7 Checklist for public narratives

Before you submit or publish any public child narrative, please use the checklist below to ensure you've included lots of positive information, but none of the negative. As you review the narrative, ask yourself if the information is strengths-based, if it could potentially be identifying, if it might risk the child's dignity or safety, and if it is reasonable to share with all members of the public, including the child's peers. In addition, we encourage you to have any child who is developmentally able review the narrative and provide feedback that you consider carefully.

Did you include the following?

☐ Preferred first name

☐ Positive personality traits

☐ Strengths

☐ Hobbies, interests, and favorite pastimes

☐ What they like about school and school successes

☐ Things that are important to them

☐ Answers to questions such as: What makes them laugh? What is their dream day like? What makes them proud?

☐ Ways they are connected to the community

☐ Information about cultural connections or languages they speak or use

☐ Dreams for the future

☐ Quotes from the child

☐ Positive quotes or input from others in their life

☐ Interesting photos or videos

☐ Important family connections

☐ In profiles of siblings, how they relate to one another

☐ Birth year

☐ How a family might be a part of their life

☐ Appeals to families

☐ How to learn more

Did you carefully consider...?

Please see chapter 4 for more information about how to make decisions about these items.

☐ A general statement about long-term needs

☐ General information about ongoing support needs

☐ Discussion of appearance

☐ Detailed discussions of chores or how the young person might be helpful to the family

☐ The young person's expressed preferences on types of families

☐ Sexual orientation, but only if the youth is out, wants the information to be included in their public narrative, has been well-informed about risks, and is engaged in the process of crafting and approving the narrative

☐ The fact that the youth is a parent, but only if the youth wants the information to be included in their public narrative and is engaged in the process of crafting the narrative, and the narrative focuses on the youth rather than the baby or child

☐ Statements about the success of the current placement, which could lead a prospective adopter to think the current family is better for the child

☐ Race or ethnic background

☐ The applicability of the Indian Child Welfare Act

☐ Last initial

☐ Date of photo and profile (only if it is updated regularly)

☐ Grade level in school (only if the child is on grade level and it's updated regularly)

☐ An average photo, either in terms of actual photo quality or how it shows the child

Have you—and another colleague—reviewed the profile to be sure it doesn't include any of the following?

Identifying information

☐ Last name

☐ Date of birth

☐ Name of school, school district, neighborhood, or local geographic markers

Abuse, neglect, maltreatment

☐ Information related to sexual abuse or sexual acting out, or references to the child or youth as a potential perpetrator or victim, including code talk that might relate to sexual abuse (such as describing the child as overly affectionate with males, talking about the need to teach safe touch, or noting that the child should be the youngest in the family)

☐ Information that suggests the possibility of child as victim, such as stating that they have no boundaries or have no sense of danger

☐ Birth family history of abuse, neglect, physical or mental illness, domestic violence, criminal history, immigrations status, or substance abuse, including even brief references or allusions to a parent's drug use or the child's exposure to drugs or alcohol in utero

☐ Reasons for the child's entry into care

☐ The child's trauma history

Placement information

☐ Current placement type (such as residential treatment, group home, or juvenile justice setting)

☐ Placement history, including number of placements in foster care or re-entry into care or other information taken directly from the case file regarding their placement history

☐ How long they have been in foster care or how long they have been waiting for an adoptive family

☐ Information about why a foster family or relative is not interested in or able to be the permanent placement

☐ References to adoption interruption, disruption, or dissolution

Medical information

☐ Medical or mental health diagnoses, medication, and treatment, including whether the child has or is attending therapy or counseling

☐ Statements that a youth is pregnant or has recently given birth

☐ Levels of, or statements about, physical impairments

☐ Reports or statements from doctors, mental health providers, other health care professionals, or caregivers about medical information

☐ Clinical information from their case file

Behavioral challenges

☐ Aggressive behaviors, including anger, fighting, or oppositional acting out

☐ Sexual behaviors, including current, past, or potential victim or perpetrator role

☐ Information about delinquency or juvenile justice involvement

☐ Negative behaviors, such as lying, running away, or stealing

☐ References to a child acting younger than or being more mature than their same-age peers

☐ Impairment levels related to their behaviors

Potentially painful or embarrassing information

☐ Mention of bodily functions (including incontinence and bedwetting) or hygiene challenges

☐ Any descriptions of body type, including short, heavy, stocky, slender, or skinny

☐ The child's height or weight

☐ Negative descriptions of the youth's appearance

☐ References to fears or sources of anxiety

☐ Anything else they could be embarrassed by if their peers saw it, such as if the child has been bullied, has trouble making friends, is clumsy or awkward, is messy or sloppy, cries easily or often, or doesn't do well at sports or in school

Things that limit potential families

☐ Discussion about their reluctance about adoption or emphasis on a unique need for preparation for adoption

☐ Statements that suggest the writer may not believe adoption is an option for the child

☐ Limits on the type of family who will be considered, including marital status, race or ethnic background, number or age of other children in the family, religion, or other fixed characteristics

Intellectual ability or education challenges

☐ Intellectual or educational challenges, including allusions to challenges and being nonverbal

☐ References to special education status or an individualized education or Section 504 plan

☐ Specific IQ score or range

☐ References to specific disabilities that relate to school, education, or intellectual ability

☐ Statements about educational impairment level

☐ References about learning more slowly than or performing at a different grade level than their same-age peers

☐ References to actual grades or scores on assessments

Sexual orientation or gender identity

☐ Anything that would convey they are transgender, including mixing pronouns, a name and gender identity that don't match, or switching names

☐ A statement about or allusions to the fact that they are LGBTQ unless it is for an older youth who wants the listing to include their sexual orientation, and they have had thoughtful conversations with caring adults about the potential positive and negative consequences, and the youth has been involved in crafting and approving the narrative

Other

☐ Anything negative

☐ Information about the young person's being a parent unless the young person wants the information in the narrative, has discussed the pros and cons, and has approved the description

☐ Specific information or details the child asked to have excluded from the narrative

☐ Language that promotes stereotypes based on gender, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics

☐ Things the child isn't, doesn't do, or doesn't like

☐ Adoption assistance eligibility

☐ Status as legally free or not legally free

☐ Disclosure of sensitive or potentially identifying information about any birth family members or siblings not in foster care, including criminal history, mental health or medical details, geographic locations, immigration status, etc.

☐ Links or references to a young person's personal YouTube channel, web pages, or social media pages

☐ Outdated information

☐ Spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors and poorly composed writing

Photos

☐ Blurry, pixelated, distorted, or otherwise low quality photos

☐ Photos that are years out of date

☐ Photos that show the child's name, a school name, a school team, residential treatment center name, a well-known building or landmark, or other location markers (such as a street sign or building with a specific name or address visible)

☐ Photos showing clothing or backgrounds with pictures of weapons or words or pictures that suggest violence or crime

☐ Photos with sexual overtones, including photos with suggestive posture, photos of youth with no shirts or significant cleavage, or photos of young people in clothing that has sexually suggestive statements or pictures

☐ Photos of children who have a high profile because their story has received significant news coverage that included last names or other identifying information (If there is a serious safety risk or risk of exposure with a high profile, you may want to consider whether photolisting is the best recruitment option for this particular child.)

☐ Photos of young people who do not want their picture included

☐ Photos that include other children unless they are siblings the agency is seeking to place together