

Welcome Letter

Dear Prospective Adoptive Parent:

Thank you for your interest in adoption. Right now, our agency has more than 100 local children waiting to be adopted.

The majority of children available for adoption through Hamilton County Children's Services are African American, over the age of six or part of a sibling group. All of our children have been abused or neglected or were at risk of abuse or neglect. Currently, they are being cared for by foster parents or live in a group facility.

Despite their troubled lives, most of our children laugh and play like other children. They have favorite toys, games and friends. Each one of them has hopes and dreams. For the most part they are normal children but they have not led normal lives. Our children need one or more committed adults who are willing and able to provide a stable, nurturing and loving home.

"Adoption is forever." Adoption of a child through Hamilton County Children's Services is for committed adults willing to help traumatized children cope with their emotions. Adoptive parents must be willing to understand and support a child's attachment to his or her birth family and help that child stay in touch with his or her siblings. If you decide to adopt one of our children, you'll find there are few things in life more challenging or more rewarding. Adoption can not only change a child's life, it can change yours.

As a public agency, Hamilton County Children's Services can help your family throughout the entire adoption process. We provide a full range of adoption services from training to finalization. In addition, support programs and services are available to our families after finalization. If you choose to adopt a child through our agency, the total cost to you is typically under \$200.

The enclosed information is designed to give you a better understanding of adoption. We've included an overview of the process, more information about the children available for adoption and the basic requirements necessary to be an adoptive parent. We hope this information helps you decide whether you are ready to take the next step in the adoption process.

If you are ready to move forward, call 632-6366 and register for the next Open House. Register today. Our children are waiting.

Sincerely,

Hamilton County Children's Services
Adoption and Foster Care Unit



Hamilton County Job & Family Services

Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services
222 East Central Parkway, Cincinnati OH 45202-1225
513-632-6366 • www.hcadopt.org

Who Can Become An Adoptive Parent

Adoptive parents come from all types of backgrounds, ages and income levels. They may be single or married; own their own home or rent; have a full or part time job. The lives of children available for adoption through HCJFS have often been turbulent. Our children do not need perfect parents; they need one or more committed adults willing to meet their needs and incorporate them into a nurturing, stable family.

HCJFS is responsible for finding families who can meet the needs of our children and protect them until adoption can be finalized. To ensure we meet these goals, each applicant must meet the basic state-mandated criteria below.

Basic Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Applicants

You must:

- Be at least 18 years of age. If you are also applying for licensure as a foster parent you must be at least 21 years of age.
- Have sufficient income to meet your basic needs.
- Be in good physical condition and capable of caring for a child.

You can be:

- Married, single or divorced. If you are married but separated you must have filed for separation in court.
- Of any religious affiliation or none, as long as your religious beliefs do not pose a threat or danger to the health or safety of an adopted child.

Restrictions on Who Can Become an Adoptive Parent

Criminal Background Checks

HCJFS obtains criminal record checks for all applicants. This includes anyone over the age of 18 living in the applicant's home. This ensures

that children are being placed in safe, healthy environments and rules out individuals who may be unsuitable as adoptive parents.

In most cases, HCJFS will not process or approve adoption applications if you or any adult member of your household has been convicted of any of the crimes listed on the back of this page or of any substantially equivalent crime. If you or any member of your household has a criminal record, please review this list carefully. There are exceptions related to the nature of the crime and when it was committed. If you have questions, call the Recruitment Unit at 632-6366.

Allegations of Abuse or Neglect

HCJFS reviews all applicants and other household members for allegations of abuse or neglect locally and with any other public child protection agency. HCJFS may deny an application if records show a substantiated case or history of abuse or neglect by the applicant or any other household member.



HCJFS is responsible for our community's most vulnerable children. Our policies exist to protect the children from further harm and to assess an applicant's ability to provide a safe, nurturing environment.

