

Adoption

When circumstances prevent a child from being returned to his or her parents, Ohio law allows a juvenile court to grant permanent custody to a public children's services agency such as Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS). The agency then pursues an adoptive placement for the child.

Children's Services, a division of HCJFS, recruits and prepares adoptive parents, pairs them with children, and provides services that help them raise their new family members. This fact sheet has been prepared to answer many of your questions about adoption.

For more information about becoming an adoptive parent, visit www.hckids.org or call (513) 632-6366.

Who are the children waiting to be adopted?

Children in the permanent custody of HCJFS may come into the agency's care in many ways, but all share a need for stability. Many have lived turbulent lives in homes where drug abuse, domestic violence and/or mental health troubles put them at high risk of abuse and neglect. Many may have lived in several foster care homes, or perhaps they had been placed with relatives. Some may also have experienced failed attempts at reunification with their parents.

What is the need for adoptive parents?

Children's Services always needs adoptive parents, especially those willing to take older children and siblings. Most children available for adoption range in age from 7 to 16 years old.

How can I find out about the children available for adoption?

After HCJFS gains custody of a child his or her availability is publicized in a variety of ways, including our agency web site (www.hckids.org), where you can view profiles of children waiting for adoption. We also work with a national web site, www.adoptuskids.org, to profile children to other interested parents across the country.

How can I become an adoptive parent?

A potential adoptive parent must complete training classes and a homestudy to be

approved as an adoptive parent. Most are approved for both foster care and adoption. The homestudy includes visits with an assessor who conducts interviews and collects information such as medical statements, credit reports and police background checks. Children's Services also obtains information from references and employers. Drug screening or psychological testing may also be required.

For more information about classes, call (513) 632-6366.

Can foster parents adopt?

Absolutely! In fact, 70 percent of public adoptions in Hamilton County originated as foster care placements. Some adoptive parents become foster parents with the intent to adopt if the child placed with them becomes available for adoption in the future. Relatives may also adopt children.

How are children matched with prospective adoptive parents?

Once a family is approved for adoption, the family is considered for matching. A match committee, consisting of various adoption professionals from caseworkers to private agency representatives to a monitor for adoptions law, matches children with potential adoptive parents.

Committee members assess the child's needs and the interests and preferences of the adoptive families and match the child with the family that best meets the child's needs.

How are children placed with an adoptive family?

Once a match is made, the caseworker begins introducing the child to the adoptive family. Initially, adoptive parents may meet the child during a visit at the child's foster home. Depending on the child's age and needs, additional visits are arranged, including overnights at the adoptive home, and – if all goes well – the child moves into his or her new home.

When is an adoption final?

After the child moves from a foster home into an adoptive home, the adoption worker visits at least monthly to ensure that the placement is going smoothly. The child must have lived with the adoptive family for at least six months before the agency can file the finalization papers with Probate Court.

The finalization hearing usually occurs within 30 days of filing and is conducted by a magistrate who grants the final order of adoption. A new birth certificate is then issued.

Is support available before and after an adoption is finalized?

Yes. A variety of training and support groups are available including:

- An adjustment group (six sessions) for newly adopted children and their families
- A monthly support group for adoptive families
- A readiness group for children from ages 6 to 12 years old preparing to be adopted.

Experts meet with each group and talk about various topics, such as separation and loss. Adoptees and adoptive families also share experiences they've had during these sessions.

Can children find out about their natural parents when they get older?

Children's Services provides non-identifying information on birth parents and siblings to adoptees when they become adults. The agency also answers inquiries from birth parents. If the adoption took place before 1964, the law allows Children's Services to identify birth parents and their children to each other.

A few words about laws governing adoption and foster care:

Under the 1994 Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) as amended by the 1996 Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP), agencies receiving federal funds may not:

- *Deny to any person the opportunity to become an adoptive or foster parent on the basis of race, color, or national origin of the person or child involved*
- *Delay or deny placement of a child for adoption or into foster care on the basis of race, color or national origin of the adoptive or foster parent or of the child involved.*

Children's Services must also provide a comprehensive program to identify, recruit and support foster and adoptive parents who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in need of care. This is designed to decrease the waiting time for adoption, prevent discrimination in child placement, and assist in the identification and recruitment of foster and adoptive families who can meet children's needs.

For more information about becoming an adoptive parent or about the adoption process, call (513) 632-6366 or visit www.hckids.org.