



**COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF
ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

FAMILY DIVISION – JUVENILE SECTION

ADOPTION MANUAL

**Revised
July 26, 2004**

TPR & ADOPTION MANUAL OUTLINE
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF ALLEGHENY
COUNTY
FAMILY DIVISION – JUVENILE SECTION

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I. Scope and Purpose of the Manual

This TPR and Adoption Manual is intended to be a reference source to attorneys and other individuals who are involved in the TPR and Adoption cases assigned to the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, Family Division, Juvenile Section. This manual does not cover TPR, Relinquishment or Adoption Practice in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, Orphans' Court Division.

Prior to October 1996, all TPR and Adoption proceedings in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania were conducted in the Orphans' Court Division. The Common Pleas Court recognized the importance of having a continuity of judges on dependency cases that resulted in the filing of a TPR Petition. On October 11, 1996 the Court of Common Pleas promulgated an Administrative Order of Court allowing the Juvenile Section judge who had presided over a child's dependency proceedings to sit as an Orphans' Court judge and preside over any TPR and Adoption Proceedings in the case. The Administrative Order was to be effective for a period of six months. On April 10, 1997 the original order was extended for another six-month period. On October 14, 1997, the original Administrative Order of October 11, 1996 was extended to October 1, 1998. On November 17, 1998 the original Administrative Order of October 11, 1996 was made permanent. Thus, at the present time, in any dependency case that results in the filing of a Petition for TPR, the case is assigned to the Juvenile Section judge who presided over the dependency proceedings.

This manual is organized in a chronological fashion. Starting with the process of effecting a goal change from reunification to adoption and proceeding to the adoption hearing, this manual covers all aspects of TRP and Adoption practice in the Family Division, Juvenile Section of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. The manual concludes with appendices containing useful information for individuals who are involved with TPR and Adoption cases in the Family Division. This manual is intended to be a dynamic and evolving resource. Should you have any suggestions for improvements, changes, or additions to the manual please contact the following individual:

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II. Statement of Policy of the Allegheny County Family Court with regard to all types of permanency recognized by ASFA

In 1998, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) became law. Under ASFA a number of permanency options for children who are adjudicated dependent are recognized. These include: 1. Return of the child to the parent or guardian; 2. TPR/Adoption; 3. Permanent Legal Custodianship (called a Planned Permanent Living Arrangement under ASFA); 4. Placement with a willing relative; and 5. Independent Living. The Court firmly believes that each case coming before the Court is unique and must be adjudicated in accordance with “best interests of the child” principles and that every child deserves a safe, stable and permanent home.

III. The Goal Change from Reunification to Adoption

1. Under the Juvenile Act the court must conduct a permanency hearing for dependent children every six months, must make a finding that the continuation of the child in the home is contrary to his/her welfare if the child is in out-of-home placement, must make a reasonable efforts finding or an aggravated circumstances finding, must approve the goal of the case and must enter an order with these findings. 42 Pa.C.S.A. §6351. Under Department of Public Welfare regulations, CYF must recommend a goal for each child through its regular family service plans and court hearings. 55 Pa. Code §3130.74.
2. The court must make findings on the following matters to be determined:
 - a) continuing necessity and appropriateness of placement;
 - b) appropriateness, feasibility and compliance with the permanency plan;
 - c) parents' progress toward alleviating circumstances that caused placement;
 - d) the appropriateness and feasibility of the current placement goal;
 - e) likely date when the goal may be reached;
 - f) whether the child is safe;
 - g) if a child is placed outside the Commonwealth, whether placement continues to meet the child's needs;
 - h) whether independent living services for a child 16 years of age or older have been provided; and
 - i) if a child has been in placement 15 of the last 22 months or the court has determined that aggravated circumstances exist and that reasonable efforts to reunify are not needed, whether CYF has filed or joined a termination petition and has found or sought an appropriate adoptive family *unless* a) the child is cared for by a relative *or* b) CYF has documented a compelling reason why termination would not serve the child's needs and welfare *or* c) the family has not been provided the necessary reunification services. 42 Pa.C.S.A. §6351(f).
3. The court must also make additional determinations about the appropriate permanency plan for the child, pursuant to 42 Pa.C.S.A. §6351(f.1).
4. A court order changing the goal of a case, for example, from reunification to adoption, is a final appealable order. An aggrieved party may appeal directly to the Pennsylvania Superior Court within 30 days of the entry of the order. In the Interest of A.L.D., 797 A.2d 326 (Pa. Superior 2002).
5. It is Allegheny County CYF's policy to ask the court to change a case goal to adoption first, then to proceed with termination of parental rights (TPR) under the Adoption Act. Other counties in Pennsylvania pursue goal change to adoption and TPR in different ways.

