

Wait No More[®]



Finding Families for Pennsylvania's Waiting Kids



Next Steps

Today: Please utilize the information on the following pages of this guide and your opportunity to interact directly with those organizations today to select the agency that seems best for your family.

Next Steps:

- Visit the agency booths
- Determine which agency you prefer to work with
- Fill out and turn in the green initiation form
- Obtain any relevant paperwork
- Find out their orientation and training schedule

If you are planning to further explore adoption, please fill out the green initiation form and place it in the marked boxes throughout the church or hand it to one of our event volunteers.

It is important to do this even if you are not sure which agency you prefer to work with yet.

In the Future: Each of the adoption agencies and ministries listed in this attendee guide has specifically identified the next step for an interested family to take as you explore your role in meeting the needs of a waiting child.

For more information on any of the orientations, trainings, or other events listed on the pages that follow, please contact the agency hosting the particular event. Thank you again for your willingness to help Pennsylvania's waiting kids!

Next Steps:

- Continue to pray about how God will use you and His specific plan for your family
- Tell someone you trust about how God is leading you and the steps you are taking
- If you have not heard from an agency after three weeks, contact the agency you listed on your initiation form or Focus on the Family
- Be proactive about any paperwork, training or requirements

Tips on How to Choose an Adoption Agency

Adoption is a life long process for parents and children, and it is important to choose an agency that can help you assess your readiness to adopt and has the expertise to help you through the process. Child placement agencies must meet the licensing standards for Child Placement Agencies to provide adoption services in Washington. A personal evaluation prior to selection of an agency will generally lead to positive results for families. The following points may be helpful in choosing an agency:

1. Learn about adoption and the issues involved

- Read books and articles on adoption
- Attend an adoptive parents' group
- Talk to other adoptive parents
- Attend agency orientation and information meetings

2. Determine the type of child you are interested in adopting

- Infant or older child
- Domestic or International
- Special needs (emotional problems, mental or physical handicaps) or minimal problems.

3. Contact the agencies and learn about their programs

- Ask about any requirements/restrictions on adoptive parents such as length of marriage, age, etc.
- Ask for brochures on their program
- Attend orientation/information meetings

4. Evaluate the agency's program (some good questions to ask)

- Ask about the steps in the agency's process such as orientation, application, study, parenting classes and the estimated time frames involved. Make a list of special questions you want answered.
- Make sure the agency is licensed; ask when was the last time the agency was visited by a representative from the licensing unit.
- Find out if complaints have been filed against the agency and if so, how they were resolved.
- Find out the staff's education, background and experience in adoption.
- Ask about the services the agency gives to birth parents and evaluate the completeness and sensitivity of this work.
- Learn the costs involved for the screening, orientation meeting, home study, supervisory visits, court reports, educational groups, services to and expenses in connection with birth parents in designated adoptions, extra work in connection with interstate placement and other possible expenses. Obtain written detailed information on all costs involved including the agency's policy on refunds.
- Ask about any support groups the agency facilitates and any post finalization services they might offer.
- If possible, talk to other adoptive parents about their experience with the agency.

5. After you have chosen the agency

- Keep in regular contact with the agency but be realistic with the staff's time.
- If you have a complaint or are dissatisfied, talk honestly to the person with whom you are working and, if this is unsatisfactory, than talk to the director.

Agency and Ministry Overview



Bair Foundation

Service area: Offices in Pittsburgh, Altoona, New Wilmington and Middletown; worked in most counties in PA

The Bair Foundation was founded in 1967 and is a non-profit Christian foster care and adoption agency based in New Wilmington, PA. The Bair Foundation mission is to provide Christ-centered quality care and services dedicated to the treatment, restoration, and empowerment of children, youth and families. We have four offices within the state of Pennsylvania but we also have multiple offices in seven other states. We have a large group of caring, nurturing foster and adoptive parents and a staff that is dedicated to helping children and families. The Bair Foundation Adoption Department is a State Wide Adoption Network affiliate and we have worked with most of the counties in the state of Pennsylvania in order to assist with adoptions from foster care. The Bair Foundation provides children with a variety of services to assist them in their search for permanent resources. We also work with adoptive families to match them with waiting children from the Pennsylvania foster care system.

Contact Information:

Jill Schmidt—Adoption Director

Kirsten Ritter—Adoption Lead Coordinator

1801 Oberlin Road

Middletown, PA 17057

Phone: (717) 985-6450, (800) 543-7059; Fax: (717) 985-6449

Email: kritter@bair.org

Website: www.bair.org



Bethanna

Service area: Bucks, Philadelphia, Delaware, Montgomery, Berks, Dauphine, Lebanon and Lancaster counties.

Bethanna is a Christian multi-service child welfare and behavioral health agency. Founded in 1934, Bethanna has a rich history of supporting children/youth and their families through foster care and adoption services, visitation services, parenting education, and an array of behavioral health services. Bethanna has been providing foster care services, including general, medical, kinship, and treatment foster care for 28 years.

The agency has offices in Philadelphia, Lancaster, Southampton and Media. Bethanna's mission is to provide the highest quality system of care for children and families in order to ensure safety, restore emotional wellness and build family stability. Bethanna holds several foster care and adoption information sessions every month for individuals wanting to find out if foster care or adoption is right for them or those wanting to begin the approval process. For more information or session dates visit our website at www.bethanna.org.

