

**[DSWD DEPARTMENT ORDER NO. 02, S. 1996,
February 21, 1996]**

**GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL ADOPTION
AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE FAMILY CARE FOR ABANDONED AND
NEGLECTED CHILDREN**

I. RATIONALE

It is the right of every child to grow up and be nurtured by his own family. Family life coupled with a satisfactory relationship between parents and the child results into wholesome personality development of the child.

The biological family is responsible for providing family life to a child and for this reason should be fostered and nurtured, whenever possible. There are instances, however, when this may not be possible. When problems of broken home, unwed motherhood, abandonment illness, extreme poverty and others seriously disrupt the family to fulfill its primary function as the basic institution in rearing a child to adulthood, then substitute parental care becomes necessary. The child has to be cared for elsewhere, temporarily, before his return to his biological family or to a more permanent placement.

While there are residential facilities available a child grows best with a family where all his needs are met. Studies have shown that institutional life has had adverse effects for most children especially infants and pre-schoolers. Over-dependency and anti-social behavior, personality disorganization and emotional disorders are often associated with adults who grew up in orphanages and institutions.

Placement of children in a substitute parental arrangement is essential for their continuing growth and development away from their own homes.

Adoption, foster care, kinship care and legal guardianship are alternative family care arrangements which provide family life to an abandoned, neglected or parentless child to ensure his physical, intellectual and social well-being.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project shall primarily focus on the development of local adoptive and foster families for abandoned, neglected and orphaned children. Other forms of alternative family care maybe developed, e.g., legal guardianship and kinship care to prevent institutionalization of children. However, there are certain instances wherein a child can benefit more from residential care like when a controlled or therapeutic environment is needed.

A. General Objective:

The project aims to provide family life to abused, abandoned neglected and orphaned children through adoption, foster care and other alternative family care.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To provide the public information on local adoption, foster care and other alternative family care; for abused, abandoned, neglected and orphaned children.
2. To develop a pool of local adoptive families, licensed foster families and other forms of alternative family care nationwide.
3. To maintain a data bank on children needing alternative family care and families qualified to provide such care.

III. COMPONENTS

1. Advocacy, Networking and Social Mobilization

1.1. The use of other governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, volunteers and support groups as partners in mobilizing people and the community to introduce and advocate amendments to existing laws, policies and procedures related to adoption and other child placement issues.

1.2. Education, information and dissemination activities which are aimed at raising the awareness of the public on adoption and other alternative family care through the following:

- a. Development and production of information, education and communication (IEC) materials such as brochures, posters and flipcharts.
- b. Use of tri-media (radio/television/movie plugs, magazines, etc.)

1.3. Conduct of consultation, dialogues/meetings with agencies and groups involved in adoption, foster care and other alternative family care, e.g. child caring/child placement agencies, hospitals, lawyers and judges, etc.

Key partners in advocacy, networking and social mobilization activities are Kaisahang Buhay Foundation (KBF), The Adoptive Families Foundation (AFF), the Association of Child Agencies and the media.

2. Development and Maintenance of Adoptive and Foster Families

2.1. The continuous recruitment, development, assessment and maintenance of adoptive and foster families even while there are no children who are presently in need of alternative family care in order that there is a ready pool of foster and adoptive families from which to select to meet the needs of a specific child when the need arises. Relatives or godparents of abandoned, neglected and orphaned children shall be encouraged to be foster/adoptive families or legal guardians of a child.

2.2 The strengthening of qualified adoptive and foster families through a continuing development program aims at sustaining and enhancing their motivations and interest and developing further their capabilities as foster and adoptive families.

3. *Training and Capability Building*

3.1. Conduct of regular case conferences and other staff development activities, e.g. trainings seminars and workshops to further enhance the skills of the direct service providers in the case management of abandoned, orphaned and neglected children.

3.2. The Child Welfare Specialist Group (CWSG) and the Child Welfare Specialists shall be provided a venue to further enhance their capability in the assessment of families and children in matching or family selection.

4. *Data Banking and Research*

4.1. A data banking system shall be installed at the Bureau and at the Field Offices to have a central data on the following

4.1.1 Abandoned, neglected and orphaned children

4.1.2 Institutions/centers

4.1.3. Approved adoptive/foster families and legal guardians

4.2. A research on socio-cultural factors and impediments affecting adoption shall be conducted.

5. *Monitoring and Evaluation*

5.1. The Bureau shall develop a monitoring (Appendix A) form and provide technical assistance to the Child Welfare Specialists.

5.2. Monitoring shall be conducted by the program staff of the Bureau once a quarter and the Social Welfare Specialist once a month for the succeeding phase or as the need arises.

5.3. A year-end evaluation shall be conducted by the Bureau in coordination with the Field Offices to determine the extent of the implementation of the project and to determine areas for technical assistance and modification of policies and procedures.

