

Connecting Hearts Inc.

Adoption Life Policy & Procedure Manual



AdoptionLife
ADOPTION AGENCIES

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1. Adoption Life Program Statement				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/2021	Effective Date:	10/1/2021	Date of Revision:
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (500); WY 049.0029.3.11082017			

1.1 Mission Statement

Adoption Life endeavors to build strong families by providing comprehensive child placement services to families and children. We are committed to giving our time, energy, and resources to help hopeful adoptive families prepare for adoption, and provide birth parents and adoptees with compassionate, caring, and life-long support. We value the roles all parties: children, birth families, adoptive families, and professionals play. We hold ourselves to a higher standard and strive to provide excellent education and advocacy while maintaining morals of trustworthiness and ethical relationships with all those touched by adoption.

1.2 Program Philosophy

1. **Social Contribution:** Adoption Life improves the world by promoting the best interests of children in need through their placement in stable, loving, and permanent homes.
2. **Client First:** Adoption Life provides valuable and exceptional services to its clients, including children, biological parents, and adoptive parents, by utilizing best practices in the delivery of social services, marketing, and the use of technology. Adoption Life will be a leader in providing outstanding customer service. We consider an experience where all parties feel supported, engaged, and satisfied as the only acceptable outcome to our services.
3. **Value Driven:** Adoption Life is directed by its values, namely the best interests of children and stability, safety, love, and permanence in homes. Education, faith, and self-determination are respected and encouraged.
4. **Ethical:** Adoption Life ascertains, develops, and follows ethical standards, with the aim that its operations will be transparent, and that public review of its activities will be viewed positively.
5. **Global:** Adoption Life provides services to children in need and parents throughout the world. No child will be denied consideration for adoption because of their age, sex, religion, race, nationality, place of residence, settlement, economic or social status, a handicap that does not prevent them from living in a family situation, or lack of an available adoptive family.
6. **Outreach and Connectivity:** Adoption Life works to establish and nourish positive relationships with digital media partners, and legal, medical, and other adoption professionals. These relationships create positive, sustainable adoption opportunities for birth families and adoptive parents.
7. **Technology:** Adoption Life utilizes technology in support of its work, including use of mobile devices, social networking, search engine optimization and video. It relies on existing technologies but also innovates with technology towards accomplishing its goals.
8. **A+ Personnel:** Adoption Life conducts its operations through personnel who are qualified to complete their responsibilities, passionate about adoption, and willing to innovate.
9. **Storytelling:** In counseling, outreach and educational activities, Adoption Life focuses on Storytelling. Storytelling creates context, teaches profound lessons, and provides hope and inspiration to the listener throughout their personal and unique adoption journey.

1.3 Description of Services

1. Adoption Life provides all required services for the placement of children for adoption, serving children, birth parents and adoptive parents. Because Adoption Life is predicated on the belief that every child has the right to a permanent and nurturing family, the program's recruitment will include

efforts aimed toward developing families for all children including children with special needs and toward educating the public about children needing adoptive families. When a need for a service presents itself which cannot be provided through Adoption Life staff, the staff will make appropriate referrals to other service providers.

2. Adoption Life provides services under the following programs:
 - A. **Designated Adoption Program.** This includes all adoption related services (education, home studies, post placement supervision, referrals, consultation, etc.) where Adoption Life is not serving as the placing agency. This includes International Home Study Services for families who are working with an appropriately licensed international placing agency, as well as families working toward independent adoption or working with another agency for placement. In this program, adoptive families contract with Adoption Life for the individual services required for their specific situation.
 - B. **Waiting Child Adoption Program.** This includes all adoption related services (education and licensing, home studies, matching and placing support, post placement supervision, referrals, consultation, post-adoption support, etc.) where Adoption Life is serving as the licensing agency for families wanting to adopt from the foster care system. Families wishing to participate in the Waiting Child Adoption Program are required to undergo state sanctioned training and approval requirements for licensure as a foster parent in their state of residence. Adoption Life is certified to provide licensure as foster families in multiple states. Adoption Life does not place children in homes for purposes other than adoption but works closely state foster care agencies if families wish to serve in a foster care capacity. Adoption Life primarily certifies families for the purpose of adoption from the foster care system. Families who are participating in this program are required to maintain licensure status for the duration of their inclusion in the program.
 - C. **Domestic Infant Adoption Program.** This includes all adoption related services (education and licensing, home studies, matching and placing, post placement supervision, referrals, consultation, post-adoption support, etc.) where Adoption Life is serving as the placing agency for biological parents wanting to place their child ages 0-5 with an adoptive family. Families participating in this program are required to maintain approval status for the duration of their participation. Adoption Life interacts with individuals wishing to make an adoption plan and support them in choosing adoptive families for their child. Adoption Life advocates for and supports open adoption relationships.

1.4 Population Served

1. Adoption Life serves Children, Biological Parents and Prospective Adoptive Parents from Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho as well as other states as allowed by law. Adoption Life also serves outside Child Placing Agencies and Foster Care Agencies through contractual relationships in the placement of children in adoptive family homes.
 - A. **Children:** Adoption Life serves children, whose best interest is served by adoption. The Agency serves children of any race, ethnicity, religious or cultural background, including special needs, for whom birth parents or other custodial parties are seeking adoption services. Adoption Life does not specify any special characteristics of the clients it serves, except that Adoption Life does not serve children who cannot be placed for adoption due to legal or medical reasons. If Adoption

Life determines that a child cannot be placed for adoption, it may refer birth parents to appropriate resources to assist in care for the child.

- B. **Biological Parents:** Adoption Life serves biological parents who (1) do not wish to parent a child, (2) doubt their ability, skill, or willingness to parent a child, and (3) are unable or unwilling to perform the duties of a parent. The Agency serves birth parents who are seeking adoption services. Birth parents are eligible to receive services if they are 1) a pregnant woman, of any age, race or cultural background, and who desires to place her child for adoption, 2) the biological father, of any age, race or cultural background of an unborn child to be placed for adoption, or 3) the biological or adoptive parents of any age, race or cultural background of a child, age 0-5, who wishes to consider placement of that child for adoption. Adoption Life does not specify any special characteristics of the biological parent clients it serves.
- C. **Prospective Adoptive Parents:** Adoption Life serves adoptive parents of any race, religion or cultural background who are desirous and qualified to adopt children. No family seeking placement or child available for placement shall be excluded from participation based on 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 state statutes prohibiting discrimination. Adoption Life serves adoptive parents from age 21 until such an age so that a child placed with them will reach majority before the adoptive parents reach the age of 70. Married applicants must be married for at least one year and maintain a residence together for at least that long. Single parents are considered to the extent they can meet the needs of a child and single parent adoptions are allowed within the state of residence.
- D. **Child Placing and Foster Care Agencies:** Adoption Life serves outside Child Placing and Foster Care Agencies who work to place children in healthy adoptive homes. Adoption Life works with agencies to recruit and appropriately train and prepare adoptive families within Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah for the placement of adoptable children in the foster care system with a variety of special needs, including potential for trauma and attachment difficulties. Adoption Life will seek out and secure appropriate contracts with said agencies to perform these placements per individual state guidelines.

2. Administration and Organization				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/2021	Effective Date:	10/1/2021	Date of Revision:
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (520-525, 544-552, 601-608), WY 049.0029.1.11082017; WY 049.0029.2.11082017; WY 049.0029.3.11082017; WY 049.0029.14.11082017			

2.1 Policy

Connecting Hearts Inc. is a registered entity doing business as Adoption Life in accordance with the laws and regulations of the states of Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah in addition to industry best practice. Connecting Hearts Inc. assures that all administrative requirements are met in all locations and operations of the agency.

2.2 Procedure: Administrative, personnel and governance requirements are met through the following:

1. **Board of Directors.** Connecting Hearts Inc. is governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of at least three Directors.
 - A. The Board of Directors operates according to the Bylaws of Connecting Hearts, Inc.
 - B. The Board of Directors meets at least quarterly. For each meeting, written minutes are prepared and retained, reflecting the following:
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Date
 - c. Agenda items
 - d. Actions
 - C. The Agency, governed by the Board of Directors for Connecting Hearts, Inc. shall be hereafter referred to as Adoption Life.
 - D. The Board of Directors is responsible for and has authority over the policies, training and monitoring of staff and consumer activities of Adoption Life. It does the following:
 - a. Establishes priorities and values for the Agency
 - b. Evaluates whether the Agency is adherent to its core value
 - c. Ensures that the Agency is compliant with its policies and procedures
 - d. Ensures that the Agency is compliant with local, state, and federal laws and regulations
 - e. Notifies State authorities of changes in program administration and purpose
 - f. Ensures that the Agency is fiscally and operationally sound
 - g. Ensures that the Agency has adequate staffing
 - h. Ensures that the Agency has appropriate insurance coverage for its operations including general liability insurance, professional liability insurance and, as required, vehicle insurance and fire insurance.
 - i. Each member of the Board of Directors is required annually to provide a signed copy of the current Department of Human Services Provider Code of Conduct.
 - j. Any member of the Board of Directors who may have contact with clients of Adoption Life will have a current background clearance.
2. **Staffing and Personnel Management.** Adoption Life is staffed with appropriate personnel, and provides referrals as needed to assure that the agency is operated in an efficient, consistent, and ethical manner, and that clients' needs are met. Job descriptions are provided, and files are maintained for employees, volunteers, and interns as appropriate.

3. **Administrative Staff.** The agency has a Managing Executive Director, who is available at all times during the operation of the program, and at least one Director of Social Work who is responsible for directly supervising all staff and volunteers who provide adoption services to clients. The Executive Director and Director of Social Work directly supervise all staff and volunteers who provide adoption-related services to clients.
 - A. **Managing Executive Director**
 - a. The Managing Executive Director manages the daily operations of Adoption Life.
 - b. If the Executive Director meets criteria for Director of Social Work, he or she may serve in this capacity.
 - c. If the Executive Director also serves as the Director of Social Work, he or she shall not supervise more than 4 staff and volunteers who provide adoption-related services.
 - B. **Director of Social Work**
 - a. Each Director of Social Work holds a Master of Social Work, is licensed with the appropriate state authority in which they practice services and has at least one full year paid professional experience in a licensed child placing adoption agency.
 - b. A Director of Social Work shall not supervise more than 8 staff and volunteers who provide adoption-related services.
4. **Clinical Staff.** The Agency hires appropriate clinical staff to meet the needs of the Agency and clientele.
 - A. Social Workers provide adoption related services to birth parents, children, or adoptive applicants. Social Workers maintain a current professional license as required by State Law.
 - B. Mental Health Professionals provide individual and group counseling as needed to assist birth parents, children, or adoptive applicants and to assist with adoption process. Mental Health Professionals maintain a current professional license as required by State Law.
 - C. All unlicensed clinical staff is provided with a minimum of 1 hour of clinical supervision by an LCSW for every 40 hours worked.
 - D. Treatment of clients is provided or supervised by professional clinical staff in accordance with State Law.
5. **Support Staff and other Services:**
 - A. As needed, the agency hires other staff to conduct its operations. Support staff may include: Care Managers, Clerical staff, Fiscal Staff, Receptionists, Transportation Coordinators, Activity Coordinators, Correspondence Coordinators, Housekeeping, Marketing Managers, and Maintenance, etc.
 - B. The agency utilizes medical professionals from local hospitals and clinics to provide medical services to its clients, as needed.
 - C. The agency provides interpreters for clients or refers clients to appropriate resources as necessary to communicate with clients whose primary language is not English.
6. **Job Descriptions.** The agency has written job descriptions for each position, which include a specific statement of duties and responsibilities and the minimum level of education, training and work experience required.
7. **Criminal Background Checks.** All directors, staff, volunteers, and interns who may have contact with children first obtain a cleared criminal background check and child abuse check in accordance with any state wherein they provide services.

- A. Wyoming: 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 fingerprint based national criminal history record check. Clearance from each of these agencies must be received before any work with clientele can begin. All employees, volunteers and interns shall complete a child abuse/neglect Central Registry background check once a year and a full fingerprint national criminal history record background check every five (5) years.
 - B. Idaho: Criminal history and background checks are required for individuals seeking employment. Individuals who are required to have a criminal history check must comply with IDAPA 16.05.06, "Criminal History and Background Checks." Employees are required to provide their previous residence information for the preceding five (5) years in their application for a criminal history and background check to comply with enhanced clearance recommendations. Employees must provide a copy of the printed, signed, and notarized criminal history and background check application for all individuals required to obtain a criminal history and background check to be maintained in the employee file.
 - C. Utah: An applicant for employment, to include interns, volunteers, and contract workers, shall require the highest level of clearance to include out of state registry checks for associated applicants who have resided outside of the state of Utah in the past 5 years.
8. **Employee Files:** The Agency maintains a personnel file for each employee and contract employee, in accordance with agency policy and state regulations wherein the employee practices. Employee files shall be kept in accordance with outlined Adoption Life Policy #13: Records on page 23.
9. **Volunteers and Interns.** The agency periodically utilizes volunteers and/or interns to provide supervised limited services to clients. A personnel file for each intern and volunteer. Volunteer/Intern files shall be kept in accordance with Adoption Life Policy #13: Records on page 23.
10. **Training.** Adoption Life provides training and supervision to all employees, volunteers or interns who provide adoption services to birth parents and adoptive families.
- A. All staff, volunteers receive orientation of policies and procedures within 7 days of hire.
 - B. All staff training is documented and maintained in the file of employees, volunteers, or interns.
 - C. Each new employee and volunteer, and current employee and volunteer whose job function significantly changes, and whose primary role requires interaction with children, must receive at least twenty-five (25) hours of planned training before working independently and 20 hours of continuing education related to adoption annually. This education must be approved by the Executive Director.
 - D. Training topics for staff and volunteers include, but are not limited to:
 - a. agency policy and procedures
 - b. adoption ethics, laws, and rules
 - c. the provision of professional and trauma informed adoption practices
 - d. any evaluations they will be performing
 - E. Staff will be supervised for adherence to training topics