Contact information:

David Gregory—Director of Admissions & Family Development

1030 Second Street Pike

Southampton, PA 18966

Phone: (215) 280-3169; (610) 565-5455 x1304; Fax: (610) 565-5007

Email: dgregory@bethanna.org

kkanyi@bethanna.org

Website: www.bethanna.org



Bethany Christian Services

Service area: Delaware—Kent, New Castle and Sussex counties; New Jersey—Camden, Gloucester, Salem, Cumberland and Burlington counties; Pennsylvania—Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Delaware, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Pike, Susquehanna and Wayne counties.

Bethany Christian Services is the nation's largest adoption agency, and we provide care for orphans and vulnerable children living on five continents. We are called to care for children of all ages and in all stages of life. We serve children at conception by counseling women with unplanned pregnancies, and our commitment extends to children and teens who are living in foster care or in orphanages—children who need a "forever family." Our primary goal is to help children of all ages and all health conditions know what it means to have a safe, stable and secure permanent family as quickly as possible through reunification, adoption, foster care, and Safe Families for Children services. Our mission is to demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of children and families through quality social services. Bethany envisions a world where every child has a loving family.

Contact information:

Abby Miller—Foster Care Supervisor/Older Child Adoption Coordinator

7827 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

Phone: (215) 376-6200; Fax: (215) 635-0837

Email: abbymiller@bethany.org

Website: www.bethany.org/philadelphia



COBYS

Service area: families within 1 hour radius of our main office

COBYS Family Services is a Christian family service agency, affiliated with the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren. "Motivated by Christian faith, COBYS educates, supports, and empowers children and adults to reach their full potential." COBYS is an affiliate of the Statewide Adoption and Permanency

Network (SWAN) and is a licensed foster care agency. Families at COBYS are approved to be resource families able to provide both foster care and adoption. It is our goal for children in foster care to move as few times as possible; therefore, we encourage families to be open to foster care and later assist children in reuniting with their birth family or provide the children with a forever family through adoption.

COBYS also carries out its mission through adoption of infants who are not a part of the foster care system; counseling by trained Christian therapists at three locations in Lancaster and Lebanon Counties; family life education programs offered in partnership with church, school, and community groups; and a permanency unit in Lancaster City.

Contact information:

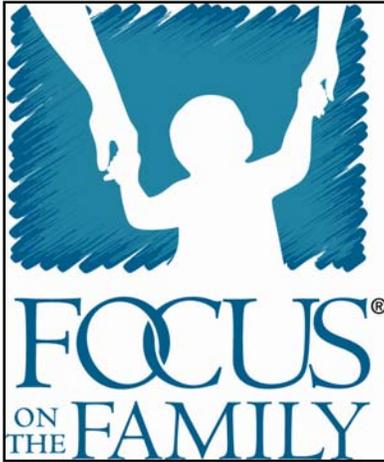
Kristen Bomberger—Resource Home Coordinator

1417 Oregon Road
Leola, PA 17540

Phone: (717) 656-6580, (800) 452-6517; Fax: (717) 656-3056

Email: careforkids@cobys.org

Website: www.cobys.org



Focus on the Family

Service area: National

At Focus on the Family we believe that every child deserves to know the love of a forever family. Therefore, our goal is to raise awareness of and recruit families for the children and youth waiting in foster care.

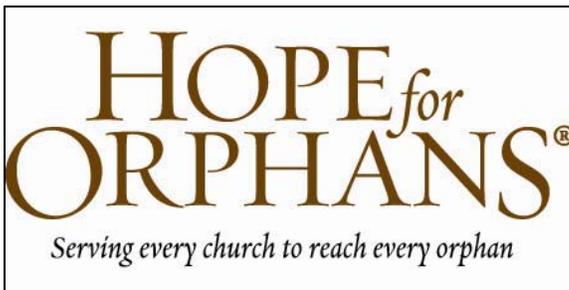
Our awareness and recruiting efforts are complemented by desperately needed post-placement resources for adoptive families that are both biblically based and relevant to their unique struggles. These resources also provide practical ways for churches and individuals to support the adoptive families in their communities.

And while not every family is called to adopt, we believe everyone can play a role through prayer support, mentoring, giving, or mobilizing the church.

Contact Information:

Email: orphancare@family.org

Website: www.iCareAboutOrphans.org



Hope for Orphans, a ministry of FamilyLife

Service area: National

Hope for Orphans believes that the local church is God's answer for the orphan crisis. Because of this, we build tools that passionate followers of Christ can use to mobilize their church on behalf of the orphan. We want to connect you with excellent resources and trusted organizations that will serve your church in reaching the

orphan. For more information, visit HopeForOrphans.org.

