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*A non-profit humanitarian adoption agency licensed by the State of Wyoming*

Connecting Hearts

## **Connecting Hearts, Inc. Policies and Procedures**

*All employees and clients of Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall agree to act in accordance to the published policies and procedures adopted by the Board of Directors of Connecting Hearts, Inc. It is the duty of those parties to stay informed regarding any policy matters that may be applicable to their situation. All policies and procedures enacted by Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall be in agreement with any and all adopted rules and policies published by the State of Wyoming. In the event there is a discrepancy, Wyoming State rules shall take precedence.*

Connecting Hearts, Inc. Policies		
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<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>I. Mission</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	

1. Connecting Hearts, Inc. Mission: Connecting Hearts, Inc. endeavors to build strong families by providing comprehensive child placement services to families living anywhere in Wyoming. We are committed to finding adoptive families for orphaned and abandoned children and to providing aid to children in need. We value the roles all parties: children, birth families, adoptive families, and professionals play. We consider an experience where all parties feel supported, engaged, and satisfied as the only acceptable outcome to our services.
  
2. Connecting Hearts, Inc. Adoption Program Goals and Objectives:
  - a. To provide new and permanent adoptive family ties for children whose birth parents are unable or unwilling to meet this responsibility including those children identified as orphaned, abandoned, dependent, legally relinquished, or otherwise identified as being available for adoptive placement.
  - b. To provide those children identified as available for adoption with a family who can provide them on-going care, nurturing, and appropriate supervision; including food, clothing, and shelter appropriate to the physical and emotional needs of the children.
  - c. To ensure that no child will be denied consideration for adoption because of his age, sex, religion, race, nationality, place of residence, settlement, economic or social status, a handicap that does not prevent him from living in a family situation, or lack of an available adoptive family.
  - d. To involve the adoptive families in an educational process.
  - e. To provide referrals to appropriate community resources for adoptive families and children and to foster communication and cooperation with other public and private agencies serving adoptive children and their families.
  - f. To provide either directly, or indirectly, or through referral the counseling and other services as needed to birth parents, the child, and the adoptive applicants.
  - g. To provide an on-going recruitment of families for children in need of adoptive homes.
  
3. The purpose of Connecting Hearts, Inc. Adoption Program is to educate and prepare adoptive families and to successfully unite them with children who are available for adoption. The primary focus of the program is the provision of adoptive services required by the child and adoptive family. We conduct home studies for the adoptive family, assist in the matching and selection process for the adoptive family as well as provide post-placement supervision.
  
4. Connecting Hearts, Inc. Adoption Program serves all areas of Wyoming. Adoptive placement services can be provided for children from the foster care system in Wyoming and other states as well as from private and domestic sources. Placement from international sources can only be completed under the supervision of and by a designated contract with an accredited agency licensed by USCIS under the Hague Convention Rules.

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>II. Organization</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	049.0029.1.11082017; 049.0029.2.11082017; 049.0029.3.11082017

1. Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall operate as a non-profit incorporation established in the State of Wyoming and registered with the Wyoming Secretary of State. Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall maintain written policies and procedures that are reviewed and updated no less than annually and provided to clientele on the connectingheartsadopt.org website and at the request of any client or regulatory agency. (049.0029.3.11082017§1)
2. Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall operate under a governing Board of Directors that shall include a minimum of 3 governing directors. Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall maintain a list of the board members including an address for each individual named. This information shall be made available to the certifying authority on an annual basis. (049.0029.3.11082017§1(c))
3. Connecting Hearts, Inc. Board of Directors shall meet no less than quarterly and maintain minutes of said board meetings that are available to clients and governing bodies upon request.
4. Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall be licensed to provide adoption related services to families in Wyoming through the Wyoming Department of Children and Family Services and shall maintain licensure in good standing while providing adoption services in Wyoming. Any lapses in licensure standing shall be communicated to all active clientele within 7 days. A remediation plan shall be defined by the Board of Directors and enacted along with a time line for completion to meet the deficient standards within 30 days of any lapse in licensure standing. This plan shall be submitted to the certifying authority within 30 days. (049.0029.2.11082017§9)
5. In accordance with Wyoming Administrative Rules (049.0029.2.11082017§2) Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall make available the following documents to the certifying authority on an annual basis:
  - a. Current list of members of the governing body;
  - b. Financial audit or review conducted by a licensed registered auditor or certified public accountant that shows compliance with all federal and state fiscal requirements and shows the program or organization is financially sound;
  - c. Current organizational chart and a summary that identifies and describes all units of operation with the organization and defines the lines of authority and the responsibility of each member of the staff;
  - d. Evidence of public and/or professional liability insurance, vehicle liability insurance, certificate of insurance, and the name and address of the insurance agency providing the insurance.
6. In accordance with Wyoming Administrative Rules (049.0029.2.11082017§4) Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall provide the certifying agency written notification prior to any changes in name, executive director, physical location, mailing address, or telephone number.
7. Connecting Hearts Inc. shall provide a minimum of 30 day notice to the certifying authority and any current clientele prior to the discontinuation of any services or intent to discontinue any services. (049.0029.2.11082017§6)

