



November 3, 2005

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Hamilton County's waiting children need adoptive homes ***November is Adoption Awareness Month***

More than 200 Hamilton County foster children are waiting to be adopted. They are not the babies you normally think of when you think about adoption. They are school-aged children. Some are teenagers. Some have been waiting for a permanent home – a “forever family” – for a long time.

Each November during National Adoption Awareness Month, we give special attention to this need. We also honor the hundreds of adoptive and foster parents who have opened their hearts and homes to waiting children.

The foster children waiting to be adopted are in the custody of the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, Children's Services division. Children's Services is the local public child protection agency.

Most adoptive parents want babies, and many go to foreign countries to get them. Many people are not aware that more than 100,000 foster children are waiting to be adopted in our own country. Of course, all children deserve a permanent home, regardless of where they live.

A national campaign to recruit adoptive parents uses the theme: “Answering the Call – You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent.”

- ***To ask about becoming a foster or adoptive parent, call 632-6366.***
- ***Visit our adoption web site: www.hcadopt.org.***
The web site includes information on how to become an adoptive parent, as well as photos, video clips and profiles of waiting children.

Throughout November, look and listen for adoption awareness promotions. Job and Family Services is partnering with the Tri-State Adoption Coalition to place photos of waiting children on tray liners at 130 Greater Cincinnati Wendy's restaurants. Public Service Announcements and advertisements are on radio stations, Web pages, Cable TV public access channels and in *Cincinnati Family Magazine*.

Background

Adoption

- **Children who are available for adoption through Children’s Services are in permanent custody of the child protection agency.** That means Juvenile Court terminated their parents’ rights, due to abuse and neglect. The children are in foster care, waiting for permanent homes.
- **As of Oct. 28, 2005, we had 219 waiting Hamilton County children available for adoption.** (The list changes weekly.) Additional children have been placed in adoptive homes or matched with families, but the adoption is pending.
- **The waiting children range in age from 18 to infants, but most are older children.** Seventy-one percent are age five or older. The average age is 12.
- **The adoptable children available from our agency have “special needs.”** Children are designated as having special needs if they have emotional or physical disorders, experienced a history of abuse, or are school-aged, racial minorities or members of a sibling group to be adopted together.
- **As of Oct. 10, we had finalized 57 adoptions in 2005.** Most adoptions are by foster parents who have grown to love and treasure the children placed in their care.
- **Children’s Services and several local private agencies recruit, train and license adoptive parents.** Private agencies that facilitate adoptions for children of all ages include The Children’s Home of Cincinnati, Catholic Social Services of Southwestern Ohio, and Lutheran Social Services.
- **Who can become an adoptive parent through Children’s Services?**
You must:
 - Be at least 18 years old (21 if you are also applying for licensure as a foster parent)
 - Have sufficient income to meet basic needs
 - Be in good physical condition and capable of caring for a child
 - Complete 33 hours of pre-service training
 - Complete a homestudy
 - Clear a criminal background check
 - Work with the agency to complete a chart which helps to match you with a child or sibling group.

Foster Care

- **At any point in time, about 1,300 children involved with Hamilton County Children’s Services are in some kind of substitute care, such as living with relatives, with foster parents or in residential centers.** However, most of the children involved in the child protection system receive services while remaining in their homes with their own families.
- **Hamilton County Children’s Services has approximately 400 licensed foster homes.** In addition, the agency contracts with private agencies such as Beech Acres and Lighthouse Youth Services, to provide additional foster homes. These private agency foster homes are called “network homes.” Network homes focus are for children who have extra therapeutic needs.