vital Records Administration (birth, marriage, and death certificates);
 - F. Court adoption records;
 - G. Obituaries (State Library); and
 - H. The Department of Motor Vehicles.
- XIII. The Post-Adoption CPSW shall notify the inquiring person when efforts to locate the person(s) being searched for are unsuccessful and share what attempts were made to locate the other party. Further, the Post-Adoption CPSW may, as appropriate:
- A. Inform the inquiring person of the option of petitioning the Circuit Court for the release of identifying information, according to RSA 170-B:19, II-d;
 - B. Advise the inquiring person of the availability of national search organizations and local support groups; and
 - C. Advise that they can request another search in five (5) years.
- XIV. When it has been verified that the person being searched for is deceased, the Post-Adoption CPSW shall notify the inquiring person and offer support.
- A. When appropriate to do so, the Post-Adoption CPSW can obtain a copy of the deceased party's obituary for the purpose of identifying additional family should the requesting party wish to pursue contact with them.
- XV. When the current location of the person being searched for is established:
- A. Presence of one (1) or more of the following factors requires further consideration and documentation when assessing how to proceed with the contact:
 1. A diagnosed medical or psychiatric disorder;
 2. Guardianship by another adult;
 3. Incarceration; or
 4. A history of severe abuse, neglect, or abandonment of the adopted person.
 - B. Initial contact with the person being searched for is made directly by the Post-Adoption CPSW unless consideration of the factors above indicate that DCYF needs to first contact the legal guardian, adoptive parent(s), or a mental health counselor.
 - C. Contact is made in a non-intrusive manner that protects the confidentiality of all persons involved. Written correspondence must:
 1. Describe the Post-Adoption CPSW's role and state the purpose of the inquiry;

2. Indicate as much detail as to the inquiry possible without disclosing confidential information; and
 3. Assure the person that any involvement is voluntary and that their information will be kept confidential unless they agree that it be provided to the other party.
- D. At the time of contact with the other party, the identity of the located person is verified by matching names, birth dates, place of birth, social security number, and/or other information from the record.
- E. The Post-Adoption CPSW shall discuss the following with the located party:
1. Does the person desire to have contact with the inquiring person;
 2. What kind of contact would they like;
 3. The type of relationship anticipated;
 4. Has the person considered the various potential outcomes of contact; and
 5. What are the person's current life circumstances and what will be the impact on their immediate family?
- XVI. If both persons want to have contact:
- A. The persons are offered the option to correspond by non-identifying letters through the Post-Adoption CPSW;
 - B. The persons are provided with identifying information by the Post-Adoption CPSW when both parties express a desire for contact and have provided consent for their information to be shared;
 - C. If requested, the Post-Adoption CPSW may schedule a meeting and be present to facilitate and answer questions;
 - D. Future ongoing contacts are arranged directly between the parties; and
 - E. The Post-Adoption case is closed. However, the Post-Adoption CPSW is available for additional support as requested by the parties.
- XVII. When the person being searched for is located, but does not want to have contact with the other party:
- A. Medical and social information is requested, if it has not already been provided; and
 - B. The inquiring person is informed of the decision for no contact and offered support.
- XVIII. If the Court has requested information, the Post-Adoption CPSW will send the Court an "outcome letter" stating the disposition of their request.

- XIX. The Post-Adoption CPSW shall document all case activity in the Adoption Search Results screen on Bridges, close the Post-Adoption Services Case in Bridges, add the file to the original Adoption File (if obtained), and send the file to Archives.

Practice Guidance

How do I request a copy of the Adoptive History Report?

- Consult the Archive Book to determine where the report may be stored (State Office or Archives).
- Seek the assistance of the Administrative Assistant at State Office to complete and submit the appropriate requisition form for records already sent to Archives.

What do I redact/release?

- When providing an Adoptive History to an adopted person:
 - Identifying information about the birth parent(s) and birth family is redacted if the adopted person does not already know this information.
 - Identifying information about previous foster placements is redacted.
- Third-party information cannot be shared without a release from the third party.

How do I request information from the following resources?

- Court adoption records: [petition the court](#).
- The Division of Records Administration (Archives): request assistance from the Administrative Assistant at State Office.
- The NH Department of State Division of Vital Records Administration: complete and submit an Application for a Certified Copy of a Vital Record (Form 1830 Request to Vital Records for Birth Certificate).

What internet/social media services might I use to locate someone?

- Accurant;
- Ancestry.com; and
- Facebook.

What if there are adult half-siblings, but the birth parent does not want me to contact them?

- Consider petitioning or motioning the Court and asking permission to make contact.
- The Petition or Motion needs to be signed by a notary.
- Participate in any hearings the Court may schedule if they feel they need further information before granting the request.
 - You may seek the permission of the Court to do this over the phone by contacting the Court Clerk once you are notified of a hearing being scheduled.

What if the parent of a sibling, half-sibling, or step-sibling requests information on an adopted person?

- If the adopted person is over the age of 18, contact them as you would any inquiry.
- If the adopted person is under the age of 18, contact the adoptive parent(s), who will act on the adopted person's behalf based on what they believe to be the best course of action, and proceed as you would with any other inquiry.

What if I receive a request for information on a child/youth who is currently in care?

- Refer the requesting party to the District Office responsible for the child/youth's case.

What if I am contacted by an adopted person who was adopted through another agency?

- DCYF does not complete searches for persons adopted through another state or private agency unless ordered to do so by the Court.
- Refer them back to the agency that handled the adoption.

Who might be a “certain interested third-party” who can request information on an adopted person or birth parent?

- Certain agencies, such as the Social Security Administration, may request information on an adopted person or birth parent for the purpose of determining eligibility for services.
- This information may be released when DCYF is provided with a written release signed by the party for whom the records are being sought.

What if the inquiring party does not know the new name of the adopted person?

- Search records such as the case file and/or adoption file assigned to the pre-adoptive name; and/or
- Secure the pre and post adoption birth certificates.

What if a former foster child wants information on a foster parent, CASA, teacher, or other person(s) with whom they had a connection while in care?

- Inquire as to the reason they wish to have contact, attempt to locate the person(s), and facilitate contact if both parties are agreeable.
- Information can usually be found through case mining or contacting previous workers.
- For private adoptions, you may need to seek the assistance of the Court where the adoption occurred, if that is known, as they may be the only source of information.
- DCYF has a reciprocal relationship with private adoption agencies, particularly Catholic Charities and Waypoint. These agencies can be contacted to see if they can provide information.

What if I am requested to participate in a court hearing?

- A court may request your presence at a hearing, although this is very rare. If you are requested to participate in a hearing, either in person or by phone, consult with the Staff Attorney prior to doing so.

What if I receive an unusual request, such as from an attorney?

- Consult the Staff Attorney for guidance.