

This Guide provides a summary of the information required for completing a Home Assessment Report as well as an outline of what information is required in each section. Foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship care providers and private guardians will experience many of the same challenges and require similar skills and abilities. Many foster parents go on to adopt children placed in their care or become private guardians, and often adoptive parents become successful foster parents.

### Nature of Assessment

The Home Assessment Report is the single most valuable tool for assessing foster, adoptive, kinship care or private guardian applicants. The Home Assessment determines the applicant's potential and resources to become a foster parent, adoptive parent, kinship care provider or private guardian, and helps to evaluate the type of child whose needs they can meet. Applicants will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. The ability to meet the eligibility standards of the foster care, adoption, kinship care and private guardianship programs.
2. Their capacity to foster, adopt, provide kinship care or become a private guardian.
3. Their ability to meet the needs of a child.
4. Their ability to work as a team member with the child, their parents, Alberta Children's Services and other professionals.
5. Their ability and desire to increase their skills and to assist others in acquiring these skills.
6. Their ability to understand the legal, social and emotional aspects of fostering, adoption and private guardianship.
7. Their ability and willingness to access resources that the child requires.

### Home Assessment Process

Home assessments are designed to assist families in determining their willingness and ability to foster, adopt, provide kinship care or assume private guardianship. Therefore, the home assessment process must be an interactive process whereby information is shared by both the caseworker and the applicants.

Applicants should be encouraged to complete the Family Questionnaire. Involvement of families in the Self-Assessment process facilitates their understanding of themselves and their skills in order to make knowledgeable decisions regarding fostering, adopting, providing kinship care or becoming private guardians.

Assessors have the responsibility of making the recommendation regarding the applicant's suitability to foster, adopt, provide kinship care or become a private guardian of a child. Through a review of the Family Questionnaire, medical report, criminal and intervention record checks, assessors will begin to form clinical impressions of the applicants and their family. As the entire family is affected, each resident of the home must be interviewed at least once. Grown children no longer residing in the home should be interviewed. Children age 12 and over should be interviewed separately. Younger children should be interviewed if they have the capacity to understand. Once the home assessment is completed and approved, a copy of the report is to be provided to the applicants.

## Part 1: Applicant's Information

### Applicant Information

The applicant provides basic information including legal name, mailing address, etc.

### Brief Family History

Does the applicant have insight into how their childhood experiences and the values of their parents have affected their:

- parenting styles
- problem solving skills
- general functioning
- relationship development
- conflict resolution skills

Was the applicant physically, emotionally or sexually abused? If the applicant's childhood experiences were traumatic, comment on resolution and whether or not counselling was provided.

Comment on how the applicant's experiences might support or act as a deterrent to fostering, adoption, providing kinship care or private guardianship. Explore significant relationships in your family. How did these relationships develop?

### Involvement with Child Intervention or Legal Systems

Each adult in the home must provide a Criminal Record Check. Ask about and document any criminal involvement by youth's age 12 or over who are living in the home.

An Intervention Record Check on each adult in the home is to be completed by the region.

Should a criminal and/or an intervention record be identified, a summary of the charges/intervention should be outlined and a recommendation must be provided by the caseworker with respect to the advisability of approving the home.

### Personality

Do your observations and interactions support the applicant's description of their personality, particularly in the following areas:

- coping ability
- strengths and weaknesses
- sense of humour
- initiative
- assertiveness
- flexibility
- demonstrativeness
- self-esteem ability to commit to long term goals without visible rewards.

What attitudes or behaviours has the applicant demonstrated which support or inhibit the assessment?

Based on your observations and interaction, does the applicant have:

**the ability to examine their own thoughts and feelings, good self-esteem in that they are able to present a balance of positives and negatives about themselves, the ability to interact with others, an awareness of the impact they have on others and how others can affect them.**

In your assessment, is the applicant's personality conducive to successful fostering, adoption or private guardianship.

### Health - Verify the applicants' information provided in the self-report.

Comment on the results of the medical report (CS0046). Request any additional medical, psychological or psychiatric reports if you believe there is a need.

If the applicant has a chronic condition, document the coping mechanisms to support the placement of a child.

If adopting, or applying for private guardianship, comment on the ability of the applicant to parent a child to adulthood.

## **Health - *continued***

If the applicant has been motivated by infertility, how has the applicant addressed this issue?

Comment on the results of any psychological testing or psychiatric assessment and the applicant's current mental or emotional stability.

Confirm that the applicants are aware of medical universal precautions, e.g. working with an HIV positive child.

If the applicants have identified either past or current addictions and resolutions, how will this enhance or inhibit their potential to foster, adopt, provide kinship care or assume private guardianship?

## **Education**

Comment on the applicant's education history, special skills, experience and/or training that might facilitate fostering, adopting, providing kinship care or assuming private guardianship.

How might the applicant's educational expectations impact fostering/adopting/providing kinship care/private guardianship and the type of child that should be placed in the applicant's home?

What education expectations does the applicant have for the child placed in the home?

## **Employment**

Comment on your assessment of how the applicant's job satisfaction and stability impacts the family dynamics.