Prohibitive Crimes

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|----------|--|---------|---|
| 2903.01 | Aggravated Murder | 2907.08 | Voyeurism |
| 2905.05 | Criminal Child Enticement | 2925.04 | Illegal Manufacture of Drugs or Cultivation of Marijuana |
| 2907.02 | Rape | 2903.60 | Failing to Provide for a Functionally Impaired Person |
| 2907.31 | Disseminating Matter Harmful to Juveniles | 2911.11 | Aggravated Burglary |
| 2903.02 | Murder | 2907.09 | Public Indecency |
| 2907.32 | Pandering Obscenity | 2925 | Funding of Drug or Marijuana Trafficking |
| 2907.03 | Sexual Battery | 2903.21 | Aggravated Menacing |
| 2923.12 | Carrying a Concealed Weapon | 2911.12 | Burglary |
| 2903.03 | Voluntary Manslaughter | 2907.12 | Felonious Sexual Penetration |
| 2907.321 | Pandering Obscenity Involving a Minor | 2925.06 | Illegal Administration or Distribution of Anabolic Steroids |
| 2907.04 | Corruption of a Minor | 2903.34 | Patient Abuse, Neglect |
| 2912.13 | Having a weapon while under disability | 2919.12 | Unlawful Abortion |
| 2903.04 | Involuntary Manslaughter | 2907.21 | Compelling Prostitution |
| 2907.322 | Pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor | 2925.11 | Possession of drugs or marijuana |
| 2907.05 | Gross Sexual Imposition | 2905.01 | Kidnapping |
| 2923.161 | Improperly discharging a firearm at or into a habitation or school | 2919.22 | Endangering Children |
| 2903.11 | Felonious Assault | 2907.22 | Promoting Prostitution |
| 2907.323 | Illegal use of a minor in nudity oriented material or performance | 3716.11 | Placing Harmful Objects in Food |
| 2907.06 | Sexual Imposition | 2905.02 | Abduction |
| 2925.02 | Corrupting another with drugs | 2919.24 | Contributing to the Unruliness or Delinquency of a Child |
| 2903.12 | Aggravated Assault | 2907.23 | Procuring |
| 2911.01 | Aggravated Robbery | 2919.25 | Domestic Violence |
| 2907.07 | Importuning | 2905.04 | Child Stealing |
| 2925.03 | Trafficking in Drugs | 2907.25 | Prostitution |
| 2903.13 | Assault | | |
| 2911.02 | Robbery | | |

Who Are the Waiting Children?

At any point in time, approximately 100 Hamilton County children are waiting to be adopted. Children available for adoption through the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services are wards of Children's Services—the local public child protection agency.

Children's Services becomes involved with families when children are abused or neglected. Children's Services attempts to stabilize the family and avoid removing the children. If that fails, children are placed with a relative, foster family or in a group setting. Children's Services works to reunify those children with their families. If that is not possible, the agency asks the court to terminate parental rights. The children are then available for adoption. As a result of this process, many of the children available for adoption have been involved in the system for quite some time.

In Hamilton County, the majority of children available for adoption are African American, over the age of six and part of a sibling group that needs to stay together. All our children have been abused or neglected or were at risk of abuse or neglect. Some have physical or emotional disabilities or developmental delays. Infants and toddlers are rarely available for adoption recruitment. In almost every case, when parental rights are terminated they are adopted by a relative or the foster family.

Most of our children are considered "special needs." In this circumstance, special needs is a legal term and does not necessarily mean a child is physically handicapped. Under Ohio law, the term describes conditions that may prevent or delay adoption of a child. In general, a special needs child will have one or more of the following characteristics. The child:

- Is part of a sibling group.
- Is a racial or ethnic minority.
- Is six years of age or older.

- Has been in permanent custody of a child placement agency for more than one year.
- Has a medical condition, physical impairment, mental retardation or developmental disability.
- Has an emotional or behavioral problem.
- Has a history that indicates a risk of medical, physical or developmental disability or emotional disorder.
- Is emotionally dependent on the foster parents.
- Has experienced previous adoption disruptions.

All of the children available for adoption through HCJFS are for the most part like any other children except their lives have often been unstable and turbulent. Regardless of their age, sex, race, physical or emotional status, these children need safe, loving, permanent homes.