Contact Information:

Jonita Hammer

2001 W. Plano Parkway

Plano, TX 75075

Phone: (972) 941-4431; Fax: (972) 941-4432

Email: jhammer@hopefororphans.org

Website: www.hopefororphans.org

Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency

Service area: Lancaster County

The Lancaster County Children and Youth Social Service Agency is a public child welfare agency that provides protection services to Lancaster County's most vulnerable citizens - our children. The Agency's mission is to protect the health, permanency, safety and emotional well-being of children and youth at risk of abuse and neglect. In the event that a child cannot be safe living with his or her family, the court may place that child into the custody of Children and Youth, also known as foster care. The first goal that must be worked towards is to reunify that child with his or her family. If that cannot happen safely, permanency for that child is sought. One permanency option is adoption. Some older youth would like to be adopted, while others would like to live with a family where they can learn important skills until they are ready to live on their own. There is a need for families who want to help children and teenagers through their journey in foster care and to provide permanency.

Contact information:

Kate Eberz—Adoption Supervisor
900 E. King Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
Phone: (717) 299-7925, (717) 299-7926

Website: www.co.lancaster.pa.us



Mid Atlantic Orphan Care Coalition

Service area: member churches are in PA, DE, NJ and VA

Founded in 2008, the Mid Atlantic Orphan Care Coalition is an effort of pastors, adoptive families and ministry leaders to connect churches with children in need. This growing coalition is united across racial and denominational lines in Christ.

It is our vision that Bible-believing churches in the Mid Atlantic region would join us in ministry to orphans and that our Coalition would inspire and equip churches to do that work well.

Our signature event is the 50 Churches/50 Children Campaign which is conducted each November (National Adoption Month). In this campaign approximately 50 member churches are asked to tell the stories of 50 children waiting for adoption.

Each Sunday we ask that the member church introduce one story to the congregation and pray that a family will be found for this child. The churches then receive quarterly updates regarding the adoption status of these children.

In 2011 there are about 58 churches participating from four states (PA, DE, NJ, and VA)

Contact information:

David Rollins—Board Member
22 Harris Circle
Newark, DE 19711
Phone: (302) 239-9562, (302) 419-4832

Email: drollins706@aol.com
Website: www.orphanarecoalition.org



Pennsylvania Family Institute
Service area: State of Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Family Institute is absolutely committed to strengthening the family in Pennsylvania, as well as providing children the best opportunities and security which comes from a strong family. As a non-profit organization, we work to raise awareness of the importance of the family and strong moral principles in today's marketplace of ideas. We serve to offer the constant reminder to leaders and policy makers in Pennsylvania to consider the family when decisions are made.

"Children are not casual guests in our home. They have been loaned to us temporarily for the purpose of loving them and instilling a foundation of values on which their future lives will be built." ~ Dr. James Dobson.

We aim to come alongside parents in building this foundation - from supporting parental choices in education through our Family Choice Scholarship Program to our City on the Hill Youth Leadership Conference for high school students held every July.

Contact information:

Dan Bartkowiak—Community Impact Director
23 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Phone: (717) 545-0600; Fax: (717) 545-8107

Email: dbart@pafamily.org
Website: www.pafamily.org



The Salvation Army Children's Services

Service area: southeast region of Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley region

Guided by faith in God and love for all people, The Salvation Army has served the physical and spiritual needs of humankind since 1865. Our Children's Services program provides a full scale of foster care and adoption services including one on one orientation, training, networking, adoption home studies, matching, placement and post adoption support services. There is little or no cost when you

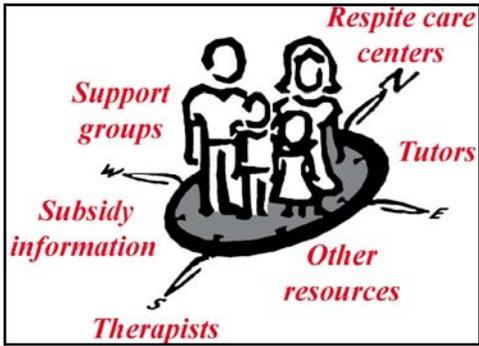
foster or adopt with our program.

The Salvation Army has always seen people through intense difficulty while gently directing their healing with a strong spiritual component. This is why the foster care and adoption process lends itself so well to the Salvation Army's mission and character. Our mission is to provide each child with the best possible foster or adoptive placement. Although the Salvation Army is a large organization as a whole, the foster care and adoption program is small in size which allows us to know each family personally so we can meet their needs at a higher level and give each child the special attention they deserve.

Contact information:

Florence Rhue—Director
425 Allentown Drive
Allentown, PA 18109
Phone: (215) 256-6868, (610) 821-7706; Fax: (215) 256-6698

Email: florence_rhue@use.salvationarmy.org
Website: www.care4kids.net



Together as Adoptive Parents, Inc.

Service area: meetings held in Philadelphia and Montgomery county

The focus of our organization is post adoption/permanency support. We believe that the adoption, foster or kinship road should never be walked alone and that no family or child should have to figure out where to find help. We offer the following:

- Quarterly newsletter
- Helpline at 215.256.0669
- Statewide post adoption website at www.taplink.org
- Monthly parenting education meetings
- Social events
- Adult and youth trainings and conferences
- Lending Library and information and referral services
- Subsidy and the adoption tax credit information and trainings.

