



# County to Public Adoption Case Transfer Process Desk Guide

Collaboration between county and public adoption professionals prior to termination of parental rights (TPR) is vital to ensure children transition to the public adoption program with a stable and appropriate adoptive resource. **Remember that TPR is not permanence; ADOPTION IS.** When placements disrupt prior to adoption finalization, we find ourselves with more limited access to placement resources and additional loss and trauma for the child.

This guide is designed to assist county and public adoption professionals between the time TPR is chosen as the permanency option and case transfer to the public adoption agency.

## ICWA/WICWA Requirements

If ICWA applies, the ongoing county professional and public adoption professional must ensure that all ICWA/WICWA requirements are met and documented throughout the case transfer process.

### Resources:

- [WICWA Online Resources for Case Workers](#) provides guidance and explanations of the WICWA requirements and processes.
- Utilize the [Documenting ICWA Quick Reference Guide](#) on the eWISACWIS Knowledge Web.

### Federal Regulations and State Statute:

- [Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#)
- [Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#)
- [2016 ICWA Regulations](#)

## ICPC Requirements

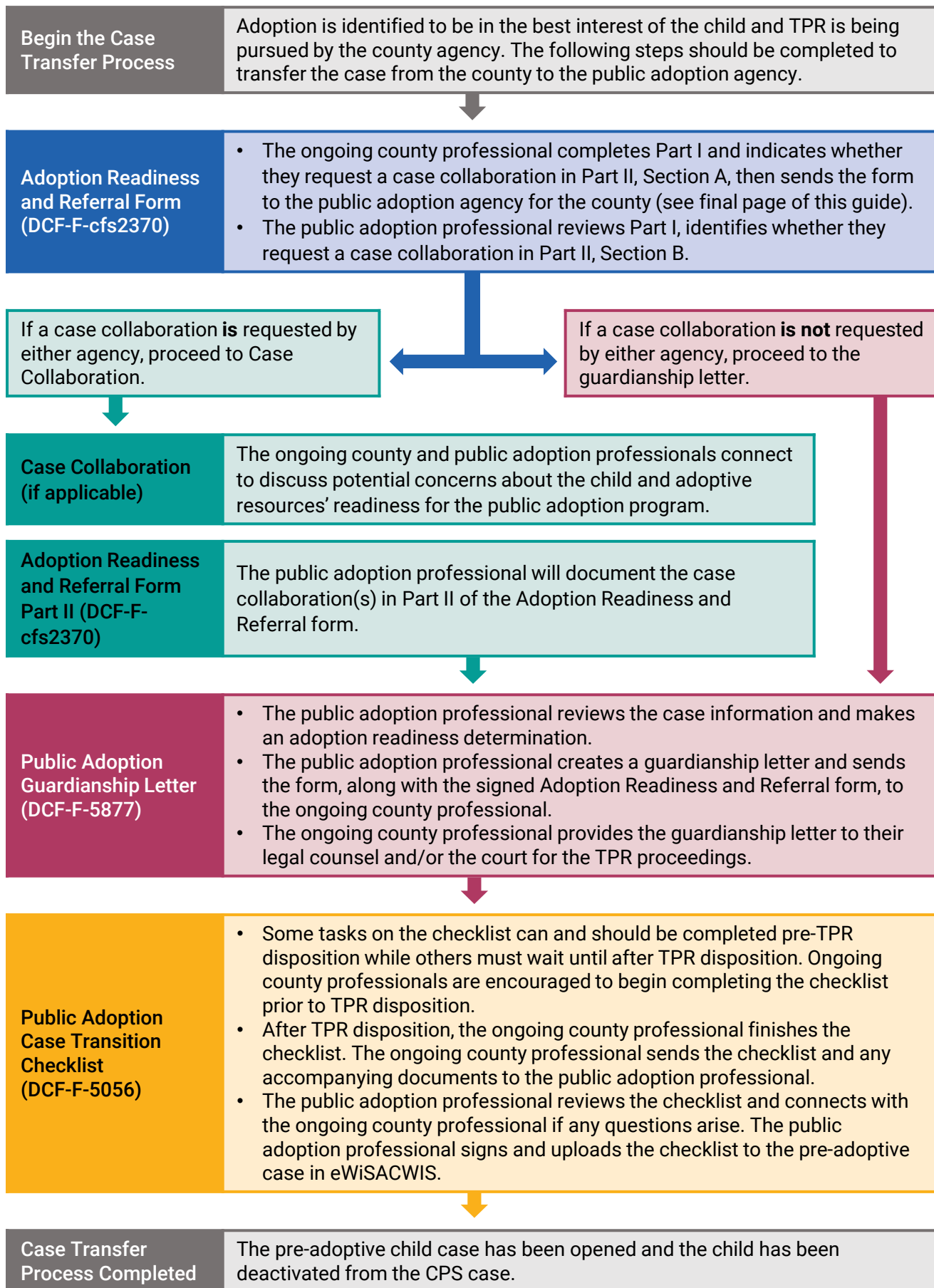
Use this transition process when Wisconsin is the sending state (i.e., where the case originated).

