

Wait No More®



Finding Families for Michigan'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 Michigan'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

Agency and Ministry Overview



Adoptive Family Support Network (AFSN)

Service Area: West Michigan

AFSN supports and nurtures the lifelong well-being of all adoptive families by supplying the tools to build strong, healthy, loving families. We provide adoptive parents a network of support, education, information, and referral.

Our services include:

- Adoption Celebration
 - E-news
 - Support Groups specific to adoption related topics
 - Workshops, Seminars, and Training Modules
 - Family Fun Events
- Parent to Parent Program: provides a listening ear, knowledgeable guidance and community connections to any member of an adoptive family in Kent County at no cost to the family.
 - Advanced Parenting for Challenging Children: 8-10 session course provides a mixture of support and education for parents of challenging children, helping families bring hope and happiness back into their lives while learning the power tools they need to heal their hearts.

Contact Information:

Betsy Boggs, Executive Director

233 Fulton East, STE 124

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Phone: (616) 458-7945, (616) 458-7608; Fax: (616) 458-7545

Email: adoptive@afsn.org

Website: www.afsn.org



Bethany Christian Services/Project Open Arms

Service Area: State of Michigan

Founded in 1944, Bethany Christian Services is the nation's largest adoption agency. It is a non-profit, 501(c) (3) organization that provides adoption and orphan care services through a national network of over 80 locations worldwide. Bethany prides itself on living

and operating by its mission statement which is to "manifest 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. With seven locations in the state of Michigan, Bethany provides services in the following areas: family strengthening and preservation, foster care, infant adoption, inter-country adoption, older child adoption, family counseling, refugee, pregnancy counseling, and post adoption services.

Contact Information:

Kimberly Offutt, Project Open Arms Coordinator

901 Eastern Avenue NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Phone: (616) 893-9499; Fax: (616) 748-6084

Email: koffutt@bethany.org

Website: www.bethany.org



Catholic Charities West Michigan

Service Area: Mason, Lake, Osceola, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Muskegon, Montcalm, Ottawa, Kent and Ionia counties.

Catholic Charities West Michigan provides help for individuals and families throughout the 11-county Diocese of Grand Rapids, regardless of their background or religion. We work to help change the lives of those most in need. We seek to improve the lives of our clients and empower them to achieve their goals. Our goal is to create a nurturing and safe family environment for children and adults as well as improving our community through specific outreach. We accomplish our work through comprehensive, results-oriented programs and

services. The programs and services of Catholic Charities West Michigan have four distinct areas of emphasis: Community Outreach, Behavioral Health, Child Welfare, and Family Preservation.

Contact Information:

Teresa Postema, Director of Foster Care & Adoption
360 Division Ave S, STE 3A
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Website: www.ccwestmi.org



Cradles of Grace, Inc./Resurrection Life

The mission of Cradles of Grace is to care for single pregnant women, encouraging life transformation through the love of Christ.

Cradles of Grace makes a way for women to choose life over abortion by walking with her during her pregnancy and giving her the support she needs. We do this by offering her counseling, which is a one on one weekly meeting with a professional Biblical counselor to help guide the woman in her decision to parent or release the child for adoption. Cradles of Grace also pairs up the young woman with a Christian woman,

trained as a mentor to help her set goals and guide her to successful, productive living in Christ. Several churches have opened up their doors to us providing church based centers which are a weekly place for the clients to gather. We offer free childcare, a time of praise, worship and fellowship with other mothers in similar circumstances, a free family style meal, and a broad variety of classes that include sexual integrity and various Bible studies.

Cradles of Grace is an equipping ministry for the body of Christ. We work within the church as a partner to better equip them to walk with single pregnant families. 90% of the women who complete the Cradles of Grace program experience life transformation in Christ which impacts women and their families for eternity and brings about permanent generational change.

