



Tip Sheet

TOOLKIT: How to Develop and Distribute an Outreach Letter to Adoptive and Guardianship Families and a Well-Being Questionnaire

Adoptive and guardianship families play a vital role in providing children with stability, love, and permanency. Yet, the journey does not end once legal papers are signed. Families often need ongoing support to navigate challenges and celebrate successes. One effective way for child welfare agencies to strengthen connections is through a thoughtfully crafted outreach letter. Such communication not only informs families about available resources but also reinforces the message that they are valued partners in the post-permanency journey.



Developing and distributing an outreach letter to adoptive and guardianship families is an essential step in strengthening connections between child welfare agencies and the families they serve. Outreach letters not only provide valuable information about available post-permanency supports, but they also communicate care, recognition, and ongoing partnership. By crafting a message that is clear, welcoming, and responsive to families' needs, agencies can build trust and ensure that families are aware of resources designed to help them thrive. Thoughtful distribution strategies—whether through mail, email, or community networks—further extend the reach of these letters, ensuring that families feel supported and included long after the adoption or guardianship process is complete.

Why Outreach Letters Matter

- **Connection:** Letters provide a personal touch that helps families feel seen and supported.
- **Awareness:** They highlight services families may not know exist, such as counseling, peer support groups, or crisis intervention.
- **Trust:** Regular communication builds confidence that agencies remain committed to families beyond adoption or guardianship finalization.
- **Engagement:** Outreach letters can spark conversations, encouraging families to reach out when they need help.

A sample letter can be found in the [Post-Adoption Center Post-Permanency Model Program Manual](#) on page 201.

Key Elements of an Effective Outreach Letter

- **Warm Opening:** Begin with appreciation for the family's commitment and recognition of their role.
- **Clear Purpose:** State why the agency is reaching out—whether to share resources, invite participation, or simply check in.
- **Resource Highlights:** Provide a concise list of available supports (e.g., therapeutic services, parent training, peer networks).
- **Accessible Contact Information:** Make it easy for families to connect—include phone numbers, emails, and website links.
- **Encouraging Tone:** Use language that is welcoming, nonjudgmental, and family centered.
- **Call to Action:** Invite families to attend an event, join a group, or reach out for more information.

Distribution Strategies

- **Mail:** Traditional letters can feel personal and tangible, especially for families who prefer paper communication.
- **Email:** Quick, cost-effective, and ideal for families who check digital platforms regularly.
- **Newsletters:** Incorporate outreach messages into broader agency updates for consistent engagement.
- **Community Partnerships:** Share letters through schools, faith-based organizations, or local service providers to expand reach.
- **Follow-Up:** Consider phone calls or texts to reinforce the message and ensure families received the information.



Best Practices

An outreach letter is more than a piece of communication—it is a bridge between agencies and families. By developing letters that are warm, informative, and accessible, and by distributing them through multiple channels, child welfare agencies can ensure adoptive and guardianship families feel supported long after permanency is achieved. This simple yet powerful tool reinforces the message that families are not alone and that help is always within reach.

The Well-Being Questionnaire in the [Post Adoption and Guardianship Instability \(PAGI\) Toolkit](#) is designed to help child welfare professionals develop a systematic way to track instability for children who exit foster care through adoption or guardianship. The PAGI well-being letter has two components: (1) an example well-being letter and (2) a spreadsheet to track the responses. The PAGI Toolkit suggests that the well-being questionnaires be sent annually, around the time the adoption finalized or guardianship granted.

Practical Tips

- **Tailor the Message:** Adapt letters to reflect cultural, linguistic, and regional needs of families.
- **Keep It Simple:** Avoid jargon; use clear, family-friendly language.
- **Consistency:** Send outreach letters regularly (e.g., quarterly) to maintain ongoing communication.
- **Feedback Loop:** Invite families to share what supports they find most helpful and what gaps remain.

Why Well-Being Questionnaires Matter

- **Family Voice:** They give families the opportunity to share their experiences in their own words. Their perspectives provide real-world understanding of the strengths, challenges and needs that data alone cannot capture.
- **Early Identification:** Agencies can spot emerging challenges before they escalate. Families can identify stress, child adjustment concerns, or gaps in resources before they escalate into crises.
- **Program Improvement:** Data collected informs service design and resource allocation. Obtaining feedback from adoptive and guardianship families guides agencies in refining programs, improving communication, and strengthening long-term outcomes.
- **Relationship Building:** Asking families about their well-being demonstrates care and commitment beyond permanency finalization. It empowers families to their voice as a valued partner in the permanency journey. These fosters trust and collaboration.

The perspectives of adoptive and guardianship families are more than feedback - they form the foundation for creating responsive, family-centered post-permanency supports. When agencies prioritize what families say about their well-being, they show respect, they build strong relationships and open the door for children and caregivers to thrive.

Key Steps in Developing the Questionnaire

1. DEFINE THE PURPOSE

- Clarify what you want to learn (e.g., emotional health, access to resources, parenting stress, child adjustment).
- Ensure questions align with agency goals and available supports.

2. DESIGN FAMILY-FRIENDLY QUESTIONS

- Use clear, simple language free of jargon.
- Include both closed ended (rating scales, yes/no) and open-ended questions.
- Focus on domains such as:
 - » Emotional and mental health
 - » Parenting confidence and stress
 - » Child’s adjustment and school experience
 - » Access to community resources
 - » Satisfaction with agency support

You may also want to include a comments section to allow the family to provide additional information about an individual child/youth.

3. PILOT AND REFINE

- Assess the questionnaire with a small group of families.
- Adjust wording, length, and format based on feedback.

4. ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY

- Translate into multiple languages.
- Offer paper, online, and phone options.
- Keep it brief (10–15 minutes maximum).

Distribution Strategies

- **Direct Mail:** Send paper copies with return envelopes for families who prefer traditional communication.
- **Email/Online Surveys:** Use secure platforms for quick responses and easier data analysis.
- **Community Partners:** Share through schools, support groups, or local family serving organizations.
- **Events:** Distribute during trainings, or support groups.
- **Follow-Up:** Provide reminders and offer assistance for families who may need help completing the questionnaire.



Best Practices for Implementation

By thoughtfully developing and distributing these questionnaires, child welfare professionals can better understand the evolving needs of adoptive and guardianship families, strengthen supports, and ensure children thrive in their permanent homes. For a sample letter and questionnaire, please see [Appendices A-1 and A-2 of the PAGI User Guide](#).

Implementation Tips

- **Confidentiality:** Assure families their responses are private and used only to improve services.
- **Respectful Tone:** Frame questions in a supportive, nonjudgmental way.
- **Feedback Loop:** Share results with families and explain how their input shaped changes.
- **Consistency:** Administer questionnaires regularly (e.g., annually) to track progress over time.

To delve further into this topic, check out the Post-Adoption Center Resource Library: www.postadoptioncenter.org/resource-library



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References:

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