



## Decision Making and Placement Selection

### Practitioner Check List

- ✓ Begin the decision-making process by reviewing the child/youth assessment profile as well as family assessment materials for all families to be considered for adoptive placement.
- ✓ Develop a view of adoptive placement selection as much more than a paper-work process. Make it a thoughtful and collaborative practice based on comprehensive and individualized assessment of the needs of the child/youth and of the capacity of prospective adoptive parent(s) to meet those needs.
- ✓ Work as part of a team including primary workers for the children, youth, and families under consideration, their supervisors, clinicians and other important people to the child/youth who can add useful information and insight. Once a family has been selected, broaden the team to include older children and youth and the prospective adoptive family so the decision can be finalized and transition planning coordinated.
- ✓ When current kinship caregivers or foster families wish to adopt, use the same process to address the concerns of the children, youth, and families about transitioning to adoption. Ensure that all parties are aware of the differences between foster care and adoption and fully comprehend their responsibilities once the adoption is finalized.
- ✓ Have a robust conversation with the kinship caregivers or foster families who wish to adopt about the supports that will exist once the adoption is finalized. Provide the families with written information that explains the available services and supports that exist within their state and assist families to make connections prior to the finalization.
- ✓ Recognize that you are only human and at times your values and preferences may begin to influence the placement decision. Self-check often for bias and rely on your team to ensure a more objective process. Resist the urge to place a child or youth where *you* would want to live and keep the focus on the young person's needs and preferences.

### Coaching Tips for Supervisors

- Value your role as a key member of the decision-making team that selects adoptive placements. Support staff members in welcoming a shared decision-making approach that includes professionals as well as families and the children/youth themselves, whenever possible.
- Be on the lookout for new tools and resources that can be used to inform the decision-making and placement-selection process.
- Keep up-to-date on policy and legal requirements that impact placement decision making, including the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions of 1996 (MEPA/IEAP) and the geographic barriers provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA), as well as local laws and regulations.
- When you notice that a staff member's personal opinions or values are becoming a source of bias, point it out and provide suggestions for help such as, relying on the balanced view that other team members can provide.