IV. The Pennsylvania Adoption Act, 23 Pa.C.S.A. **§2101 et seq.**

a. Involuntary Termination of Parental Rights

1. CYF has standing to file for termination of parental rights for children in its care who are under 18 years old. Child advocates also have standing to file for termination for dependent children they represent, although this recent change is not reflected in Local O.C. Rule 15. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2512(a).
2. Termination petitions must contain the grounds for termination, an averment that the agency will assume custody until the child is adopted, and other factual information about the parties. 23 Pa C.S.A. §2512(b) and O.C. Rule 15 §6.
3. When a termination petition contains an “unknown father” it must state whether a claim of paternity has been filed under §8303. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2512(c) and O.C. Rule 15 §6. CYF regularly requests paternity letters from the State Department of Public Welfare and includes a written response when there is an unknown father.
4. Termination petitions must contain an order of court which lists the grounds for termination and a prayer clause that terminates forever all parental rights to the child and awards custody to the petitioner. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2513(d) and O.C. Rule 15 §6.
5. The effect of a termination order is to extinguish parental rights to be notified of adoption proceedings and to award custody to the petitioner. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2521.
6. Previous involuntary TPRs are grounds to support a finding of “aggravated circumstances” against the biological parent with respect to future children, under the Juvenile Act. 42 Pa.C.S.A. §§6302 and 6341.

b. Confirmation of Consent to Terminate Parental Rights

1. The intermediary has standing to petition the court for confirmation of consent to terminate parental rights as an alternative procedure for relinquishment of parental rights. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2504. CYF uses this procedure when biological parents are willing to execute a consent. In Allegheny County, CYF and private petitioners rarely use “voluntary relinquishment” as a means to terminate parental rights, perhaps because the biological parent must be the petitioner, must attend the hearing and must testify. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §§2501-2503.
2. A biological parent’s consent must be executed in writing, must be executed no sooner than 72 hours after the child’s birth, must be witnessed by two people, and must contain specific statutory language. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2711(c) and (d); O.C. Rule 15 §5.

3. If a biological parent's consent does not disclose the identity of the adoptive parents, it must contain a statement that the biological parent executed the consent voluntarily in the absence of this disclosure. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2712.

4. When 40 days have elapsed and the biological parent has not revoked consent or proceeded with a voluntary relinquishment, the intermediary may file a petition to confirm the consent and terminate parental rights. The original consent must be attached, and the petition must contain factual information about the parties. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2504(a) and O.C. Rule 15 §5.

5. The court must compile a list of counseling services available for biological parents contemplating consent to termination of parental rights and must distribute this list to agencies and hospitals which provide maternity care, and must make it available to intermediaries upon request. The court must offer such counseling to any parent present in court before entering a termination order pursuant to a confirmation of consent. Parents may apply for counseling and the court must establish a fund to pay for counseling for those who cannot afford it. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2505.

c. Notice to Biological Parents for Termination Hearings

1. After a termination or confirmation of consent petition is presented to the court, the court must schedule a hearing to occur not less than 10 days after filing. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §§2504(b) and 2513(a); O.C. Rule 15 §§5 and 6.

2. For a hearing to confirm a parent's consent, the petitioner must appear as well as the two witnesses to the consent, unless the signatures were notarized, unless one of the witnesses to the consent is an attorney, or unless one of the witnesses to the consent is an adoption agency or CYF representative. O.C. Rule 15 §5. Currently, most parents' consents are witnessed by at least one CYF caseworker and are not notarized.

3. Biological parents must be notified of the date, time and location of their termination or confirmation of consent hearing by personal service, by registered mail, or by other means as the court requires. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §§2504(b) and 2513(b).