When Wisconsin is the receiving state (i.e., supervising the placement in Wisconsin), case transition will follow the requirements of the sending state. Once necessary paperwork is received, the Wisconsin ICPC Specialist will deactivate the child from the family case, set up the preadoptive case, and assign the public adoption supervisor.

It is best practice for the ongoing county professional and public adoption professional to facilitate a transition meeting with the family to transfer supervision responsibilities.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Process Overview	2
Adoption Readiness and Referral Form FAQs	3–4
Case Collaboration FAQs	5–6
Public Adoption Guardianship Letter FAQs	7–8
Public Adoption Case Transition Checklist FAQs	9
Public Adoption Contacts by Region	10



# Adoption Readiness and Referral Form: FAQs

When TPR and adoption are determined to be in the best interest of a child, ongoing county professionals should begin the process of referring the case to the public adoption program by completing the Adoption Readiness and Referral form (DCF-F-CFS2370).

This form should be completed through, Part II - Section A, and submitted to the public adoption agency **by the time the petition for TPR is filed**. Individual counties may establish earlier deadlines based on county requirements for TPR filing.

## ▪ Why do some answers on the form require explanations?

Many of the questions on the Adoption Readiness and Referral form state, “If **NO**, explain” or “If **YES**, explain.” If you check a “yes” or “no” that requires explanation, the public adoption professional will need additional information to decide whether they would recommend adoption and, if so, how they can best support the child and adoptive resource after TPR.

## ▪ What if I don’t have the information needed to answer certain questions?

All applicable questions should be answered as completely and accurately as possible. Provide any information you do have or steps you have taken to acquire the information.

Information may be updated on subsequent iterations of the form if more information is gained.

For example, TPR date is often not known the first time the Adoption Readiness and Referral form is completed for a specific case but may be able to be filled in at the 6-month review if applicable.

## ▪ Why does this form ask about records that aren’t required until TPR?

Some records may take a significant amount of time to complete or receive. To ensure that these records are assembled before TPR disposition, ongoing county professionals should begin working on them at the time of referral, if not already completed.

## ▪ Why is this form asking questions about...?

In the blue boxes below and on the following page of this guide, you can find explanations to questions for which additional clarification may be helpful.

### ***Permanency options that do not require TPR (e.g., guardianship and kinship) have been explored and are not appropriate for this child.***

When a child cannot safely remain in their home, every effort should be made to place the child with a relative or like-kin caregiver and to maintain safe connections with the birth family.

Permanency options that do not require TPR allow the child to achieve permanence without severing legal relationships and should be prioritized when viable.

### ***If the adoptive resource is a married couple, are there any concerns about separation or divorce?***

Wisconsin Stat. § 48.82(1) requires couples to be married to adopt jointly. If the adoptive resource identified is a couple but they are not married at the time of adoption finalization, only one of the adoptive resources can legally adopt the child.