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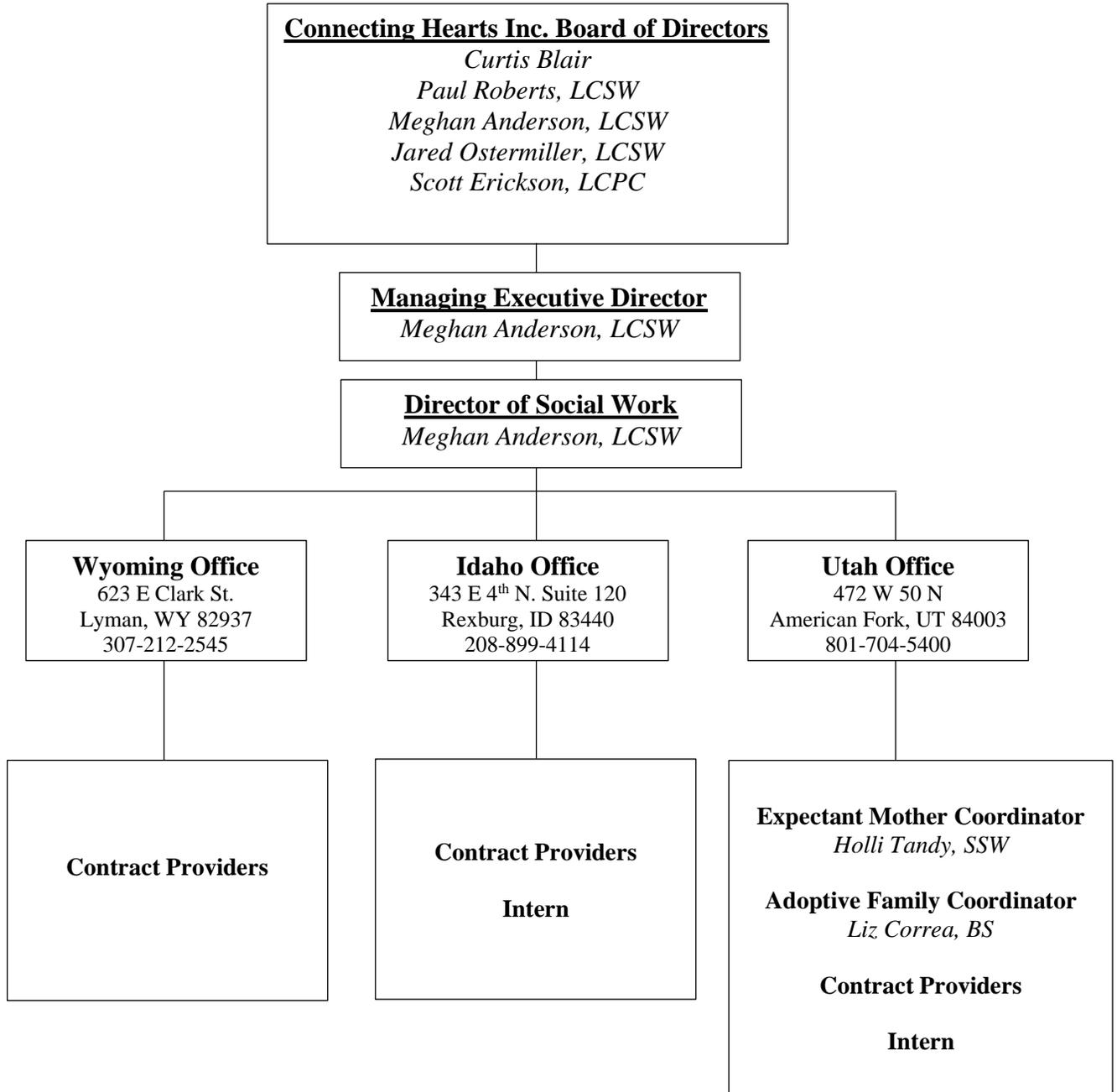
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Adoption Life Organizational Chart



3. Finance				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (535-536); WY 049.0029.3.11082017			

3.1 Policy

Adoption Life assures that finances are managed in an ethical and responsible manner with transparency.

3.2 Procedure

1. Adoption Life will designate authorized employees/directors to manage financial deposits and disbursements.
2. All payments from clients will be directed to Adoption Life or 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 or employees under any circumstances.
5. Professional services shall not be provided until an agreed upon deposit is made. Services rendered prior to agreed upon contract and fee shall be consultative in nature only.
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 may 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 Adoption Life 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.

4. Staff Behavior Management

Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (573)				

4.1 Policy

1. Adoption Life assures that client behavior is managed appropriately. Inappropriate behavior and its consequences are clearly defined. Staff shall receive annual training relative to behavior management.
2. **Definitions:** The following are defined as inappropriate behaviors:
 - A. Non-compliance with reasonable staff instructions
 - B. Theft or illegal activity
 - C. Possession or consumption of alcohol, drugs, or any other mood-altering substance
 - D. Associations with persons who are using alcohol, drugs, or other mood-altering substance, who may put client or other clients at risk
 - E. Sexual Misconduct: An individual engages in "sexual misconduct" when he or she engages in any act for purposes of sexual gratification that involves another person and that is done without the consent or at the expense of that person.
 - F. Nudity in public places
 - G. Physical violence or threats of physical violence
 - H. Possession of contraband, weapons, or drugs
 - I. Profanity or vulgarity in public and common areas
 - J. Destructive acts or behavior
 - K. Dishonesty

4.2 Procedure

1. Adoption Life will adhere to the following procedure for the methods of behavior management:
 - A. No management or staff member shall authorize or use any method designed to humiliate or frighten a client.
 - B. No management person authorizes or uses, and no staff member uses or permits the use of physical restraint with the exception of passive physical restraint. Passive physical restraint shall be used only as a temporary means of physical containment to protect the client, other persons, or property from harm. Passive physical restraint shall not be associated with punishment in any way.
 - C. Staff involved in an emergency safety intervention that results in an injury to a resident or staff must meet with the Director of Social Work to evaluate the circumstances that caused the injury and develop a plan to prevent future injuries.
 - D. Adoption Life does not employ any time out or seclusion methods.
 - E. The Director of Social Work is responsible for the supervision of the behavior management procedure.
 - F. If a client escalates physically or emotionally, staff is informed to bring in additional staff and to call appropriate medical help if needed.
 - G. All staff shall receive annual behavioral management training, which will be documented in their employee file.
 - H. Consequences: Staff will meet with clients to discuss inappropriate behaviors. Issues will be addressed as needed. If issues cannot be resolved, and/or it is determined that the safety of the client or other individuals is at risk, the client will be provided with appropriate referrals and will be discharged from the program.

5. Ethical Conduct				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:				

5.1 Policy:

Adoption Life promotes lawful and ethical behavior by all employees, officers, and members of the Board of Directors and to ensure that the Agency is conducted according to the values of the Agency and all applicable rules, regulations and laws.

5.2 Procedure:

1. **Compliance with Laws, Regulations, Rules and Policies.** Each employee and officer is expected to be familiar and comply with all of the policies of the Agency that apply to their position.
2. **Appearance of Good Conduct and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest.** Each employee, officer and director have a responsibility not only to do the right thing but also to avoid behavior that could be perceived as failing to do the right thing. Employees, officers, and directors should always act in the best interest of the Agency and avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's private interest interferes in any way with the interests of the Agency as a whole. A conflict situation can arise when an employee, officer or director takes actions or has interests that may make it difficult to perform his or her Agency work objectively and effectively. Conflicts of interest also arise when an employee, officer or director, or a member of his or her family, receives improper personal benefits because of his or her position with the Agency.
3. **Employee Relations.** Each employee and officer should promote diversity, inclusiveness, and understanding in the workplace by valuing the individuality and creativity that every employee brings to the agency.
4. **Harassment.** Management firmly believes that harassment of any kind seriously undermines the integrity of the employment relationship and respect for human dignity. The Agency is committed to providing a work environment free from harassment, intimidation, and coercion based on or related to race, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, or any other classification protected by law. Each employee and officer have a responsibility to uphold the Agency's commitment to provide a workplace free from harassment of any kind.
5. **Commitment to Safety.** Each employee and officer should always perform his/her job safely, protecting the clients, other employees, and themselves from injury.
6. **Commitment to Excellence.** Each employee and officer should:
 - a. Represent the Agency with dignity and in a respectful manner.
 - b. Strive for continuous improvement and maximize efficiency in his/her job.
 - c. Work with others to achieve the common goal of quality service.
7. **Community Relations.** Officers and employees should be responsible citizens of our local, state, and national communities.
8. **Appropriate Use of Agency Assets.** Each employee, officer and director have a responsibility to properly use Agency property, facilities, and equipment. This responsibility includes protecting Agency property from loss, theft, abuse, and unauthorized use. All Agency assets should be used for legitimate business purposes.
9. **Agency Opportunities.** Employees, officers, and directors are prohibited from (a) taking for themselves, personally, opportunities that are discovered through the use of Agency property, information, or position; (b) using Agency property, information, or position for personal gain; and (c) competing with the Agency. Employees, officers, and directors owe a duty to the Agency to advance its legitimate interests when the opportunity to do so arises.

- 10. Fair Dealing.** Each employee, officer and director should endeavor to deal fairly with the Agency's clients, suppliers, and employees. None should take unfair advantage of anyone through manipulation, concealment, abuse of privileged information, misrepresentation of material facts, or any other unfair-dealing practice.
- 11. Accurate Company Records.** It is important that the Company maintain accurate and reliable records that meet applicable legal, financial, regulatory and management requirements. Each employee and officer have a responsibility to ensure all Agency records and correspondence are accurate and maintained in accordance with the applicable document and data retention policies of his/her applicable area.
- 12. Confidential Company Information.** Confidential information is any non-public information that - if disclosed - would be damaging to the best interests of the Agency or might be of use to competitors. Each employee, officer and director have a responsibility to hold all confidential information obtained from the Agency or its clients in confidence, except when disclosure is authorized or legally mandated. Confidential information should not be shared with the media, competitors or any other third parties. If there is any doubt about whether such information has been publicly released or if disclosure is legally mandated, the employee, officer or director should contact our attorney.
- 13. Referrals.** The Agency does not require clients to use or pay for specified attorneys or other service providers. Agency staff informs clients that they are free to select independent attorneys and other service providers and does not charge clients fees for services that clients obtain independently. The Agency does not refer or steer any individual to any private practice in which the Agency's board members, volunteers, employees, agents, consultants, independent contractors, or their respective families are engaged, without first disclosing any potential conflicts of interest and informing said individuals that they are free to select independent service providers.
- 14. Donations.** The Agency, its board members, volunteers, employees, or agents do not solicit donations from an adoptive family that is under consideration for placement of a child. The Agency, its board members, volunteers, employees, or agents do not accept donations from an adoptive family that is under consideration for placement of a child.
- 15. Reporting Violations.** If an employee or officer knows about or suspects misconduct, illegal activities, fraud, misuse of agency assets or violations of agency policies, he/she has a duty to report his/her concerns. There will be no retribution against any employee making such a report in good faith.
- 16. Retaliation.** It is a violation of this policy for any Agency employee, officer, or director to retaliate or discriminate, directly or indirectly, or encourage others to do so, against an individual who reports a suspected violation or provides information relevant to an investigation of any conduct which the individual reasonably believes to be a violation of applicable laws, regulations, or agency policies.
- 17. Violations.** The Board of Directors will investigate any violation or suspected violation of this Code and take appropriate corrective action. Disciplinary action may include termination, referral for criminal prosecution, and/or reimbursement to the Agency for any losses or damages resulting from violations of the Code of Ethics. Examples of violations include:
 - a. Authorizing or participating in actions which violate applicable laws, regulations, or agency policies.
 - b. Failing to report a violation or willfully withholding relevant and material information concerning a violation.
 - c. Retaliating against individuals who report or assist in investigations of suspected violations of applicable laws, regulations, or agency policies.
- 18. Changes to the Code of Ethics.** The Board of Directors may approve any updates or changes to the provisions of this Code.

6. Culture and Religion				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (579)			

6.1 Policy:

Adoption Life respects the cultural and religious beliefs and practices of its clients and seeks to accommodate those beliefs and practices in its activities.

6.2 Procedure:

1. **Non-discrimination.** Adoption Life does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, cultural heritage, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. Reference is made to Adoption Life’s Policy #16 on Legal Requirements (page 29), which includes a statement of non-discrimination.
2. **Birth Parents.** Adoption Life is sensitive to the cultural and religious beliefs and practices of birth parents. Upon intake and with casework, it seeks to ascertain the cultural and religious values of birth parents in order to assist birth parents in determining, (1) whether or not they desire to place their child for adoption, and (2) whether a selected family is suitable for placement of the child. If possible, birth parents will be allowed to choose prospective adoptive parents whose cultural and religious background is either consistent with the birth parents or consistent with the birth parents’ desires for placement. Adoption Life does not require that birth parents participate in any cultural or religious practices or agree to any set of cultural or religious beliefs.
3. **Adoptive Parents.** Adoption Life will not interfere with or seek to alter the cultural or religious beliefs or practices of Prospective Adoptive Parents, unless such beliefs or practices may be harmful to a child placed with those parents. If Adoption Life identifies a cultural or religious belief or practice that may be harmful to a child, a caseworker will counsel with the Prospective Adoptive Parents in an effort to provide for the child’s best interests while accommodating cultural or religious beliefs or practices. If Prospective Adoptive Parents refuse to modify cultural or religious beliefs or practices which may be harmful to a child, Adoption Life may (1)refuse to place a child with such parents, or (2)disrupt an adoptive placement. Adoption Life does not require that Prospective Adoptive Parents participate in any cultural or religious practices or agree to any set of cultural or religious beliefs.
4. **Children.** Adoption Life seeks to place children in a manner that will preserve cultural and religious practices and beliefs. Such efforts are subject to the wishes of birth parents and the child’s best interests. Adoption Life does not require that children participate in any cultural or religious practices or agree to cultural or religious beliefs.
5. **Indian Children.** Adoption Life complies with the Indian Child Welfare Act (“ICWA”). It seeks to determine whether a child to be placed for adoption is an “Indian Child” and follows required procedures for Indian Children. Reference is made to Adoption Life’s Policy #16 on Legal Requirements (page 29), regarding the Indian Child Welfare Act.
6. **Documentation.** Birth parents, adoptive parents, and children, who are capable of understanding cultural and religious values and beliefs, will be given a copy of this policy and be asked to sign prior to beginning services.

7. Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (570); WY 049.0029.3.11082017			

7.1 Policy:

1. Adoption Life reports suspected abuse of children or vulnerable adults to State authorities.
2. Definitions:
 - A. Abuse: Abuse is a willful action by a caretaker that results in injury or harm.
 - B. Neglect: Neglect is an error by a caretaker which is a serious disregard of responsibility.
 - C. Exploitation: Exploitation is the act of taking unfair advantage of a person by a caretaker.

7.2 Procedure:

1. Adoption Life trains its staff and volunteers to be sensitive to and observant of possible abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults.
2. Any staff member or contracted employee of Adoption Life who has 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 appropriate state authorities. Staff members must immediately record this report with the Adoption Life administrator following any report of abuse and/or neglect.
3. Clients who have contracted with Adoption Life 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 report made concerning an employee of Adoption Life involving 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 Adoption Life. Such suspension or reassignment shall remain in effect pending the outcome of the investigation by the appropriate authorities.
5. Any report made concerning a client of Adoption Life involving 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.
6. Adoption Life shall work with appropriate state 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.
7. 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 statutes, and outlining Adoption Life policies and procedures relating to abuse and/or neglect reporting.

8. Adoptive Parent Discipline & Safety Practices				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (573)			

8.1 Policy:

Adoption Life assures that children in the care of families licensed for adoption and/or foster care through the Agency are kept safe and provided with appropriate supervision to their needs. The agency monitors the child during post placement visitation to assure proper discipline techniques are employed which are age appropriate, and which do not cause physical, mental, emotional harm to the child. The adequacy of safety measures relative to the home environment and the on-going maintenance and supervision of the child are all factors to be considered when assessing the home’s ability to meet policy requirements that govern the care of children in adoptive placements.

8.2 Procedure:

1. **Animal Safety.** As children are the primary victims of animal bites, applicants agree to comply with the following mandates listed below to assure the safety of any child placed in their home:
 - Provide close supervision of children when around animals.
 - Refrain from keeping dangerous or aggressive dogs or other pets in the home or on the property, unless properly secured with a leash, fence, cage or similar enclosure.
 - Notify the agency immediately if any animal attacks a child placed in the home or others.
 - Provide opportunities and instruction to children in care regarding safe socialization with people friendly breeds of animals.
2. **Gun Safety.** Firearms take the lives of thousands of children each year. To prevent the accidental death of any child placed in their home, applicants agree to the following mandates:
 - Inform the agency immediately of the presence of firearms in the home, now or at any time prior to finalization.
 - Keep all firearms unloaded and out of view and reach of children in the home.
 - Never allow children placed in the home to handle guns. Youth who have successfully completed a state approved hunter education course, and have obtained a hunter safety certificate and a hunting license, may engage in hunting activities with the prospective adoptive parent or other approved adult only.
 - Secure all firearms in the home under lock and key or with any one of the reliable gun safety mechanisms available commercially and store ammunition separately in a secure manner.
3. **Motor Vehicle Safety.** Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for children of all races, ages 5 to 14, according to national statistics. To ensure the safety of children placed in care, applicants agree to adhere to the following safety precautions when riding or driving motorized vehicles:
 - Secure children 4 years of age and under in a federally approved child safety restraint seat, that is properly installed according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
 - Refrain from transporting children/youth under 18 years of age in the bed of a pickup truck at any time. Children must always be properly secured with safety seat belts.
 - Consult with the caseworker prior to allowing a child to ride as a passenger or driver on any highspeed watercraft and other similarly motorized vehicles.

- To protect young children from air bag injuries, adoptive parents are required to transport children 12 years old and under in the rear seat of the vehicle, with seat belts buckled up.
 - All children in care, regardless of age, must be individually secured (one child to a seat belt) by an appropriately fitting seat belt when being transported in a motorized vehicle.
4. **Supervision.** Children in care are required to be supervised by appropriate adult caretakers at all times. In keeping with this requirement, applicants agree to adhere to the following:
- Provide appropriate adult supervision for the children in my care at all times.
 - Refrain from leaving children placed in my care in the supervision of minors (under the age of 18).
 - Refrain from leaving children unattended in a motor vehicle.
 - Refrain from leaving children in the care of unauthorized adult caretakers. Any substitute caretaker should have the agency's approval.
 - Obtain approval from the agency prior to leaving older children (15 years old and older) unsupervised.
 - I understand that appropriate adult caretakers must provide supervision for children in adoptive home placements at all times. Teenagers and other minors do not meet the standard of "appropriate adult caretaker" and are never assigned the task of supervising children in care.
 - Any potential caretaker must be in agreement with the agency's discipline policy.
5. **Water Safety.** According to the recent statistics, drowning ranks highest among the causes of accidental deaths for children and youth 0 to 24. Adoptive parents whose primary or alternate place of residence is equipped with an in-ground/above ground swimming pool or is proximate to any body of water are required to take extra safety precautions with children placed in their care. To ensure the safety of children in their home, applicants agree to the following water safety guidelines:
- Inform the agency immediately if/when our home fits the above criteria.
 - Know or learn how to swim.
 - Enroll all children 3 years of age and older placed in the home in a swimming class taught by a certified instructor.
 - Ensure direct adult supervision of children when around bodies of water.
 - Ensure the compliance with any local or state ordinances regarding pools or waterfront property.
 - Restrict access to any bodies of water that could pose a drowning threat through fencing, locked gates, covers and other appropriate means.
 - Ensure that the swimming pool and surrounding area are properly maintained and free from danger.
 - Equip the swimming pool with lifesaving and flotation devices.
6. **Discipline Policy.** This agency's policy prohibits the use of corporal or unusual punishment on a child. In particular, children removed from their parents or other caretakers due to neglect or abuse must be disciplined in ways that do not perpetuate the physical and emotional pain experienced as a result of past inappropriate parenting practices. To ensure the safety and well-being of the children placed in an adoptive home, applicants agree to the following:
- Refrain from the use of any corporal or unusual punishment on a child placed in my/our home, including, but not limited to, the following: spanking, slapping, switching, shaking, pinching, biting, twisting, or pulling; tying with rope, withholding food, force feeding, denying mail; denying appropriate contacts with family, denying contact with worker; degrading child or child's family, or humiliating child; creating fear, anger and anxiety; locking child in a room, closet or outside the

- home; group punishment or delegating older children to administer punishment; destroying the child's property and any other practices which may physically or emotionally damage the child.
- Refrain from using physical restraints of any type unless the person conducting the restraint is appropriately trained and certified to do so and there is imminent risk of serious physical harm to the child or another person in the proximity.
 - Use disciplinary approaches appropriate to the child's age, development, and circumstances.
 - Understand that it is more important to use positive reinforcement than punishment to control behavior.
 - Notify the school system that corporal punishment is not an acceptable method of disciplining the child.
 - Seek on-going information/training to build and enhance my/our child's behavioral management skills.
 - Immediately inform the agency of the need for assistance in managing the behavior of any child placed in my/our home.
 - Refrain from authorizing any other individual or agency to administer prohibited methods of discipline.
7. Applicants understand that physical or emotional punishment is defined as any deliberately inflicted pain to the body of the individual. Adoptive parents are required to know the difference between punishment and discipline.
- Discipline is instruction – a standard of behavior, which is maintained consistently and with authority. It is a learning process for children. Discipline should help a child reach a goal of controlling his or her own behavior and acquiring self-discipline.
 - Punishment, on the other hand, is one means of enforcing discipline, usually the least effective means. Parents may have used some forms of physical and emotional punishment with their biological children. It is necessary to remember, however, that children reared in an accepting and loving family that is able to meet their needs tolerate punishment in a different way than children removed from their families because of severe neglect and abuse.
8. Children in state custody usually feel at least one and often all of the following:
- Negative attention is better than no attention at all.
 - The natural response to frustration, disappointment, anger, etc., is physical or verbal violence.
 - Any form of physical action can lead to severe abuse, creating fear and mistrust.
 - They are not lovable, which is reinforced by physical hurt and verbal demeaning.
 - They are the reason the family is not together and deserve punishment.
9. Additional inappropriate and prohibited parenting practices include those behaviors that demean, humiliate, degrade, create anxiety, and fear, and deny children their basic right to be reared in a manner that is instructive, firm, loving and humane. This policy further prohibits name-calling, the criticism, or deprecation of a child's racial/ethnic heritage, and socio-economic station in life.

9. Infection Control					
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:					

9.1 Policy:

Adoption Life takes proactive steps in the prevention and control of infectious and communicable diseases in accordance with local, state, and federal health standards, and to assure that all employees and clients are safe within the agency. All employees and volunteers of Adoption Life are trained in the prevention and control of infectious and communicable diseases.

9.2 Procedure:

1. Upon initial application, clients are asked to provide relevant medical information.
2. All staff will be informed and trained regarding universal precautions in the prevention of infectious disease.
3. All employees and volunteers will be encouraged to engage in good hygiene practice while at work, especially hand washing with soap and water.
4. Disinfectant soaps or gel sanitizers will be utilized in all public areas, and signs will be posted to inform and remind staff, volunteers, and clients of infection control information.
5. Paid time off is provided to eligible employees to make all reasonable attempts to ensure that employees not attend the workplace while displaying symptoms of illness.
6. The Managing Executive Director will monitor, create, and implement work rules to promote safety through infection control.

10. Smoking					
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:					

10.1 Policy:

Adoption Life is a non-smoking facility. In accordance with the Federal Clean Air Act, smoking is not permitted within 25 feet of any Adoption Life facility.

10.2 Procedure:

Any employee of Adoption life found to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action.

11. Emergencies

Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (504, 506, 582)				

11.1 Policy:

Adoption Life prepares for and responds to dangerous situations such as fire, disaster, and other emergency situations. Adoption Life reports adverse incidences and emergency situations to appropriate authorities and state regulatory personnel.

11.2 Procedure:

1. The Executive Director and/or Director of Social Work shall be immediately notified in the event of an emergency in any Adoption Life facility.
2. An Evacuation Procedure shall be posted in each Adoption Life facility.
3. **Fire:** Staff will be trained as follows:
 - A. Person discovering the Fire:
 - a. Pull fire alarm
 - b. Confine the fire if it can be done safely
 - c. Extinguish fire if to do so would not cause further danger or harm
 - d. Evacuate the building, if required.
 - B. Staff:
 - a. Notify 911 that alarm has sounded and building is being evacuated
 - b. Account for staff and clients
 - c. Do not re-enter the building until being told to do so by management or fire department personnel
4. **Emergency Plans**
 - A. Executive Director ensures that all information in the printed procedures is up to date. Executive Director or designee conducts basic emergency preparedness exercises, such as fire safety.
 - B. Initial Emergency Preparedness training is conducted at employee orientation.
 - C. Staff are able to identify two emergency exit paths.
 - D. Staff are able to locate the fire alarms closest to designated work area(s).
 - E. Staff supervises and accounts for clients in emergency/evacuation situations.
 - F. Upon initial assessment, clients are educated on how to respond to fire warnings and other safety instructions including evacuations.
 - G. Staff assures emergency transportation (see Transportation Policy on page 22), and will notify client's physician or nearest relative or guardian in case of emergency situation.
5. **Safety**
 - A. The Agency identifies and addresses any safety hazards.
 - B. The agency assures that fire drills are conducted at least quarterly and are documented. Notation of inadequate response shall be documented. The agency provides access to an operable 24 hour telephone service. Telephone numbers for emergency assistance, i.e. 911 and poison control, are posted.
 - C. The program has an adequately supplied first aid kit in the facility such as recommended by the American Red Cross.
 - D. The agency does not permit firearms or ammunition on the premises.
6. **Medical Emergencies:** Staff shall be trained to respond to medical emergencies by immediately calling for help or notifying 9-1-1 and administering life saving measures in which the staff member is appropriately certified.
7. **After-Hours Emergencies:** If staff is at home and learn of an emergency or disaster at work, staff will notify the Executive Director before coming in to work.
8. **Incident Reporting:** Adverse incidents involving fire, injury of a child or employee shall be documented and reported to licensing authorities no later than one working day from the time of the incident becoming known to the chief administrator. Law enforcement will be notified immediately if appropriate to the situation.

12. Transportation				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:				

12.1 Policy:

Adoption Life assures safe transportation of clients by staff, volunteers, and interns.

12.2 Procedure:

1. Adoption Life maintains a written policy and procedure for transporting clients in the glove box of all its vehicles and to staff.
2. Prior to transporting any client, an employee, volunteer, or intern will provide a valid driver's license with no restrictions, which will be photocopied and placed in their file.
3. Each employee, volunteer or intern who transports clients in their own vehicle, will provide proof of insurance, which will be photocopied and placed in their file.
4. All vehicles used for transportation will have an American Red Cross approved first aid kit.
5. If a client requires immediate medical attention, staff will not transport clients, but will utilize 911/local EMS for transport.
6. Drivers follow safety requirements of the State. Passengers will utilize seat belts and car seats, if indicated.

**Agency Name: Adoption Life
24 Hour Emergency Phone #: 307-212-2545 or 911**

Wyoming Office	Emergency Contacts	Phone
623 E Clark St. Lyman WY 82937	Police – Uinta County Sherriff	307-782-7432
	Fire	307-789-8556
307-212-2545	Ambulance	307-789-8556
	Paramedic	307-789-8556
	Evanston Regional Hospital	307-789-3636
	Poison Control	800-222-1222

Idaho Office	Emergency Contacts	Phone
343 E 4th N. Suite 120 Rexburg, ID 83440	Police	208-359-3008
	Fire	208-359-3010
208-899-4114	Ambulance	911
	Paramedic	911
	Madison Memorial Hospital	208-359-6900
	Poison Control	800-222-1222

Utah Office	Emergency Contacts	Phone
472 W 50 N American Fork, UT 84003	Police	801-763-3020
	Fire	801-763-3045
801-704-5400	Ambulance	911
	Paramedic	911
	American Fork Hospital	801-855-3300
	Poison Control	800-222-1222

13. Records

Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (527, 560-562,565-566, 624)				

13.1 Policy:

Adoption Life maintains and stores records in a secure fashion in accordance with state statutes and makes records available for release only upon suitable authorization.