4. Notice in the manner described above must be given to the biological mother, to every alleged father included in the petition (including legal fathers), and to the parent or guardian of a minor parent whose rights may be terminated. Notice of one parent's termination must be given to the other parent. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §§2504(b) and 2513(b); O.C. Rule 15 §§5 and 6.

5. The language that must be included in notices to all of the parties described above is specified in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2513 and in O.C. Rule 15 §§5 and 6.

6. Proof that notice has been achieved must be filed with the court at least 5 days before the scheduled hearing. O.C. Rule 15 §§5 and 6. Current practice in Allegheny County also allows notice documents to be presented to the court at the time of the termination hearing.

7. How proper notice may be achieved “by other means as the court requires” finds authority in the Supreme Court Orphans’ Court Rule 15 (which addresses Adoption), in the Rules of Civil Procedure, in case law, and in other local Orphans’ Court Rules. The progression is as follows:

a) Supreme Court Orphans’ Court Rule 15.6 states that notice may be made on a parent by personal service, service at his/her residence on an adult member of the household, or by registered or certified mail at his/her last known address. If these methods are not successful, notice by publication or otherwise shall be given if required by general rule or special order of the local Orphans’ Court.

b) If personal service is not successful, or if the certified/registered mail receipt is not returned with the signature of the person to be notified, then notice shall be given under appropriate court order in accordance with Local O.C. Rules 12.9, 12.10 and 12.11, with the last published notice to be at least 10 days before the scheduled hearing.

c) Local O.C. Rules 12.9, 12.10 and 12.11, relating to non-adoption Orphans’ Court matters, state in relevant part that notice by publication should occur once a week for three successive weeks in the Pittsburgh Legal Journal and a newspaper of general circulation at or near the party’s last known residence in Allegheny County. If the person had no known residence in Allegheny County at any time, then notice is to be done as the court directs.

d) Current Orphans’ Court practice requires that when personal or certified mail service is unsuccessful or impossible (in cases where no last known address is available), CYF must present an affidavit of diligent search to the court which explains what efforts were made to find a parent’s address. Such affidavits are contemplated in civil proceedings generally in Pa. R.C.P. 430. The sources which must be investigated to accomplish a diligent search in the context of a real estate case are described in Deer Park Lumber, Inc. v. C.B. Major, 559 A.2d 941 (Pa. Superior 1989). There is no case law which specifies what comprises a diligent search for biological parents in termination cases. CYF currently investigates sources which include but are not limited to: case record; relatives; telephone book; Coles Directory; voter’s registration; department of motor vehicles; jails and prisons; and child support locator. A sample Affidavit of Diligent Search currently used by CYF, and CYF’s Policy on Diligent Searches for Parents are attached for your information.

e) If the court deems CYF’s efforts to locate a biological parent to be sufficient, it will ratify publication as proper notice by court order.

8. Parents whose rights are subject to involuntary termination have the right to counsel, which the court must provide if the parent is indigent. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2313(a.1). In Allegheny County, attorneys from the Allegheny County Bar Foundation's Juvenile Court Project, (Parent Advocates) routinely serve as counsel for indigent parents in TPR proceedings. Children are also entitled to representation in these proceedings. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2313(a). Dependent children in Allegheny County are routinely represented by KidsVoice.

9. When a termination order has been entered, the court must send the order to the parents and advise them in writing of their continuing right to place medical information on file with the Department of Public Welfare. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2504(d).

d. Adoption Petition and Hearing

1. The contents of adoption petition are specified in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2701 and O.C. Rule 15 §9. Required exhibits to the adoption petition are specified in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2702 and O.C. Rule 15 §9.

2. A certified copy or original marriage certificate for the adopting parents must be attached to the adoption petition, as well as the adoptive parents' previous divorce decrees and death certificates of previous spouses, if applicable. O.C. Rule 15 §9.

3. Applicable consents listed in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2711 must also be attached to the adoption petition. These include: the agency consent; the consent of the adoptee if over 12 years of age; and the consent of a non-adopting spouse. O.C. Rule 15 §9.

4. Consents of biological parents are not required to be attached to the adoption petition if parental rights have already been terminated. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §§2713 and 2714.

