Policy on Statewide Adoption Email Listserv

Overview:
This policy outlines the requirements for membership and use of the statewide adoption email listserv.

Reason for Policy:
The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) recognizes that the majority of county social service agencies in the state do not have specialist social workers responsible to complete the steps necessary to finalize adoptions of children under guardianship of the commissioner of Human Services. Adoption is a complex process creating a new legal relationship of parent and child, which requires specific knowledge and skills. In addition, generalist social workers who facilitate adoption work sporadically may feel isolated. For these reasons, DHS created a statewide adoption email listserv to provide a communication venue for county and private agency staff responsible for adoption of children under guardianship of the commissioner. Until recently, the listserv was administered by a private agency under grant contract with DHS. On April 1, 2012, DHS took over administration of the listserv to ensure members comply with the policies and procedures.

Applicability:
This policy is applicable to the statewide adoption email listserv, which relates to children under guardianship of the commissioner.

Policy:
I. Appropriate Members of the Adoption Email Listserv
   - County social service agency staff:
     - Social workers responsible for placing children under guardianship of the commissioner in adoptive families
     - Social workers responsible for completing adoption home studies on parents who intend to adopt children under guardianship of the commissioner
     - Supervisors, managers and directors of county staff described above.
   - Private adoption agency social workers and supervisors under grant contract with DHS through the Public/Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI), who work directly in recruitment and matching of children under guardianship of the commissioner and prospective adoptive parents.
   - Private adoption agency social workers and supervisors that are not part of the PPAI, but who routinely and consistently work in recruitment and matching of children under guardianship of the commissioner and prospective adoptive parents.
   - DHS Adoption Unit staff.
   - Private agency staff who work on the State Adoption Exchange under grant contract with DHS.

II. Appropriate Uses of the Adoption Email Listserv
Five appropriate uses for the listserv:

- Distribution of a recruitment description, using only non-identifying information, of a child under guardianship of the commissioner waiting for adoptive parent(s).
- Sharing non-identifying information about parent(s) with an approved adoption home study waiting to be matched with a child under guardianship of the commissioner.
- Dissemination of adoption-related information by DHS, including legislative changes, new and updated policies and procedures, policy bulletins and best practice guides, tools, revised forms, resources and data research findings.
- Announcement of trainings, task force meetings, recruitment opportunities and other adoption-related events.
- Posting practice-related questions and generating best practice discussions.

Any other use of the listserv requires prior approval by DHS staff responsible for the listserv listed in Procedure V.

Specific prohibitions of the adoption email listserv:

- No identifying information about child(ren), birth parent(s), foster parent(s), prospective adoptive parent(s) or anyone else. Identifying information includes, but is not limited to: last names, birth dates, Social Security numbers and addresses.
- No specific diagnoses (e.g., Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Reactive Attachment Disorder, etc.) or sensitive issues (e.g., wets the bed, victim of sexual abuse, etc.) may be included.
- No home or personal email addresses are allowed to be used for membership.
- No distributing social network information, including invitations to view or participate in Facebook, MySpace, YouTube or any similar internet medium.
- No distributing any information that constitutes lobbying.

Procedures:

I. Requesting membership on the listserv

- County agency staff – Send an email to the DHS staff responsible for the listserv listed in Procedure V.
- Private agency staff – Complete an Application for Private Adoption Agency Staff to Request Membership on the Minnesota Adoption Email Listserv, and send as an email attachment to the DHS staff responsible for the listserv listed in Procedure V.

II. Requesting removal from the listserv

- If you are currently a member of the listserv, but do not meet one of the criteria listed in Policy I, email the DHS staff responsible for the listserv listed in Procedure V to request removal.
- If you resign or otherwise end employment with the county or private agency, or move to another position within the county or private agency that no longer involves the adoption of children under guardianship of the commissioner, email the DHS staff responsible for the listserv listed in Procedure V to request removal.

III. Options if you are not appropriate for membership on the adoption email listserv

- DHS administers a statewide foster care email listserv that functions similarly to the adoption listserv. If you are a county or private agency social worker, supervisor,
manager or director who works primarily in the foster care placement of children in the public child welfare system, email Deborah Beske Brown at Deborah.beske.brown@state.mn.us to request membership on the foster care listserv.

- DHS Licensing Division administers an email list for Rule 4 agencies in order to disseminate information to licensed private agencies. If you are not appropriate for membership in either the adoption or foster care email listservs because you work primarily with children not under guardianship of the commissioner, email Meg McAlister at meghan.mcalister@state.mn.us to request inclusion on Licensing’s email list.

IV. General information and tips for using the adoption email listserv
- Security of the adoption email listserv cannot be guaranteed. Therefore it must be treated as a public recruitment venue. No information may be included that violates federal or state data privacy laws.
- Sending a child recruitment description on the adoption listserv may satisfy the requirement to register a child on the State Adoption Exchange for recruitment efforts to meet Adoption Assistance eligibility. See Policy on State Adoption Exchange and Other Child-specific Recruitment Activities for Children Under Guardianship of the Commissioner for more information.
- Child descriptions on the listserv are intended to give a brief synopsis of a waiting child, not to provide full disclosure.
- Be cognizant about using “reply” versus “reply all.”
- Communication should be guided by the understanding that the goal of the listserv is to increase the adoption knowledge-base of county and private agency social workers responsible for children under guardianship of the commissioner.
- All communication must be professional in nature and language.
- If you have a question for DHS, send an email to the appropriate DHS staff, not to the adoption listserv.
- Dissemination of information seeking participation in research, including surveys, interviews, etc., is not allowed unless given prior approval by the DHS staff responsible for the listserv listed in Procedure V.

V. Department staff responsible for adding and removing members from the listserv, and providing consultation on using the listserv as a recruitment tool:
   Ami Nafzger, adoption unit supervisor
   ami.nafzger@state.mn.us
   651-431-4508

Form(s) that apply:
Application for Private Adoption Agency Staff to Request Membership on the Minnesota Adoption Email Listserv

Related Policies and References:
Policy on State Adoption Exchange and Other Child-specific Recruitment Activities for Children Under Guardianship of the Commissioner
Training:
None

Legal Authority:
None

Standards:
None

Definitions:
Child under guardianship of the commissioner: An individual under 18 years of age, who is under guardianship of the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services by court order, pursuant to Minn. Stat., section 260C.325.

Policy Contacts:
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This policy and its procedures remain in effect until rescinded or updated.