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>III. Service Model</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	

1. Overall program services include:
  - a. Recruitment of Adoptive Families
  - b. Home Study Preparation
  - c. Networking with Placement Agencies
  - d. Post-Placement Supervision
  - e. Post-Adoption Supervision
  - f. Court Appearances as Required
  - g. Adoption Consultation
  - h. Birth Parent Counseling
  - i. Adoption Classes and Family Preparation Resources
  - j. Community Education
  
2. Because Connecting Hearts, Inc.'s Adoption Program is predicated on the belief that every child has the right to a permanent and nurturing family, the program's recruitment efforts are aimed toward developing families for all children including special needs children and toward educating the public about children needing adoptive families.
  
3. No family seeking placement or child available for placement shall be excluded from participation on the basis of race, creed, color or national origin. All services shall be provided in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and in compliance with Wyoming statutes prohibiting discrimination. (049.0029.3.11082017§2)
  
4. Adoptive families may be networked with other families with similar issues, with permission given to share names and phone numbers. Support groups may be made available as an extension of the educational process. These support groups could consist of the prospective adoptive parents, adoptive families, and supportive professionals. Through the support group, prospective adoptive parents and parents who have secured placement of child(ren) can be helped through the times of stress by other adoptive families.
  
5. When a need for a service presents itself which cannot be provided through Connecting Hearts, Inc. staff, the staff will make referrals to other service providers. The service providers which may be available to the client include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Local or regional medical providers
  - b. Local or regional child development resources
  - c. Local or regional behavioral health resources
  - d. Local law enforcement resources
  - e. Local or regional legal resources
  - f. Social Security Administration
  - g. National adoption resources

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>IV. Employees</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	049.0029.3.11082017; 049.0029.14.11082017

1. In accordance with Wyoming State Statute (049.0029.3.11082017§10), all employees, including contract employees shall complete a check of the Wyoming Central Registry check, an abuse and/or neglect Central Registry check from any other states of residence within the past five years, and a finger print based national criminal history record check. Clearance from each of these agencies must be received before any work with clientele can begin.
2. Employees shall be responsible for conducting activities in accordance with accepted professional standards of accuracy, loyalty, truth, and good faith and comply with local, state and federal laws.
3. All employees must undergo a TB screening and/or testing within 10 days of hire and cannot have direct contact with children prior to receiving the results. Each staff must complete a TB Yearly Risk Factor Self-Assessment and there shall be follow-up TB testing if recommended by a health professional. In the case of a positive exposure, employees shall follow the procedures of the Wyoming Department of Health. (049.0029.3.11082017§12(a))
4. Any employee shall not engage in work with clients while infected with a communicable disease. Employees shall be examined and cleared by a physician before engaging in work with clients following the diagnosis or suspected diagnosis of a communicable disease. (049.0029.3.11082017§12(b))
5. All employees will complete 20 hours of orientation as outlined in 049.0029.3.11082017§11 and 20 hours of continuing education related to adoption annually (049.0029.14.11082017§4). This education must be approved by the Executive Director.
6. Employees shall work for a salary, retainer, or fee, not a commission. Employees and supervised providers are paid for actual services rendered and only on a fee-for-service basis rather than a contingent fee basis. If working in fundraising, it shall be on the basis of a predetermined fee and not a percentage of funds raised.
7. No payments, promise of payment or any other consideration may be made to any individual directly or indirectly involved in provision of adoption services in a particular case, except for fees and services actually rendered and reimbursement of costs incurred. In kind or other donations not intended to influence or affect a particular adoption are not prohibited.
8. The agency prohibits its employees and agents from giving money or other consideration directly or indirectly to a child's parent(s) or other individual(s), or an entity, as payment for the child or as an inducement to release the child.