Contact information:

Phyllis Stevens—Executive Director

478 Moyer Road

Harleysville, PA 19438

Phone: (215) 256-0669, (215) 460-2106; Fax: (215) 513-2921

Email: taplink@comcast.net

Website: www.taplink.org

November 2011

Bethanna

- Information Session—Saturday, Nov 12, 9:30am, Media
- Information Session—Saturday, Nov 12, 1:00pm, Center City
- Information Session—Wednesday, Nov 16, 6:45pm, Southampton
- Information Session—Tuesday, Nov 22, 10:00am, Center City
- Information Session—Monday, Nov 28, 6:45pm, Media
- Information Session—Wednesday, Nov 30, 6:45pm, Center City

Bethany Christian Services

- Foster Care Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Nov 8, 6:00-8:00pm
 - Safe Families Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Nov 8, 9:30-11:00am
 - Foster Care Informational Meeting—Thursday, Nov 10, 10:00am-12:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Nov 15, 7:00-9:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Wednesday, Nov 16, 7:00-9:00pm, Allentown Public Library
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Wednesday, Nov 30, 6:00-8:00pm, Hope Center
- *Registration is required. Please call 800-215-0702. Childcare not provided.*

COBYS

- Orientation—Tuesday, Nov 1
- Reading Orientation—Tuesday, Nov 8, Wyomissing Church of the Brethren

Mid Atlantic Orphan Care Coalition

- 50 Churches/50 Children Campaign—month of November

Pennsylvania Family Institute

- Friends of the Family* Fundraising Dinner—Friday, Nov 4, Lancaster, PA;
www.pafamily.org/lancbanquet.php

The Salvation Army

- Orphan Sunday Adoption Ministry Fair—Sunday, Nov 6, 8:30am-12:30pm, Calvary Fellowship Church
 - Care N Share—Monday, Nov 14, 6:00-8:00pm, Henning's Market
- *To register, please call or email at least 3 days in advance to: Megan Grim @ 610-821-7706 or megan.grim@use.salvationarmy.org.*

Together as Adoptive Parents

- Adoption/Permanency Conference—Saturday, Nov 12, 8:30am-4:30pm, Deliverance Evangelistic Church (5 hour Training Certificate and CEU's available)

December 2011

Bethanna

- Information Session—Thursday, Dec 8, 6:30pm, Lancaster
- Information Session—Saturday, Dec 10, 12:30pm Center City
- Information Session—Thursday, Dec 15, 6:45pm, Southampton
- Information Session—Monday, Dec 19, 2:00pm, Media
- Information Session—Tuesday, Dec 20, 6:45pm, Center City

Bethany Christian Services

- Foster Care Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Dec 6, 10:00am-12:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Dec 6, 7:00-9:00pm
 - Safe Families Informational Meeting—Friday, Dec 9, 1:30-3:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Wednesday, Dec 28, 6:00-8:00pm, Hope Center
- *Registration is required. Please call 800-215-0702. Childcare not provided.*

COBYS

- Orientation—Tuesday, Dec 6
- Reading Orientation—Tuesday, Dec 13, Wyomissing Church of the Brethren

Mid Atlantic Orphan Care Coalition

- Monthly Board of Directors meeting

Together as Adoptive Parents

- Christmas Party—Monday, Dec 12, Langhorne United Methodist Church

January 2012

Bethanna

- Information Session—Saturday, Jan 7, 10:00am, Southampton
- Information Session—Tuesday, Jan 10, 6:45pm, Center City
- Information Session—Thursday, Jan 12, 6:30pm, Lancaster
- Information Session—Wednesday, Jan 18, 12:00pm, Center City
- Information Session—Saturday, Jan 21, 10:00am, Media
- Information Session—Saturday, Jan 28, 10:00am, Center City
- Information Session—Monday, Jan 30, 1:00pm, Media

Bethany Christian Services

- Foster Care Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Jan 10, 10:00am-12:00pm
 - Foster Care Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Jan 10, 6:00-8:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Jan 17, 7:00-9:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Wednesday, Jan 25, 6:00-8:00pm, Hope Center
- *Registration is required. Please call 800-215-0702. Childcare not provided.*

COBYS

- Orientation—Tuesday, Jan 3
- Reading Orientation—Tuesday, Jan 10, Wyomissing Church of the Brethren

Mid Atlantic Orphan Care Coalition

- Monthly Board of Directors meeting

The Salvation Army

- Foster Care & Adoption Orientation—Saturday, Jan 21, 9:00am-1:00pm
 - Caring for the Abused Child—Saturday, Jan 28, 9:00am-1:00pm
- *To register, please call or email at least 3 days in advance to: Megan Grim @ 610-821-7706 or megan.grim@use.salvationarmy.org.*

February 2012

Bethanna

- Information Session—Thursday, Feb 9, 6:45pm, Southampton
- Information Session—Friday, Feb 10, 10:00am, Center City
- Information Session—Saturday, Feb 18, 10:00am, Center City
- Information Session—Tuesday, Feb 21, 6:45pm, Media
- Information Session—Wednesday, Feb 29, 6:45pm, Center City

Bethany Christian Services

- Foster Care Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Feb 7, 10:00am-12:00pm
 - Foster Care Informational Meeting—Thursday, Feb 16, 6:00-8:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Tuesday, Feb 21, 7:00-9:00pm
 - Adoption Informational Meeting—Wednesday, Feb 29, 6:00-8:00pm, Hope Center
- *Registration is required. Please call 800-215-0702. Childcare not provided.*