# Adoption Readiness and Referral Form: FAQs

***The adoptive resource's license includes one or more approved exception(s).***

If you are unsure, check in eWiSACWIS or speak with the resource's licensor prior to answering.

***The adoptive resource understand the requirements for adoption, including the requirements for an adoptive home study, adoption trainings, and possible changes in subsidy.***

The adoptive resource should be aware of requirements for adoption that differ from those for fostering. These include:

- 25 hours of adoptive parent training, including 6 hours of child-specific training
- An additional home study must be completed by the public adoption agency
- The pre-adoptive parent must be licensed at a level 2 or higher
- Adoption Assistance, if approved for the child, cannot exceed the foster care rate or \$2,000 and may be lower than the foster care rate in some situations
- Daycare assistance (Wisconsin Shares) is not automatically provided for adopted children; eligibility for Wisconsin Shares after adoption is based on the adoptive parents' income
- *Unmarried couples looking to adopt need to determine which one will be the adoptive resource*

***All known relatives and like-kin are aware that TPR is being pursued.***

It is not uncommon for relatives or like-kin to wait until after TPR to request placement. Ensuring that relatives and like-kin know about the plan for TPR may prompt them to request placement prior to TPR and/or helps the adoption agency anticipate requests that may come after TPR.

Relatives and like-kin who do not wish to adopt may still be valuable connections for the child. Having conversations with these relatives and like-kin about TPR supports their relationship with the child and can promote the child's overall well-being.

***The child has been informed of the plan for termination of parental rights (TPR) AND adoption.***

It is important for every child to feel they have a voice in decisions being made about their life. A child will not necessarily understand that TPR is required for adoption or what a TPR means for their relationship and visits with biological relatives, so it is important that both TPR and adoption are explained to a child separately and in age-appropriate language. These conversations may reveal important connections or pieces of their life story the child wishes to carry through the adoption.

***The child currently receives services to address their emotional, behavioral, and physical needs.***

Document any services a child currently receives so that plans can be made to continue these services through the case transition. Services may include but are not limited to:

- Special education services
- Therapy of any kind (physical, occupational, play, cognitive-behavioral, speech, etc.)
- Specialized medical care (other than preventive services)
- Birth to 3 services
- Children's Long-Term Support Program (CLTS)
- Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)

# Case Collaborations: FAQs

Part II of the Adoption Readiness and Referral form give ongoing county and public adoption professionals the opportunity to request a case collaboration to discuss outstanding questions or concerns before the public adoption professional makes a guardianship recommendation.

## ▪ What is a case collaboration?

Case collaborations are discussions between ongoing county professionals, public adoption professionals, and sometimes other individuals to address outstanding concerns about a child's and/or adoptive resource's readiness for the public adoption program. Case collaborations **must** occur whenever requested by either agency.

The purpose of a case collaboration is to give both agencies the opportunity to ask questions, gather information, and develop action steps to address any concerns that may lead to preventable disruption of a placement prior to or after TPR.

Case collaborations can occur in person, via video chat, over the phone, or even over email. Brief, clarifying phone calls or emails exchanged do not constitute a case collaboration unless they include specific discussion of concerns and/or the development of action steps. These calls and emails would not need to be documented in Part II of the Adoption Readiness and Referral form.

## ▪ Why might a case collaboration be requested?

Common reasons for requesting case collaborations include:

- Lack of information or clarity in Part I of the Adoption Readiness and Referral form
- Child or family has supports in place that must be continued after TPR
- Concerns about placement stability
- Concerns about adoptive resource's understanding of adoption assistance, child care assistance, and other changes post-adoption
- Licensing exceptions that need clarification prior to adoption home study

## ▪ Who can participate in a case collaboration?

Case collaborations **must** include ongoing county professionals and public adoption professionals who are or will become involved in the case. When ICWA applies, the Tribal Contact **must** also be included.

