

Northstar Tips and Tricks

Welcome to the 3rd edition of Northstar Tips and Tricks! Over the past few months, we have been tracking questions and comments, and what is highlighted in this newsletter are the most common issues that have come up. If you have any questions, be sure to contact your county's Program Consultant. Don't know who your Program Consultant is? See Appendix A!

If you have any suggestions for the next edition of Tips and Tricks, send an email to: northstar.care@state.mn.us

SSIS Tips and Tricks

Help Desk

When calling the help desk for data fixes that pertain to adoption or kinship cases, be sure to indicate that the data fix needs to occur on the DHS SSIS system also.

In order to ensure consistent information is given and to log issues, please contact your SSIS mentor prior to calling the help desk. SSIS mentors can contact the help desk if needed.

Pre-school Entry Rate – When You Submit the Eligibility Determination Matters!!

The date you submit a child's Eligibility Determination determines whether the child will receive the preschool rate or the school-age rate. SSIS looks at the child's age at the end of the month in which the Eligibility Determination was submitted. So, if the Eligibility Determination is submitted on January 15, the system will look to see how old the child is on January 31. If you have a child who will turn age 6 on January 30, and you submit the Eligibility Determination at any point in January, the system will register the child as eligible for the school-age rate. Note that the benefit agreement may reflect age 5 rather than age 6, if everything was submitted before the child turned age 6, but the payment will reflect age 6.

It is also not necessary to do an amendment to a benefit agreement when a child reaches a significant age (i.e., age 7 or 13) for child care purposes. The benefit agreement includes language stating that payment levels will change incrementally based on the age of the child.

Understanding Status of Eligibility Determination

There are multiple statuses that your Eligibility Determination can have. Be sure to check the status of your Eligibility Determination so you know where you are in the approval process.

- **Draft:** You have not yet sent in the Eligibility Determination to your program consultant. The **Draft** status remains in place when you select **Send Elig Document to DHS**, which does not

submit the Eligibility Determination to DHS, but rather lets DHS know that you have a question or need consultation on filling out the Eligibility Determination.

- **Pending DHS Approval:** You have submitted the Eligibility Determination to DHS for DHS to approve.
- **Determination Confirmed:** Your program consultant has approved your Eligibility Determination, and you may proceed to the next step.
- **Data Correction Needed:** Your program consultant has reviewed your Eligibility Determination, and there is an error that needs to be fixed in the Eligibility Determination before your program consultant can approve it.
- **Document Correction Needed:** Your program consultant has reviewed your Eligibility Determination, and there is an error with a required document that needs to be corrected before your program consultant can approve the Eligibility Determination. For example, there is a missing document, or the document is in the wrong format.
- **Exemption Denied:** You have submitted the Eligibility Determination in order to request an exemption, and your program consultant has denied your exemption request.
- **Inactive:** You have submitted the Eligibility Determination to DHS for DHS to approve, and your program consultant has inactivated your Eligibility Determination. This might be done in order to start a new Eligibility Determination.

The screenshot shows a software interface with several tabs: Setup, Document, Properties, Discussions, and Required Documents. Below the tabs, it indicates "1 required fields needed to complete." The fields shown are:

- Document template: Northstar Adoption Assistance Eligibility Determination
- Description: Northstar Adoption Assistance Eligibility Determination
- Status: Draft (highlighted with a red box)
- Status change date: 8/26/2015 3:49:10 F
- Initial submission date: (empty field)

Attached Documents in SSIS

This is a reminder that the attached documents feature in SSIS is now available for you to use. A handout is available online that shows how to electronically submit required documents to DHS via SSIS Worker. If you choose to submit your required documents using the attached documents feature, you do not need to send them via fax, email, or mail. This handout is located at:

http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/agencywide/documents/pub/dhs16_196349.pdf

State Adoption Exchange (SAE)

Please remember to make sure your SAE event detail is correct. Also, updates of children currently registered need to occur every 12 months unless there is a need to complete it earlier.

All children legally free for adoption, who do not yet have an identified prospective adoptive parent, must be registered on the SAE per [Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.605, subdivision 1 \(d\)\(3\)\(iv\)\(A\)](#). Agencies may defer registration of a child, one time only, for 90 days, if the child's foster parents or other individuals are considering adopting the child or if the child is undergoing diagnostic testing or study. Agencies can also defer a child's registration, one time only, but for any period of time, if the child

is hospitalized and needs daily professional care that will not allow the child to be placed in a family setting. Children who are in a preadoptive placement, but not yet adopted, are exempt from being registered on the SAE; however, if the placement disrupts, the child must be registered on the SAE.

Please see DHS's [Policy on State Adoption Exchange](#) for more information.