13.2 Procedure:

1. Records are stored or released in consideration of the following standards:
 - a. Client confidentiality is maintained at all times. Client files are to be stored in a secure manner to prevent inappropriate disclosure.
 - b. Paper files are to be stored in locked file cabinets accessible only to authorized agency staff.
 - c. Paperwork that is digitized shall be kept in password protected files accessible only to authorized agency staff.
 - d. Adoption Life will preserve client files indefinitely.
 - e. If Adoption Life ceases to provide services, the agency shall notify the Office of Licensing where the records shall be stored.
2. Adoption Life responds within 30 days to records requests from birth parents, adoptees, adoptive families, and other interested parties. Records are released only with proper consent forms, except as required by law.
3. Adoption Life maintains a Permanent Child Register for all children admitted to Adoption Life programs. The register will include each child's name, gender, date and place of birth, parent/guardian name and address, placing authority for child, date of placement, and date of discharge/finalization.
4. Case files are maintained for birth parents and prospective adoptive parents. Child files are maintained separately for children over the age of 6 months where Adoption Life serves as the placing agency. Each case file cross-references related files.
5. **Adoptive parent files contain the following:**

<i>Section 1: Application and Agreements</i>	<i>Section 2: Supporting Documents</i>	
1.1 Application for Service 1.2 Acknowledgement of Risk 1.3 Consent & Waiver of Conflict of Interest (if applicable) 1.4 Release of Information (if applicable) 1.5 Acknowledgement of Policy (Culture and Religion; Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation; Adoptive Parent Discipline and Safety; Grievances; Adoptive Parent Rights and Responsibilities) 1.6 Receipt of Foster Care Rules (if applicable) 1.7 Description of Services 1.8 Contract for Services 1.9 Fee Agreement 1.10 Receipt of Payment	2.1 Pre-Adoption Home Study 2.2 Photo Identification for applicants 2.3 Appropriate Background Checks 2.4 Adoptive Family Background 2.5 Birth Certificates for all family members (certified copies) 2.6 Marriage Certificate (certified copy) 2.7 Divorce Decree including visitation and custody orders (if applicable) 2.8 Death Certificate (if applicable) 2.9 Medical Reports for all residents of the home	2.10 TB Test Results (if applicable) 2.11 Most recent IRS 1040 2.12 Financial Worksheet 2.13 Employment Verification 2.14 Bank Verification 2.15 Health Insurance Verification 2.16 Life Insurance Verification 2.17 Guardianship Plan 2.18 Adoption Training Verification 2.19 CPR/First Aid Certification (if applicable) 2.20 5 Reference Letters (2 Family and 3 Non-Family) 2.21 Home Safety Checklist & Diagram
<i>Section 3: Placing Program Documents</i>	<i>Section 4: Placement</i>	<i>Section 5: Notes & Miscellaneous</i>
3.1 Adoption Preference Checklist 3.2 Adoptive Family Profile 3.3 Matching Form (if applicable)	4.1 Placement Agreement 4.2 Openness Plan 4.3 ICPC 100 A & 100 B	5.1 Case Notes 5.2 Correspondence

3.4 Progress notes 3.5 Service Plans/Needs Assessments 3.6 At Risk Acknowledgment 3.7 Proposed Placement Plan 3.8 Placement History	4.4 Child Records 4.5 Post Placement Supervision Reports 4.6 Decree of Adoption	5.3 Documentation of agency efforts to obtain any records lacking in the client files 5.4 Other
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6. Birth parent files contain the following:

<i>Section 1: Application and Agreements</i>	<i>Section 2: Supporting Documents</i>	<i>Section 3: Matching/Financial</i>
1.1 Intake 1.2 Birth Mother Application for Service 1.3 Birth Father Application for Service 1.4 Release of Information (if applicable) 1.5 Description of Services 1.6 Birth Mother Non-Identifying Information 1.7 Birth Father Non-Identifying Information 1.8 ICWA Forms (if applicable) 1.9 Acknowledgement of Policy (Culture and Religion; Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation; Adoptive Parent Discipline and Safety; Grievances; Birth Parent Rights and Responsibilities)	2.1 Proof of Pregnancy 2.2 Photo Identification 2.3 Birth Certificate(s) 2.4 Insurance/Medicaid Information 2.5 Marriage Certificate 2.6 Divorce Decree 2.7 Custody and Visitation Orders 2.8 Death Certificate 2.9 Education Plan	3.1 Psychosocial History 3.2 Service Plan 3.3 Pre-Placement Expenses 3.4 Post-Placement Expenses 3.5 Hospital Plan/Birth Plan 3.6 Openness Plan 3.7 Matching Form 3.8 Consent & Waiver of Conflict of Interest 3.9 Adoptive Family Non-Identifying Information 3.10 Prenatal Medical Records
<i>Section 4: Placement</i>		<i>Section 5: Notes & Miscellaneous</i>
4.1 Birth Mother Relinquishment/Consent to Termination 4.2 Birth Father Relinquishment/Consent to Termination 4.3 Relinquishment Dictation 4.4 Child Social History/Service Plan 4.5 Medical Records for Child 4.6 Birth/Legal Father Affidavit 4.7 Putative Father Registry Checks 4.8 Durable Power of Attorney (ID) 4.9 Authorization for Medical Care (ID)	4.10 Decree of Termination 4.11 Order of Adoption/Decree 4.12 Attendances and Absences 4.13 Placement Participation 4.14 Services Received 4.15 Financial Assistance Received by Birth Mother 4.16 Media Release (if applicable) 4.17 Mutual Consent Registry Information 4.18 Client Satisfaction Survey	5.1 Case Notes 5.2 Correspondence 5.3 Documentation of agency efforts to obtain any records lacking in the client files 5.4 Other

7. Child files contain the following:

<i>Section 1: Application and Agreements</i>	<i>Section 2: Supporting Documents</i>	
1.1 Child File Information Sheet 1.2 Social History/Service Plans 1.6 Birth Mother Non-Identifying Information 1.7 Birth Father Non-Identifying Information	2.1 Education Information (if applicable) 2.2 Legal Status 2.3 Birth Certificate 2.4 Death Certificate (if applicable) 2.5 Parent/Guardian Information	2.6 ICWA (if applicable) 2.7 Custody and Visitation Orders (if applicable) 2.8 Education Plan 2.9 Insurance/Medicaid
<i>Section 3: Matching/Preplacement</i>	<i>Section 4: Placement</i>	<i>Section 5: Notes & Miscellaneous</i>
3.1 Psychosocial History 3.2 Service Plan 3.6 Openness Plan 3.7 Matching Form 3.10 Medical & Psychiatric Records for Child	4.1 Birth Mother Relinquishment/Consent to Termination 4.2 Birth Father Relinquishment/Consent to Termination 4.3 Relinquishment Dictation 4.8 Durable Power of Attorney (ID) 4.9 Authorization for Medical Care (ID) 4.10 Decree of Termination 4.11 Post Placement Reports 4.12 Order of Adoption/Decree	5.1 Case Notes 5.2 Correspondence 5.3 Documentation of agency efforts to obtain any records lacking in the client files 5.4 Other

8. Employee files contain the following:

Section 1: Application Information		Section 2: Job Description
1.1 Application for Employment 1.2 Documentation of Education & Current Licensing Credentials 1.3 Copy of Government Issued Identification 1.4 References and Verification of Child Care History 1.5 State Specific Criminal History Clearance (Including Self-Declaration) 1.6 I-9 Form 1.7 W9 or W4 form as applicable 1.8 Relevant TB Testing Results	1.9 Signed copy of Department of Human Services Provider Code of Conduct (UT) 1.10 Proof of Vehicle Insurance 1.11 Acknowledgement of Policy (Culture and Religion; Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation; Adoptive Parent Discipline and Safety; Grievances) 1.12 Verification of Orientation and Program Specific Training 1.13 Verification of CPR/First Aid Training	2.1 Signed Job Description 2.2 Contract for Services 2.3 Pay/Salary Agreement
Section 3: Employee Evaluation	Section 4: Annual Updates	Section 5: Notes & Miscellaneous
3.1 90 Day Probationary Evaluation 3.2 Annual Employee Evaluation 3.3 Documentation of Disciplinary Action	4.1 Relevant Licensing 4.2 Acknowledgement of Policies 4.3 Relevant Background Clearances 4.4 Updated TB Testing 4.5 Continuing Education Training Log 4.6 Proof of Vehicle Insurance 4.7 Updated CPR/First Aid Certification	5.1 Case Notes 5.2 Correspondence 5.3 Documentation of agency efforts to obtain any records lacking in the client files 5.4 Other

9. Volunteer/Intern files contain the following:

Section 1: Application Information		Section 2: Job Description
1.1 Application for Employment 1.3 Copy of Government Issued Identification 1.4 References and Verification of Child Care History 1.5 State Specific Criminal History Clearance (Including Self-Declaration) 1.8 Relevant TB Testing Results	1.9 Signed copy of Department of Human Services Provider Code of Conduct (UT) 1.11 Acknowledgement of Policy (Culture and Religion; Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation; Adoptive Parent Discipline and Safety; Grievances) 1.12 Verification of Orientation and Program Specific Training	2.1 Signed Job Description 2.2 Signed Learning Agreement
Section 3: Volunteer Evaluation	Section 4: Annual Updates	Section 5: Notes & Miscellaneous
3.1 90 Day Probationary Evaluation 3.2 Annual Employee Evaluation 3.3 Documentation of Disciplinary Action 3.4 Intern Evaluation	4.2 Acknowledgement of Policies 4.3 Relevant Background Clearances 4.4 Updated TB Testing	5.1 Case Notes 5.2 Correspondence 5.3 Documentation of agency efforts to obtain any records lacking in the client files 5.4 Other

14. Quality Assurance					
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (525)				

14.1 Policy:

Adoption Life will implement and administer a quality assurance plan to ensure growth for the agency and implementation of best practices.

14.2 Procedure:

1. The quality assurance plan will be developed and updated annually, noting progress, and setting new goals. It shall be reviewed quarterly. The Executive Director develops the quality assurance plan based on review, problem identification, action, and evaluation. The Executive Director or designee monitors and documents all quality assurance activities, which is maintained in a separate file.
2. The quality assurance plan will include accurate identification and reporting of current placements and any potential disruptions taking place in the reporting period. Full assessment of disruptions and need for any corrective actions will be included.

15. Grievances

Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (574); WY 049.0029.3.11082017				

15.1 Policy:

Clients and employees with a grievance against Adoption Life will be heard. Clients and employees of Adoption Life receive a copy of the agency's Grievance Policy upon admission or hire.

15.2 Procedure for Clients:

1. If a client is not satisfied with the services offered by Adoption Life or its representatives, including the services offered by individuals working under a contract with Adoption Life, the client may pursue a grievance
2. Clients agree that in the event of dissatisfaction with services they will discuss the dissatisfaction and negotiate in earnest.
3. 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 Director of Social Work regarding the problematic situation and details of the failure to reach an agreement with initial agency staff. If the grievance implicates the Director of Social Work, it shall be discussed with the Executive Director of the office providing services to the client and if it implicates the Executive Director, it shall be directly submitted to the Board of Directors of Adoption Life as described below.
 - C. If no mutually agreeable solution can be reached in the above outlined steps, clients may elect to submit a written complaint to Board of Directors of Adoption Life. The grievance shall be in writing and specify (1) the date it is made, (2) the date that services were provided, and (3) a written description of the grievance. 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.
4. All contact information for the above parties will be provided to the clients.
5. 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.

6. Connecting Hearts, Inc. maintains a written record of each written complaint received and the steps taken to investigate and respond to it and makes this record available to the accrediting entity upon request.
7. Connecting Hearts, Inc. provides to the accrediting entity 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.

15.3 Procedure for employees:

1. If an employee has a work-related concern, he or she is encouraged to share the concern with their immediate supervisor. Each employee shall receive a prompt, impartial assessment of work-related concerns. Employees agree that in the event of dissatisfaction with conditions they will discuss the dissatisfaction and negotiate in earnest.
2. Significant grievances, including those relating to significant adverse employment action, should be addressed by the Executive Director. Employees are entitled to a review of any significant adverse employment action. The grievance shall be in writing and specify (1) the date it is made, (2) the date of the adverse action or event and (3) a written description of the grievance. Relevant documentation should be attached to the written statement.
3. The Executive Director will review the employee's grievance and may meet with the employee and/or the employee's supervisor(s). A decision will be made, and a written response will be provided within 30 days of receipt of the employee's grievance.
4. If the employee is not satisfied with the initial response, he/she may request that the Board of Directors of Adoption Life review the grievance. The Board of Directors will provide the client with a written response within thirty (30) days of receipt.
5. If an employee files a grievance regarding his or her direct supervisor, the agency Executive Director (or, the Board of Directors of Adoption Life, if the grievance is regarding the agency Executive Director) will conduct interviews with the employee filing the grievance to assure that there is no retaliation.
6. Written documentation of grievances shall be maintained in employee files and provided to licensing authorities upon request.

16. Legal Requirements				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:				

16.1 Policy:

Adoption Life complies with all applicable adoption laws and regulations as required by the States of Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah, as well as all Federal laws. This includes but is not limited to the Indian Child Welfare Act and Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children.

16.2 Procedure:

1. Legal Custody

Adoption Life is legally responsible for a child following relinquishment from biological parent(s) until the adoption is finalized unless a court places legal responsibility with another party. Adoption Life does not assume legal custody of children who are in the custody of state foster care services.

2. Non-Discrimination

Adoption Life does not delay or deny the placement of a child or the opportunity to become an adoptive parent or discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, cultural heritage, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. In working with expectant parents, Adoption Life does not discriminate based on marital status, race, color, ethnicity, cultural heritage, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

Pursuant to Utah and Idaho law, individuals who are co-habiting may not legally adopt within those states. Adoption Life places children with applicants in Idaho and Utah who are married or single but not co-habiting.

3. Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Adoption Life inquires of any parent considering placing their child for adoption as to whether the parent or their ancestors were members of an Indian Tribe or an Alaska Native Village or whether they resided on an Indian reservation or in an Alaska Native Village.

Parents who acknowledge that they or their ancestors may have been members of an Indian Tribe or Alaska Native Village, or that they may have lived on an Indian Reservation or in an Alaska Native Village complete a *Status of Child as an Indian Child* form.