5. Parties who must consent to an adoption must be notified of the date, place and time of the adoption hearing by personal service, registered mail or other means as the court directs. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2721. Current practice allows CYF to notify the adoptive parents and child by first-class mail.

6. The adoptive parent, child, and CYF caseworker are required to attend the adoption hearing. Other parties may be required to attend if the court deems their testimony helpful. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2723.

7. The court cannot enter an adoption decree until all requirements have been met. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2901. The contents of the adoption decree are specified in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2902 and O.C. Rule 15 §9.

8. The decree must specify the child's new name, if desired. After adoption the child may take the adoptive family surname and any first and middle name. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2904 and O.C. Rule 15 §10. Current practice in Allegheny County does not limit the child's choice of surname.

9. A report of costs incident to the adoption must be presented at the adoption hearing. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2724 and O.C. Rule 15 §9.

e. Report of Intermediary

1. Within six months after the Report of Intention to Adopt is filed, the intermediary who arranged the child's placement with the adoptive family must file a report which contains factual information about the child, the biological parents, any money received by the intermediary and other items. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2533 and O.C. Rule 15 §8. Current practice is for CYF to file the Report of Intermediary and the Report of Intention to Adopt at the same time as it files the Adoption Petition.

2. The Report of Intermediary must attach exhibits specified in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2534. In Allegheny County practice, CYF provides all the exhibits specified, but they are usually attached to other documents filed with the court and not provided again as attachments to the Report of Intermediary.

f. Report of Intention to Adopt

1. The adoptive parents are required to file a Report of Intention to Adopt with the court within 30 days of their receipt of the child. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §§2531 and 2532. The contents of the Report of Intention to Adopt are specified in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2531(b) and in O.C. Rule 15 §7.

2. In practice, because so many adoptive families already have custody of the child as foster families before they become an "adoptive family," CYF does not arrange for the adoptive family to file its Report of Intention to Adopt until the Adoption Petition is filed. The Adoption Petition, Report of Intermediary, and Report of Intention to Adopt are all filed simultaneously.

g. Adoptive Family Profiles and Related Documents

1. A home study or pre-placement report on the adoptive family, also known in Pennsylvania as a "family profile" is required by 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2530. An intermediary may not place a child with an adoptive family unless a favorable report has been completed within three years prior thereto and which has been supplemented within one

year prior thereto. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2530(a). The family profile must be completed by a public agency, an adoption agency or a licensed social worker designated by the court. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2530(a).

2. The family profile must contain all pertinent information about the fitness of the adoptive family as specified in 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2530(b). The family profile must also include information required by the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) relating to background checks for prospective adoptive parents. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2530(b).

3. The CPSL, 23 Pa.C.S.A. §6344, specifies requirements for prospective foster and adoptive parents. Criminal history information from the State Police Registry, as well as a child abuse report clearance must be obtained within the preceding one year period. CYF is prohibited from approving a foster or adoptive home if the subject has a founded child abuse report within the past five years, or if the subject has ever been convicted of a crime listed in this section. The enumerated crimes are those that involve violence, child abuse, and crimes of a sexual nature. CYF is also prohibited from approving a foster or adoptive home where the subject has been convicted of a felony drug offense within the past five years.

4. CYF routinely provides *more extensive* criminal history information for adoptive parents than is required by the law. CYF provides criminal data from the State Police (CLEAN), the City of Pittsburgh (BCI), from Allegheny County (ICIS), and from telephone checks with local police. CYF provides information about the existence of Protection from Abuse orders, outstanding warrants, and dispositions for all charges (when possible to find them) to the court.

5. When a prospective adoptive parent has any criminal history, even if the charge is old, minor, or has been dismissed, CYF requests the Juvenile Court Judge who is responsible for the child to examine the record and determine if he or she wants the adoption to proceed.

6. In addition to the family profile, child abuse and criminal checks, four references for the adoptive family are required, as listed in the sample form contained in the appendix to O.C. Rule 15. Current practice in Allegheny County requires the references to be non-relatives who have known the adoptive family for at least two years.

h. Investigations of Adoptive Homes

1. After a Report of Intention to Adopt has been filed, the court must cause an investigation to be made and a report to be filed. The investigation may be conducted by a public agency, a private agency, or by an appropriate person designated by the court. The court may rely on the written family profile for this investigation. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2535.