General Tips and Tricks

Do Not Finalize Permanency Option until Agreement is Signed by DHS

Please remember not to finalize an adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (TPLPC) until eligibility for Northstar Adoption Assistance or Northstar Kinship Assistance has been determined and the benefit agreement signed by DHS. If the finalization occurs prior to the benefit agreement being signed by DHS, the family will not be eligible to receive benefits, unless they go through an appeal process, where they must prove—and a human services judge must find—that extenuating circumstances exist, and that the child met all eligibility criteria at the time of the finalization, in order to receive benefits.

There is a special option for TPLPCs: A judge can order a TPLPC but defer finalization in order to determine eligibility for Northstar Kinship Assistance. However, a judge can also finalize a TPLPC regardless of eligibility.

Remember that your program consultant has 15 business days to complete an Eligibility Determination review. That timeline is also our goal for APA reviews. Benefit agreements are typically reviewed in much less time, as that is the final step before finalization can occur.

Reassessments

To help balance the workload, we have made some changes to the review and processing of reassessments. Payment staff will now be receiving and reviewing ALL reassessments.

- Legacy reassessments are handled in the same manner:
 - Family contacts their county of residence and requests a reassessment in writing
 - Assigned worker works with family to submit supporting professional documentation and completes the supplemental needs assessment with family
 - Once this is complete, the assessments, supporting documentation and a letter with the agency's recommendation is sent to DHS Permanency Support unit.
- Northstar reassessments have a different process:
 - Family contacts DHS or financially responsible agency and requests reassessment
 - Financially responsible agency notifies DHS of reassessment request
 - DHS staff add child/ren to the reassessment log
 - Agency worker sees child/ren on their reassessment log in SSIS

- Agency worker finds child in SSIS and completes a MAPCY for a post-permanency reassessment
- If new MAPCY level is higher than the current level, county/tribal worker sends to DHS along with supporting documentation relevant for reassessment.

MAPCY

The [MAPCY Brochure](#) has been published and is available online via eDocs.

Timelines

Please remember that DHS staff have 15 working days to review each step submission (e.g., Kinship/Adoption Placement Agreements, Eligibility Determinations, and Kinship/Adoption Assistance Benefit Agreements). If a correction is requested, the timeline is reset.

When you submit your documents and request if anything is missing, we will respond once the submission is reviewed, not at the time we receive your email.

Adam Walsh Background Clearances

Minnesota Statutes, section 245C.05, subdivision 7, requires new Adam Walsh background clearances to be run on a preadoptive parent or relative custodian when a legal name change has occurred. In order to save time, we request you complete this step prior to submitting the background studies to DHS for the APA/KPA or Eligibility Determination review.

Out-of-home Placement Plan (OHPP)

If using an Out-of-home Placement Plan as documentation of your adoption placement decision, it must:

- Be current (within 6 months and include current adoptive/kinship placement)
- Address all 10 best interest factors, including strengths and needs
- Include signatures.

Practice Guides in the Works

Practice guides for both the kinship and adoption processes are currently being developed. If you have any items you would like to be addressed specifically (for example, any frequently asked questions or unique circumstances encountered), please email them to Heidi Ombisa Skallet at heidi.ombisa.skallet@state.mn.us. The practice guides will be finished sometime in 2016.

Paths to Permanency

[Paths to Permanency](#) is an easy-to-understand resource that provides an overview of legal issues and financial supports for permanency options for relatives and foster families. It includes information on the differences between adoption and transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, available financial supports through Northstar and questions for families to consider when making the decision to provide a permanent home for children.

Appendix A: Program Consultants by County

Suzanne Habedank Suzanne.Habedank@state.mn.us 651-431-4711	Paulette Lonzo Paulette.Lonzo@state.mn.us 651-431-4716	Jessica Ramstad Jessica.Ramstad@state.mn.us 651-431-4715	Karen Womack Karen.Womack@state.mn.us 651-431-4989
Benton	Aitkin	Beltrami	Anoka
Carver	Blue Earth	Carlton	Becker
Douglas	Cass	Clearwater	Big Stone
Hennepin	Dakota	Cook	Brown
McLeod	Fillmore	Hubbard	Chippewa
Meeker	Freeborn	Initiative Tribes	Chisago
Mille Lacs	Goodhue	Itasca	Clay
Morrison	Houston	Kanabec	Crow Wing
Pope	LeSueur	Kittson	Des Moines Valley
Renville	MPA (Dodge, Steele, Waseca)	Koochiching	Faribault/Martin
Sherburne	Mower	Lake	Grant
Stearns	Ramsey	Lake of the Woods	Isanti
Todd	Rice	Mahnomen	Kandiyohi
Wright	Wabasha	Marshall	Lac Qui Parle
	Washington	Norman	Nicollet
	Winona	Pennington	Nobles
		Pine	Olmsted
		Polk	Otter Tail
		Red Lake	Scott
		Roseau	Sibley
		St. Louis	Southwest Health and Human Services
			Stevens
			Swift
			Traverse
			Wadena
			Wantonwan
			Wilkin
			Yellow Medicine

