

COVID-19 Adoption/ Post Adoption Practice Guidelines – Updated June 11, 2020

Purpose: Both CFS agencies and private adoption agencies complete adoption work. During COVID-19 this practice guideline allows for alternative service delivery, while ensuring the safety of families, organizations and program staff, based on public health information. All CFS agencies who support adoption work, including subsidy requests, are subject to these interim guidelines.

Adoption Regulation Requirements

All the requirements and time frames set out under the Adoption Regulation, including medical reports, child abuse registry checks, prior contact checks and criminal records checks, continue to apply in order for prospective adoptive families to be approved. This means adoption placements, except for relinquishing at birth, will be delayed until COVID-19 public health directives regarding social distancing have been lifted.

Homestudy Assessments and Homestudy Updates

Until further notice, homestudy assessments may be completed via telephone and/or online. However, one home visit must occur to complete a home safety inspection. Homestudy updates for families who have moved or renovated since the previous homestudy or update must also include one home visit to complete a home inspection. Please see the home visit guidelines below for further details.

Home Visits

Effective immediately, home visits for home inspection purposes to complete homestudy assessments or homestudy updates for clients who have moved to a new residence or renovated can occur.

Before going on a home visit, call the client and ask the following questions:

1. Have you or anyone in your household been in contact with anyone who has travelled internationally within the past 30 days?
2. Are you living in the same household as, or providing care for, a person with COVID-19 infection in the last 30 days?
3. Are you or anyone in the household currently experiencing any of the following cold or flu-like symptoms:
 - a. fever
 - b. cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
 - c. runny nose, sore throat
 - d. headache/weakness

If someone is ill or answers yes to any of the questions above, reschedule the visit.

If the visit takes place, minimize the number of people in attendance. Everyone must practice hand hygiene before and after the visit. Maintain physical distancing (two meters or six feet) whenever possible and encourage clients in the home to wear non-medical or cloth masks, if they have them.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn by all agency staff entering a private residence for a home inspection. Agency staff will have access to PPE. Ensure all procedures regarding donning and doffing PPE are followed. Further information on is available here: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-ppe-wearing-it-right.pdf>

When conducting a visit in an indoor location other than a private residence (e.g., agency office), agency staff must determine if physical distancing cannot be maintained or if anyone in attendance is medically compromised. In these situations, PPE must be worn (eye shield and mask).

PPE is not required for agency staff when conducting outdoor visits.

Adoption Placement – Division 1 (Permanent Ward)

The Central Adoption Registry will now be providing referrals for permanent wards with approved adoptive applicants, including child-specific referrals. Please see the home visit guidelines above on how home visits can be conducted safely.

Adoption Placement – Division 2 (Private)

Completing these placements is considered essential, as birth parents are planning for their newborn infants to be adopted and the children are to be placed within 48 hours. Public health protocols must be followed for contact with birth parents and prospective adoptive parents in completing a Division 2 adoption placement.

Please see the home visit guidelines above on how home visits can be conducted safely.

Adoption Placement – Division 3 (Intercountry)

All child proposals will continue to be processed. If the Manitoba Central Authority approves the child proposal, it will be forwarded to the appropriate adoption agency to share with prospective adoptive parents. Prospective adoptive parents will be required to have the child's medical information reviewed by a physician via telephone before accepting the child proposal.

Please see the home visit guidelines above on how home visits can be conducted safely.

Public health officials are strongly advising all Manitobans, including health care providers, to cancel or postpone any non-essential travel. This includes international travel and travel within Canada. Anyone who returns from travel, either international or domestic, should immediately self-isolate and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following their return.

Adoption Placement – Division 4 (Defacto), Division 5 (Extended Family) and Division 6 (Parent’s Own)

Division 4, 5 and 6 adoptions require a Report Upon Investigation, which may be completed via telephone and/or online. A home inspection visit is required. Please see the home visit guidelines above on how home visits can be conducted safely.

The Court of Queen’s Bench is currently processing all uncontested adoption matters. However, contested adoptions remain on hold, pending direction from the Associate Chief Justice.

Education Seminars

Until further notice, these are suspended unless it is offered online. If you offer online education, you must use an interactive educational format to evaluate the prospective adoptive parents’ level of learning.

Post-Adoption Services

The post-adoption services website has been updated to note that staff will respond to clients in alternate ways to reduce the reliance on face-to-face meetings and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Clients can call the toll free telephone number (1-855-837-5542) or email address postadoption@gov.mb.ca for assistance

The requirement of a witness on the post-adoption registry forms will be waived until further notice. Clients can send in their forms by email or mail with their identifying information only.

Adoption Financial Assistance

These requests are considered essential and will continue to be processed electronically.

- **Ongoing Assistance** will be extended for 60 days upon request, if the date of expiration occurs between March 1 - July 1, 2020. Adoption workers are required to email the names of the families, children and the per diem rates for this extension to Adoption@gov.mb.ca.
- **Prescription requests / renewals** will continue to be processed according to usual procedures.

- **Therapy requests / renewals** will be approved or renewed with evidence the therapy is being provided via phone or electronically. The therapist is required to email the child's case manager outlining how they will be providing service to the clients.
- **Dental requests** are cancelled until further notice. In emergency situations, case managers should provide adoptive families' insurance coverage and the billing information via email to (Adoption@gov.mb.ca) for processing.
- **Psychological assessments** will be approved / renewed with evidence the service is being provided via phone or electronically. The specialist is required to email to the child's social worker outlining how they will be providing service to the client.
- **Mileage / accommodation requests** will be processed according to usual procedures.

Post-Placement Reports

At this time, states of origin have not indicated whether they will accept post-placement reports without face-to-face meetings. If an agency is facing imminent time constraints due to COVID-19 response, agency staff may consider completing the post placement reports via a telephone and/or online interview. However, agency staff must document in the report a face-to-face meeting was not conducted due to COVID-19 response.

Ultimately, it will be the decision of the state of origin if this approach is acceptable. We will share any updates on acceptable post-placement reporting as soon as it is received.