COBYS

- Orientation—Monday, Feb 6
- Reading Orientation—Tuesday, Feb 14, Wyomissing Church of the Brethren

Mid Atlantic Orphan Care Coalition

- Monthly Board of Directors meeting

The Salvation Army

- Building Healthy Attachments—Saturday, Feb 4, 9:00am-1:00pm
 - Permanency Issues—Saturday, Feb 11, 9:00am-1:00pm
- *To register, please call or email at least 3 days in advance to: Megan Grim @ 610-821-7706 or megan.grim@use.salvationarmy.org.*

The Adoption Process¹

Step 1: LEARN about Adoption

You can look for books and magazines about adoption at bookstores, libraries and for information on the internet. Attend an adoptive parents' support group or adoption conferences. Visit adoption agencies' websites, obtain further information from brochures or attend orientation sessions. Learn about the types of adoption, including how to adopt a waiting child through agencies in your state.

Step 2: SELECT an Agency

You must work with an agency licensed in the state where you reside. Contact several agencies to ask about the type of children they place, their fee structure, how they assess and prepare families, and how long it will take. Get references: speak with other parents who have used the agency you are investigating. Check whether the agency is licensed by your state to provide adoption services. You do not need an attorney at this point, but you may want to ask which legal services will be provided by your agency and which services you may be responsible for on your own.

Step 3: COMPLETE a Homestudy

A homestudy is a series of meetings between you and an agency social worker. Think of it as an ongoing conversation which is part of the approval process for adoption and also serves to prepare you for parenting. The social worker who prepares your homestudy will need certain documents such as birth certificates, marriage license, child abuse clearances and personal references before finalizing his or her report. At least one meeting will be at your home. All individuals who live in your home will need to be in attendance. The social worker is not there to do a "white glove" test of your home, but is there to ensure that you and your family are prepared to have a child or youth in your home and you are ready to parent. Your social worker can also answer questions for you and point you in the direction of further resources to support you as you move along on your journey.

Step 4: SEARCH for a Child

You begin the search for a child, teenager or sibling group when your homestudy is complete and approved. Your agency will have children in its care or your worker will search by networking with other child placing agencies. You can also be active in the search. Explore other exchanges' or agencies' photo listings of children.

Step 5: EXCHANGE Information with the Child's Agency

Each time you locate a child who seems like the right match for your family, your worker and the child's worker will exchange information. Your homestudy is sent. If the child's worker is interested in your family, you may then receive the child's profile. This step of the process may take some time and requires both patience and persistence.

Step 6: LEARN that You Have Been Selected for a Child

You and several other families may be considered at the same time. The child's worker makes the final decision on which family can best meet the child's needs. When you are selected, more confidential information is shared, so that you can be sure this is the child for you. If the child's parental rights are not legally terminated, it will be done at this time.

¹All information adapted from http://www.adopt.org/assemble/overview_howto.html.

Step 7: MEET and VISIT with the child

The first meeting with the child is followed by several visits over a few weeks or months. If the child lives in another state, the child's agency will work with you to arrange for at least one or two visits. Paperwork, such as the Interstate Compact or adoption assistance agreement is completed. You are getting ready to add a new child to your family.

Step 8: RECEIVE a Placement

The placement date is when the child comes to live in your home. Your agency will visit and work with you for several months in post placement supervision. During this time you file a legal intent to adopt petition.

Step 9: FINALIZE Your Adoption

Your child or teenager becomes a legal part of your family when you attend a court session where a judge finalizes your adoption. You will receive an amended birth certificate that names you as parents and a certificate of adoption.

Step 10: LIVE AS AN ADOPTIVE FAMILY

Adoption doesn't end after finalization. You will continue to learn about adoptive parenting. Talk with your child and others about adoption, find support and services for your child's needs, and connect with other adoptive parents. And, when you are ready, consider adopting again.

Frequently Asked Questions about Adoption²

1. Who are the children waiting for adoption?

¹More than 107,000³ children wait for permanent homes in the United States. Most are school-aged or older. Many have emotional, physical, or learning disabilities. There are brothers and sisters who need to stay together. More than half of the children come from minority cultures.

Caucasian children under five years old often have severe medical disabilities or have older brothers and sisters. African American children, Latino children, and children of mixed heritage cover a wider age range. The majority are boys.

Most children waiting for adoption live in foster or group homes because their parents were unable to care for them. Often, personal and family problems made it impossible for the parents to maintain a home for their children. Some of these children have been abused, neglected or abandoned.

2. Can I ask for more information about the child I want to adopt?

Most children's agencies can provide more information about a child than they are able to include on a flyer, newspaper article, or website description. However, some of the child's information is considered confidential, and workers may want to share it only with those families they are seriously considering as adoptive parents.

Once you have been selected for a particular child, adoption agencies are required to share with you any information that they have about the child, with the exception of identifying information about the birth family. Unfortunately, they may not always have a great deal of information, especially if a child has lived in several foster homes. It is important to ask for whatever is available, including medical reports, results of psychological or educational testing, and information about early development.