The Adoption Process

One of the most common questions is, how long does the adoption process take? It takes a minimum of one year and in most cases longer. How much longer depends, in part, on you. If you do not miss a training class, that portion of the process can be completed in six weeks. Completing your application and homestudy paperwork in a timely fashion also reduces delays. However, the length of time necessary to match an available child to your desires and parenting skills is unknown. Every aspect of the adoption process is governed by laws and regulations designed to protect the child. HCJFS takes its responsibility toward the children and adoptive families seriously. We make sure the adoption process is fully completed as quickly as possible.

Step 1: You call, write or email us for information on adoption.

We invite you to an Open House.

Step 2: You attend an Open House

Open House is a mandatory first step in the adoption process. During the open house, you authorize a local police check. It takes one to two weeks to process a police check. If your police check meets state standards you will be invited to pre-service training.

Step 3: You attend pre-service training.

Pre-service training consists of 36 hours of classes. You can choose between three-hour evening sessions or six-hour Saturday sessions. Most training can be completed within six weeks if you don't miss a class. If you do miss a class, you must wait until the next training series to make up that class. Both you and your partner or spouse must complete the training before your adoption application will be approved.

At pre-service training:

- You will receive an adoption application. You must complete the application and return it on a timely basis. Incomplete applications cause delays in the adoption process.
- HCJFS will obtain your fingerprints. After training, your fingerprints are submitted for a state criminal background check.

Note: No children are allowed at pre-service training.

Step 4: Homestudy process

The homestudy helps you make decisions about adoption. It involves:

- Multiple interviews with all members of the family.
- A home safety inspection.
- Medical evaluation and forms.
- Personal references.
- An extensive questionnaire.



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Step 5: Matching Process

Once your homestudy is complete, HCJFS prepares a match chart about your family.

A committee of adoption and child welfare specialists meet weekly to review family and child match charts. The committee approves all matches between children and families.

A match is made between your family and a child or sibling group.

Step 6: Presentation and Preplacement Visits

Once you have been matched, your adoption worker discusses all information HCJFS has about the child with you and your family.

You and your family will be encouraged to thoroughly discuss the child, their inclusion in your family and your family's ability to parent that child.

Preplacement visits are scheduled.

Step 7: Placement

Your child moves into your home.

Your adoption worker visits on a regular basis.

Step 8: Finalization

Finalization is a legal proceeding where the adoptive parents accept the rights and responsibility for the adopted child.

HCJFS can file for adoption finalization anytime after the child is living in your home for six months.

Your adoption worker, your family and the adopted child will meet with a Probate Court magistrate.

If the Magistrate approves the adoption is finalized.

Step 9: Post-Finalization Services

Adoptive parents are encouraged to use a variety of support services available through HCJFS such as training and support groups.

Local Adoption Resources

In addition to Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services, there are several other area agencies that can assist you with adoption services or information.

Information Resources

Hamilton County Adoption Website

A photo listing and video clip of Hamilton County Children available for adoption
www.hcadopt.org

Statewide Photolisting

A photo listing of children available for adoption throughout the state. You can view a copy of the "Ohio Adoption Photo Listing" at the Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services. Call 632-6366 for an appointment. Or you can review the listing on the web site at www.state.oh.us/odhs/oapl

Adoption Connection

Telephone: (513) 489-1616
Address: 11223 Cornell Park
Cincinnati, Ohio 45242
Services: Facilitates adoption of infants only.
Homestudies
Training
No international adoptions
Cost: Sliding scale

The Children's Home of Cincinnati

Telephone: (513) 272-2800
Address: 5050 Madison Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45227
Services: Facilitates adoption of children of all ages, including special needs children.
Homestudies
Training
Provides referrals for International Adoption
Cost: Sliding Scale

Catholic Social Services of Southwestern Ohio

Telephone: (513) 241-7745
Address: 100 East 8th Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
Services: Facilitates adoption of children of all ages.
Homestudies
Training
Provides referrals for International Adoption
Cost: Sliding Scale

Lutheran Social Services

Telephone: (513) 326-5430
Address: 11370 Springfield Pike
Cincinnati, Ohio 45246
Services: Facilitates adoption of children of all ages.
Homestudies
Training
Pregnancy Counseling
Provides referrals for International Adoption
Cost: Sliding Scale



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