Case collaborations **may** also include a variety of others as appropriate for the topic(s) being discussed. This may include:

- The child, especially older youth
- The adoptive resource
- Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)
- Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- Relatives with whom the child has meaningful relationships and/or visitation
- County or adoption supervisors
- Foster Care Coordinator (FCC)
- Treatment Foster Care licensor
- Independent Living Coordinator
- Educational team
- Other members of the child's team

# Case Collaborations: FAQs

## ▪ Who is responsible for organizing and facilitating case collaborations?

Regardless of who requested the case collaboration, it is the responsibility of the public adoption professional to schedule and facilitate the case collaboration and to document action steps from the case collaboration in Part II of the Adoption Readiness and Referral form. The agenda should be determined collaboratively based on the questions or concerns identified in Part II of the Adoption Readiness and Referral form.



The public adoption professional will follow up on the progress of action steps for the purposes of generating or updating the Public Adoption Guardianship Letter.

## ▪ What are some tips for conducting a case collaboration?

- **Create and share the agenda** ahead of the collaboration. This helps establish common goals.
- **Make time for introductions.** Especially when the collaboration includes individuals other than county and adoption professionals.
- **Remember the scope.** Though TPR and adoption often go together, the purpose of a case collaboration is not to determine whether TPR is appropriate. The purpose is to determine what steps need to be taken to prepare the child and adoptive resource for adoption.
- **Consider all perspectives.** Case collaborations should be as the name suggests: collaborative. All participants are equal partners in the case collaboration, and each has a vital perspective to contribute.
- **Develop a clear plan of action.** Unless all concerns are solved during the case collaboration, clear actions steps should be created, assigned, and documented in Part II of the Adoption Readiness and Referral form by the public adoption professional.

# Public Adoption Guardianship Letter: FAQs

After Part I of the Adoption Readiness and Referral form has been completed and case collaboration has occurred (if requested), the public adoption professional completes the Public Adoption Guardianship Letter and sends it to the ongoing county professional. In most counties, the guardianship letter will be submitted as part of the TPR filing. Guardianship letters are valid for 6-months; if 6 months pass without TPR, the Readiness and Referral form must be updated by the county ongoing professional and submitted to the public adoption professional for a new guardianship letter to be issued.

## ▪ What is the purpose of the Public Adoption Guardianship Letter?

The Public Adoption Guardianship Letter is an opportunity for the public adoption professional to provide their assessment of the child's and adoptive resource's readiness for an adoption home study.

The guardianship letter is not an opportunity for the public adoption professional to identify whether TPR is in the best interest of the child; that is the scope of the county child welfare agency.

## ▪ What reasons for support or concern may be included?

The Public Adoption Guardianship Letter provides space for the public adoption professional to indicate reasons they support or have concerns about the child and adoptive resource completing an adoption home study.

Examples of reasons for support include:

- The adoptive resource is a relative or like-kin of the child.
- The child and adoptive resource is reported to have a strong bond or relationship.
- The child is reportedly aware of the plan for adoption and is in support of the plan.
- If the pre-adoptive placement disrupts, there is a pool of waiting adoptive families who may be a resource to this child.

Examples of reasons for concern include:

- The child does not have an adoptive resource.
- The adoptive resource is not licensed at a level two or higher and there is not a clear plan to become licensed.
- ICWA applies to the child, but ICWA requirements were not followed.
- The child and/or adoptive resource is apprehensive about adoption.
- If the pre-adoptive placement disrupts, there are limited or no waiting adoptive families who may be a resource for this child.



# Public Adoption Guardianship Letter: FAQs

## ▪ What should be included in the adoption readiness determination?

The Public Adoption Guardianship Letter asks that the public adoption professional make a determination of adoption readiness on behalf of DCF. This determination should be based on information from the Adoption Readiness and Referral form and any case collaborations that occurred.

If adoption and an adoption home study with the current adoptive resource are **both** recommended, no additional action steps need to be identified.

If adoption and/or an adoption home study with the current adoptive resource is **not** recommended, the public adoption professional must identify one or more action steps that would help prepare the child and/or adoptive resource for adoption readiness.

