
OVERVIEW

The purpose of an adoptive family assessment is to gain insight into prospective adoptive families, in addition to providing families and Michigan's adoption professionals' guidance in matching families and children. Thorough assessments of a prospective adoptive family allow the family and child(ren) to be better supported before, during, and after the adoption process.

MDHHS-5643, ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENT

The [MDHHS-5643, Adoptive Family Assessment](#), must be used to assess and provide a recommendation for all prospective adoptive parent(s) regardless of foster home licensure status or history. The evaluation provides documentation of the assessment by the adoption case manager of the prospective adoptive parent's ability to provide a nurturing and stable environment that ensures the child's safety and supports their overall well-being. This assessment does not provide an adoption recommendation for a specific child or children.

DHS-612, CHILD SPECIFIC ADOPTION FAMILY ASSESSMENT

The [DHS-612, Child Specific Adoption Family Assessment](#), must be completed for any approved prospective adoptive parent(s) when a specific child is identified; see [ADM 610, Placement Decisions for Adoption of a Specific Child \(Consideration\)](#). This evaluation provides a more in-depth assessment into a prospective adoptive family's ability to provide permanence and meet the needs of a specific child(ren).

MDHHS 5643-A, ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENT ADDENDUM

The [MDHHS 5643-A, Adoptive Family Assessment Addendum](#), must be used to update information for a previously approved adoptive family when:

- A change in circumstances that would affect the child and family. For example, changes in household composition, a move, employment changes, or health concerns require an update to the original assessment.

Note: For recruited families, adoption case managers should be intentional about documenting updates and/or changes when they occur with the family.

- On a subsequent adoption when the family has a previously approved MDHHS 5643.

DHS-1926, PRELIMINARY ADOPTIVE FAMILY ASSESSMENT

Under certain circumstances as outlined in [ADM 500, Preliminary Adoptive Family Assessment](#), the [DHS-1926, Preliminary Adoptive Family Assessment](#), can be used to determine whether a full adoptive family assessment should be completed.

CASE MANAGEMENT Assessment Time Frames

Current Placement Interested in Adoption

A [MDHHS-5643, Adoptive Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 90-calendar days of the prospective adoptive family signing a [DHS 3153-A, Adoption Application](#). When a specific child has been identified, the [DHS-612, Child Specific Adoption Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 30-calendar days of the approved MDHHS-5643.

Subsequent Current Placement Interested in Adoption

For a subsequent adoption, a [MDHHS 5643-A, Adoptive Family Assessment Addendum](#), must be approved within 90-calendar days of the prospective adoptive family signing a new [DHS 3153-A, Adoption Application](#). When a specific child has been identified, the [DHS-612, Child Specific Adoption Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 30-calendar days of an approved MDHHS-5643-A.

Other Interested Parties for Specific Child Adoption

A [MDHHS-5643, Adoptive Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 90-calendar days of the prospective adoptive family signing a [DHS 3153-A, Adoption Application](#). The [DHS-612, Child Specific Adoption Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 30-calendar days of the approved MDHHS-5643.

Recruited Family Adoption

A [MDHHS-5643, Adoptive Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 90-calendar days of the prospective adoptive family signing a [DHS 3153-A, Adoption Application](#). When the family is matched with a specific child, the [DHS-612, Child Specific Adoption Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 60-calendar days of a [MDHHS-6038, Consideration to Adopt](#), being signed.

Subsequent Recruited Family Adoption

For subsequent recruited family adoptions, a [MDHHS 5643-A, Adoptive Family Assessment Addendum](#), must be approved within 90-calendar days of the prospective adoptive family signing a new [DHS 3153-A, Adoption Application](#). When the family is matched with a specific child, the [DHS-612, Child Specific Adoption Family Assessment](#), must be approved within 60-calendar days of a [MDHHS-6038, Consideration to Adopt](#), being signed

Deferred Recommendation

All efforts should be made to complete the assessment in the required timeframe, however if the required documentation from the prospective adoptive family, Division of Child Welfare Licensing (DCWL), or any other relevant entity, i.e., physical exams or local law enforcement checks, is not received by the report due date, the adoption case manager must complete a thorough adoptive family assessment with all the information gathered and provide a deferred recommendation on the assessment outlining all missing documentation and efforts to obtain the information. Barriers and action steps must be outlined in the [DHS 614, Quarterly Adoption Progress Report](#); see [ADM 330, Quarterly Adoption Progress Reports](#).

Once the missing documentation is received, the adoption case manager must complete a subsequent assessment to address the missing documentation as soon as possible not to delay

permanency. The subsequent assessment would be the same type of assessment that was deferred.

Note: Consent cannot be requested until an adoption recommendation is made on the subsequent assessment.

Case Contacts

Adoption case managers are required at minimum, one visit in the residence of the prospective adoptive parent(s) during the assessment process. Monthly contact should occur throughout the adoption assessment process to update them on progress towards completion. Adoption case managers should determine the best method of contact to meet the needs of the family (i.e., face-to-face, phone call, virtual, or email).

The family assessment must include dates and places of contact and persons interviewed or observed.

All social work contacts with the family must be recorded in the electronic case record.