Based on the information provided on the *Status of Child as an Indian Child* form, Adoption Life seeks to determine whether a child to be placed for adoption is an “Indian Child,” as that term is used in the ICWA. A child is an “Indian Child” if the child is (1) a member of an Indian Tribe or (2) eligible for membership in an Indian Tribe and the biological child of a member of an Indian Tribe. The ICWA applies only to an Indian Child.

If the child is or may be an “Indian Child,” Adoption Life takes one or more of the following steps to ensure compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act. Any contact or communication with an Indian tribe shall be with the consent of the birth parent(s).

- Contact the tribe or tribes in which the child may be eligible for membership in order to ascertain whether the child is an Indian Child.

- Communicate with the appropriate tribe regarding options for adoptive placement of an Indian Child and pursue such options, including (a) placement of the child with a family who are related to the child; (b) placement of the child with a family who are members of the tribe, (c) placement of the child with an Indian family who are not members of the tribe, (d) tribal approval for placement of the child with a non-Indian family selected by the birth parent(s), or (e) a tribal determination not to intervene in proceedings for termination of parental rights or adoption.
- Adhere to the requirements for relinquishment under the ICWA, including (1) a judicial relinquishment, (2) no relinquishment until the child is at least ten days old, and (3) a right to rescind the relinquishment prior to termination of parental rights.
- Notify a tribe of which the child is or may be a member of the relinquishment and anticipated termination of parental rights.
- Seek a judicial determination that there is good cause to deviate from any requirements and preferences imposed by the Indian Child Welfare Act relative to notice to an Indian tribe and placement. Good cause may be based on a birth parent's right to anonymity and confidentiality or other reasons.
- All communication will be documented.

Adoption Life staff consult with their executive director regarding any placement involving an Indian Child and with legal counsel as required.

4. Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC)

For any placement of a child from one state with prospective adoptive parents in another state, Adoption Life completes and assembles the following and submits it to the compact administrator in the sending state:

1. A completed ICPC-100A form.
2. A cover letter requesting approval signed on behalf of Adoption Life and identifying the child, birth parent(s), prospective adoptive parent(s), a statement of how the match was made, the name of any intermediary, and the name and address of any other supervising agency.
3. The consent or relinquishment signed by an agency representative (when required) and/or the birth parents, and a statement detailing how the rights of all parents will be legally addressed.
4. A certification that the consent or relinquishment is in compliance with the laws of the sending state and, if requested, the laws of the receiving state.
5. Verification of compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.
6. A legal risk acknowledgment signed by the prospective adoptive parents, if applicable in either the sending or receiving state.
7. A statement of the basis on which Adoption Life has authority to place the child, including a copy of any court order providing such authority, and documentation that supervision is on-going.
8. A current case history of the child, including custodial and social history, chronology of court involvement, social dynamics, education information and a description of any special needs

of the child. For an infant, this shall include, at minimum, a copy of the medical records of the birth and hospital discharge summary for the child, if the child has been discharged.

9. Any required documentation of foster care licensure, certification or approval for the prospective adoptive parents.
10. A copy of the most recent adoption home study or approval of the prospective adoptive family, including verification of compliance with federal and state background clearances.
11. A copy of any order appointing a legal guardian for the child.
12. An affidavit of expenses, signed by the adoptive parents.
13. A copy of Adoption Life's license.
14. Information about the biological parents, including social history, medical history, ethnic background, reasons for adoption and circumstances of the proposed placement.
15. Acknowledgment by Adoption Life that it will be providing post-placement supervision and its obligation to do so or, if supervision will be provided by another, acknowledgment from them.
16. Authority for the prospective adoptive parents to provide medical care.

Adoption Life does not send or bring a child or cause a child to be sent or brought into the receiving state until approval is given by the compact administrator in the receiving state. It informs prospective adoptive parents of this requirement and requires their compliance.

Following placement, Adoption Life submits a completed ICPC-100B form confirming placement to the sending state's compact administrator.

Following finalization, Adoption Life submits a completed ICPC-100B form with a copy of the final decree of adoption to the sending state's compact administrator.

If a child to be placed for adoption is physically present in the receiving state prior to the biological parents' relinquishment of the child for adoption, Adoption Life does not require that the child be returned to the sending state. Adoption Life instead acts in an expeditious fashion to obtain approval pursuant to the procedure outlined above.

17. Services for Birth Parents

Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:					

17.1 Policy:

Adoption Life provides support to birth parents in the provision of adoption services, which include Intake and Assessment, Counseling, Adoption Planning, Selecting an Adoptive Family, Housing, Pregnancy related and Medical Expenses, Activities, Relinquishment, Transportation, Assuring Rights of Birth Fathers, Documentation and Post-Adoption Services. Adoption Life assures proper record keeping. Adoption Life also provides appropriate resource and referral services to birth parents who utilize its services, but who choose to not complete their adoption plan. Adoption services are provided through assessment, individual and group counseling, and case management.

17.1 Procedure:

1. Outreach for Birth Parents

Adoption Life does not solicit birth parents but conducts marketing and outreach to identify birth parents who are seeking adoption services. Adoption Life assists birth parents in accessing its services through a variety of methods including but not limited to the following:

- A. On-line outreach and marketing
- B. Social media
- C. Blogs
- D. Agency website and other adoption websites
- E. Physician, hospital, school, prison referrals
- F. Pregnancy support centers
- G. Word of mouth and other community resources/referrals
- H. Personal contact via telephone or in person

2. Intake and Assessment

All birth parents are provided with a Licensed Social Worker at intake.

With the birth parents' consent, a complete Psychosocial Assessment is completed within 30 days of initial contact with Adoption Life, whenever possible. Assessments will be conducted sooner if necessary to permit placement.

The intake and assessment include information for both biological parents whenever possible and is comprised of the following information:

- A. Identifying information,
- B. Contact information (phone, email, address, and emergency contact),
- C. Reason(s) for placement,
- D. Special circumstances (i.e. Older Child, Special Needs, ICWA)
- E. History of drug, alcohol, tobacco use
- F. Medical and mental health information
- G. Preferences for adoptive family
- H. Available support systems and resources.

Based on the birth parent assessment, a written service plan is developed within 30 days to identify a client's needs and services to be provided to assure client's health, safety, permanency, and well-being.

3. **Adoption Planning**

The Licensed Social Worker:

- A. Supports the birth parents' decision about placement and does not induce or persuade birth parents to consent to adoption or to relinquish a child through duress, undue influence, misrepresentation, or deception.
- B. Informs the birth parents that a decision to sign the consent or relinquishment is voluntary, permanent, and irrevocable once it is signed.
- C. Assists and supports the birth parents choosing adoption in determining what kind of adoptive family should be selected for the child, based on the family's ability to meet the individual needs of the child.
- D. Informs the birth parents in the initial consultation of their right to select an adoptive family in consideration of religion and marital status.
- E. Assures that the birth parents' needs and wishes regarding openness, religion, and marital status are respected.
- F. Informs the birth parents that a detailed, non-identifying health history and a genetic and social history of the child is provided to the adoptive parents and informs the birth parents of relevant voluntary adoption registries.
- G. Assists the birth parents in considering whether they want to disclose their identity to the adoptee or the adoptive family or hear about or from the child.
- H. Provides birth parents with non-identifying information about potential adoptive parents, such as age, physical characteristics, religion, educational achievement, family members, profession, nationality, health, and reason for adopting.
- I. Educates birth parents regarding policy and procedure in emergency situations.

4. **Counseling**

Birth parents receive counseling from a Licensed Mental Health Professional to address issues related to options for parenting, adoption planning, grief, loss, life skills, relinquishment, and other psychosocial issues, as needed. Birth parents are offered and provided with appropriate referrals if the agency is unable to provide services requested.

5. **Rights of Birth Father**

The biological mother of a child who may be placed for adoption has a right of privacy and confidentiality in connection with her pregnancy. Although Adoption Life generally encourages a biological mother to identify the child's biological father and state his whereabouts, it recognizes that there may be valid reasons to withhold such information. Thus, she is not subjected to undue pressure to reveal such information. A biological father is involved in the adoption process only with the consent of the biological mother.

Adoption Life complies with applicable laws and court orders relating to notice to and consent from biological fathers in connection with adoption and termination of parental rights.

Adoption Life generally seeks to involve biological fathers in the adoption process, notifying the father of a planned adoption and seeking his consent to the adoption. It recognizes, however, that there are valid reasons and legal justification to proceed with an adoption without notice to or the consent of a biological father. Among these are the following:

- A. The identity or whereabouts of a biological father are unknown
- B. The rights of a biological father have been terminated

- C. The biological father has perpetrated abuse on the biological mother or child or has abandoned the child
- D. The biological father has failed to express the interest expected of a father or has failed or refused to assume paternal responsibility or taken the steps necessary to establish legal paternity.
- E. The background of the biological father indicates that he is an unfit parent (i.e. based on a significant criminal history or habitual drug use).

6. Selecting an Adoptive Family

The Agency considers the birth parents' preferences when matching the birth parents with any prospective adoptive family. The birth parents may consider the following criteria:

- A. Age
- B. Nationality
- C. Health
- D. Marital Status
- E. Family composition (with/without children)
- F. Religion
- G. Physical Characteristics
- H. Education
- I. Profession
- J. Income
- K. Geographical location
- L. Reason for adopting
- M. Level of Openness
- N. Other criteria as indicated by the birth parent(s)

7. Housing

If a birth parent needs housing, Adoption Life assists them in locating appropriate housing within their community. Adoption Life does not maintain housing owned by the agency but supports individuals in securing housing in their area. Adoption Life may provide support in securing and maintaining a stable living environment for situations where it is appropriate and necessary.

8. Living Expenses

Adoption Life may provide for some living expenses of birth parents that are reasonable and related to the birth mother's pregnancy and charge those expenses to adoptive parents. Reasonable expenses are determined by staffing with the caseworker, Director of Social Work, Executive Director and/or legal counsel. The agency shall retain records documenting the actual cost of goods and services provided which exceed twenty-five dollars.

Records outlining financial assistance shall be placed in the birth mother's file.

A birth mother will not be asked or required to reimburse the agency or the adoptive family for any expenses paid on her behalf.

9. Actual Medical Expenses

As a general matter, Adoption Life does not obligate itself or adoptive parents to pay birth parent medical expenses. In coordination with adoptive parents, arrangements may be made as a matter of charity to pay medical expenses related to pregnancy, including: Prenatal care, Maternity care, medical, physician, labor and delivery, hospital, lab and other medical services, which are not covered by insurance or

governmental programs. Generally, these expenses are paid if the birth mother places her child for adoption. Payment is in the discretion of Adoption Life.

A birth mother will not be asked or required to reimburse the agency or the adoptive family for any medical expenses paid prior to placement. Generally, medical expenses are paid at the time of placement.

10. Activities

Clients of Adoption Life are provided with adoption-related services. Clients may also participate in activities unrelated to their treatment plan, including but not limited to social and recreational activities.

11. Relinquishment

Birth parents receive as much counseling as they reasonably need and desire from a mental health therapist prior to signing a relinquishment. Counseling shall include a discussion of the rights of the birth parents and information regarding how, where and when the relinquishment will take place.

If possible, birth parents receive a copy of the proposed relinquishment before signing. Birth parents have the right to choose where and when they relinquish a child for adoption.

The relinquishment of a birth mother is not taken until at least twenty-four hours after the birth of the child. The relinquishment of a birth mother shall be made before a representative of Adoption Life, a judge, or an individual appointed by a judge to take the relinquishment. Unless made before a judge, the relinquishment shall also be made before a Notary Public or two witnesses.

If signed before a representative of Adoption Life, relinquishment documents shall be signed before a licensed mental health professional, who reads the relinquishment documents aloud to the birth parent and assure that the birth parent understands the documents, all questions that the birth parent has are answered, the birth parent is signing the relinquishment documents freely and voluntarily, and all legal requirements for the relinquishment are satisfied.

The relinquishment of a father may be taken at any time as allowed by state law and, at the father's election, may be taken before an Adoption Life representative, a judge, an individual appointed by a judge to take the relinquishment, or a Notary Public.

As necessary, Adoption Life engages in proceedings using the relinquishment documents to terminate or determine parental rights.

The birth parent is offered a copy of the signed relinquishment. Receipt or refusal of the relinquishment is documented in the birth parent's file.

12. No Compensation to Induce Relinquishment

In providing or paying for counseling, housing, transportation, living expenses, maternity expenses, legal fees, medical expenses or any other similar service, Adoption Life acts out of charity. No service provided or payment made is done for the purpose of inducing a birth parent or other person to place a child for adoption, consent to an adoption or cooperate in the completion of an adoption. All such service and payment is related to the birth mother's pregnancy and in a reasonable amount.

13. Transportation

Adoption Life may provide transportation to Wyoming, Idaho or Utah for expectant birth parents who reside out of state and who choose to travel to Wyoming, Idaho or Utah. The cost of travel is covered by the adoptive parents at placement. Following placement, the birth parents receive return transportation, if requested.

14. Post Placement Services

Adoption Life provides lifetime post-placement support for adoption related issues for birth parents and their families, including but not limited to the following:

- A. Post-adoption counseling for local birth mothers by licensed professionals. If additional mental health counseling is required/requested, referrals are provided to appropriate community resources.
- B. Resource and referral for counseling services for out-of-state birth parents to adoption professionals in their home state.
- C. Telephone support.
- D. Referral to community resources.
- E. Assistance with post-placement correspondence and mediation, if requested.

Birth parents may remain in agency or adoptive family-sponsored housing for up to one week after placement

Documentation of all post-placement activities is maintained in the client's file.

15. Documentation

All interactions with the birth parent are documented.

The Social Worker verifies identity of the birth mother utilizing a birth certificate, driver's license, or other government issued identification.

For married birth parents, the agency obtains documentation as to marital status, e.g. marriage certificate, divorce decree, if applicable.

The Social Worker completes the following documentation at a minimum:

- A. Social History
- B. Birth father Information
- C. Financial Needs Assessment
- D. Progress Notes
- E. Relinquishment Documentation

16. Records

Birth Parent files shall be kept in accordance with previously outlined Adoption Life Policy #13: Records on page 23.

17. Parenting

If a parent seeking adoption services from Adoption Life chooses to parent his/her child and to not complete the adoption plan, the birth mother/parent is provided with referrals to appropriate community resources as indicated, including but not limited to housing assistance, counseling, Medicaid, and other medical resources.