Determine the applicant's ability and acceptance of managing a career and fostering, adopting providing kinship care or assuming private guardianship of a child.

If travel is a routine requirement, identify the possible effects on a child.

***If applying to foster***, is the applicant able to attend meetings, conferences, or appointments during the day?

If the applicant is caring for other children or dependent adults on a full or part time basis, comment on how this might effect the placement of a child.

## **Religious, Cultural, Racial and Ethnic Background**

Comment on the applicant's religious beliefs.

Is the application tolerant of other religious orientations and cultures? Does the applicant have any apparent prejudices or strong opinions about other cultures/races?

Comment on any religious beliefs/practices or affiliations that may inhibit or facilitate the placement of a child.

If applying for a child of a different racial/cultural/religious background, how will the applicant promote the child's culture and tradition.

Identify languages spoken.

## **Part 2: Family Dynamics**

### **Composition**

Describe the family composition.

Describe any special needs that the children in the home may have. Include what resources and coping mechanisms are required. How will this inhibit or facilitate the placement of a child?

If the applicant is single, provide an assessment on the demonstrated ability to meet the challenge of fostering, adopting or private guardianship without the support of a partner. Comment on the applicant's ability to provide role models of the opposite sex to the child. Provide examples of who will be the role model and what activities will be involved.

## **Marital Relationship or Adult Interdependent Relationship of Applicants**

If married, the applicants must provide a certified copy of their Marriage Certificate. Comment on the demonstrated quality of the marital relationship in terms of stability, commitment and mutual satisfaction.

Determine how supportive and dependable this relationship is regarded by each applicant. Do the applicants have insight into how fostering, adopting or private guardianship might impact their relationship? Comment on these impacts.

## **Previous Marital or Long-Term Relationships**

Provide an assessment of the difference between the previous and current relationship. If children were born in a previous relationship, what responsibilities does the applicant have? How might these impact any child placed in the home?

## **Communication**

What is the family's style of communication in terms of clarity and directness? Do messages come across clearly and directly or is healthy communication hindered by unclear messages, double messages or no messages at all?

How are messages received and interpreted? Are individual family members able to express their opinions and concerns in a tolerant atmosphere?

## **Autonomy of Individuals**

Are family members allowed and encouraged to develop as individuals? Provide examples. Can the family support and respect individual differences? Are any family members controlling of others? Provide examples.

## **Ability to Problem Solve and Handle Crisis**

Comment on the family's ability to cope with problems. Briefly illustrate characteristic ways of handling problems in the past and present. Has there been growth? Identify problems currently being handled by the family and how they are coping. Identify any problems/issues that are left unresolved. Will these problems inhibit the placement of a child?

## **Emotional Interaction**

Comment on the family's ability to maintain and enhance the self-esteem of its members. Does the family present as being emotionally healthy? Can they express feelings? Are they committed and supportive of each other?

Does the family schedule leisure activities? What do they like to do and how often?

## **Family Traditions**

Does the applicant understand the impact of traditions and customs on their life style? Will the family acknowledge and accept the traditions of a child which are different from their own? How will they promote the child's traditions?

## **Philosophy of Child Rearing**

Is behavioural control rigid, strict, flexible, laissez-faire or chaotic? Are these patterns consistent or inconsistent? Are the house rules clearly understood by all family members? Is there consideration given to being flexible and negotiable? Are the behaviour expectations consistent and appropriate with the age/maturity of the children? Does the applicant have an understanding of a child's development/learning stages?

How would the applicant cope with a child who is unable to meet their expectations? To what extent is the parents' self esteem linked with the behaviours, accomplishments or lack of success of children?

***If applying to foster***, the use of physical discipline with their own children will not prohibit a family from being approved. An assessment of the family's ability to use physical discipline with their own children and not with foster children must be included. How might this impact the following:

- dynamics in the home,
- the attitudes of the biological children towards the foster children,
- the reaction of foster children to the use of physical discipline with others.

**A family's refusal to comply with the policy prohibiting the use of physical discipline with foster children will mean an automatic rejection of the family.**

## Interests and Hobbies

Does the applicant encourage and support independent interests and hobbies? How much time does the applicant spend on interests, hobbies, volunteer work and leisure activities? How would this schedule be impacted by a placement of a child?

How creative is the applicant in meeting the recreational needs of children? Are the children's activities, age or ability appropriate?

## Social Support Network

Comment on the applicant's social support network. Does the applicant access and use supports appropriately? Discuss the applicant's ability to access and use a support network in time of stress.

## Part 3: Home and Community

### Home

Describe the physical space.

Does the applicant's home have sufficient physical space to accommodate an additional child(ren). Does the storage of weapons comply with current policy and legal expectations? Are all medications and toxic chemicals inaccessible to small children? Are mood altering drugs locked up? Does the home comply with the Safety Environment Assessment for Foster Care [Foster Homes ONLY].

### Community

Comment on the recreational/educational resources available to the family in their community. Which resources are being used?

### Contact with Professionals

What is the applicant's attitude towards professional services? How willing is the applicant to access specialized resources that may be essential in maintaining the placement of a child with special needs? Are these resources available?