3. Can the biological parents come back to take a child?

In order for a child to be adopted, the birth parents have to relinquish legal parental rights. With most agency adoptions, a child is already legally free for adoption before a placement occurs. While cases where a parent changes his/her mind (usually before an adoption is finalized) are highly publicized, they occur infrequently. Once the adoption has been finalized, the biological parents have no legal tie to the child.

4. Can I adopt a child in a different state?

Yes. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), passed in 1998, requires state agencies to speed up a child's move from foster care to adoption by establishing time frames for permanency planning and guidelines for when a child must be legally freed for adoption. The law also removes geographic barriers to adoption by requiring that states not delay or deny a placement if an approved family is available outside the state.

**see Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children on page 26.*

²All information adapted from <http://www.adopt.org/assembled/FAQ.html>.

³http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report18.htm

5. Can I adopt a child of another race?

Yes. In October, 1995, the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) became effective. This act and subsequent revisions bar any agency from discriminating because of race when considering adoption opportunities for children, if the agency receives federal funding. Another law affecting transracial adoption is the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which establishes provisions for the placement of Native American children.

6. How long will it take to adopt?

There are two stages in the adoption process: pre-placement and post-placement. Placement is when the child enters your home, pre-placement describes the time before and post-placement the time after. There is a pre-placement waiting period for all adoptions. The time frame, like the cost, varies with the type of child being adopted. With a completed homestudy in hand, the process to adopt a child with special needs can often proceed quickly and be completed within a few months. The wait is typically between two and seven years for a healthy infant.

After placement, your agency will have to supervise your family for a legally-mandated length of time before finalization can occur. Typically this post-placement time period will be no less than six months from the time of placement.

7. What is a homestudy?

A homestudy is a series of meetings with a social worker to provide more in-depth information about adoption and help prepare an applicant for parenting an adopted child. The homestudy process varies from agency to agency. Some conduct individual and joint interviews with both members of a couple; others conduct group homestudies with several families at one time. Most ask applicants to provide written information about themselves and their life experiences.

Agencies also require certain documents: a marriage license, birth certificate, medical report, criminal check and child abuse clearance. Personal character references are often required. The homestudy includes at least one visit to your home by an agency worker. The time it takes to complete the homestudy will vary from one agency to another, but families who are interested in children with special needs are usually given prompt attention.

8. How does foster care differ from adoption?

Foster care is meant to be temporary shelter for a child; generally the plan is for the child to return to the parents when they are able to provide care. If that fails, the parental rights are terminated.

Foster parents may be able to adopt the child in their care if the child becomes available, through a foster-adopt program with their agency. In fact, most adoptions in the United States are by children's foster parents. Beginning as a foster parent is also one way that you may be able to adopt a healthy infant or toddler. But you are not required to be a foster parent in order to adopt.

While some agencies approve a family simultaneously for both foster care and adoption, a foster care homestudy and an adoption homestudy are not always interchangeable. If you are thinking about foster-adoption, it is important to inquire how an agency handles this.

9. How can I begin the adoption process?

- Call several agencies in your state and ask them to give you information about their programs.
- Select an adoption agency to provide you with a homestudy.
- Connect with a parent support group in your area.
- Visit libraries and read books and magazines on adoption.
- In addition to the adoption agency you will be working with, you may contact other adoption resources to learn about waiting children.

10. What will it cost to adopt?

It is not costly to adopt a child with special needs. Often the agency has a sliding fee scale, and frequently there is little or no cost. Following the adoption, the children may receive subsidies to cover the medical and other necessary expenses, although the family is still likely to incur other costs, over the years, as they raise their child.

Costs of adopting a healthy infant of any race through a private agency or attorney in the United States range from several hundred dollars to \$30,000 or more. Inter-country adoptions are costly, as well. Families pay between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in fees, which may not include travel and living expenses while in the foreign country.

11. Is there financial assistance to help me adopt?

Under both state and federal assistance programs, adoptive parents of children with special needs are eligible for a one-time payment of non-recurring adoption expenses. Such expenses include reasonable and necessary adoption fees, court costs, attorney fees, and other expenses.

A growing number of companies and government agencies are offering adoption benefits, which can include a financial reimbursement for legal expenses, agency fees, medical expenses, post adoption counseling, and other expenses, as well as paid or unpaid leave time and help finding resources and referrals. Check with your employer to find out your company's policies.

Loans and travel assistance may also be available through banks or travel agencies. For more information on loans and grants, you may want to contact the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) at 800-470-6665 or www.nacac.org or contact the National Adoption Foundation, or www.nafadopt.org.

12. Is there a tax credit for people who adopt?⁴

On March 23, 2010, Public Law 111-148, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, was signed into law by President Obama. In signing the legislation, the adoption tax credit was preserved for another year and increased to \$13,170. The increase is retroactive, meaning that any adoption occurring after January 1, 2010 is eligible for this higher credit. The credit is now refundable meaning that even families that owe zero taxes can receive the full tax credit in the form of a tax refund to help with their adoption-related expenses. Adoption-related expenses are defined as "reasonable and necessary adoption fees, court costs, attorney fees, and other expenses which directly relate to, and the principle purpose of which is for, the legal adoption of an eligible child by the taxpayer." Examples of these expenses include fees paid to an adoption agency, legal fees, travel-related expenses, all official costs and any other reasonable cost associated with adopting the identified child.

