

BECOMING A FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT IN IOWA



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

Do you have to be under the age of 40 to become a foster or adoptive parent? No, many people do not begin fostering or adopting until they are older and their biological children are grown. If you are in good health and are able to care for a child, you can become a foster or adoptive parent.

Can a single person become a foster or adoptive parent? Yes, both single and married people can foster or adopt a child.

Do you have to own a home to foster or adopt a child? Both renters and homeowners can become foster and/or adoptive parents.

Is it expensive to become a foster parent and/or adopt a child with special needs? Currently, there are no fees for the orientation, PS-MAPP training and the homestudy/licensing process.

How long does the licensing/adoption approval process take? Both the foster care licensing and special needs adoption approval processes include a one-time orientation meeting, a 30-hour training program that takes place over ten weeks (PS-MAPP), and completion of a homestudy. It takes approximately 110 days from the first day of PS-MAPP training to get your homestudy submitted to DHS. It takes approximately 30 days for DHS to review your homestudy to determine if you will be approved or denied.

Can I adopt a foster child? While the primary goal of foster care is to reunify the child with their birth family, some children cannot return home. When this happens, DHS will develop a permanency plan for the child, which may include adoption.

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

What takes place at an orientation meeting?

Orientations are given to Iowa families who are interested in foster care and/or special needs adoption. The orientations are given by private agencies who are partners of Iowa KidsNet. During the orientation, you will learn about the process and be given characteristics of children that are waiting for your help. You will be given an application to fill out and have records checks completed. These record checks must be completed prior to being registered for PS-MAPP training.

I missed my scheduled orientation meeting. Who do I call? Call Iowa KidsNet to reschedule your orientation.

Does my spouse need to attend the orientation and the PS-MAPP training with me? Married couples are required to attend the orientation and training together. It is strongly encouraged that both partners of an unmarried couple attend both the orientation/training.

What is PS-MAPP training? PS-MAPP is a training program for the preparation of prospective foster and adoptive parents. Through the course of ten 3-hour meetings, prospective foster/adoptive parents learn about the children needing placement. Each person leaves the training with specific strategies and techniques for utilizing effective discipline with children who have been abused or neglected. The training provides information on the child welfare system, giving initial policy and procedure information. There is no cost to attend and it is held at various locations in Iowa.

When is the next PS-MAPP training in my area? Iowa KidsNet is responsible for the coordination of PS-MAPP training. Contact Iowa KidsNet to find out when the next training is scheduled in your area.

To become a foster or adoptive parent, contact Iowa KidsNet: 800-243-0756 or www.iowakidsnet.com

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

What is a Homestudy? Families must undergo a formal evaluation process (homestudy interview) in order to determine their appropriateness for foster care and/or adoption. A social worker will be assigned to complete your homestudy. During interviews with your worker, you will be asked to talk about your parenting style, your life experiences, your sense of family, your expectations for a child, the reasons you want to foster and/or adopt, and your ability to adjust your family style to include a new family member. Careful pre-evaluations of prospective families is critical in order to safeguard children and avoid adoption disruptions. When adoptions don't work out, it is profoundly costly to the self-esteem of both the child and the family. Agencies focus on finding the best possible family for a child, rather than finding a child for a specific family.

I just moved to Iowa and was a licensed foster parent in another state. Do I still need to go through the foster parent licensing approval process in Iowa?

Yes, you are required to complete Iowa's licensing approval process in order to serve as a foster parent in Iowa.

Is Iowa KidsNet involved in the foster family or adoptive family selection process? Or in the placement of children?

Iowa KidsNet is responsible for matching all foster families for Iowa's foster children. DHS is responsible for the placement of a foster child. The Iowa Department of Human Services is solely responsible for the selection and placement of children available for adoption; Iowa KidsNet is not involved in this process.

FOSTER CARE QUESTIONS:

Can I choose the gender and age of children I would like to foster? While working on your homestudy, the social worker will ask you about the age, gender and special needs of children you are interested in fostering. Once licensed, a social worker will call you and describe the child(ren) needing a foster home. If you don't feel comfortable caring for any child described, you simply decline the placement.

FOSTER CARE QUESTIONS:

How long will it be before DHS places a foster child with our family? Receiving your foster care license does not guarantee that you will receive a placement. The more specific you are regarding the age, gender and special needs of children you are willing to consider, the longer your waiting period may be. You may want to consider expanding the criteria of children you are willing to accept and open your home to teenagers, sibling groups, minority children and/or teen moms.