Contact Information:

Carol Lubs, Executive Director
PO Box 459
Rockford, MI 49341
Phone: (616) 295-7151, (616) 233-0441; Fax: (616) 866-5089

Email: cradlesofgrace1@gmail.com

Website: www.cradlesofgrace.org



D.A. Blodgett – St. John's

Service Area: In or near Kent County

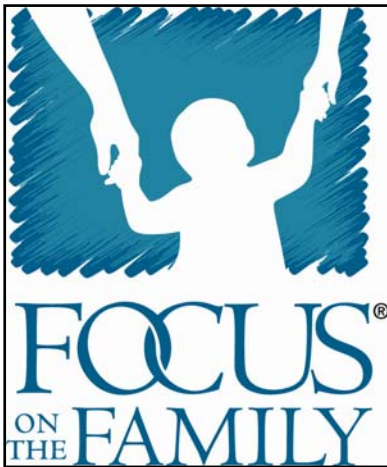
D.A. Blodgett - St. John's Special Needs Adoption Program's objective is to recruit, train and prepare adoptive families for children who have been referred to us by the foster care system. All of the children we

place for adoption have been removed from their birth parents due to some type of abuse or neglect. "Special needs" doesn't necessarily mean a child with mental or physical disabilities; it simply means a child who has been through the foster care system. Most of our children have some emotional, psychological, educational, or physical challenges, resulting from this abuse or neglect. Our greatest need is for families that are willing and able to adopt an older child (over age 8), children of any race and larger sibling groups (three or more children). The SNAP provides free training, family assessments, placement assistance and post placement supervision to any family who adopts through this program. Some children placed for adoption through this program qualify for adoption subsidy from the state which may include a monetary stipend or assistance with medical expenses.

Contact Information:

Joy Engelsman, Adoption Program Manager
805 Leonard St. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: (616) 774-4615, (616) 451-2021; Fax: (616) 451-8936

Email: jengelsman@dablodgett.org
Website: www.dablodgettstjohns.org



Focus on the Family

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



Greater Hopes Family Services

Service Area: West Michigan

Greater Hopes works to tenderly care for and heal children and families through loving and expert adoption services.

We tenderly care for and restore dignity to human lives through providing ethical, gentle and loving family services. When we help parents make wise plans for their children's futures, everybody has a better outcome. When needed, resource families support these parents in the manner most reasonable under the circumstances. And if it turns out an adoption plan is best for a child, the child is placed by the parents into a loving adoptive home with the help of a caring, qualified professional.

Contact Information:

Cathy Raidna, Executive Director
1345 Monroe Ave. NW, Suite 246
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
Phone: (616) 451-0245

Email: greaterhopes@greaterhopes.org
Website: www.greaterhopes.org



Heart for Kidz/Resurrection Life Church

Service Area: West Michigan

Heart for Kidz is an adoption and foster care support group meeting at Resurrection Life Church. It is available for any family who has adopted children or is fostering children in their home, is considering adoption or foster care, and anyone who has a heart to help

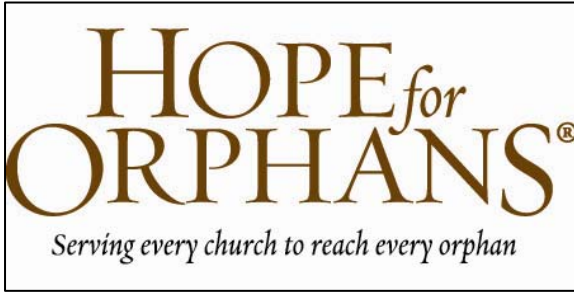
children or families that have adopted or are providing foster care.

Our goal is to support families that have followed God's calling to help orphans. Support comes in various forms such as prayer, friendship, and help with physical needs such as clothing and educational opportunities.

The Group leaders are Jim and Lisa Faber, who are members of Resurrection Life Church. This group meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month upstairs in the Nursery area at Resurrection Life Church.