9. Employees shall make a full disclosure to employers and clients all relationships, which might pose or appear to pose possible conflicts of interest or constitute a dual relationship.  
(049.0029.3.11082017§2(a(iv)))
10. Employees shall neither seek, nor accept any additional payment or compensation outside of predetermined fee dictated by Connecting Hearts, Inc. for any work performed in the capacity of an adoption service provider with Connecting Hearts, Inc.
11. Employees shall hold confidential, and leave intact, all lists, records and documents, acquired in the service of Connecting Hearts, Inc.
12. All employees will sign a Connecting Hearts, Inc. code of ethics statement.
13. All employees providing direct professional services to families will maintain and provide ongoing proof of professional liability insurance.
14. All employees will be evaluated yearly by the Adoption Agency Executive Director.
15. Staff files shall be maintained for all employees and shall include at a minimum the following:  
Name, documentation and verification of education and training, verification of work experience, TB screening and/or test results, copy of resume, employee signature verifying they have reviewed all policy and procedures for the organization, documented proof of all training received by staff (to include the number of hours, dates, title of training and name of trainer), documentation in writing, signed by each staff member that to the best of his/her knowledge he/she is not on a child abuse and/or neglect registry in Wyoming or any other state, completed abuse and/or neglect Central Registry check, and evidence of a FBI criminal history record check; documentation of the completion of an annual evaluation, copy of employment contract (049.0029.3.11082017§32(b)), statement of understanding of child abuse and/or neglect reporting responsibilities, and verification of professional liability insurance coverage (for staff providing professional services to clients).

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>V. Abuse and/or Neglect Reporting</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	049.0029.3.11082017§3

1. Any report made of the law enforcement authorities or DFS concerning an employee of Connecting Hearts, Inc. concerning an allegation of abuse and/or neglect of any child shall result in the temporary suspension or reassignment of duties to preclude any contact with minors associated with Connecting Hearts, Inc. Such suspension or reassignment shall remain in effect pending the outcome of the investigation by the appropriate authorities.
2. Any report made of the law enforcement authorities or DFS concerning a client of Connecting Hearts, Inc. concerning an allegation of abuse and/or neglect of any child shall result in the immediate suspension of contracted services. Such suspension shall remain in effect pending the outcome of the investigation by the appropriate authorities.
3. Clients who have contracted with Connecting Hearts, Inc. have the duty to report to the agency any allegations of suspected abuse and/or neglect that have been made against any member of their household within 24 hours of their notification. Failure to do so may result in permanent termination of current and future services.
4. Any staff member or contracted employee of Connecting Hearts, Inc. who as reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to any abuse and/or neglect, or who as observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse and/or neglect, must immediately report or cause a report to be made of such fact to the DFS office and/or the local law enforcement agency in the county where the abuse occurred. Staff members must immediately record this report with the Connecting Hearts, Inc. administrator following any report of abuse and/or neglect to law enforcement or DFS authorities.
5. Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall work with DFS authorities and/or other involved agencies to determine appropriate placement for a child in a post-placement period prior to finalization that is placed in a home where an allegation of suspected abuse and/or neglect has been made against any member of the household.
6. All staff members and prospective adoptive families shall read and sign a statement defining child abuse and/or neglect, outlining responsibilities to report all child abuse and/or neglect incidences as required by statues, and outlining Connecting Hearts, Inc.'s policies and procedures relating to abuse and/or neglect reporting.

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>VI. Finances</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	1/5/19
<b>References:</b>	049.0029.3.11082017§2(b)

1. Connecting Hearts, Inc. will designate only 2 authorized employees/directors to manage financial deposits and disbursements.
2. All payments from clients will be directed to Connecting Hearts, Inc. and never to an individual employee.
3. Income and disbursement records and tax information will be audited by an external auditor on a yearly basis.
4. No money will be loaned to clients under any circumstances.
5. Work shall not commence on a home study or report until an agreed upon deposit is made. If an employee starts work prior to receiving a signed contract and deposit, the employee shall assume the risk of nonpayment for services provided.
6. Following the completion of a service or report, full payment is expected within 30 days of the invoice date. Additional invoices shall be sent at 30 and 60 days from date of original invoice. Failure to make full payment 90 days after initial invoice shall result in the use of a collections service to secure the payment amount.
7. All payments, including deposits, are non-refundable unless otherwise stated in the explanation of fees.
8. Clients shall have access to an explanation of fees that outlines all known expenditures associated with the Connecting Hearts adoption process. These fees may be subject to change. Clients are accountable for the specified fee published at the time a contract for specific services are entered into.