Distribution

Assessments must be approved by the adoption supervisor prior to making an adoptive placement. Prospective adoptive parent(s) must be given a signed and dated copy of their adoptive family assessment. The prospective adoptive parent(s) must sign the assessment or an acknowledgment form to document the receipt and review of the assessment. See subsection **Release of Family Adoptive Family Evaluation** in [SRM 131, Confidentiality](#), for other entities assessments can be released to without written consent.

CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRING ADDITIONAL EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION

The adoption case manager must determine if the child's best interests will be met through the adoption, including the ability for the prospective adoptive family to be physically and emotionally able to ensure the child's safety and well-being and provide permanency.

The [MDHHS 5643, Adoption Family Assessment](#), or [DHS-612, Child Specific Adoption Family Assessment](#), must have additional evaluation and documentation requirements under the following circumstances.

- Number and age of children in the home.
- Age of the prospective adoptive parent(s).
- CPS central registry.
- Prior licensing or CPS referral or investigation.
- Married individual adopting without their spouse.
- Physical or mental health concerns for prospective adoptive parent(s).

Note: Expedited consents from the MCI office or designee will not be approved in any cases requiring additional documentation; see [ADM 0850, Expedited Consent](#).

Circumstances that require additional evaluation and documentation are outlined in the subsections below.

Number and Age of Children in the Home

A more extensive assessment of the family's ability to meet the needs of the child(ren) must be completed when any of the following apply:

- The total number of children who will be placed in the home will result in more than four adopted children in the home.
- Placement of a child will result in more than three children under the age of three in the home.
- Placement of a child will result in a total of six or more children in the home.

This assessment is to determine if the family has a thorough understanding and capacity to meet the individual needs of the child(ren). The following must be included:

- An assessment of the family's demonstrated ability to advocate for and participate in identified services for their child(ren) based on references from professionals and service providers; see **Personal and Professional References** in this policy.

- A review of the level and extent of extraordinary care required by other children and any adults in the household who have continuing care needs, including a review of any Determination of Care (DOC) rates being paid through adoption assistance.
- Identification and review of the family's current support systems. This should include individuals or organizations that provide support to the family in meeting the ongoing needs of the child(ren) on a permanent basis and may include other household members, extended family, neighbors, friends, church, school, community groups, daycare and respite care providers, and other sources of support. It must also include a plan for guardianship of the child(ren) in the event of the adoptive parent(s) death or permanent disability preventing continuation of parental responsibility.
- An assessment of the impact of adoption on the family's ability to care for all children based on the children's changing needs.
- An assessment of the training needs of the family, including an assessment of prior training history.
- An interview of each child currently living in the home and children no longer in the home, including foster children and any adult child(ren), if available. The assessment of the prospective adoptive family's ability to nurture and safely care for all the children in the home must be clearly documented.

Age of Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

A more extensive assessment of the family's ability to meet the needs of the child(ren) must be completed when any of the following apply:

- The prospective adoptive parent is under the age of 21.
- The youngest child to be adopted is less than 10 years of age, and there is more than a 50-year age difference between the child and the youngest prospective adoptive parent.

The family's designated alternate care provider should the prospective adoptive parent(s) become unable to provide care for the child must be documented. Contact must be made with the alternate care provider to evaluate the extent of their relationship with the child and their willingness to provide permanent care for the child. The contact must be documented using the [MDHHS-](#)

[5526, Alternate Care Provider Assessment for Prospective Adoptive Parents.](#)

CPS Central Registry

If it is determined that a prospective adoptive parent(s) or adult household member(s) is listed on a Child Protective Services (CPS) central registry for child abuse or neglect, the circumstances must be fully documented in the adoptive assessment. See [ADM 520, Background Checks, Clearances, Criminal History Checks, and Fingerprinting](#), for guidance on completing central registry checks. The reasons for placement consideration must include a full explanation as to reasons the family is being recommended for the adoption of a specific child; see **Michigan Children's Institute Superintendent Review for Individuals on Central Registry** in this policy.

Prior CPS Complaint or Investigation

If it is determined that a prospective adoptive parent(s) or adult household member(s) has a history of previous licensing/CPS complaints, investigations, and dispositions the circumstances must be fully documented in the adoptive assessment. See [ADM 520, Background Checks, Clearances, Criminal History Checks, and Fingerprinting](#), for guidance on completing checks for prior complaints or investigations.

Married Individual Adopting Without Their Spouse

If the prospective adoptive parent is married and planning to adopt without their spouse, the adoption case manager must consult the Michigan Children's Institute (MCI) office prior to approval. The adoption case manager must document the reason the individual is requesting to adopt without their spouse in the narrative of the family assessment and assess whether it is in the child's best interest.

Adoption case managers must not recommend approval for a married individual to adopt without their spouse when the spouse will be involved in the care of the child, especially if the spouse

resides in the adoptive home or it has been determined the spouse could not be approved for adoption ([MCL 710.24](#)).

Note: The court where the adoption petition is filed has final approval.