If a birth mother residing in agency or adoptive family-sponsored housing decides to parent her child and to not complete her adoption plan, Adoption Life assists her in relocating to alternative housing, including a shelter, if needed, within 7 days from her decision to parent.

If Adoption Life paid for a birth parent's travel to another state, it will pay for their to travel back, if requested.

The birth mother will not be required to reimburse the agency or the adoptive family for any living expenses paid on her behalf, unless fraud can be proved.

The birth mother choosing to parent will be responsible for the medical costs related to her pregnancy, including prenatal care, labor, delivery and all hospital, physician, lab and other medical services received.

If the birth mother's prenatal care costs were paid by Adoption Life or the adoptive family, the birth mother will not be required to reimburse those costs.

18. Birth Parent Rights & Responsibilities

All birth parents considering making an adoption plan will be provided with the Birth Parent Rights & Responsibilities as outlined below:

RIGHTS:

- To be treated with respect, dignity, care, and individualism at all times by all agency representatives.
- To be free from illegal or improper discrimination.
- To choose whether to place a child for adoption.
- To have all questions or concerns addressed in a timely, respectful manner.
- To develop a unique, individual adoption plan.
- To select an adoptive family to parent their child, and to be satisfied that the family they select is suitable for adoption.
- To be heard on whether an adoption will be open or closed and the level of openness desired.
- To have clear understanding regarding the relinquishment process.
- To receive information about financial support available through the agency from prospective adoptive parents, as well as through local community resources.
- To have no undue pressure, duress, undue influence, misrepresentation, or deception regarding the decision of adoption.
- To receive independent, legal counsel.
- To receive medical care for the pregnancy.
- To receive counseling regarding the adoption decision.
- To be assured of privacy of information and privacy for both current and closed records.
- To be able to express a grievance or complaint.
- To communicate by telephone or in writing with family, attorney, physician, clergyman, and case worker, except when this is considered contraindicated by the licensed clinical professional.
- To send and receive mail so long as security, general health and safety requirements are met.
- To receive referrals to appropriate community resources, including but not limited to housing, counseling, Medicaid, and other medical resources, even if they decide not to complete the adoption plan.
- To not be required to reimburse the agency or the adoptive family for any living expenses or costs of prenatal care paid by Adoption Life or prospective adoptive parents.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To be forthcoming and honest in all communication with the staff at Adoption Life.
- To be forthcoming and honest with the prospective adoptive family.
- To comply with all the rules of the program at Adoption Life.

- To comply with the agreements as to openness.
- To take responsibility for all medical costs related to pregnancy, including prenatal care, labor, delivery and all hospital, physician, lab, and other medical services received, if they choose not to complete an adoption plan.

18. Services for Children

Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (563-564, 571-572, 583,630)				

18.1 Policy:

1. Adoption Life takes custody and assumes responsibility of children ages 0 to 5 relinquished to it for adoption but only when an appropriate placement is available for the child. Adoption Life places children based on their best interest, recognizing that it is generally in a child's best interest to be placed with individuals selected by birth parents.
2. Adoption Life serves as an intermediary for the adoption of children of any age wherein the State serves as a legal guardian and biological parental rights have been terminated.
3. The Agency serves children of any race, ethnicity, religious or cultural background, including special needs, whose birth parents or legal guardians are seeking adoption services. Adoption Life does not specify any special characteristics of the clients it serves, except Adoption Life does not serve children who cannot be placed for adoption due to legal or medical reasons.
4. Adoption Life places only children who are citizens of the United States of America or who have been lawfully admitted to the country such that adoption would be appropriate.
5. If Adoption Life determines that a child cannot be placed for adoption, it refers the birth parents to appropriate resources to care for the child.

18.2 Procedure:

8. Intake and Assessment

Wherein Adoption Life takes custody and assumes responsibility of children relinquished for adoption by biological parents an intake and assessment is completed before placement and includes:

- A. Birth parent background
- B. Reason(s) for placement
- C. Medical/genetic information
- D. Delivery/developmental information
- E. Social, biological, cultural, religious, safety, or environmental information
- F. Special needs, if applicable
- G. Prior placement history, if applicable.

Based on the assessment, a written service plan is developed within 30 days to identify the client's needs and services to be provided to assure the child's health, safety, permanency, and well-being.

Adoption Life does not take custody of a child if it determines through the assessment that the child cannot be placed for adoption. In these cases, the birth parents are referred to appropriate resources to care for the child.

With the birth parent's consent, all children receive an assessment and complete developmental history conducted by a Licensed Social Worker within 30 days of intake/birth, or within the time frame ordered by the court, to obtain information to assist in the placement process.

The Licensed Social Worker who is assigned to the birth parent(s) generally completes the assessment of the child. The adoptive family's case worker may complete the assessment, so long as the relationship is disclosed to the birth parents. To assure no conflict of interest, prospective adoptive parents and birth parent(s) sign a *Consent and Waiver of Conflict of Interest* at the time of assessment.

When Adoption Life serves as an intermediary in the placement of a child, as in waiting child adoptions, Adoption Life assists families in obtaining relevant and up to date information regarding any assessments and history associated with the child and review said information prior to taking placement of a child.

Information gained through the assessment determines what, if any, additional resources are required, and Adoption Life makes appropriate referrals for the child.

9. Birth Parent and Family Background Information

Wherein Adoption Life takes custody and assumes responsibility of children relinquished for adoption by biological parents the agency attempts to obtain information about the birth parents and their family background to provide the adoptive family with the following:

- A. The talents, interests, and education of the birth parents.
- B. The non-identifying information about other children born to either of the birth parents.
- C. Characteristics that should be given consideration in selecting and preparing a child for an adoptive family.

When Adoption Life serves as an intermediary in the placement of a child, as in waiting child adoptions, Adoption Life assists in obtaining information related to birth parent and family background from relevant sources.

10. Placement

When Adoption Life serves as the placing agency, the agency has an individualized written adoptive placement plan for each child, which includes:

- A. A Placement Agreement which is signed with the adoptive family at the time of placement. The Placement Agreement outlines the legal responsibilities between the agency and the adoptive family.
- B. The financial and social service responsibilities of each agency and individual.
- C. Providing the adoptive family with referrals and resources regarding child development, parenting, education, etc.; with infant adoption, assuring that discharge instructions are provided by the hospital at the time of discharge, including feeding schedules, when to notify a physician, signs of distress, and other newborn care instructions.
- D. Providing for the care, maintenance, and support of the child, including any necessary medical care or treatment; generally, Adoption Life delegates these responsibilities to the adoptive family, while reserving the right to take steps, up to disruption of the placement, to protect the best interests of the child.
- E. Providing the family and child services or service referrals after the adoption is finalized.

The agency attempts to place siblings together.

A child is placed with the adoptive family at the earliest time possible after being freed for adoption.

11. Post-Placement Services

A social worker supervises the child's placement until finalization of the adoption to monitor placement, assist with the transition, and assist the family in obtaining any needed services.

When managing relinquishments from birth parents, the agency assumes legal custody of the child following relinquishment and retains legal custody after placement until finalization.

Absent exceptional circumstances, finalization takes place at least six months following placement. Court approval for earlier finalization is required.

The first contact with the adoptive family takes place within two weeks of placement.

A face-to-face supervisory home visit takes place approximately every two months after placement until finalization or more frequently if required by state law or interagency agreement.

The adoptive family receives counseling and resources as needed to assist them during the post placement period.

The adoptive family agrees to provide appropriate health care and dental services if appropriate to children in their care. Physician exams must take place within 30 days of initial placement and at appropriate intervals thereafter. Children over the age of 3 shall receive appropriate dental examination and within 3months of placement.

The agency provides assistance in finalizing the adoption, unless the agency removes the child due to circumstances that may impair the child's security in the family or jeopardize the child's physical and emotional development. If the child is removed, the agency provides the adoptive parents written notice of their right to appeal and the procedure for appeal.

If Adoption Life cannot provide post-placement services directly, it contracts with a qualified agency, entity or professional who can provide such services. An inter-agency agreement/contract is signed describing the services and placed in the adoptive family's file.

12. Transitioning

The social, developmental, and physical needs of the child determine the amount of time taken to prepare the child for placement.

The child is counseled regarding the adoptive placement and is protected from emotional disturbances associated with sudden disruption from a known situation.

The agency has a written plan with the child's birth parents or other current caregivers, the adoptive parents, and the child to facilitate the child's transition into the adoptive family.

The caseworker provides support through the transition period to minimize trauma and to assure appropriate coping and a smooth transition for the birth parent(s), the adoptive family, and the child.

The child's stated preferences are considered and if possible, honored.

13. Activities

Clients of Adoption Life are provided with adoption-related services. Clients may also participate in activities unrelated to their treatment plan, including but not limited to social and recreational activities.

14. Foster Care/Temporary Care

A child awaiting placement with an adoptive family is placed in a licensed foster or residential home or facility.

Adoption Life works with state licensing authorities to either license families for foster care or identify families licensed through the state for foster care services. Adoption Life does not license families for foster care purposes unless that family is actively pursuing adoption, and does not typically place children in homes for the express purpose of foster care, unless extenuating circumstances exist.

When Adoption Life serves as the licensing authority for families, and children are placed in the home by state foster care services, the Director of Social Work will serve as the supervisor for that placement.

The agency obtains a copy of the foster home license prior to placing a child and retains the license in the child's case file.

If the agency has a child available for adoption who has not been placed within 60 days after relinquishment or after being determined to be available for adoption by the court, the agency documents its efforts to screen the child with other child placing agencies and lists the child with local, regional, and inter-state adoption exchanges.

15. Documentation

A Licensed Social Worker completes or obtains the following documentation relevant to the type of placement and background of child at a minimum.

- A. Social Summary
- B. Adoptive Child Information (completed on children at least 90 days old)

16. Records

Child files shall be maintained within both the adoptive family file and birth parent file as applicable. Child files shall be kept in accordance with previously outlined Adoption Life Policy #13: Records on page 23.

17. Child Rights

Children placed for the purpose of adoption or foster care within a home licensed by or supervised by Adoption Life shall be entitled to the following rights:

- To eat nutritious meals with the family;
- To eat the same food as the family, except when the foster child is provided with alternative food ordered by the foster child's physician;
- To participate in family and school activities;
- To privacy, including maintaining the confidentiality of information about the foster child and not retaining copies of the foster child's records once the foster child is no longer placed there;
- To be informed of the foster child's responsibilities, including household tasks, privileges, and rules of conduct;
- To be protected from discrimination based upon the foster child's race, color, national origin, culture, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, or disability;
- To be protected from harm or acts of violence, including protection from physical, verbal, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, maltreatment, exploitation including source funding, or inhumane treatment;
- To be treated with courtesy and dignity, including reasonable personal privacy and self-expression;
- To communicate with and visit the foster child's family, attorney, physician, and clergy, except as restricted by court order;
- To have clean clothes and personal hygiene needs met;
- To participate in their own cultural traditions;
- To receive prompt medical care when sick or injured; and
- To be free from media content that is likely harmful considering the foster child's age, behavior, needs, developmental level, and past experiences.
- To have access to truthful and age appropriate information regarding their family of origin.
- To have permission to ask questions and communicate openly about their identity as and adoptee.

19. Services for Adoptive Parents					
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:	
References:	WY049.0029.14.11082017				

19.1 Policy:

Adoption Life qualifies families for adoptive placement and places children with suitable adoptive parents who provide for the child's best interest.

19.2 Procedure:

7. Recruitment and Application of Adoptive Families

Adoption Life may become aware of adoptive families seeking adoption services through the following methods:

- A. Online outreach and marketing
- B. Social Media
- C. Blogs
- D. Word of mouth
- E. Community resources and referrals
- F. Personal contact via telephone or in person

2. Application and Approval

Adoptive families may apply with Adoption Life to receive adoption related services. The agency selects applicants who:

- A. are over the age of 21;
- B. able to provide the continuity of a caring relationship;
- C. informed with regard to a child's ethnic, religious, cultural, and racial heritage;
- D. understand the needs of a child at various developmental stages;
- E. demonstrate motivation centering on the best interests of the child(ren);
- F. have verifiable income which is sufficient to provide for a child's needs;
- G. are open and comfortable with the sharing of adoption and biological background information with the child(ren); AND
- H. meet requirements for adoption in their state of residence.

Adoption Life does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or religion. Pursuant to existing Utah and Idaho law, individuals who are co-habiting within those states may not legally adopt. As such, Adoption Life places children with people in Utah and Idaho who are married or single but not co-habiting.

3. Intake & Assessment

Prospective adoptive parents may be recruited or self-refer for services provided by Adoption Life. Prospective adoptive parents are required to participate in an Orientation which provides an overview of the services provided by Adoption Life.

Prospective adoptive parents are assigned a caseworker who assists and supports them throughout the adoption process.

Prospective adoptive parents must have a current home study provided by Adoption Life or another licensed provider, to adopt a child.

The Director of Social Work (or Executive Director in the absence of the Director of Social Work) reviews each home study conducted by another provider, and determines if the report meets the requirements of the State and Agency.

Prospective adoptive parents who reside outside of Wyoming, Idaho or Utah are required to work with a licensed adoption agency or attorney in their home state. An inter-agency agreement will be obtained to provide adoption services, including post placement visits to assure the child's health, safety, permanency, and well-being.

