GEAUGA COUNTY PROBATE COURT
JUDGE TIMOTHY J. GRENDELL

CHECKLIST – PRO SE ADOPTION OF A MINOR

These instructions are provided as a public service of the Geauga County Probate Court, are intended as a guideline only, and are not legal advice. Depending on the circumstances of each case, additional steps may be required that are not listed below. The clerks are not attorneys and therefore cannot answer legal questions or assist you in completing the forms or deciding which forms apply to your situation. The documents that you file must be typewritten or legibly handwritten, and completed in their entirety. The clerks may refuse the filing of illegible or incomplete documents. The Court recommends that you obtain legal advice from your attorney or obtain assistance from the Court's Help Center before preparing and filing any forms. You may make an appointment with the Help Center by calling 440-226-7339. Please read the Help Center information sheet titled "Pro Se Adoption of a Minor," which is located on the Court's website.

Background

Before March 20, 2025, all adoption matters regarding a minor must be handled by a public or private adoption agency or an attorney. As a result of the Adoption Modernization Act, effective March 20, 2025, certain persons may proceed with the adoption of a minor without the involvement of an agency or an attorney. Those persons are (1) stepparent, (2) grandparent, (3) adult sibling, (4) legal custodian, and (5) guardian.

Pre-Filing Concerns

1. Determine Biological Parents of Minor/Adoptee.

    a. Determine who are the known biological parents (name and address).

    b. Determine whether the parental rights of the known biological parents have been permanently terminated by prior court order or voluntary termination agreement.
        i. If permanently terminated by prior court order (other than this Court), please obtain a copy of that order, and the name of the court and case number.
        ii. If permanently terminated by voluntary termination agreement, please obtain a copy of that agreement if possible.

    c. Determine whether the biological father is unknown.
        i. In that case, the Court will assist you in what is known as a "Putative Father" search. You will need to obtain the Ohio Putative Father Registration certificate.

d. **NOTE** that the parent could be a person who previously adopted the minor rather than a biological parent.

2. Waiting Period. Determine the number of months that the minor/adoptee has resided in your home.

3. Household Members. Prepare a list of the names of all household members including full name and social security number.

4. Legal Custodian or Guardian. Unless you are appointed by this Court, if you are not a stepparent, grandparent, or adult sibling, please obtain a copy of the court order appointing you as legal custodian or guardian (unless issued by this Court).

5. Status of Petitioner. Please gather (i) marriage certificate and (ii) copy of government/photo ID (e.g. driver's license) for you and all household members.

6. No Written Consent Status. Again, review the information sheet titled "Pro Se Adoption of Minor." If you have concluded that written consent of a parent is not required by reason of R.C. 3107.07, then gather all papers and prepare a memo that support your conclusion.

7. ICWA Affidavit. You need to perform a background check to determine whether the minor/adoptee has a native American lineage. You should consult with the parents (to the extent possible) and other relatives to obtain the necessary information. If you conclude that the minor has a native American lineage, then it is highly recommended that you obtain legal advice from an attorney of your choosing.

8. Inter-State or Foreign Adoptions. If the adoption process includes cooperation with another state (e.g. the minor was born in another state) or a foreign adoption (e.g., the adoption process regarding the minor was conducted in another country), then it is highly recommended that you obtain legal advice from an attorney of your choosing.

9. Reference Letters. Determine who will prepare the four reference letters that indicate your suitability to adopt the minor.

10. Minor's Birth Certificate. Obtain a long-form (that shows the city/township, county, and state) certified copy of the minor's birth certificate.

11. Child Support. Determine whether either or both parents are paying child support to a Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA). If so, please advise the Court.

Filing Requirements

1. Form 18.0 – Petition for Adoption of Minor

2. Form GCPF 4.53 – ICWA Affidavit

3. Certified copy of minor's certified long-form birth certificate

4. If the biological father is unknown, then obtain and file an "Ohio Putative Father Registration" certificate

5. Form 18.3 - Consent to Adoption, for the parent(s) whose written consent is required, which must be notarized

6. Form HEA 2727 – Certificate of Adoption

7. Reference Letters – you must file four reference letters that indicate your suitability to adopt the minor child.

    - If there is only one Petitioner, then use the form titled "GC PF 18.5A – Adoption Reference Letter."

    - If there are two Petitioners, then use the form titled "GC PF 18.5B – Adoption Reference Letter."

8. Marriage License of Petitioner

9. Photo I.D. of Petitioner and all household members

10. List of full names of all household members, including copy of Photo I.D. for each.

Additional Notes

1. Preliminary Hearing on Consent. If the Petition alleges that a parent's written consent is not required, then the Court will hold a Preliminary Hearing to determine that, in fact, the parent's written consent is not required. The Court will notify that parent of the hearing date.