<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>VII. Client Service Policies</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	2/1/19
<b>References:</b>	049.0029.14.11082017

1. A client will not receive a home study preparation packet or information on criminal checks before they have sent a signed contract and fee to Connecting Hearts, Inc. Clients will be sent a copy of the signed contract after it is received by Connecting Hearts, Inc.
2. Connecting Hearts, Inc. respects the laws of the states in which they work and upholds these laws. All home studies and other adoption related services shall meet current rules and laws adopted by the State of Wyoming.
3. Entering into an agreement to complete the home study process with Connecting Hearts, Inc. does not guarantee approval for an adoptive placement. Determination of approval/disapproval of adoptive homes is the responsibility of the Agency Director ((049.0029.14.11082017§8).
4. Married applicants must be married for at least one year and maintain a residence together for at least that long.
5. Single parents are considered to the extent they have the ability to meet the needs of a child.
6. Applicants for adoption must be at least 21 years old.
7. All families hoping to adopt must undergo an adoptive family screening process which shall include the completion of a home study and an abuse and/or neglect Wyoming Central Registry check and a central registry check from all other states he/she has lived in for the past 5 years, and a finger print based national criminal history record check (049.0029.14.11082017§5).
8. As part of the adoption home study process, Connecting Hearts Inc. shall collect and maintain in a file the following documents, prior to approval (049.0029.14.11082017§6):
  - a. Background checks on prospective parents and all other adult residents of the home;
  - b. References: 3 Non-family relatives who have known the adoptive applicants for at least two years and 2 Family relatives;
  - c. Physician or other medical professional statement verifying a prospective adoptive parent is physically, cognitively, and emotionally capable of providing care for the child(ren);
  - d. TB testing results
  - e. Evidence of pre-adoption training
  - f. Health and Safety Inspection
  - g. Completed Adoption Home Study Report

9. Three (3) or more interviews shall be held with prospective adoptive parents, including (049.0029.14.11082017§6):
  - a. Individual interviews for each adoptive applicant;
  - b. Individual interviews for all household members (age appropriate);
  - c. At least 1 interview with all family members present in the family home for domestic infant adoption and at least 2 interviews must take place in the home for foster care adoption.
  
10. A Health and Safety Inspection shall be completed during the home study process and shall be monitored during the duration of the contracted services with Connecting Hearts Inc. (049.0029.14.11082017§7)
  
11. Home Studies and Home Study Updates completed through Connecting Hearts, Inc. are to be used for the purpose of child placement for up to 12 months following the approval date.
  
12. Home studies may be updated up to 5 times, or for up to 6 years from the original completion date before a new home study will be required, provided that significant changes to the family's circumstances have not dramatically changed the content of the original home study. This determination will be made by the agency director.
  
13. Approved Foster Homes shall be reviewed on an annual basis and an in-home inspection must be completed and documented in the foster home file.
  
14. Connecting Hearts Inc. will maintain and document ongoing communication with the foster family by visiting in the foster home at least one time each month (when placed with child) when the child is present, unless indicated more often based on the circumstances of the case.
  
15. In accordance with Wyoming State Statutes, Connecting Hearts Inc. shall provide monthly supervisory visits to each adoptive home in which children are placed during the pre-finalization period. These visit shall be recorded in the adoptive home record. Exceptions may be made by asking for a variance with the Department of Family Services and must be recorded in the adoptive home record. (049.0029.14.11082017§10)
  
16. Clients agree to submit a Final Decree of Adoption to Connecting Hearts, Inc. after an adoption is finalized where-in Connecting Hearts, Inc. has provided any professional services.
  
17. Client paperwork shall be kept in a locked fireproof file cabinet located in the Connecting Hearts, Inc. office. Paperwork that is digitized shall be kept in an encrypted file with a back-up kept on a portable hard drive also stored in a locked fireproof cabinet. Final adoption records shall be retained indefinitely (049.0029.14.11082017§15).

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>VIII. Client Rights and Responsibilities</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	049.0029.14.11082017

1. A client is defined as any person(s)/entity that has contracted with Connecting Hearts, Inc. to provide professional services.
  
2. Clients of Connecting Hearts Inc. are entitled to rights that include but are not limited to:
  - a. The right to be treated with dignity and respect.
  - b. The right to competent and caring assistance from the agency staff.
  - c. The right to receive services that are non-coercive and free from all abuse and harassment.
  - d. The right to understand the services being offered to you.
  - e. The right to know any fees or charges that you may have to pay and what financial assistance may be available.
  - f. The right to have a copy of your itemized invoice.
  - g. The right to schedule timely appointments.
  - h. The right to file complaints about the services you have received.
  - i. The right to give informed consent to the extent of the law.
  - j. The right to know the name, license, credentials and areas of skill of the worker you are working with.
  - k. A client has a right to copies all reports written on their behalf as part of any contracted services.
  