## Part 4(a): Child Desired (For Foster Care and Adoption)

If the family is applying for a specific child, add:

1. Name of child
2. Date of Birth (yyyy/mm/dd)
3. Child ID #
4. Children's Services status
5. Date of placement
6. Special needs of child
7. Expected duration of placement
8. Aboriginal status and band number (*if applicable*)
9. Name, phone number and worksite office of placing caseworker
10. If the child's caseworker supports the placement and why
11. Applicant's relationship and involvement with child and birth family

Describe the child the applicants have indicated they would like placed in their home. Based on your assessment of the family, should the type of child the applicants have requested be placed in their home? If not, what type of child have you and the applicants agreed should be placed in the applicants' home?

If applying to adopt, include: age, gender, racial origin, acceptable background characteristics, acceptability of contact with birth parents, siblings and/or extended family.

If applying to adopt, is the applicant open to legal risk placements?

## Part 4(b): Child Information (For Private Guardianship)

1. Name of child
2. Date of Birth (yyyy/mm/dd)
3. Child ID #
4. Racial origin
5. History of involvement and relationship between the applicants and the child
6. History of intervention involvement with child/family
7. Acceptability of sibling contact
8. Functioning of the child's birth family
9. Relationship/contact with the birth parents/biological/extended family
10. Placement history of the child
11. Current functioning of the child (health/physical/emotional and academically)
12. Current and anticipated needs and services for the child

## Part 5: Income

Review and record the information from the applicant's T-4 slips.

Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to meet the financial needs of the family?

***If applying to foster***, confirm that the applicant understands that fostering does not guarantee an income - there may be times when a foster family does not have a child placed with them.

***If applying to adopt, provide kinship care or assume private guardianship of a special needs child***, does the applicant require and qualify for the Supports For Permanency Program?

## Part 6: Understanding and Motivation for Proposed Placement/Foster Care/Adoption/Kinship Care/Private Guardianship

### Understanding

Describe the applicant's understanding of the legal, social and emotional aspects of fostering, adopting or assuming private guardianship.

Describe the applicant's understanding of why children come into the Ministry's care, what special needs they may have and the resources and supports they require.

Describe the applicant's desire and willingness to participate in training and support groups.

Describe the applicant's understanding of how fostering, adopting or assuming private guardianship will affect their lives and the lives of their children.

### Parenting a Biological/Fostered/Adopted/Kinship Care/Private Guardianship Child

Describe the applicant's understanding and acceptance of the difference between fostering, adopting, providing kinship care or private guardianship and biological parenthood.

***If applying to foster***, describe the applicant's willingness to work with birth parents as role models and teachers. If applying to adopt or obtain private guardianship, describe the applicant's willingness to maintain contact with the birth family.

***If applying to foster***, describe the applicant's understanding and desire to work towards achieving the permanency plan identified for a child by the Ministry.

## Motivation

What do the applicants identify as their motivation to foster, adopt, provide kinship care or obtain private guardianship?

Is it apparent that one applicant is more motivated than the other to foster, adopt, provide kinship care or obtain private guardianship or is it a mutual decision?

Comment on the attitude of all family members (including extended family) regarding the plans to foster, adopt or assume private guardianship. Is any family member not supportive of the placement? If so, why?

If a family member is not supportive do the applicants still wish to proceed?

## Part 7: References

**Do not identify the references.** Provide interview summaries from at least 3 references for each applicant, one of which should be a relative. Provide a summary of any contact with the school (if applicable) and other contacts that were made.

Document the references' opinions on the suitability of the applicants to foster, adopt, provide kinship care or assume private guardianship. Comment on the references' perceived strengths and weaknesses of the applicant. What are the references' recommendations regarding the applicant's application? Does the information provided by the references support your assessment?

## Part 8: Overview of Home Assessment Process

Provide the following information regarding the assessment process:

- dates of personal visits
- who was interviewed
- activities undertaken by the applicant in support of fostering, adopting, providing kinship care or obtaining private guardianship (self-report, pre-service training, self-study, attending specialized training)
- provide the date that the applicants completed parent preparation training.

## Part 9: Summary of Outcome of Assessment

Ensure the applicant(s), the assessment caseworker, and the supervisor have signed the bottom of the Home Assessment Report.

Ensure the applicant is provided with a copy of the completed Home Assessment Report.

## Part 10: Placement Supports

Summarize needed supports and services for the child desired. Discuss the supports the home will need to ensure children placed will have their needs met. Have arrangements for the provision of the identified supports/services been made? Are there adequate resources and supports to assist the home with the child desired?

## Part 11: Recommendation/Approval of Assessor

Based on the findings of the home assessment, do you recommend or not recommend the applicant for approval. If not recommending, please consult with supervisor.

- Supervisor's Approval
- Opinion of the child (*if applicable*)
- Opinion of the birth parents (*if applicable*)
- Approved by Director of Private Licensed Adoption Agency (*for agency and international adoptions*)
- Approved by Director, Alberta Children's Services (*for international adoptions only*)