To apply for the credit, married couples must file a joint return and the maximum credit limits are the same for both married couples and single adoptive parents. To take the adoption credit, the taxpayer must complete Form 8839, entitled "Qualified Adoption Expenses," which is used to itemize qualifying adoption-related expenses. Form 8839 is then attached to either the Form 1040 or Form 1040A, whichever is applicable. Adoptive parents should make sure to keep all applicable records, receipts, journals and invoices from their adoption journey and retain this information for at least three years after the credit has been used in full. While all families may not be able to recoup the entire \$13,170, a personal accountant or adoption agency representative can help the family estimate how much they should be able to receive within the allowable time period.

13. Can I receive financial assistance after adoption?

Most children registered with agencies as having special needs have already been classified as eligible for financial assistance, also called subsidies. Sources of assistance may be federal or state funds. It is important to discuss subsidies with your social worker and local department of social services and to have a written adoption assistance agreement prior to adoption. Many children also receive medical assistance in the form of a Medicaid card. A child's eligibility for adoption assistance is based on the child's need and not that of the adopting parents.

14. What services are available before adoption?

During the preparation for adoption, as you complete your homestudy, an agency social worker counsels you and provides information and support. Sometimes social workers will refer families to special interest groups for a particular child's needs. They may also provide information on adoptive parent support groups, a valuable resource. These may be general or specific to a certain type of child or family, for example the Committee for Single Adoptive Parents or the Latin American Parents Association. Some groups have newsletters and other written materials.

Family preparation classes are offered by some agencies and required by others.

15. What services are available after adoption?

After placement, many agencies offer post-adoption services to you. These can include support groups, individual and family counseling, workshops on specific topics of parenting, or ongoing contact with your social worker. If a child was receiving therapy or special schooling before the adoption, it will usually be continued. An employee assistance program at your workplace may also offer referrals for needed services.

**see pages 10-15 and 31 for other support ministries and materials.*

⁴All information taken from <https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/images/stories/documents/adoptionadvocate21.pdf>.

Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children⁵

If a child is born in one state, commonly known as the “sending state” and the adoptive family lives in another state, called the “receiving state”, the adoption placement must be approved by the ICPC, the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children. All states are members of the ICPC. For the purposes of an adoption it is illegal to move a child across state lines without meeting the requirements of the ICPC.

The documentation submitted to the ICPC for approval includes the adoptive parent’s home study, the child’s birth information and other health information, biological information on the birth parents, and relinquishment or termination documentation from the birth parents. Documentation for the child and the adopting parents will be forwarded to the ICPC office in the sending state which will forward the documents to the ICPC office in the receiving state. The ICPC offices review the documentations to verify that their state laws have been complied with.

Once approval has been made, the child can be placed with the adopting family who are from another state. It is not required, but recommended to hire an adoption professional such as an adoption attorney or agency to assist with the ICPC procedures.

New Jersey:

New Jersey Department of Children and Families

www.nj.gov/njfofosteradopt/

Delaware:

Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

<http://kids.delaware.gov/>

⁵All information adapted from <http://www.abcadoptions.com/icpc.htm>.

Ten Questions for Parents Preparing to Adopt or Foster⁷

We believe it is critically important that parents who are preparing to adopt or foster a child must be honest and realistic about the journey and the challenges that lie ahead. Just as Jesus in Luke 14 challenged those who would follow him to “count the cost,” so too parents who respond to God’s call to adopt or foster must be willing to count the cost of the adoption journey and prepare to “lay down their lives” to love their child and help him or her become all that God intends.

The following questions are designed to help parents (and parents-to-be) begin to honestly assess the journey ahead...and what it will require. We encourage you to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider these questions. They are not meant to scare you or in any way discourage you from continuing on this amazing path. Instead, our desire is simply that these questions will point you toward the hope and help that you need to form a strong and lasting connection with your child as you faithfully follow God’s call in your life.

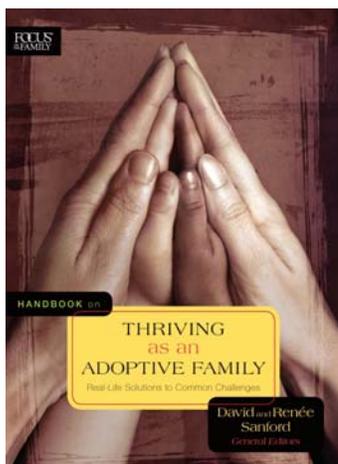
1. Are you willing to acknowledge and fully embrace your child’s history, including that which you know and that which you will likely never know?
2. Are you willing to accept that your child has been affected by his/her history, possibly in profound ways, and as a result that you will need to parent your child in a way that exhibits true compassion and promotes connection and healing?
3. Are you willing to parent differently than how you were parented, how you have parented in the past, or how your friends parent their children? Are you willing to “un-learn” certain parenting strategies and approaches that may not be effective with your child, even if you have used these strategies and approaches successfully with your other children in the past?
4. Are you willing to educate yourself, your parents, family and friends on an ongoing basis in order to promote understanding of your child’s needs and how best to meet those needs?
5. Are you willing to be misunderstood, criticized and even judged by others who do not understand your child’s history, the impacts of that history and how you have been called to love and connect with your child in order to help him/her heal and become all that God intends?
6. Are you prepared to advocate for your child’s needs, including at school, church, in extracurricular settings and otherwise, in order to create predictability and promote environments that enable your child to feel safe and allow him/her to succeed?
7. Are you willing to sacrifice your own convenience, expectations and desires in order to connect with your child and help him/her heal, even if that process is measured in years, not months?
8. Are you willing to fully embrace your child’s holistic needs, including his/her physical, emotional, relational and spiritual needs?
9. Are you willing to seek ongoing support and maintain long-term connections with others who understand your journey and the challenges that you face? Are you willing to intentionally seek and accept help when you encounter challenges with your child that you are not equipped to adequately deal with?