IV. FORMS/TYPES OF ALTERNATIVE FAMILY CARE

Alternative family care is provided to children in especially difficult circumstances whose parents are unable to provide for their basic needs either temporarily or permanently brought about by problems in family relationships, illness, extreme poverty, lack of parenting preparation, etc. aggravated by lack of family support.

Alternative family care may be provided through the following social work interventions under the child care and placement services:

1. *Adoption* — is a socio-legal process which enables a child who cannot be reared by his biological parents acquire legal status wherein he can benefit from new relationships with a permanent family. Adoption establishes a parent-child relation resulting in the same mutual rights and obligations that exist between children and their biological parents.

2. *Foster Family Care* — is the provision of planned substitute parental care to a child on a temporary basis by a licensed foster family when his/her biological

parents are unable to care for him/her for a certain period of time. The child maybe placed on a short term (6 months) or long term (1 year or more) placement depending on the child's needs.

3. *Kinship Care* — is a form of foster family care to provide a planned substitute parental care to a child by a licensed foster family within the extended family and/or with godparents system of a child when his/her biological parents are unable to care for him/her for a certain period of time. It is congruent with family preservation with emphasis on maintaining biological ties and avoiding out-of-home care. Further, it prevents the institutionalization of a child. The placement maybe longer than a regular foster care due to blood relationships.

4. *Legal Guardianship* — is a socio-legal process of providing a child substitute parental care thru the appointment of legal guardianship over the child and his/her property until the child reaches the age of majority. This does not give a child equal rights and status as that of the biological child like the right to a name, inheritance, etc.

V. IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES

This project shall be implemented nationwide.

1. *Family Recruitment and Development* — Recruitment and development of adoptive/foster families may be done through the following:

1.1. Interpretation of the service to the community through use of tri-media, e.g. television, radio, posters, magazines, etc., as well as personal contacts to recruit/develop adoptive, foster families.

1.2. Conduct of regular fora/group orientation on adoption and foster care

The Field Office shall conduct a series of foster care/adoption fora to groups of applicants to provide information about adoption and foster care and other alternative family care. Such fora shall be a tool for self-screening, assessment of applicants and development of adoptive/foster families, kinship care givers and legal guardians.

The following topics shall be discussed:

- a. What is adoption/foster care/kinship care?
- b. The effects of adoption/foster care/legal guardianship and other forms of alternative family care
- c. Requirements to become a foster/adoptive family
- d. The adoption/foster care process
- e. Required documents
- f. The different types of children available for adoption/foster care

2. *Family Assessment* — A thorough study and assessment on all adoptive/foster parent applicants and their families is necessary to determine their motivations and whether they fully meet the requirements and to evaluate their capability to provide a safe, secure, and loving home for an adoptive/a foster child.

2.1. Conduct of Homestudy for Adoption/Foster Care — The Field Office through the Social Welfare Officer II shall conduct planned interviews,

home visits and collateral interviews with the applicants, their children, if any and other persons who may have direct involvement with the child. This will provide the social worker the opportunity to know the applicants and their family, to determine whether they fully meet the requirements and their capability to provide a safe, secure and loving home for an adoptive/foster child.

2.2. If evaluation of the applicant's capability to adopt is favorable, the social worker shall prepare the adoption homestudy report recommending the approval of the prospective family. For a guide, the social worker may refer to the Self-Instructional Manual on Adoption.

2.3. For foster care, the homestudy shall be prepared by the Social Welfare Officer II or the social worker of the licensed/accredited child placement agency implementing foster care program for the recommendation to license the foster family.

3. *Matching or Family Selection*

3.1. Matching refers to the judicious pairing of a child with a family based on the child's needs and his/her capability to benefit from the placement as well as the capability and interest of the adoptive/foster parents to meet the child's needs.

3.2. This process shall be done in a regular matching conference at the Field Office by the Child Welfare Specialist Group (CWSG) where the social worker of the child and family are present. If a child is not matched to an adoptive family, all documents of the child shall be forwarded to the Bureau for interregional matching. Children not matched at this level are cleared and endorsed for intercountry adoption. (Please refer to APPENDIX B for flowchart).

3.3. Only the social worker shall present the child during the matching conference except under extreme circumstances that she cannot attend shall the Executive Director of the child caring agency be allowed to present the case of the child.

4. *Pre-Placement Services* — The social worker shall conduct activities to prepare the adoptive family and the child of his/her actual placement.

4.1. Preparation of Adoptive/Foster Parents — After the matching conference, the adoptive/foster families shall be informed within one week of the child matched with them. Information on the child will be shared to help them understand and make plans for the child which shall include the following:

- > Family background including non-identifying data about biological parents
- > Developmental data
- > Personality and temperament
- > Medical history
- > Report of psychological examination, if appropriate
- > Recent photograph of the child