

ADOPTION PROGRAM

Services & Statement of Need

As a licensed child-placing agency, Family & Children Services provides assistance to individuals and families wishing to adopt children who are legally free for adoption and are permanent wards of the state or court. The underlying goal of Family & Children Services' Adoption Program is to provide the most appropriate family for the child that meets the child's needs and best interests.

The goal of the adoption program at Family & Children Services involves the placement of children with emotional, physical, or social challenges due to abuse or neglect into permanent families. These children have been removed from their families of origin due to a variety of issues that have resulted in their biological parents being unable to care for them. Through court intervention, the children are made wards of the Michigan Children's Institute or the Court. Family & Children Services is dedicated to finding families that are able to make a unilateral and unconditional commitment to these children, providing them with a loving, stable home that can meet their best interests and encourage them to become productive adults.

Family & Children Services is committed to the collaboration between foster parents (which may include relative caregivers), prospective adoptive parents, social workers and the legal system in the identification of a family that will adopt should the child's permanency goal become adoption.

Biological parent(s) are encouraged to provide identifying information while participating in foster care services and maintain contact when parental rights are terminated if determined to be in the best interest of the child. Additionally, continued contact with other members of the child's family will be encouraged when considered to be in the best interest of the child.

ADOPTION REQUIREMENTS FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Each adoptive parent must be physically and emotionally qualified (as determined by the agency) to parent a child whose parents' rights have been terminated and who may exhibit the behaviors found in children who have been abused or neglected. Each adoptive parent should be at least 18 years old. Ideally, the age difference between the adoptive parent and the child should be at least 10 years. Special circumstances will be considered on an individual basis. The adoptive family must be financially able to meet the child's needs and must meet all State of Michigan laws and rules for adoptive families. This includes attending an orientation meeting prior to the completion of an adoption assessment.

Other factors considered when selecting a home for each child include: placement with relatives, placement with foster parents, placement with siblings, any special physical and/or emotional needs of the child, the child's religious preferences, and the child's wishes (particularly if over the age of 14). Consideration for the adoption of a specific child means that the child's adoption worker will explore the child's relationship with relatives and other families who have a history with the child and/or a relationship that is significant to the child.

AGENCY SERVICES

The following provides a listing of the types of adoption services provided by Family & Children Services. The Agency's need for families for permanent state and court wards is noted in the section below. Family & Children Services' Adoption Program accepts direct referrals from agencies in

Southwest Michigan, including Kalamazoo, Calhoun, St. Joseph, Allegan, Branch, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. Referrals are accepted from throughout the state as well.

Our pre-placement services for foster to adoptive families requesting to adopt a permanent state or court ward include orientation, assessments, education and training obtained through a series of interviews, individualized training, and group training. We encourage families to complete all required training. The decision to present a child to a family is based on professional judgment with regard to the family's profile and the child's specific need requirements.

After the child is placed with an adoptive family, post placement visits occur to assess the child's continued needs and assist the family in meeting the child's needs. The family is assisted by mutually scheduled consultations with the adoption worker, or other appropriate resources, until the adoption is finalized.

After finalization, the agency provides direct post-adoptive casework services including assistance to families seeking medical subsidy and referrals to community resources as appropriate. In addition, Family & Children Services' adoption staff respond to inquiries from adult adoptees, birth parents, other relatives, and adoptive parents who are seeking information to search for each other. Listening to their emotional needs is the first priority. Educating about the current laws and available resources are the next steps. The agency does not conduct the search.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Youth ages 13-17, and sibling groups of all ages: Need – High

Our goal is to maintain siblings in one family placement; therefore, we are in need of families who are able to adopt sibling groups of 2 or more children.

Single placements of children ages 8 - 12 years: Need – High

Single placement of children ages 3 - 8 years: Need – Moderate

Single placement of children ages 0 - 3 years: Need – None to Low*

*Typically, toddlers or younger children are part of a sibling group. At Family & Children Services, if we are called upon to place single toddlers or infants, we will contact our existing foster parents or the family who may have previously adopted the siblings of the child for this placement.

FEES & COSTS

There are no fees for adopting a Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) child. There may be associated expenses for adopting a child under care with DHHS or a contractual private agency partner. These expenses may include things such as; psychological assessments, physicals, lodging, meals, birth certificate, and court fees. Upon qualification of non-recurring adoption expenses, reimbursement of approved expenses may occur. If eligible, the reimbursement claim form must be submitted within 2 years from the final Order of Adoption.

Legal Representation

Adoptive parents have the right to independent legal representation when adopting a child. Family & Children Services does not pay for the legal representation.

INQUIRIES

Interested adoptive parents can inquire by calling the Adoption Program: 269-344-0202 or 269-965-3247.