⁷All information taken from <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/ten-questions-for-parents-preparing-to-adopt-or-foster/>.

10. Are you willing to acknowledge that you as a parent bring a great deal to the equation when it comes to how your child will attach and connect? Are you willing to honestly examine (on an ongoing basis) your motivations and expectations relating to your adoption journey? Are you willing to look at your own past (including your past losses and trauma, both big and small) and consider how your past may impact your interactions with your child? Are you willing to consistently examine your role as parent as you experience challenges and difficulties along the journey?

As you read through the above questions, you may have concluded that some of the questions didn't apply to you and your situation. That may be the case to some extent, as every adoption and foster care experience is unique. However, we encourage you to spend some time reading and talking with other experienced adoptive and foster parents about what you should realistically expect as you travel this journey. We find that parents sometimes start with less than accurate assumptions about how the adoption or foster care journey will unfold, and as a result they are more likely to form unrealistic expectations. We believe that these questions are helpful and instructive for all parents considering or pursuing adoption and foster care, and we hope that as you work through them they will lead you toward greater insight and understanding.

Focus on the Family Support Resources

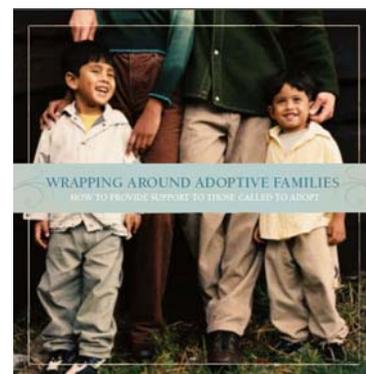


Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family

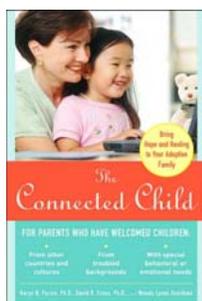
Adoption is a high calling from God, and the Christian home is primary soil for planting seeds of faith. But how will post-adoption challenges affect this growth? Many families do not feel adequately prepared for unexpected challenges like a child who has been adopted fighting with his new siblings, not wanting to be touched, or showing signs of reactive attachment disorder (RAD). Packed with practical advice, ideas and resources, this distinctively Christian book is an important parenting resource that provides comprehensive, topical, Bible-based solutions for the inevitable challenges after adoption.

Wrapping Around Adoptive Families

There are many different ways to minister to God's orphan children and to the adoptive families that have welcomed these children home. This booklet makes it clear that struggling adoptive families need their church families to support them during times of trials. While the suggestions in this booklet may not apply to all situations, they represent a general "cry of the heart" of adoptive families who welcomed home an emotionally wounded or struggling child. The goal is to provide practical guidance for churches seeking effective ways to support adoptive families.



Other Resources



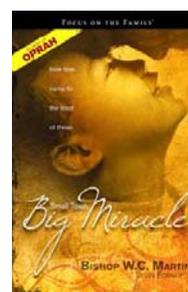
The Connected Child



Finding Home



Castaway Kid



Small Town, Big Miracle

To download *Created to Connect – A Christian's Guide to The Connected Child* or to view helpful videos and articles for adoptive and foster families, visit www.empoweredtoconnect.org.

Counseling for Families in Need

Our staff is trained to help answer your specific questions, provide resources and pray with adoptive families. Families seeking someone to talk with can call 1-800-A-Family (232-6459) or contact our counseling help line directly for a consultation at 1-855-771-HELP.

Special Thanks to...



Wait No More Initiation Form
Your Passport to Initiating the Process of Adopting from Foster Care*

Date	First Name(s)	Last Name
Address		
Address:		City:
County:		Zip:
Home Phone:		
Cell Phone:		
Email:		
Best way and time of day to reach you:		
Are you interested in a particular child? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, give the child's name: If no, what type of child would be of interest to you?		
Are you open to a sibling group? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Number of children desired: Age range you are interested in: Race/ethnicity: Gender Preferred: <input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Either		
Please list the agency you prefer to work with: <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> No Preference</div>		

In order for us to best serve you, please **do one of the following**:

- Drop this form into one of the receptacles before you leave today
- Fax it to 719-548-5947
- Mail it to Focus on the Family Attn: Erin Eberspacher Colorado Springs 80995

*Initiation of the Process will be followed by several steps including, but not limited to, attending an orientation and submitting an official application. Please see the agency of your choice for additional information and thank you for initiating the process of adoption from foster care.