Contact Information:

Jim Faber, Group Leader
5100 Ivanrest Ave SE
Grandville, MI 49418
Phone: (616) 534-4923(church), (616) 334-7563(Jim's cell)



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:

Shane McBride

2001 W. Plano Parkway

Plano, TX 75075

Phone: (972) 941-4432, (972) 832-9789; Fax: (972) 941-4432

Email: smcbride@hopefororphans.org

Website: www.hopefororphans.org



Kent County Department of Human Services

Service Area: Kent County and neighboring counties

The Kent County Department of Human Services is dedicated to the welfare of children. The Foster Care Department is once again in the business of licensing foster homes! The agency is currently licensing relatives of children in the Child Welfare System, foster homes for adolescents, large sibling groups, and medically fragile children.

Foster parents are trained prior to accepting a placement in their home, and receive a stipend to offset the cost of care for

the children. The agency's motto is: "Children need loving homes...share yours!" Please contact the office at 248-1633 for more information.

Contact Information:

Debra Smith-Jones

121 Franklin SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49507

Phone: (616) 248-1633, (616) 502-1512; Fax: (616) 248-1038

Email: Smith-JonesD@michigan.gov



Lutheran Adoption Service
Service Area: Southern Michigan

Lutheran Adoption Services is a jointly owned subsidiary corporation of Lutheran Child and Family Services of Michigan and Lutheran Social Services of

Michigan. Opened in 1977, we have placed more than 5,000 children for adoption in the last 32 years. We specialize in working with children in the Michigan foster care system and finding loving, permanent homes while preserving sibling connections as much as possible. Our dedicated staff strives to provide efficient services with keeping to our core belief that “every child deserves a loving home”.

Contact Information:

Eric Washburn, Supervisor
801 S. Waverly, #205
Lansing, MI 48917

Phone: (517) 827-5180, (248) 423-2770 x1123; Fax: (517) 886-1586

Email: ewash@lssm.org
Website: www.lasadoption.org



Lutheran Social Services of Michigan
Service Area: West Michigan

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan has been providing services for children and families since 1934. We are Michigan’s largest private foster care agency, helping more than 800 children every day across the Lower Peninsula. Our experienced staff is passionate about

their desire to help foster families create a better life for the children in their care. Thousands of Michigan children need temporary homes where they can feel safe, secure and loved. Some are victims of abuse or neglect. Some have been abandoned by their birth families. It’s not their fault! To be a successful foster parent you must love children and want to help them. Be a hero: provide a safe home for children by becoming a foster parent.

Contact Information:

Kate Wert, MSW, Foster Care Licensing Coordinator
207 East Fulton St. 4th Floor
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: (616) 356-1934, x22; Fax: (616) 356-5779

Email: kwert@lssm.org
Website: www.lssm.org



Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE)

Service Area: State of Michigan

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is an information and referral service for prospective adoptive parents interested in adopting children with "special needs," and for adoption workers looking for homes for these children.

The MARE website provides a photo listing of waiting Michigan children and of Michigan families interested in adopting children with special needs. The child listings are updated bimonthly, typically at the beginning and end of each month.

MARE is not a placement service -- it does not provide care for waiting children and does not do family home studies. Instead, MARE refers prospective parents to agencies and answers

questions they might have about adoption and children with "special needs." MARE also provides technical assistance to adoption workers and agencies.

Contact Information:

Sheila Boardman, Recruitment Specialist
PO Box 980789
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Phone: (734) 528-2047

Website: www.mare.org



Michigan Family Forum

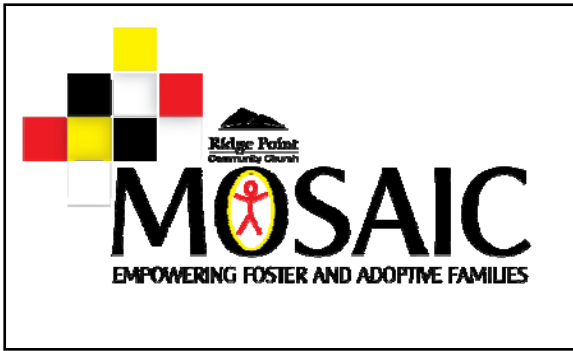
Service Area: State of Michigan

Michigan Family Forum is a non-profit family policy council affiliated with Focus on the Family and Family Research Council. For 20 years, Michigan Family Forum has served as the voice for the family at the Capitol in Lansing. Michigan Family Forum's efforts are focused in four key areas: Strengthening Marriage, Encouraging Fatherhood, Protecting Children and Honoring our Elders. Michigan Family Forum has partnered with Bethany Christian Services on their Project Open Arms initiative and seeks to network with churches to find loving homes for Michigan's orphans. Visit us online at www.michiganfamily.org for more information about how you can partner with us to help develop sound public policy for stronger Michigan families.

