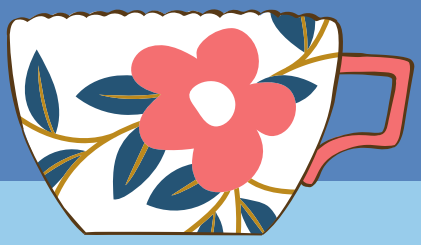
A Family Tree
Creating and Supporting Families Since 1975

YOUR AFT HOME STUDY

Congratulations!
You've taken the first step in your adoption process. We are happy to be with you for this exciting part of your journey.



PLEASE READ!
We know you have a lot to do. Take a few quiet moments to sit down and read through this packet. Take notes as necessary, this will help you, we promise!



STEP BY STEP
Is the best way to get through this process. And don't forget to breeeeeaaaathe!

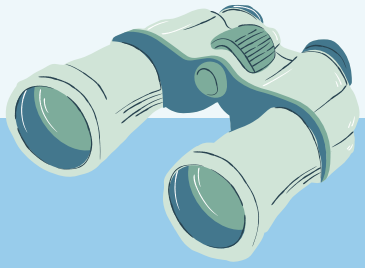
THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING IN ADOPTION
We've been doing this work for many years, and we know adoptive families are worth the work!



KNOW YOUR HOME STUDY

What is a home study?

A home study (HS) is a document, (10-20 pages) which contains legally required information and statements about a prospective adoptive applicant. The HS usually includes a specific approval statement, clarifying how many children the applicant is approved to adopt, their genders, ages and allowable needs or medical conditions. If this approval statement does not include parameters which address the specific child the applicant wishes to adopt, the adoption may be delayed until such time as the home study can be updated.



WHO NEEDS A HOME STUDY?

Anyone intending to adopt (or in some cases, become legal guardian to) any child. In rare cases the HS document may be waived according to prevailing law. Married applicants and anyone living in the same home as the adoptive applicant must be included in the HS report.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY INVOLVED IN A HOME STUDY?*



1) You apply with an agency for a Home Study (HS) Service
2) You provide the agency with the required HS paperwork;
3) You meet with your HS worker in your home and at the office;
4) You complete pre-adoptive training;
5) You review your HS draft report;
6) Your HS is finalized and sent to you and any other agency you work with

* This is a general outline and may not fully represent your HS process.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR MY HOME STUDY?

Review your HS paperwork packet and make sure you understand what is needed of you and when it is needed. If any preliminary paperwork is required prior to the agency beginning the HS work, complete that first.

Do not: Renovate, buy new decor, or baby proof!



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Rev. 08/2024

What paperwork do I need?

Your HS agency and your child placing agency, will provide you with a complete list of what they need from you. Sometimes they need similar or even the same paperwork (for your HS and for your adoption process.)

This is a list of the most commonly required documents:



- Copies of birth, marriage, divorce, naturalization, and/or citizenship documents as applicable;
- Financial verification such as W2s, most recent tax return;
- Letters of employment;
- (Self-written) biographical outlines and photos;
- Letters of reference and information about guardians;
- Medical clearance forms,
- Criminal clearances - including: FBI, and child abuse and neglect clearances (CAN) back to age 18. (If you have lived in more than one state or country you will need CANs from previous jurisdictions. Clearance work is usually managed by your HS agency.

How long does it take to complete a home study?

Completing the home study can take 3-6 months depending. The home study process involves detailed paperwork be submitted to AFT in order for the HS to be written. We cannot complete the home study until all documentation is received. Hence completion of an HS involves both AFT and the client.



WHO IS AUTHORIZED TO CONDUCT A HOME STUDY?

Home studies are conducted by **licensed child placing organizations,** or adoption agencies. It is up to the agency and the prevailing law to determine who is qualified to conduct the HS for the agency. Rules may vary.

Can I Start My HS Before I Select an Adoption Program?

Yes, but it is highly encouraged to have selected an adoption program so that we make sure to follow all requirements for that agency and program. An approved HS must include a statement specifying age range, gender, racial background, and any special medical or developmental conditions which the prospective parents are able to handle. In some cases child placing entities may require specific language be included in the final HS report.

Does My HS Report Expire?

Yes, in most cases the HS is valid for one year. The HS must be valid at the time of child placement and/or at the time of adoption. Most adoption processes take more than one year and you will likely need to update your HS at least one time before your child is placed. If you are traveling to adopt a child you'll need a valid home study (for international or inter-state travel).