What are the space and bedroom requirements for foster children? Forty square feet of bedroom space is required for each child. Children 6 years of age or older cannot not share a room with a child of the opposite sex. Children 2 years or older must have bedroom space other than the foster parents' bedroom.

Will I receive financial assistance to help me foster a child? Yes, they are reimbursed through a basic maintenance rate payment issued to the foster parents by the Iowa Department of Human Services. *Please note: Iowa KidsNet is not involved in determining the rate or the payment to foster parents. Please direct all financial questions to DHS.*

Do foster children receive health coverage? All foster children are eligible for the Title XIX Medical Program. Title XIX covers most medical, dental and prescription drug expenses.

I am related to a child who is in the foster care system and I would like to be considered as their foster or adoptive parent. What do I do? You need to contact the child's Department of Human Services worker. Inform the worker you are interested in being considered as a foster/adoptive parent for the child. The worker will be able to answer your questions and let you know the options that are available.

I have guardianship of a child. Can I become a foster parent and receive financial assistance for this child? No, once you have guardianship of a child, you are not eligible to become a foster parent for that child. Contact your local DHS office to apply for FIP, Medicaid and Social Security.

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ADOPTION QUESTIONS:

Can I choose the gender and age of children I would like to adopt? While working on your homestudy, the social worker will ask you to specify the age, gender and special needs of children you are interested in adopting.

Where are the waiting children living at now? The waiting children reside in foster family homes, residential treatment centers and youth shelters.

Can I meet the child I want to adopt before the child is placed in my home? Yes, pre-placement visits take place before a child is placed in an adoptive home. These visits can take place near the child's location and/or in your home.

Can I adopt a child of a different race? Adopting a child of a race different than your own is referred to as a transracial adoption. Transracial adoptions do take place as case workers strive to always find the best family to match the child's needs. Also, the desires of older children and teens regarding the race of their adoptive families are also taken into consideration.

What qualities does the Department of Human Services look for in adoptive parents? Agencies look for families who can best meet the needs of the child who needs to be placed. They look for families who can commit to a child and are willing to accept the reality of raising that child to adulthood. Some of the general characteristics agencies look for include patience, consistency, structure, flexibility, and the ability to advocate for the child's special needs.

How do caseworkers select the adoptive family for a child? First, the caseworker will read homestudies submitted by interested approved families for a specific child. If the worker feels that a family might be a good match, they will set up interviews with them. The worker will narrow down their choices of families and then hold a staffing meeting to choose a family that best meets the needs of the child.

Do foster/adoptive children receive health coverage? All children with special needs adopted through the State are eligible for Title XIX/Medicaid until age 18.

ADOPTION QUESTIONS:

Will I receive financial assistance to help care for an adopted child with special needs? An adopted child with special needs may be eligible to receive adoption subsidy. A subsidy is intended to help with the cost of the often expensive services these children may require.

What is the cost to go through the adoption approval process and to adopt a child with special needs? Currently, there are no fees for the orientation, PS-MAPP training, the homestudy process or to finalize an adoption. Since the children awaiting adoption are in the foster care system, the state is responsible for the expenses of finalizing special needs adoptions.

How long will it be before DHS places a waiting child with our family? An approved homestudy does not guarantee that a child will be placed with your family. Selecting a family that can meet the needs of a child is the primary goal when making a pre-adoptive placement. The more specific you are regarding the type of child you are willing to consider, the longer your waiting period may be. You may want to consider expanding the criteria of children you are willing to adopt and open your home to teenagers, sibling groups and minority children.

Can the birth parents take back a child after they are adopted? Once a child's parental rights have been terminated, he or she becomes a guardian of the state. The birth parents no longer have any legal rights to that child. All of the children listed for adoption through Iowa KidsNet have already had their parental rights terminated.

I am related to a child in the foster care system and I would like to be considered as their adoptive parent. What do I do? You need to contact the child's DHS worker. Inform the worker you are interested in being considered as the adoptive parent for the child. The worker can tell you the options that are available.

I don't live in Iowa. Can I adopt a child from Iowa? It is possible to adopt an Iowa child if you live in another state, but it is necessary to complete the requirements for special needs adoption in your state before you can be considered for a child from Iowa.

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Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (800.277.8145 / 515.289.4567 / www.ifapa.org)
IFAPA empowers, supports and advocates for foster, adoptive and kinship families in Iowa. IFAPA provides training, peer support and resources to promote safety, permanency and well-being for Iowa's children.