Contact Information:

Brad Snavely, Executive Director
PO Box 15216
Lansing, MI 48901
Phone: (517) 374-1171; Fax: (517) 374-6112

Email: info@michiganfamily.org
Website: www.michiganfamily.org



MOSAIC Foster & Adoptive Ministry – a ministry of Ridge Point Church

MOSAIC exists to empower foster and adoptive families through community, mentoring, education, wrap-around support and encouragement.

We offer regular "social gatherings" for networking and meeting other adoptive and foster families, book clubs and/or DVD training sessions, summer play groups,

resource lending library and information on local events/conferences. In addition, the new "Fostering Together" foster care support group started this spring, and a Respite Training event will be offered in the fall.

We welcome any area adoptive and/or foster families to journey together with us regardless of church affiliation.

Though MOSAIC is a ministry of Ridge Point Community Church, we serve the community and welcome partnerships with other area churches.

Contact Information:

Wendy Cheek, MOSAIC Coordinator
340 104th Ave.
Holland, MI 49423
Phone: (616) 403-1687(cell), (616) 395-2600(church)

Email: wcheek@allcom.net
Website: www.mosaicfosteradopt.weebly.com



Orphan Ministry Alliance, West Michigan **Service Area:** West Michigan

ABOUT US: We are an alliance of churches, individuals, adoption agencies and other related organizations dedicated to expanding orphan and adoption ministry in the local church. This alliance meets regularly to encourage and equip one another as well as to coordinate resources and efforts, with the goal of expanding our impact on the worldwide orphan crisis.

MISSION STATEMENT: Encourage and empower the Church to live out God's mandate to care for orphans and bring them the hope of Jesus Christ.

Contact Information:

Jodi Lewis
1670 Spring Wind Drive SW
Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 583-1667

Email: jnjlewis@gmail.com



Pathways, MI

Service Area: Muskegon, Ottawa, Allegan and Kent Counties

Mission Statement: "Providing life-transforming services to children, families and our community."

Pathways, MI is aware that foster families provide a vital service to their community. Our Child Welfare Department is committed to keeping lower caseloads for each case manager and licensor in order to maintain more personal and thorough levels of services. When

placement of a child in foster care becomes necessary, the goal of the foster care program is to ensure that the child's needs are met, and that a child is placed with a permanent family as soon as possible.

When children in foster care are unable to be reunited with their birth families, the adoption program at Pathways, MI places children into loving, permanent homes. An Adoption Specialist assists adoptive families by providing orientation, training and family assessments at no cost to the adoptive parents.

Contact Information:

Catherine Brink, Foster Home Licensor
Stephanie Dykhuis, Adoption Specialist
412 Century Lane
Holland, MI 49423

Email: cbrink@pathwaysmi.org

Website: www.pathwaysmi.org

Phone: (616) 396-2301, x137, (616) 396-2301, x139; Fax: (616) 396-8070



Youth Guidance Foster Care & Adoption Center

Service Area: State of Michigan; Focus on Eaton, Cass, St. Joseph, Branch, Calhoun, Berrien, Ionia/Montcalm and Hillsdale Counties.

Youth Guidance Foster Care & Adoption Center is a loving Christian non-profit organization dedicated to the needs of Michigan's foster children and families. We are based in Battle Creek and work with children from all parts of the state: All ages. All backgrounds. All shapes and sizes. We believe that children deserve to be raised

in families, not just in homes. Children deserve to feel loved and respected - to grow up with confidence and a healthy sense of self-respect. We assist families seeking to adopt children currently in foster care, ages 0-18. We're guided by faith and driven by our commitment to providing compassionate care for each child we help. We believe that we are called to serve others with competent care, compassionate commitment, and Christ-like character. Over the years, Youth Guidance has gained the respect of service providers and court systems across Michigan by providing the highest quality of service to children and families.