Examples of action steps include:

- The child and adoptive resource continue to show stability for 3 months before TPR is pursued.
- The adoptive resource completes their training requirements before TPR is pursued to demonstrate a willingness to complete future adoption finalization requirements.
- An adoptive resource is identified before TPR is pursued to increase likelihood that the child achieves permanence via adoption in a timely manner after TPR.





# Public Adoption Case Transition Checklists: FAQs

Completion of the Adoption Case Transition Checklist ensures that all case information is transferred from the county to the public adoption agency as part of the case transition process.

Ongoing county professionals should begin completing the Case Transition Checklist well before TPR occurs—even as early as TPR filing—to avoid having to do it in a hurry after TPR has occurred.

The checklist includes items that should be completed before and after TPR has occurred, beginning the checklist early also helps ensure that all necessary tasks are being completed throughout the process.

## ■ **What should a transition plan include?**

The Adoption Case Transition Checklist requires the ongoing county professional and public adoption professional to create a transition plan with the family. Necessary components of a transition plan include:

- County and adoption professionals must touch base (via phone, email, Zoom, or in person) prior to a transition meeting with the family to ensure uniformity of message.
- There must be a transition meeting with the family within 30 days of TPR. The timing of this meeting should be determined by the ongoing county professional and public adoption professional together.

## ■ **Why is an explanation required if a task hasn't been completed or is not applicable for some items?**

All of the information and documentation being requested is vital for the public adoption professional to know or have in order to facilitate finalization timely. If a task has not been completed or information is missing the public adoption professional will need to know what steps have been taken to complete the task so they know where to start from if needed.

## ■ **Why is eWiSACWIS not an option for some items?**

The following documents may not be uploaded in eWiSACWIS; they must be shared by paper or through another electronic method only. The public adoption professional is responsible for sending these records to the Adoption Records Search Program after adoption finalization.

- Family History Questionnaires Medical / Genetic ([DCF-F-CFS1049](#))
- Family History Questionnaires Medical / Genetic – Pregnancy and Delivery Information ([DCF-F-CFS1049A](#))
- Affidavits ([DCF-F-CFS0142](#))

These documents are **vital** to ensure that an adopted person can access their social and medical histories from prior to adoption. Please note that the Medical / Genetic forms can be completed at any time prior to TPR; completion of these documents does not need to wait until TPR.

# Public Adoption Contacts by Region

Counties should send their Adoption Readiness and Referral forms to the appropriate public adoption agency to initiate the case transfer process. If you need to contact a supervisor for an adoption agency, please use the [Public Adoption Contacts](#) map.

## Eastern Region (Lutheran Social Services)

Brown	Kewaunee	Oconto	Washington
Calumet	Manitowoc	Outagamie	Waupaca
Door	Marinette	Ozaukee	Waushara
Fond du Lac	Marquette	Shawano	Winnebago
Green Lake	Menominee	Sheboygan	

## Western Region (Lutheran Social Services)

Ashland	Douglas	La Crosse	Pepin	Taylor
Barron	Dunn	Langlade	Pierce	Trempealeau
Bayfield	Eau Claire	Lincoln	Polk	Vernon
Buffalo	Florence	Marathon	Portage	Vilas
Burnett	Forest	Monroe	Price	Washburn
Chippewa	Iron	Oneida	Rusk	Wood
Clark	Jackson			

## Southern Region (Children's Wisconsin)

Adams	Grant	Lafayette
Columbia	Green	Richland
Crawford	Iowa	Rock
Dane	Juneau	Sauk
Dodge		

## Southern Region (Children's Wisconsin)

Jefferson
Kenosha
Racine
Walworth
Waukesha

## Milwaukee County (Children's Wisconsin & Wellpoint Care Network)

Please note cases transferring to public adoption in Milwaukee do not utilize this case transfer process. Connect with the public adoption team with the child's assigned supervising agency regarding the process for transfer to public adoption.

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.