

OPTIONS EDUCATION Service Attachment

DEFINITION

Options Education is defined as a provision of face-to-face or virtual education to explain the concept of relinquishment, explore alternatives along with the pros and cons of the options, and discuss the potential outcomes of such a decision, while also informing parents about legal permanency options. The purpose of this process is to allow parents to make an informed decision regarding whether to relinquish their parental rights. It also educates parents that they are not able to voluntarily relinquish parental rights contingent on any requests and/or promises (for example, the parent cannot be promised a choice of placement, and the parent cannot be promised contact) and that relinquishments are voluntary, permanent and irrevocable upon signature.

Parents may choose to maintain parental rights with the understanding that the court may disagree and terminate parental rights. Parents are advised to consult with their attorneys to ensure they fully understand all the information they have received and clarify any questions or uncertainties before making a decision.

Voluntary Relinquishment to DHHS:

Parents are informed that by voluntarily relinquishing their parental rights, they give up all legal rights, custody, and control over the child to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Parents need to understand that relinquishing parental rights cannot be conditioned on specific requests or promises, such as choosing a placement or maintaining contact with the child. They are also made aware that relinquishment is a voluntary, permanent, and irreversible decision once signed. Additionally, parents are provided information about services available to birth parents following relinquishment.

Before conducting Options Education, the contractor will conduct a preliminary screening for parent's competency to make an informed decision regarding relinquishment. A preliminary screening may include, but is not limited to, checking the parent's orientation to time, place and person and asking if the parent is under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs/chemicals

Voluntary Termination of Parental Rights for Indian Children:

If applicable, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, 35 U.S.C. Section 1913, and Neb. Rev. Stat Section 43-1506 are followed when discussing the voluntary termination of parental rights for Indian children.

Educating Expecting Parents for Future Family Planning:

Expecting parents are informed about the potential impact of relinquishing parental rights on future cases. Relinquishing parental rights will not prevent future involvement with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) regarding other children. If parental rights are terminated for the current child, and the parent becomes involved with DCFS in future cases, the court may not require the department to provide reunification services. Parents are also informed that there is no guarantee that the state will not intervene in future cases if there are concerns of child abuse or neglect. Expecting parents are encouraged to access available Pregnancy and Parenting Options Counseling in the community.

TARGET POPULATION

The target population is any parent involved with and referred by DHHS or Tribal CFS.

LENGTH OF SERVICE

A client can be referred to options education anytime throughout the case. It is up to the client if they want to participate in Options Education. Options Education can be up to 3 occurrences, 1 hour per occurrence. Referrals should be available for up to 90 days.

ACCEPTING & RESPONDING TO REFERRALS

Contact with the DHHS Children and Family Service Specialist (CFSS) to discuss the referral should be attempted within two (2) business days of the authorization for Options Counseling. Service provision shall occur within the authorization timeframe (provided that the client chooses to participate in the service).

Efforts to contact the client should begin within three (3) business days of the authorization for Options Education.

STAFF CREDENTIALS

An employee of the Contractor that provides adoption services to perform the Options Education. The employee of the Contractor shall possess at minimum a bachelor's degree and have two (2) years of experience working for an adoption agency.

If an employee does not meet the standards outlined above, the Contractor shall seek approval from the DHHS Contract Monitor, or Designee, by requesting an Exception which provides the name of the employee, their job function, and education deficiencies that prevent them from meeting the contractual standards.

MINIMUM REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Contractor agrees to submit the following information. A written discharge summary confirming that the educational session(s) took place including name of client, dates and times of sessions provided, hours of services provided, determination of orientation and competency, summary of information provided, and the parents informed decision. Documentation will be submitted within three (3) business days following the final appointment, or as requested, to the referring CFS Specialist.

PPI Database: When requested by DHHS the Contractor shall report data measures on the DHHS Provider Performance Improvement database by the 15th calendar day of the month following the provision of services.

ESTABLISHED RATE

Face-to-Face Rate: DHHS shall pay Contractor the identified service rate for Options Education as outlined on the DHHS page at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Protection-and-Safety-Services-and-Rates.aspx> for direct, face-to-face contact time assisting the child(ren) and/or family.

Virtual Rate: When sessions are conducted virtually through video conferencing and no travel is made, DHHS shall pay Contractor the identified service rate for Virtual Options Education as outlined on the DHHS page at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Protection-and-Safety-Services-and-Rates.aspx> for direct, virtual contact time assisting the child(ren) and/or family.

- Virtual Contact is defined as face-to-face contact via digital/video methods. It does not include phone calls, text messages, or any other non-video contact.
- Virtual Options Educations service shall only be provided when approved by the assigned CFS Specialist or CFS Supervisor. A separate Service Referral and Authorization for Virtual Options Education service, indicating the number of virtual hours, is required prior to performing virtual services.

Payment for Service Preparation: DHHS shall pay the Contractor the identified service rate for Service Preparation as outlined on the DHHS page at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Protection-and-Safety-Services-and-Rates.aspx> for each occurrence that 1) the client is not present of the scheduled session at the designated

time and location, 2) if the family cancels the session while en-route to the designated location, or 3) if the client schedules but does not attend a virtual session.

- Service Preparation will be defined as any preparatory work or communication (phone, email, text, or in-person conversation) that is completed by the Contractor prior to the scheduled session in which the family is not present or cancels the session while en-route.
- The Contractor shall provide clear written documentation that service preparation was completed prior to the scheduled session. For the purposes of this payment, "location" shall mean a place where the Contractor meets the family that does not include the Contractor's office or place of business.
- DHHS shall pay the Contractor for distance for those instances when a Contractor travels to meet the family, and the client is not present for the scheduled session at the designated time and location, or the family cancels the appointment while the Contractor is en-route to the location of the scheduled session.
- The Contractor shall not be paid for Service Preparation if the scheduled session with the family occurs.

Mileage Rate: DHHS shall pay the Contractor the per-mile rate established in the State of Nebraska's travel expense policies that are in effect at the time the expense is incurred for distance traveled to and from the location where the Family Support Services are provided.

- Travel expense policies are found in the State Accounting Manual at the following website address: <http://das.nebraska.gov/accounting/manual.html>. DHHS will notify the Contractor of any per-mile rate change in the State of Nebraska's travel expense policies within three business days of receiving the rate change announcement.

The Contractor shall use MapQuest or Google Maps to record the number of miles traveled to deliver Family Support Services. The Contractor shall notify the DHHS in writing by the end of the third business day following the execution of this contract, which one of the two websites will be used by the Contractor for this purpose. If the Contractor bills for more than five (5) miles over the mileage measured by MapQuest or Google Maps, the Contractor shall note the reasons why on the travel log. If no reason is recorded on the travel log, DHHS will pay the Contractor for the number of miles measured by MapQuest or Google Maps