Appendix B: DHS Adoption Unit Phone List

Adoption Fax: 651- 431-7627		ICPC Fax: 651-431-7628
Davis, Marvin Northstar Program Manager	651-431-4922 marvin.davis@state.mn.us	Manager
Kathleen Hiniker Children's Services Supv	651-431-5890 Kathleen.a.hiniker@state.mn.us	Supervisor –Adoptions/eligibility; adoption of children under guardianship; RCA policy
Peterson, Mical Children's Services Supv.	651-431-4728 mical.peterson@state.mn.us	Supervisor – Adoption Assistance; ICPC policy; birth search policy; adoption of children not under guardianship; fair hearings
Policies		
Heidi Ombisa Skallet Agency Policy Specialist	(651) 431-5889 heidi.ombisa.skallet@state.mn.us	Agency Policy Specialist – Children under guardianship; TPLPC; DNR/DNI; legislation; Adoption and Kinship Assistance; RCA policy
Jody McElroy Agency Policy Specialist	(651) 431-4730 jody.mcelroy@state.mn.us	MAPCY QA and Extraordinary Levels
Grants/Contracts		
Vacant Social Svcs Prog Consultant		Adoption contracts/Grants – Public Private Adoption Initiative, post-adoption policy, adoption policy about children not under guardianship
Graves, Crystal Social Svcs Prog Consultant	(651) 431-5723 crystal.graves@state.mn.us	Adoption Contracts/Grants – Purchase of Service, MN ADOPT, NACAC, U of MN PACC
Adoption & Adoption Assistance Eligibility		
Habedank, Suzanne Social Svcs Prog Consultant	(651) 431-4711 suzanne.habedank@state.mn.us	Adoption/Kinship & Adoption/Kinship Assistance Eligibility – Children under guardianship; adoption process; adoption placement; case consultation; Cases divided by county
Lonzo, Paulette Social Svcs Prog Consultant	(651) 431-4716 paulette.lonzo@state.mn.us	Adoption/Kinship & Adoption/Kinship Assistance Eligibility – Children under guardianship; adoption process; adoption placement; case consultation; Cases divided by county ;
Ramstad, Jessica Social Svcs Prog Consultant	(651) 431-4715 jessica.ramstad@state.mn.us	Adoption/Kinship & Adoption/Kinship Assistance Eligibility – Children under guardianship; adoption process; adoption placement; case consultation, Cases divided by county plus AICWI tribes
Womack, Karen Social Svcs Prog Consultant	(651) 431-4989 Karen.womack@state.mn.us	Adoption/Kinship & Adoption/Kinship Assistance Eligibility –Children under guardianship; adoption process; adoption placement; case consultation; Cases divided by county
Adoption Records		
PajDaj Yang Social Svcs Prog Advisor	(651) 431-4718 Pajdaj.yang@state.mn.us	Post-adoption searches; tribal enrollment; MPD conversions/extensions
Adoption Assistance adoption.assistance@state.mn.us		
Jopling, Susan State Prog Admin	(651) 431-4683 susan.jopling@state.mn.us	Adoption Assistance – payments and reimbursements; Caseload divided by adoptive parent's last name: A-C
Krumwiede, Kristie State Prog Admin	(651) 431-4719 kristie.krumwiede@state.mn.us	Adoption Assistance – payments and reimbursements; Caseload divided by adoptive parent's last name: D-H

Price, Tiffany State Prog Admin	(651) 431-4732 Tiffany.price@state.mn.us	Adoption Assistance – payments and reimbursements; Caseload divided by adoptive parent's last name: I-L
Pigsley, Bret State Prog Admin	(651) 431-4723 bret.pigsley@state.mn.us	Adoption Assistance – payments and reimbursements; Caseload divided by adoptive parent's last name: M-R
Vang, Sia State Prog Admin	(651) 431-4724 sia.j.vang@state.mn.us	Adoption Assistance – payments and reimbursements; Caseload divided by adoptive parent's last name: S-Z
Interstate Compact (ICPC) mn.icpc@state.mn.us		
Frazier, Michelle Social Svcs Prog Consultant	(651) 431-4710 michelle.frazier@state.mn.us	ICPC policy – Foster care, adoption, parent, and relative ICPC requests; Caseload divided by county
VanMoer, Tamera Social Svcs Prog Consultant	(651) 431-4727 tamera.vanmoer@state.mn.us	ICPC policy – Foster care, adoption, parent, and relative ICPC requests; Caseload divided by county
Leon Williams Management Analyst	(65) 431-7628 leon.williams@state.mn.us	ICPC and Adoption Contracts – ICPC requests, PPAI billing