Contact Information:

Nicole Gillies, Program Supervisor
70 Calhoun Street
Battle Creek, MI 49017

Email: YouthGuidance@citylinc.org

Website: www.CityLinC.org

Phone: (269) 788-3069, (269) 969-9438; Fax: (269) 969-9465

May 2011

Bethany Christian Services – Grand Rapids

-Tuesday, May 24 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-8:30pm

Bethany Christian Services – Holland

-Thursday, May 26 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-9:00pm

Cradles of Grace

-Monday, May 23 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan

-Wednesday, May 25 – Orientation, 6:00-8:00pm

MOSAIC

-Monday, May 23 – DVD Training, 6:00-8:00pm

-Thursday, May 26 – DVD Training, 9:00-11:00am

June 2011

Bethany Christian Services – Grand Rapids

- Monday, June 6 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-9:00pm
- Tuesday, June 7 – PRIDE Session 1, 6:00-9:00pm
- Wednesday, June 8 – PRIDE Session 2, 6:00-9:00pm
- Tuesday, June 14 – PRIDE Session 3, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, June 16 – PRIDE Session 4, 6:00-9:00pm
- Tuesday, June 21 – PRIDE Sessions 5 & 7, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, June 23 – PRIDE Session 6, 6:00-9:00pm
- Tuesday, June 28 – PRIDE Session 8, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, June 30 – Therapeutic Crisis Intervention Session 1, 6:00-9:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Holland

- Monday, June 6 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-9:00pm
- Wednesday, June 15 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-9:00pm
- Tuesday, June 21 – Post Adoption Parent Support Group, 5:30-7:00pm
- Tuesday, June 21 – Post Adoption Child Support Group, 5:30-7:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Kalamazoo

- Friday, June 3 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2 & 9, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Saturday, June 4 – PRIDE Sessions 3 & 4, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Friday, June 24 – PRIDE Sessions 5 & 6, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Saturday, June 25 – PRIDE Sessions 7 & 8, 9:00am-4:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Muskegon/Fremont

- Tuesdays, June 14, 21 & 28 – PRIDE Trainings, 5:00-9:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Madison Heights

- Thursday, June 2 – PRIDE Session 4, 6:30-9:30pm
- Saturday, June 11 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2 & 3, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Thursday, June 16 – PRIDE Session 6, 6:30-9:30pm
- Tuesday, June 21 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-8:30pm
- Saturday, June 25 – PRIDE Sessions 4 & 6, 9:00am-4:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Traverse City

- Wednesday, June 15 – Adoption/Foster Care Orientation, 9:00am-12:00pm

Cradles of Grace

- Monday, June 6 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm
- Monday, June 13 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm
- Monday, June 20 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm
- Monday, June 27 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm

D.A. Blodgett

- Monday, June 13 – Orientation, 6:30-8:30-m
- Saturday, June 25 – Adoption Training, 8:30am-5:30pm

Greater Hopes Family Services

- Wednesday, June 8 – Adoptive Parent Support Group Meeting

Heart for Kidz

- Wednesday, June 1 – Support Group Meeting
- Wednesday, June 15 – Support Group Meeting

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan

- Tuesday, June 14 – Orientation, 6:00-8:00pm
- Wednesday, June 29 – Orientation, 6:00-8:00pm

Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE)

- Saturday, June 11 – MOSAIC Ministry Event

MOSAIC

- Wednesday, June 8 – Play Date
- Thursday, June 9 – Fostering Together, 7:00-9:00pm
- Wednesday, June 22 – Play Date

Pathways, MI

- Thursday, June 16 – PRIDE Training
- Friday, June 17 – PRIDE Training
- Thursday, June 21 – Orientation, 6:30-7:30pm