3. Clients of Connecting Hearts Inc. are expected to adhere to the following expectations that include but are not limited to:
  - a. A client is open and honest
  - b. A client is to keep Connecting Hearts Inc. updated on their physical address, mailing address, phone number, and email address.
  - c. A client follows through on service plans and recommendations of Connecting Hearts Inc. staff.
  - d. A client pays all fees as required in a timely manner.
  - e. A client provides updated and correct details about their criminal history, health, income and employment.
  - f. A client communicates any conflicts directly to their staff member when possible in an effort to resolve conflicts.
  - g. Clients agree to abide by the expectations set out in Connecting Hearts, Inc. policies and procedures as set out at the date of their signed contract.

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>IX. Grievance/Complaint</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	049.0029.3.11082017§29

1. Clients agree that in the event of dissatisfaction with services they will discuss the dissatisfaction and negotiate in earnest.
2. Clients agree to the following procedure for complaints and/or grievances:
  - a. Discuss in good faith directly with the agency personnel involved in the situation. This step may be omitted if a client feels the agency personnel has behaved in an abusive or victimizing way toward them or anyone in their family. If no mutually agreeable solution can be reached, proceed to next step.
  - b. Discuss in good faith with the agency director regarding the problematic situation and details of the failure to reach an agreement with initial agency staff. If no mutually agreeable solution can be reached, proceed to next step.
  - c. Draft formal letter of complaint to Board of Directors via Connecting Hearts, Inc. The Board of Directors will respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of the letter and provide expedited review of complaints that are time-sensitive or that involve allegations of fraud. If no mutually agreeable solution can be reached, proceed to next step.
  - d. Clients agree to mediation to resolve conflict if an agreement to the conflict cannot be arrived at by discussion. If no mutually agreeable solution can be reached, proceed to next step.
  - e. Client may elect to file formal complaint with state accrediting entity at any time if they feel the grievance has not been resolved to a satisfactory level.
3. Clients seeking to file a grievance within the legal system are advised that Connecting Hearts, Inc. will only stand trial or undergo legal mediation in the state of Wyoming.
4. Connecting Hearts, Inc. will not take any action to discourage a client or prospective client from, or retaliate against a client or prospective client for, making a complaint, expressing a grievance, providing information in writing or interviews to an accrediting entity on the agency's or person's performance; or questioning the conduct of, or expressing an opinion about, the performance of an agency/person.
5. Connecting Hearts, Inc. maintains a written record of each complaint received and the steps taken to investigate and respond to it and makes this record available to the accrediting entity upon request.
6. Connecting Hearts, Inc. provides to the accrediting entity and Secretary on an annual basis, a summary of all complaints received, during the preceding 12 months, including the number of

complaints received and how each was resolved. In addition, an assessment of any discernible patterns in complaints received against the agency/person, along with information about what systemic changes, if any were made or planned should be included.

7. Connecting Hearts, Inc. has a satisfaction survey that is designed to be a quality improvement program through which it makes a systematic effort to improve its adoption services as needed. Clients shall be given satisfaction surveys at the conclusion of the home study process and at regular intervals following the placement of a child as determined by agency director. The results of these surveys will be evaluated at the board meetings.
8. Connecting Hearts Inc. shall report within 10 calendar days, in writing to the certifying authority, if applicable, any civil or criminal action that is brought against the program or any person employed by the program which relates to the delivery of the service or which may impact on the continued operation of the facility (049.0029.3.11082017§2(f)).

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>X. Contract Termination</b>
<b>Date of Adoption:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Effective Date:</b>	3/18/18
<b>Revision Date:</b>	
<b>References:</b>	

1. Connecting Hearts, Inc. may terminate the contract with a family upon the family's failure to comply with or satisfy any of the terms, conditions or covenants contained in the contract or the previously identified client responsibilities.
2. Connecting Hearts, Inc. also reserves the right to terminate the contract at any time if the family acts in bad faith, or if the parties are unable to agree or cooperate about a significant issue.
3. Adoptive parents can at any time choose to withdraw from this agency. They must notify the agency in writing of their desires. After this letter is received we will return their papers by mail. All fees are considered non-refundable.