

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can adopt a child?

If you have the ability to love a child, to provide the basics for a child and to make a lifelong commitment, you can adopt a child from community-based care. You don't need to own a home, maintain a specific income level or be married. Certain things can disqualify you as an adoptive parent such as certain felony criminal records.

What are the financial requirements (if any) to adopt a child in care?

The acceptable income level varies widely depending on each unique situation. Income will be addressed as part of the home study to ensure that an adoptive parent is currently financially stable and able to provide for the basic needs of a child. Potential adoptive parents will never be disqualified based on income alone.

What does an adoption cost?

When you adopt a child from the State of Florida you will not be charged an adoption fee or fees related to pre-adoptive training, home studies or placement. There may be expenses related to attorney fees and court costs but these are usually reimbursed by the state. Other one-time-only expenses that may be reimbursed are birth certificate fees and travel expenses for visiting the child.

How long does the adoption process take?

The timeframe varies from case to case but the background checks, MAPP training and home study can usually be completed in less than nine months.

Will I receive a complete case history when I consider a child for adoption?

Yes. One of the benefits of adopting from the state is having access to a comprehensive case history. You will be given information on the child's medical background, foster placements and developmental level. You will also be given

insight into the child's personality, habits, hobbies, aspirations, likes and dislikes. This information helps determine how the child will fit into your family.

Can the biological parents take the child back?

No. Florida's children are not made available for adoption until a court has terminated the parental rights of their birth parents. This form of adoption is very secure.

What does "special needs" mean?

"Special needs" is a federal legal definition that qualifies certain children for financial assistance. It does not mean the child necessarily has any disability. In the state of Florida, one or more of the following criteria qualifies a child for special needs assistance:

- Age 8 or older
- Member of a sibling group being placed for adoption together
- African American or racially mixed
- Significant emotional ties with foster parents or a relative caregiver
- Mental, physical or emotional handicap

What financial assistance is available for children adopted from community-based care?

In addition to free health care through the Medicaid program and free college tuition to one of Florida's state universities, colleges or vocational schools, many children adopted from state care are eligible for a monthly stipend to help defray some of the costs related to adding a child to your family. Talk to your adoption counselor to find out what options are available to you and your child.

Adoption Assistance – In Florida, adopted children with special needs are eligible for monthly adoption assistance. The monthly stipend may be negotiated up to the full amount of the child's foster care rate at the time of adoption, depending on the child's needs. Adoption assistance is funded with federal or state monies, depending on the child's eligibility, and continues even when the family moves to

another state.

Adoption Tax Credit – Every family’s tax situation is different, but if your family’s income is below \$204,410, the adoption tax credit is worth looking into. The tax credit is applied to your total tax liability and could increase your refund. The form number is 8893. The form and instructions are available at www.irs.gov.

Employer Adoption Benefits – The National Adoption Center provides a listing of employers who provide adoption benefits. To request a copy, contact the National Adoption Center at 1-800-TO-ADOPT.

Adoption Benefits for State Employees – State employees and teachers who adopt could be eligible for a one-time stipend of \$5,000 or \$10,000, depending on the special needs of the child and depending on Legislative funding each year. Enrollment occurs each year from August 1 to October 31, and applications are available online at www.dcf.state.fl.us/adoption/adoptbenefitsprogram.shtml.

Is post-adoption support provided?

Yes. The local community-based care agency that assisted you in completing the adoption provides support such as information and referral services, support groups, adoption-related libraries, case management and training. To find out what options are available to you in your area, talk with your adoption counselor or contact your regional office of the Department of Children and Families.