July 2011

Bethany Christian Services – Grand Rapids

- Thursday, July 7 – Therapeutic Crisis Intervention 2, 6:00-9:00pm
- Saturday, July 9 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2 & 3, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Tuesday, July 12 – Therapeutic Crisis Intervention 3, 6:00-9:00pm
- Wednesday, July 13 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-8:30pm
- Saturday, July 16 – PRIDE Sessions 4 & 6, 9:00am-4:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Holland

- Monday, July 11 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-9:00pm
- Tuesday, July 19 – Post Adoption Child Support Group, 5:30-7:00pm
- Tuesday, July 19 – Post Adoption Parent Support Group, 5:30-7:00pm
- Saturday, July 23 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2, & 3, 9:00am-3:30pm
- Saturday, July 30 – PRIDE Sessions 4 & 6, 9:00am-3:30pm

Bethany Christian Services – Kalamazoo

- Friday, July 15 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2 & 3
- Saturday, July 16 – PRIDE Sessions 4 & 6

Bethany Christian Services – Muskegon/Fremont

- Thursdays, July 14, 21 & 28 – PRIDE Trainings, 5:00-9:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Madison Heights

- Thursday, July 14 – PRIDE Sessions 1 & 2, 6:30-9:30pm
- Saturday, July 16 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2 & 3, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Tuesday, July 19 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-8:30pm
- Thursday, July 28 – PRIDE Session 3, 6:30-9:30pm
- Saturday, July 30 – PRIDE Sessions 4 & 6, 9:00am-4:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Traverse City

- Thursday, July 7 – PRIDE, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, July 14 – Attachment, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, July 21 – Loss, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, July 21 – Adoption/Foster Care Orientation, 1:00-4:00pm
- Thursday, July 28 – Strengthening Family Relationships, 6:00-9:00pm

Cradles of Grace

- Monday, July 11 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm
- Monday, July 18 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm
- Monday, July 25 – Meeting, 5:30-8:00pm

D.A. Blodgett

- Thursday, July 7 – PRIDE, 6:00-9:00pm
- Monday, July 11 – Orientation, 6:30-8:30pm
- Thursday, July 14 – PRIDE, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, July 21 – PRIDE, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, July 28 – PRIDE, 6:00-9:00pm
- Saturday, July 30 – Adoption Training, 8:30am-5:30pm

Greater Hopes Family Services

-Wednesday, July 13 – Adoptive Parent Support Group Meeting

Heart for Kidz

-Wednesday, July 6 – Support Group Meeting

-Wednesday, July 20 – Support Group Meeting

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan

-Tuesday, July 12 – Orientation, 6:00-8:00pm

-Saturday, July 16 – PRIDE Sessions 1 & 2, 9:00am-Noon

PRIDE Session 3, 12:30-3:30pm

-Saturday, July 23 – PRIDE Session 4, 9:00am-Noon

PRIDE Session 6, 12:30-3:30pm

-Wednesday, July 27 – Orientation, 6:00-8:00pm

MOSAIC

-Thursday, July 7 – Fostering Together, 7:00-9:00pm

-Wednesday, July 13 – Play Date

-Wednesday, July 27 – Play Date

Pathways, MI

-Saturday, July 23 – PRIDE Training

August 2011

Bethany Christian Services – Grand Rapids

- Monday, August 1 – PRIDE Session 1, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Tuesday, August 2 – PRIDE Session 2, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Wednesday, August 3 – PRIDE Session 3, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Thursday, August 4 – PRIDE Session 4, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Monday, August 8 – PRIDE Sessions 5 & 7, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Tuesday, August 9 – PRIDE Session 6, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Wednesday, August 10 – PRIDE Session 8, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Thursday, August 11 – Therapeutic Crisis Intervention 1, 10:00am-1:00pm
- Friday, August 12 – Therapeutic Crisis Intervention 2 & 3, 10:00am-4:00pm
- Tuesday, August 16 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-8:30pm

Bethany Christian Services – Holland

- Monday, August 1 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-9:00pm
- Saturday, August 13 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2 & 3, 9:00am-3:30pm
- Tuesday, August 16 – PRIDE Sessions 4 & 6, 9:00am-3:30pm
- Tuesday, August 16 – Post Adoption Child Support Group, 5:30-7:00pm
- Tuesday, August 16 – Post Adoption Parent Support Group, 5:30-7:00pm
- Tuesday, August 16 – Discover Adoption, 6:30pm