4. Adoptive Parent Programs

Adoption Life offers the following programs to adoptive parents to best suit their individual needs:

- A. *Designated Adoption Services* – for adoption services wherein Adoption Life is not serving as the placing agency but assisting a family in meeting state/agency requirements for adoption. To include education, home studies, post placement supervision, referrals, and consultation services as necessary. This includes International Home Study Services for families who are working with an appropriately licensed international placing agency, as well as families working toward independent adoption or working with another agency for placement. In this program, adoptive families contract with Adoption Life for the individual services required for their specific situation.
- B. *Waiting Child Adoption Program* – for families wishing to adopt from the foster care system. Families in this program are certified as foster parents in their respective states where Adoption Life holds relevant licensing to do so and Adoption Life assists them in inquiring and matching with a waiting child available for adoption from the foster care system in any state in the US. Services include education and licensing, home studies, matching and placing support, post placement supervision, referrals, consultation, and post-adoption support. Families wishing to participate in the Waiting Child Adoption Program are required to undergo state sanctioned training and approval requirements for licensure as a foster parent in their state of residence. Adoption Life is certified to provide licensure as foster families in multiple states. Adoption Life does not place children in homes for purposes other than adoption, but works closely state foster care agencies if families wish to serve in a foster care capacity. Adoption Life primarily certifies families for the purpose of adoption from the foster care system. Families who are participating in this program are required to maintain licensure status for the duration of their inclusion in the program.
- C. *Domestic Infant Adoption Program* – for families hoping to adopt a child aged 0-5 whose birth parent chooses to relinquish their parental rights for the purpose of adoption. Services include education and licensing, home studies, marketing, matching and placement assistance and coordination, birth parent assistance, post placement supervision, finalization assistance, and post adoption support. Families participating in this program are required to maintain approval status for the duration of their participation. Adoption Life interacts with individuals wishing to make an adoption plan and support them in choosing adoptive families for their child. Adoption Life advocates for and supports open adoption relationships.

5. Supportive Information Services

All Adoptive parent applicants are assigned a caseworker who assists and supports them throughout the adoption process. Adoptive families are provided with the following:

- A. Program specific Description of Services

- B. Training information
- C. Pre- and Post-placement Services, including outreach, matching and post-placement visits
- D. Individual and Group Counseling as needed, to be provided by a Licensed Mental Health Professional or Supervisee
- E. Statement regarding adoptive parent rights
- F. Statement regarding birth parent rights (for Domestic Infant Adoption Program)
- G. Non-identifying information on children available for adoptive placement and their birth families (for Domestic Infant Adoption Program)
- H. Non-identifying information on birth parent(s) (for Domestic Infant Adoption Program)
- I. Status of putative father (for Domestic Infant Adoption Program)
- J. ICWA (for Domestic Infant Adoption Program)
- K. Relevant State Voluntary Adoption Registry
- L. Other pertinent information regarding the adoption

6. Home Study Service

All adoptive parents must have a suitable home study in order to be considered for placement with Adoption Life. Adoptive families are offered the option to obtain a home study conducted by Adoption Life. Home studies shall include:

- A. Three or more interviews shall be held with prospective adoptive parents, including: (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 waiting child adoption.
- B. All families hoping to adopt must undergo an adoptive family screening process which shall include the completion of an abuse and/or neglect central registry check for state of residence and a central registry check from all other states he/she has lived in for the past 5 years, and a fingerprint based national criminal history record check.
- C. Written statements from at least two related and three non-related individuals who have known the family for at least 2 years and provide information directly to the agency regarding the applicant's qualifications for parenting an adoptive child.
- D. A report of all members of the household's physical and mental health status, made within six months prior to the date of the application.
- E. Evidence of pre-adoption training.
- F. Inspections of the home, to determine whether sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of the child exist and whether basic health and safety standards are maintained. Specific standards are outline in the document titled Adoption Life Home Safety Checklist.

Clients who begin the home study process agree to provide all necessary documentation and complete required training within 3 months of contracting for home study services. Failure to do so may result in the requirement to begin the process again.

Home Studies and Home Study Updates completed through Adoption Life are to be used for the purpose of child placement for up to 12 months following the approval date.

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 Director of Social Work.

All home studies completed by Adoption Life shall meet appropriate state standards for pre-adoption home studies.

Once a home study has been used for the purpose of placement and finalization of an adoption, a new home study will be required for new adoption services.

Adoptive families may obtain a home study from another qualified home study provider and submit it to Adoption Life for review and approval. The home study must be prepared by a licensed, qualified home study provider and meet state standards as well as Adoption Life home study standards.

Entering into an agreement to complete the home study process with Adoption Life does not guarantee approval for an adoptive placement. Determination of approval/disapproval of adoptive homes is the responsibility of the Agency Director.

Adoptive applicants are informed by the agency within five (5) business days after the decision is made, as to the (1) acceptance or (2) reasons for the denial of their home study. When a denial is made, the agency provides applicants with a written copy of the agency's appeal process, which includes the right to submit a written appeal and request for reconsideration and the right to request an additional evaluation.

Approval of the home study may be denied for reasons including but not limited to:

- A. Criminal history;
- B. Unstable family relationships;
- C. Unstable home environment;
- D. Unstable health status;
- E. Non-compliance with home study requirements;
- F. Absence of suitable references.

Except when authorized by court order, the agency does not place a child in an adoptive home until the home study and each adult's criminal and abuse background screenings have been approved.

7. Pre-Placement Services, Placement Determination and Matching

The agency prepares the adoptive family for the placement of a child that is available for adoption.

The agency reviews all available information about the birth parents and/or child with the prospective adoptive parents and encourages the matching with a child whose needs the adoptive parents will be able to meet.

The agency provides supportive counseling during the pre-placement period.

Approval by the agency does not guarantee selection by birth parent(s) or other placing agencies.

Agency staff work closely with the adoptive parents(s) to discuss ways to enhance their preparation for adoption and may recommend further training opportunities that will enhance adoptive parent(s) preparation for an adoptive placement.

In Adoption Life's Domestic Infant Adoption Program, birth parents select adoptive parents based on the birth parents' preferences. Every effort is made to satisfy such preferences. Generally, it is in the best interest of the child to be placed with a family selected by the birth parents.

The agency places or recommends that responsible parties place the adoptive child where the child's needs can best be met.

In determining the best placement for the child, the following factors are considered:

- A. the wishes of the child's birth parent, in the case of infant adoption;
- B. the child's emotional, physical, mental and social needs;

- C. the family's ability to financially provide for the child and to
- D. meet the child's emotional, physical, mental, and social needs;
- E. the placement of the child's siblings; **AND**
- F. the availability of the child's relatives, the adoptive child's former foster parents or other significant persons to provide support to the adoptive family and child.

The agency assures that a child is matched with adoptive parents who indicate their willingness to provide the type of post-placement contact requested by the birth parents or outside placing agencies with the birth parents, siblings, extended family, or others.

If a family has already identified a birth mother and chooses to utilize the services of Adoption Life for a placement, the Agency will provide adoption-related services through finalization. Services include but are not limited to:

- A. support
- B. counseling for adoptive and birth families
- C. post placement services
- D. relinquishment
- E. post-adoption birth mother counseling
- F. assistance with ICPC

Prior to placement, the agency provides the adoptive family with all non-identifying information available on the child, including, but not limited to:

- A. All available records concerning the child's medical, social, legal, family, and educational background;
- B. All available records concerning the birth parents' medical, social, legal, family, and educational background; and
- C. Advice on any adoption subsidy that may be available for the child.

Once matched, a Proposed Placement Plan is established and presented to the adoptive family. The plan outlines the anticipated details of the adoption placement including fees and costs, openness plan, legal issues, and medical issues.

8. Children's Medical Expenses

The adoptive family is responsible to contact their insurance company regarding the child's and/or birth mother's medical services, and if the physician/hospital providing medical services is within their insurance network. All medical costs associated with the adoption are the responsibility of the adoptive family.

Adoption Life provides the adoptive family with the contact information for all medical providers and will also provide the medical providers with the contact information for the adoptive family.

Adoption Life assists families in locating and accessing necessary medical providers to provide continuity of care for any special needs and medical supports a child may have.

9. Placement Services

Adoption Life places a child in an adoptive family's home only if the adoptive parents have been approved by the Agency as capable of providing a stable, safe, and healthy environment for the child.

The adoptive family must have a home study which meets the standards of their state of residence, conducted either by Adoption Life or by a qualified home study provider, and which is approved by the

Agency. If indicated, a home study addendum may be provided with additional information to assure all requirements are met.

The adoptive family must meet program requirements for training. This includes a minimum of 10 hours of training for all adoptive families. Waiting Child Adoption requires a minimum of 20 hours of approved annual adoption training. Families working with outside agencies for placement must ensure they meet both Adoption Life training standards as well as any involved placing agency policies. Completion of training is documented in the adoptive family file.

The Agency provides counseling to the adoptive family to facilitate the child's acceptance into the family and to preserve stability.

The Agency provides referrals to community resources as needed.

A Placement Agreement is signed by the adoptive parents. The Placement Agreement outlines the legal responsibilities between the agency and the adoptive family.

The family is provided with referrals and resources regarding child development, parenting, education, etc.; with infant adoption, the agency assured that discharge instructions are provided by the hospital at the time of discharge, including feeding schedules, when to notify a physician, signs of distress, and other newborn care instructions.

The agency assures for the provision of care, maintenance, and support of the child, including any necessary medical care or treatment; generally, Adoption Life delegates these responsibilities to the adoptive family, while reserving the right to take steps, up to disruption of the placement, to protect the best interests of the child.

All adoption fees are paid prior to placement.

If required, the Agency manages the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process.

Placement with the adoptive family occurs as soon as possible following relinquishment. The Director of Social Work oversees the placement, including where and when placement occurs.

All issues related to placement are documented in the adoptive family's file.

If the adoptive family pays medical expenses prior to placement and the birth mother does not place the child for adoption, Adoption Life does not reimburse the adoptive family for those expenses. Additionally, a birth mother will not be asked or required to reimburse the agency or the adoptive family for any medical expenses paid prior to placement.

Generally, medical expenses are paid at the time of placement. All medical expenses must be paid, or payment arrangements must be made, prior to finalization of the adoption.

10. Post-Placement Services

A social worker supervises the child's placement until finalization of the adoption to monitor placement, assist with the transition, and assist the family in obtaining any needed services.

Following relinquishment of birth parent rights, the agency assumes legal custody of the child following relinquishment and retains legal custody after placement until finalization. In Waiting Child Adoption, the child remains in the legal custody of state child welfare organizations until finalization.

Absent exceptional circumstances, finalization takes place at least six months following placement. Court approval for earlier finalization is required.

Post placement visitation shall comply with published state guidelines wherein the adoptive family resides and be ultimately determined by the presenting needs of the family.

At minimum, post placement supervision shall consist of 1 visit within two weeks of placement and an in-home supervisory visit approximately every two months after placement until finalization.

Post placement fees are paid prior to finalization.

Waiting Child Adoption shall require at a minimum, monthly in-home visitation until finalization.

The adoptive family receives counseling and resources as needed to assist them during the post placement period.

The Agency monitors the provision of the care, maintenance, and support of the child, including any necessary medical care or treatment; generally, Adoption Life delegates these responsibilities to the adoptive family, while reserving the right to take steps, up to disruption of the placement, to protect the best interests of the child.

The Agency aids in finalizing the adoption, unless the agency removes the child due to circumstances that may impair the child's security in the family or jeopardize the child's physical and emotional development. If the child is removed, the agency will provide the adoptive parents written notice of their right to appeal and the procedure for appeal.

If the couple or the agency feels that finalization should be delayed, an assessment will be made by the caseworker and reviewed by the Director of Social Work to determine a plan of action as to whether to move forward towards finalization or remove the child based on his or her best interests.

Approval for travel out of the state or for a period longer than one week must be requested by the adoptive parents prior to finalization. If the child will be staying with other adults for a period lasting more than 30 days, a criminal record for that person(s) may be required by Adoption Life.

Any unusual incidents relating to the child including but not limited to suspicion or witnessing of abuse, injury, or major medical issues of the child will be reported by the adoptive parents in a prompt manner. An Incident Report will be completed by the caseworker or Director of Social Work and reviewed by the Executive Director. All matters relating to any unusual incidents will be documented and placed in the "Incident Report" binder.

Any unusual incidents will be reported to the Office of Licensing within 24 hours of the incident.

Adoption Life shall work with appropriate state authorities and/or other involved agencies to determine appropriate placement for a child 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.

11. Post-Finalization Services

If requested by the adoptive family, Adoption Life provides supportive services after the adoption is finalized. These services include, but are not limited to:

- A. Resource and referral for long term counseling needs.
- B. Short term counseling charged to the adoptive family at market rate (designated on agency fee schedule).
- C. Assistance with completion of subsidy forms and applications.
- D. Post adoption contact mediation.

12. Activities

Clients of Adoption Life are provided with adoption related services. Clients may also participate in activities unrelated to their treatment plan, including but not limited to social and recreational activities.

13. Children in State Custody and With Special Needs

The agency assists families in inquiring about and obtaining available information regarding individual children in the custody of the state who are available for adoption.

The agency assists families during the screening and selection process by participating in selection staffings and interfacing with appropriate caseworkers who are recruiting for adoptive homes.

The agency assists families in seeking out services and trainings that will support their ability to appropriately meet the needs of children with special needs and/or who have been in state custody.

The agency informs each prospective adoptive parent that assistance may be available when adopting children in the custody of the state including:

- A. Medicaid coverage for medical, dental, and mental health services;
- B. tax benefits, adoption subsidies, or other financial assistance to defray the costs of adoption; and
- C. training and ongoing support for the adoptive parents.

14. Documentation

All interaction with the prospective adoptive parents is documented. The Caseworker completes the following documentation:

- A. Matching Efforts
- B. Progress Notes
- C. Placement Agreement
- D. Placement Dictation

15. Contract Termination

Adoption Life 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.

Adoption Life 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.

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.

16. Records

Adoptive family files shall be kept in accordance with previously outlined Adoption Life Policy #13:Records on page 23.

17. Adoptive Parent(s) Rights and Responsibilities

All hopeful adoptive parents working with Adoption Life will be provided with the Adoptive Parent Rights & Responsibilities as outlined below:

RIGHTS:

- To be treated with respect, dignity, care and individualism by the agency.
- To be free from illegal or improper discrimination.
- To have all questions or concerns addressed in a timely, respectful manner.
- To be presented with adoption situations that are aligned with their set criteria.
- To not be forced to accept any adoption situation that they do not feel comfortable with.
- To have understanding and recognition of their unique situation and their choice of adoption as a way to grow their family.