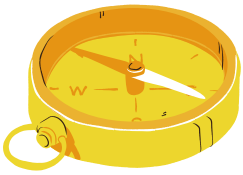
Please note that in some cases clearances sited in the report may expire and may need to be updated in order to keep the home study valid. These include medical, CAN, criminal clearances, etc. Please note that AFT is not responsible for maintaining your updated clearances. Please keep track of your clearance dates. Once updated, we can add your updated clearance dates to your HS report. Please note that HS validity requirements are not determined by AFT. In cases of interstate or international adoptions, cases may be delayed if clients travel without having updated all clearances.



HOW DO I UPDATE MY HOME STUDY?

Contact the agency that completed your HS or if you have moved to a new state, contact AFT and we can connect you with an agency in your (new) area of residence. Updating a HS usually involves updating your clearances, and completing one or more additional interviews. While you are awaiting child placement, a home visit is required every 12 months. When using a new HS agency, you are required to provide copies of all previous HS reports to any new HS agency.

WHEN DO I NEED TO UPDATE MY HS?



Any time an applicant has a change of circumstances the home study agency should be informed. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Clearances expire (within one year of the listed date)
- Moving homes;
- Change in employment;
- Change in the number of people living in the home, or change in legal status of anyone living in the home (i.e. previously minor child turns 18);
- Significant change in health of applicants or change in criminal history status.

Even if your HS is still valid, applicants are required by law to inform the approving agency any time there are significant changes in circumstances.

Our children watch us and learn.

How Much Does an HS cost?

Home studies range in cost from $1,500 (for a HS update), to $5,000 (for more complicated reports and circumstances). Fees are based on how much work is anticipated. Case work involved in completing an HS may be more involved than the applicant is aware. The majority of the time required to complete the final HS document does not actively involve the applicant but involves a variety of agencies and/or individuals. Please review our List of Service Fees sheet for more details about AFT service fees.

WHO ESTABLISHES HS REQUIREMENTS?



Home study content, language, and requirements are determined by but not necessarily limited to the following: a) the state office which licenses the HS agency; b) the laws of the state responsible for placing the child; c) the agency and or worker conducting the HS; d) the U.S. government (USCIS and Office of Homeland Security) in intercountry adoption cases; e) the laws of the sending country, in the case of intercountry adoption cases.

Completing HS guidelines

AFT follows the state of Hawaii's home study guidelines. Our home study generally meets placing agency's domestic adoption requirements, however clarifying home study guidelines with the agency you work with is advised. This ensures that the home study meets the agency's standard and reduces the chance of delay in a placement.

International adoption agencies with specific country programs have their own home study requirements. When you apply and are apart of a country program, please notify your AFT team member. This will help us be aware of the home study requirements. This also reduces the chance for a home study to be denied approval or stall placement.

Since most agencies have home study guidelines, AFT encourages applicants have a placing agency so that we can begin following their home study guidelines as soon as possible.

If you can help a child, you don't have to spend years repairing an adult.



HOW WILL I KNOW IF I DO NOT "PASS" THE HOME STUDY?

Clients who do not meet the HS requirements will not be approved. Requirements include but are not limited to: medical proof that you are healthy enough to care for a child; financial means to care for a child; reference letters; criminal record clearances, child abuse clearance (CAN). Please note that applicants with minor criminal records such as a DUI, or petty criminal record from a number of years ago may be approved so long as the issue is not indicative of a continuing or substantive issue. Applicants with any type of substantiated CAN record will not be approved. Please check with AFT if you are concerned.

When Will I Know if My HS is Approved?

Once your paperwork has been received and reviewed, and your interviews have been completed, you may be given a preliminary verbal note from your AFT worker. Your final HS report will include the approval or denial statement. If you are anxious please speak with us.

What happens once I have completed the HS?

Once your HS report has been written, reviewed and approved, AFT will mail copies to all involved parties. Note that clients are required to review and sign a statement verifying that all information contained in the HS report is accurate. If you are working with a child placing agency, a copy will be provided to your placing agency. If you require post adoption visits or reports or an HS update, you may contact us at any time and we are happy to reopen your case.

Cases reopened in less than 12 months do not require a new application fee, however clearances or other fees may apply depending on the requested service or need.