Physical or Mental Health Concerns for Prospective Adoptive Parent(s)

The adoption case manager must request a physical or psychological examination (at the prospective adoptive parent's expense) if there are concerns about the physical or mental health of any household member. See **Physical and Mental Health Status** in this policy for documenting these concerns.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Personal and Professional References

The prospective adoptive parent(s) must provide a minimum of three references from persons not related to the prospective adoptive. The [DHS-608, Personal Reference Letter](#), must be used to document personal references provided by the prospective adoptive parent(s).

The [DHS-610, Professional Reference](#), must be used when assessments require additional evaluation and documentation under certain circumstances; see **Circumstances Requiring Additional Evaluation and Documentation** in this policy. A professional reference is an individual who has direct experience working with the family and can attest to their ability to meet the physical and emotional needs of the child, including parenting, attachment, and advocacy of the prospective adoptive parent(s). Examples of professional references include teachers, therapists, coaches, daycare and assisted care providers, and medical professionals.

Note: Current or former foster care case managers and/or licensing specialists are not acceptable professional references.

The [DHS-611, Adult Child Reference](#), must be used to gather information from any adult child(ren) no longer residing in the home. If an adult child refuses or is not able to provide the information on the form, the efforts to contact the adult child and obtain the information must be documented in the electronic case record.

Reference forms must be mailed directly from the adoption case manager to the identified reference and returned directly to the adoption case manager.

Adoption case managers must obtain updated references for each subsequent application and adoption.

Verbal References

If a reference is the only delay in processing an assessment, the adoption case manager may obtain references verbally. The appropriate MDHHS reference form must be used to ask questions and document the responses. The adoption case manager's attempts to obtain written references, the date of the verbal contact, the method the reference was obtained, such as a phone interview or video conference, and the adoption case manager's signature must be documented on the appropriate reference form.

Clearances

See [ADM 0520, Background Checks, Clearances, Criminal History Checks, and Fingerprinting](#).

Physical and Mental Health Status

A medical statement for each member of the household that indicates that the member has no known health concerns that would affect the care of an adoptive child is required using the [DHS-3190, Medical Statement for Foster Home Licensing/Adoption](#). The second page of the DHS-3190 must be used for documentation of the physical or psychological examination report. All medical statements and reports must be current and dated within one year of the supervisor's approval date of the assessment.

Note: Local courts may have individual requirements for physical examinations for prospective adoptive families. Adoption case

managers should clarify these requirements with the court prior to filing the PCA 301, Petition for Adoption.

Alternate Care Providers

The [MDHHS-5527, Statement for Alternate Care Provider](#), must be used to document the alternate care provider(s) as identified by the prospective adoptive parent(s). Additionally, the adoption case manager must conduct an Internet Criminal History Access Tool (ICHAT), central registry clearance, check for prior CPS complaints or investigations, and Sex Offender Registry check on the identified alternate care provider(s). The results of the background checks must be kept in the adoptive family case record.

MICHIGAN CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE SUPERINTENDENT CENTRAL REGISTRY REVIEW

For MCI wards, the consent request to the MCI superintendent must include a copy of the CPS investigation report for the referral(s) that resulted in the individual being placed on central registry and a detailed explanation of the reason(s) for recommending the adoptive placement.

A thorough review by the MCI office of the circumstances surrounding the placement with the individual on central registry must be completed. Following this review, a written determination, using the [DHS-96, MCI Determination for Individuals Placed on Central Registry Requesting Consent](#), must be completed by the MCI office and will be sent to the adoption case manager. If the MCI superintendent consents to adoption, a copy of the written determination of the review must be included in the documentation provided to the court for their review prior to the adoptive placement.

Note: For children who are not yet placed in the prospective adoptive home, the MCI superintendent review and court review of the case must be completed prior to placing the child in the prospective adoptive home.

**MICHIGAN
CHILDREN'S
INSTITUTE
SUPERINTENDENT
CONSULTATION**

The MCI superintendent or their designee must be consulted prior to making an adoptive placement recommendation if any of the following situations are present:

- When the current caregiver for the child is requesting consideration for adoption but is not recommended for adoption.
- When an adoptive placement recommendation would result in a child being in an adoptive placement without their siblings.
- When circumstances requiring additional evaluation or documentation is needed to complete the adoptive family assessment.
- When the adoption case manager has any concerns regarding making an adoptive placement recommendation.

**LEGAL AUTHORITY
State*****The Probate Code, MCL 710.24***

The court may allow a married individual to adopt an adult without their spouse joining in the petition if all of the interested parties consent or a married individual to adopt without their spouse joining in the petition if the failure of the other spouse to join in the petition or to consent to the adoption is excused by the court for good cause shown or in the best interest of the child.

The Probate Code, MCL 722.957

With the exception of a private child placing agency operated, supervised, or controlled by a religious institution or organization that limits services or gives preference to an applicant of the same religion, an agency shall not refuse to provide services to a prospective adoptive parent or make placement decisions based solely on age, race, religious affiliation, disability, or income level.

POLICY CONTACT

Questions about this policy item may be directed to the [Child Welfare Policy Mailbox \(Child-Welfare-Policy@michigan.gov\)](mailto:Child-Welfare-Policy@michigan.gov).