- To be fully informed of a child's full medical background known to the agency.
- To be provided technological services that are innovative, creative and transparent.
- To be able to express a grievance or complaint.
- To have privacy of information and privacy for both current and closed records.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To provide Adoption Life with requested documentation in a timely and efficient manner.
- To be honest and forthcoming in all communication with the agency and with the birth parents.
- To verbalize any questions, concerns or misunderstandings experienced, to assure clear understanding of the adoption process.
- To treat birth parents with respect, empathy and understanding.
- To communicate regularly with their post adoption worker to assure post placement visits are scheduled and completed, and to communicate any changes to their family situation during the post placement period.
- To comply with the agreements as to openness.
- To be fully informed of all legal issues known to the agency.
- To be heard on the level of openness including the right to have a closed adoption.
- To seek independent counsel and services from professionals outside the agency.
- To pay birth parent medical and living expenses as promised.

20. Services for Foster Families				
Date of Adoption:	10/1/21	Effective Date:	10/1/21	Date of Revision:
References:	IDAPA 16.06.02 (400-408, 571,575-578,580-581, 615-623, 630-634)			

20.1 Policy:

Adoption Life licenses families who are interested in adopting from the foster care system for placement and works with appropriate state agencies to identify and place children available for adoption with suitably licensed foster and adoptive parents.

20.2 Procedure:

1. Recruitment and Application of Foster Families

Adoption Life may become aware of adoptive families seeking adoption services through the following methods:

- A. Online outreach and marketing
- B. Social Media
- C. Blogs
- D. Word of mouth
- E. Community resources and referrals
- F. Personal contact via telephone or in person

8. Application and Approval

Adoptive families may apply with Adoption Life to receive adoption related services. The agency selects applicants who:

- A. are over the age of 21;
- B. able to provide the continuity of a caring relationship;
- C. informed with regard to a child's ethnic, religious, cultural, and racial heritage;
- D. understand the needs of a child at various developmental stages;
- E. demonstrate motivation centering on the best interests of the child(ren);
- F. have verifiable income which is sufficient to provide for a child's needs;
- G. are open and comfortable with the sharing of adoption and biological background information with the child(ren); AND
- H. meet requirements for adoption in their state of residence.

Adoption Life does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or religion. Pursuant to existing Utah and Idaho law, individuals who are co-habiting within those states may not legally adopt. As such, Adoption Life places children with people in Utah and Idaho who are married or single but not co-habiting.

9. Intake & Assessment

Prospective foster parents may be recruited or self-refer for services provided by Adoption Life. Prospective foster parents are required to participate in an Orientation which provides an overview of the Waiting Child Program provided by Adoption Life.

Prospective foster parents must disclose any previous home studies and foster care placements.

Prospective foster parents are assigned a caseworker who assists and supports them throughout the adoption process.

Prospective adoptive parents must complete a current home study provided by Adoption Life or another licensed provider, to adopt from the Waiting Child Program.

Prospective adoptive parents must be licensed as foster parents by Adoption Life or another licensed provider to adopt from the Waiting Child Program.

The Director of Social Work reviews each home study conducted by another provider, and determines if the report meets the requirements of the State and Agency.

10. Waiting Child Program Requirements

Adoption Life offers the Waiting Child program to adoptive parents who wish to adopt from the foster care system.

Families wishing to adopt from the Waiting Child program must be licensed as foster families within their state of residence.

A licensed foster home shall not house more than five (5) foster children, and the total number of children in the home cannot exceed ten (10) children including the foster parents' own children.

No more than two (2) infants under two (2) years of age, including the foster parent's own children, shall be placed in one (1) foster home.

A foster home shall not have more than two (2) severely emotionally disturbed (SED) diagnosed children (including the family's own SED-diagnosed children) in their care at one time.

Exceptions (e.g., to maintain family groupings) shall be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Administrator/Executive Director or designee and certifying authority.

Adoption Life does not place children in homes for purposes other than adoption, but works closely state foster care agencies if families wish to serve in a foster care capacity.

Families who are participating in this program are required to maintain licensure status for the duration of their inclusion in the program.

11. Supportive Information Services

All foster parent applicants are assigned a caseworker who assists and supports them throughout the adoption process. Prospective foster families are provided with the following:

- A. Program specific Description of Services
- B. Training information
- C. Pre- and Post-placement Services, including outreach, matching and post-placement visits
- D. Individual and Group Counseling as needed, to be provided by a Licensed Mental Health Professional or Supervisor
- E. Statement regarding adoptive parent rights
- F. Relevant State Voluntary Adoption Registry
- G. Other pertinent information regarding the adoption

6. Home Study Service

All foster/adoptive parents must have a suitable home study in order to be considered for placement for foster care or adoption. Home studies shall include:

- A. Three or more interviews shall be held with prospective adoptive parents, including: (a) Individual interviews for each adoptive applicant; (b) Individual interviews for all household members (age appropriate); (c) At least 2 interviews on separate dates with all family members present in the family home.

- B. All families hoping to foster/adopt must undergo an adoptive family screening process which shall include the completion an abuse and/or neglect central registry check for state of residence and a central registry check from all other states he/she has lived in for the past 5 years, and a fingerprint based national criminal history record check.
- C. Written statements from at least two related and three non-related individuals who have known the family for at least 2 years and provide information directly to the agency regarding the applicant's qualifications for parenting an adoptive child.
- D. A report of all members of the household's physical and mental health status, made within six months prior to the date of the application.
- E. Evidence of pre-adoption training, including a program orientation and 20 hours of training approved by the Director of Social Work. Training must be updated annually during the course of program participation.
- F. Inspections of the home, to determine whether sufficient space and facilities to meet the needs of the child(ren) exist and whether basic health and safety standards are maintained. Specific standards are outline in the document titled Adoption Life Home Safety Checklist.

Clients who begin the home study process agree to provide all necessary documentation and complete required training within 6 months of contracting for home study services. Failure to do so may result in the requirement to begin the process again.

Home Studies and Home Study Updates completed through Adoption Life are to be used for the purpose of child placement for up to 12 months following the approval date.

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 Director of Social Work.

All home studies completed by Adoption Life shall meet appropriate state standards for pre-adoption home studies.

Once a home study has been used for the purpose of placement and finalization of an adoption, a new home study will be required for new adoption /foster services.

Adoptive families may obtain a home study from another qualified home study provider and submit it to Adoption Life for review and approval. The home study must be prepared by a licensed, qualified home study provider and meet state standards as well as Adoption Life home study standards.

Entering into an agreement to complete the home study process with Adoption Life does not guarantee approval for an adoptive or foster placement. Determination of approval/disapproval of adoptive homes is the responsibility of the Director of Social Work.

Adoptive applicants are informed by the agency within five (5) business days after the decision is made, as to the (1) acceptance or (2) reasons for the denial of their home study. When a denial is made, the agency provides applicants with a written copy of the agency's appeal process, which includes the right to submit a written appeal and request for reconsideration and the right to request an additional evaluation.

Approval of the home study may be denied for reasons including but not limited to:

- A. Criminal history;
- B. Unstable family relationships;
- C. Unstable home environment;

- D. Unstable health status;
- E. Non-compliance with home study requirements;
- F. Absence of suitable references.

Except when authorized by court order, the agency does not place a child in a foster or adoptive home until the home study and each adult's criminal and abuse background screenings have been approved.

7. **Pre-Placement Services, Placement Determination and Matching**

The agency prepares the adoptive family for the placement of a child that is in need of foster care and/or available for adoption.

The agency reviews all available information about the child with the prospective adoptive parents and encourages the matching with a child whose needs the adoptive parents will be able to meet.

The agency provides supportive counseling during the pre-placement period.

Approval by the agency does not guarantee selection by state foster care or other placing agencies.

Agency staff work closely with the adoptive parents(s) to discuss ways to enhance their preparation for adoption and may recommend further training opportunities that will enhance adoptive parent(s) preparation for an adoptive placement.

In Adoption Life's Waiting Child Adoption Program, state run child placing agencies generally select adoptive families for children within their custody. Adoption Life staff assist and participate in the inquiry and matching process, participating in staffing meetings, reviewing available documentation with adoptive families, and presenting adoptive families to selection staff when appropriate.

The agency places or recommends that responsible parties place the adoptive child where the child's needs can best be met.

In determining the best placement for the child, the following factors are considered:

- A. the child's emotional, physical, mental and social needs;
- B. the family's ability to financially provide for the child and to
- C. meet the child's emotional, physical, mental, and social needs;
- D. the placement of the child's siblings; **AND**
- E. the availability of the child's relatives, the adoptive child's former foster parents or other significant persons to provide support to the adoptive family and child.

The agency assures that a child is matched with adoptive parents who indicate their willingness to provide the type of post-placement contact requested by the placing agencies with the birth parents, siblings, extended family, or others.

Prior to placement, the agency makes every attempt to provide the adoptive family with all non-identifying information available on the child, including, but not limited to:

- A. All available records concerning the child's medical, social, legal, family, and educational background;
- B. All available records concerning the birth parents' medical, social, legal, family, and educational background; and
- C. Advice on any adoption subsidy that may be available for the child.

8. **Children's Medical Services**

The foster/adoptive family is responsible to seek appropriate medical care for all foster or adoptive children placed in their care.

While medical costs are typically covered by the state during the foster placement, families agree to provide for any medical care not covered by state insurance or subsidies. The family is responsible to contact their insurance company regarding the child's medical services, and if the physician/hospital providing medical services is within their insurance network after an adoption occurs.

Adoption Life assists families in locating and accessing necessary medical providers to provide continuity of care for any special needs and medical supports a child may have.

9. Placement Services

Adoption Life does not make placement determinations for foster care or Waiting Child Adoptions. Adoption Life prepares, licenses and advocates for families wishing to serve in this capacity.

The adoptive family must have a home study which meets the standards of their state of residence, conducted either by Adoption Life or by a qualified home study provider, and which is approved by the Agency. If indicated, a home study addendum may be provided with additional information to assure all requirements are met.

The adoptive family must be licensed as foster parents in the state wherein they reside.

All adoption fees are paid prior to placement.

Placement with the foster/adoptive family will be coordinated with the placing agency and will follow a well-defined transition plan aimed at supporting the children and family.

The Agency provides counseling to the adoptive family to facilitate the child's acceptance into the family and to preserve stability.

The agency assists families during the screening and selection process by participating in selection staffings and interfacing with appropriate caseworkers who are recruiting for foster and adoptive homes.

Adoption Life supports the placement of a child in an adoptive family's home only if the adoptive parents have been approved by the Agency as capable of providing a stable, safe, and healthy environment for the child.

Families agree to provide appropriate clothing for children placed in their home that is suitable to the environment, season, and individual needs of a child.

Families agree to enroll children in appropriate schooling within 5 school days of their placement.

Families serving as foster care providers agree to provide transportation and support for mandated visitation if the placing agency continues to work toward reunification. Families agree to maintaining ongoing contact with important persons in the child's life during the post placement and post finalization period so long as that contact is positive and desired by the child.

Families agree to use all adoption subsidy and financial benefits for the welfare of the child.

Families agree to safeguard and maintain a child's belongings and ensure any and all belongings are transferred with the child to any subsequent placement settings.

A Placement Agreement is signed by the foster/adoptive parents. The Placement Agreement outlines the legal responsibilities between the agency and the adoptive family.

The family is provided with referrals and resources regarding child development, parenting, education, and other appropriate resources for the well-being of the child.

All issues related to placement are documented in the adoptive family's file including a placement history for the family.

10. Post-Placement Services

A social worker supervises the child's placement until finalization of the adoption to monitor placement, assist with the transition, and assist the family in obtaining any needed services.

During the post placement period, the child remains in the legal custody of state child welfare organizations until finalization.

Absent exceptional circumstances, finalization takes place at least six months following placement. Placing agency approval is required for earlier finalization.

Post placement visitation shall comply with published state guidelines wherein the adoptive family resides and be ultimately determined by the presenting needs of the family.

At minimum, post placement supervision shall consist of 1 visit within two weeks of placement and an in-home supervisory visit every month after placement until finalization.

Post placement fees are generally paid through contracts with placing state agencies. Families assume the cost of supervisory visits in the absence of appropriate contracts and shall be paid prior to finalization.

The adoptive family receives counseling and resources as needed to assist them during the post placement period.

The Agency monitors the provision of the care, maintenance, and support of the child, including any necessary medical care or treatment; generally, Adoption Life delegates these responsibilities to the adoptive family, while reserving the right to take steps, up to disruption of the placement, to protect the best interests of the child.

The Agency aids in finalizing the adoption, unless the agency removes the child due to circumstances that may impair the child's security in the family or jeopardize the child's physical and emotional development. If the child is removed, the agency will provide the adoptive parents written notice of their right to appeal and the procedure for appeal.

If the family or the agency feels that finalization should be delayed, an assessment will be made by the caseworker and reviewed by the Director of Social Work to determine a plan of action as to whether to move forward towards finalization or remove the child based on his or her best interests.

Approval for travel out of the state or for a period longer than one week must be requested by the adoptive parents prior to finalization.

If the child will be staying with other adults overnight or on a recurring basis, a criminal record for that person(s) may be required by Adoption Life.

Any unusual incidents relating to the child including but not limited to suspicion or witnessing of abuse, injury, or major medical issues of the child will be reported by the adoptive parents within 24 hours. An Incident Report will be completed by the caseworker or Director of Social Work and reviewed by the Executive Director. All matters relating to any unusual incidents will be documented and placed in the "Incident Report" binder.

Any unusual incidents will be reported to the Office of Licensing within 24 hours of the incident.

Adoption Life shall work with appropriate state authorities and/or other involved agencies to determine appropriate alternate placement for a child 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.

11. Post-Finalization Services

If requested by the adoptive family, Adoption Life provides supportive services after the adoption is finalized. These services include, but are not limited to:

- A. Resource and referral for long term counseling needs.
- B. Short term counseling charged to the adoptive family at market rate (designated on agency fee schedule).
- C. Assistance with completion of subsidy forms and applications.

12. Activities

Clients of Adoption Life are provided with adoption related services. Clients may also participate in activities unrelated to their treatment plan, including but not limited to social and recreational activities.

13. Documentation

All interaction with the prospective adoptive parents is documented. The Caseworker completes the following documentation:

- A. Matching Efforts
- B. Progress Notes
- C. Placement Agreement

14. Contract Termination

Adoption Life 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.

Adoption Life 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.

Adoptive parents can at any time choose to withdraw from this agency. They must notify the agency in writing of their desires. All fees are considered non-refundable.

15. Records

Adoptive family files shall be kept in accordance with previously outlined Adoption Life Policy #13:Records on page 23.