2. The investigation shall cover all pertinent information regarding the child's eligibility for adoption and the suitability of the adoptive family to meet the needs and welfare of the child.

23 Pa.C.S.A. §2535(b).

3. The court may request an investigation be made by an agency or designated person to verify information contained in the Adoption Petition and other facts about the desirability of the proposed adoption. The court may rely in whole or part on its earlier investigation made under §2535, mentioned above. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2724(b). In any case, age, sex, health, social and economic status or racial, ethnic or religious background of the child or adopting parents shall not preclude an adoption, but the court shall decide its desirability based on the child's needs and welfare. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2724(b).

4. After the Report of Intention to Adopt has been filed, the case must be referred to the Orphans' Court Adoption Department for investigation pursuant to O.C. Rule 15 §7. Although a separate court investigation still occurs in Orphans' Court, cases heard by Juvenile Court Judges do not currently entail a separate investigation. The Juvenile Court relies on the family profile submitted by CYF.

i. Confidentiality

1. The court must assure that the identity of the adoptive parent is not disclosed during the termination proceedings without the adoptive parent's consent. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §2504.1. Likewise, access to adoption records, especially information about the biological parents' identity and whereabouts is strictly protected. 23 Pa.C.S.A. §§2905-2910.

V. Scheduling of TPR and Adoption Hearings

All TPR and Adoption hearings are scheduled through the IRMA mainframe system. The Court Adoption Specialist is responsible for the scheduling of TPR and Adoption hearings. Each Juvenile Section judge has two TPR days each month, with the exception of Judge Kathleen Mulligan, who has one TPR day per month. The Court Adoption Specialist coordinates schedules with the various attorneys who appear in TPR and Adoption hearings so that a minimum number of continuances due to conflicts in attorneys' schedules are necessary. The Court Adoption Specialist can be contacted at (412) 350-0221

VI. Filing of Documents in TPR and Adoption cases

All pleadings, motions, notices and any other documents must be filed at the office of the Register of Wills. In August of 2003, the Register of Wills instituted an electronic docketing system for TPR and Adoption cases. As a result, all documents for TPR and Adoption cases must be filed with the Register of Wills. The former practice of delivering documents to the Court Adoption Specialist for inclusion in the file is no longer allowed. Similarly, the former practice of delivering motions and other documents to the judge assigned to the case during the course of a hearing in the matter is no longer allowed.

Because it takes several days for the Register of Wills to process documents filed with them and arrange for transfer of same to the Juvenile Court Adoption Department, all concerned parties are urged to file documents several days in advance of the hearing at which they intend to present the document.

If a party, counsel or the court wants a document in the case to appear of record in the docket of the case, it must be filed with the Office of the Register of Wills. All filings must have a cover sheet indicating the case name and case number. The contact phone number for TPR and Adoption matters at the Register of Wills office is (412) 350-4868.

VII. Pretrial Practice in Contested TPR Cases

The juvenile Court's "TPR Pretrial Order" governs pretrial practice in contested TPR cases. A copy of this order can be found in the Appendix of this manual. The court adopted the TPR Pretrial Order in order to bring uniformity to pretrial practice in Contested TPR cases.

The order requires filing and service of pretrial statements. Pretrial statements must include: The name of each person whom the party intends to call at trial as a witness, including expert witnesses. The attachment of the entire report of each expert witness listed in the pre-trial statement is required. The pretrial statement must describe the expert witness's qualifications and experience and state the substance of the facts and opinions to which the expert is expected to testify and a summary of the grounds for each opinion.

In addition to pretrial statements the TPR Pretrial Order requires that the testimony of any person who is not identified in a timely filed pre-trial statement may be excluded at trial and that the testimony of an expert witness may not be inconsistent with or go beyond the fair scope of his or her report.

The TPR Pretrial Order also requires that the testimony of any witness which the proponent wishes to provide by telephone shall be noted on the pretrial statement. Any objections to the presentation of the testimony by telephone must be made in writing at least eight days before trial, or the telephone testimony will not be permitted at trial absent extraordinary circumstances without an order of court. A party seeking such an order must petition the court at least five days prior to the trial.

The TPR Pretrial Order also requires that the parties must file a list of all of the exhibits that the party expects to offer in evidence, containing an identifying mark for the exhibit. Petitioners must use number exhibits and Respondents must use lettered exhibits. Any exhibits that do not exceed three pages must be attached to the pretrial statement, and all exhibits not attached to the pretrial statement must be described. All exhibits must be available for inspection by any opposing party at any time after the filing of the pretrial statement.

In addition to a listing of exhibits, the Order also requires that those portions of the CYF record which are to be relied on at trial shall be described with sufficient specificity so as to enable all counsel to readily identify those portions of the record. Unless otherwise precluded by law, statute or court order, the Order requires that the entire CYF Record shall be made available for inspection by any opposing party at any time after the filing of the pretrial statement. Only documents or other writings and portions of the CYF Record listed in the Pretrial statement may be offered in evidence at trial except as rebuttal evidence.

Finally, the Order provides that no pretrial statement or any modifications thereafter may be filed beyond the deadline for filing without an order of court permitting the late filing. The parties are required to enter into stipulations to the fullest extent possible and absent compelling circumstances, no continuances of a contested TPR hearing will be granted on the day of trial.

VIII. TPR Hearings

TPR hearings have been called the “death penalty” of Juvenile Court Proceedings. This moniker is not without some merit as TPR cases can permanently affect the lives of the persons who are the subject of the hearings. The burden of proof in TPR cases is on the petitioning party to prove its case by clear and convincing evidence, the highest quantum of evidence in any civil case. The rules of evidence are used to govern the trial process. The petitioning party has the burden of going forward with evidence to prove its case. The responding party has the right to present its defense case. Rebuttal evidence is allowed. At the end of the hearing the judge normally announces a decision from the bench and issues a written Order in the matter. Some judges choose to do separate findings of fact.

IX. Adoption Hearings

After the appeal period has elapsed or the case has been returned from the Superior Court affirming the decision of the juvenile court judge, an adoption hearing is scheduled. The Court Adoption Specialist schedules the adoption hearing. The adoption hearing is usually short. The attorney for CYF elicits testimony from the adoptive parent or parents and the CYF caseworker. The testimony affirms the adoptive parents' commitment to the child and the legal and moral responsibilities undertaken by the adoptive parent. The testimony from the caseworker pertains to CYF's assent to the adoption and the status of any adoptions subsidies. Unlike many hearings at the Juvenile Court, the adoption hearings tend to be happy events for the Court as well as the participants in the hearing.

X. Allegheny County Family Court's Celebration of Adoptions

A. Monthly Adoption Day

The Juvenile Court conducts adoption hearings every other month. All adoptions hearings are scheduled on the same day of the month for all of the Juvenile Court Judges. The hearings occur in the afternoon of adoption day. After the hearing, the families are invited to celebrate with the other families in the second floor waiting room. Snacks and beverages are provided. The Court also provides entertainment for the children, usually balloon art. In addition to the entertainment, various groups who support adoption causes donate gifts and goodies that are given to the children. Each child gets a gift bag to hold all of the goodies. These celebrations have been well received by the adoptive children and their families.

B. National Adoption Day

National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness about the 126,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families. Since 2000 National Adoption Day has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys and advocates to finalize their adoptions into permanent families and to celebrate adoption. More information on National Adoption Day can be found on the Internet at www.nationaladoptionday.org.

In Allegheny County, the Juvenile Court has a weeklong celebration of National Adoption Day beginning on the Monday of the week before Thanksgiving. The week begins with a kick-off event on Monday. During the week, local adoption agencies and service providers are invited to have information tables in the Juvenile Court rotunda and at the City-County Building. The aim of these activities is to raise awareness of the need for permanent homes for children for whom the Allegheny County Department of Children, Youth and Families seeks adoptive placements.

National Adoption Day is celebrated on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Courts across the country open their doors on this special day to conduct final adoption hearings. The Allegheny County Juvenile Court is a proud participant in National Adoption Day activities. The donation of time, talent, goods and services from a variety of individuals, charitable foundations and corporations make Allegheny County's celebration of National Adoption Day possible.