Bethany Christian Services – Kalamazoo

- Wednesday, August 10 – PRIDE Sessions 1, 2 & 3, 9:00am-4:00pm
- Thursday, August 11 – PRIDE Sessions 4 & 6, 9:00am-4:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Muskegon/Fremont

- Tuesday, August 16 – Discover Adoption Meeting, 6:00-8:00pm

Bethany Christian Services – Madison Heights

- Thursday, August 4 – PRIDE Session 4, 6:30-9:30pm
- Tuesday, August 16 – Foster Care Orientation, 6:00-8:30pm
- Thursday, August 18 – PRIDE Session 6, 6:30-9:30pm
- Tuesday, August 30 – Discover Adoption Meeting, 6:30-8:30pm

Bethany Christian Services – Traverse City

- Thursday, August 4 – Discipline, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, August 11 – Continuing Family Relationships, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, August 18 – Planning for Change, 6:00-9:00pm
- Thursday, August 18 – Adoption/Foster Care Orientation, 9:00am-12:00pm
- Thursday, August 25 – Making an Informed Decision, 6:00-9:00pm

D.A. Blodgett

- Monday, August 8 – Orientation, 6:30-8:30pm
- Tuesday, August 30 – Evening Class, 6:30-8:30pm

Greater Hopes Family Services

- Wednesday, August 10 – Adoptive Parent Support Group Meeting

Heart for Kidz

- Wednesday, August 3 – Support Group Meeting
- Wednesday, August 17 – Support Group Meeting

Lutheran Social Services of Michigan

- Tuesday, August 9 – PRIDE Sessions 5 & 7, 6:00-9:00pm
- Tuesday, August 16 – PRIDE Session 8, 6:00-9:00pm

MOSAIC

- Thursday, August 4 – Fostering Together, 7:00-9:00pm
- Wednesday, August 10 – Play Date
- Sunday, August 21 – MOSAIC Summer Picnic, 3:00-6:00pm
- Wednesday, August 24 – Play Date

Orphan Ministry Alliance, West Michigan

- Thursday, September 22 – Growing a Godly Orphan Ministry, 7:00pm

Pathways, MI

- Saturday, August 13 – PRIDE Training
- Saturday, August 20 – PRIDE Training

Frequently Asked Questions about Adoption¹

1. What is the first step in becoming a foster parent or an adoptive parent?

The first step is to find an agency to complete your licensing (for foster care) or your home study (for adoption). There are many agencies that have licenses to do foster care or adoption or both. Every county has a local Department of Human Services (DHS) agency, and many counties have licensed adoption agencies that can assist you in the foster care and/or adoption process.

A complete list of adoption agencies can be found at:

<http://mare.org/MIAgencies/MIAgencies.html>

When you first contact an agency, be sure to ask them plenty of questions – any question you have is important enough to be answered. You may want to ask:

How long will the home study or foster care licensing process take? Will I have to pay any fees? What fees will be reimbursed once an adoption is complete? How long will I wait until I am identified as a family for a child? Will the agency complete my adoption home study even if I don't want to foster a child or get a foster care license? What services are provided to me once my home study is complete? When and where are the adoption training classes held?

Feel free to call several agencies and ask them the same kinds of questions before making a final decision. Be sure you feel comfortable with the agency you choose; you will be working closely with them for a long time during the process and will be sharing private and personal information. They will also become your strongest advocate in this process.

2. What's the difference between foster care and adoption?

Foster care differs from adoption in a few ways. A foster parent assumes care and responsibility for the child in foster care, but the State maintains all legal guardianship of the child. Adoption transfers legal responsibility and care over to the adopting parents.

A foster parent's primary role is to help in efforts to reunite the child with their birth family. This may include visits between the child and birth parents (when appropriate), taking a child to counseling (if needed), and working closely with the foster care worker. Children may stay in the foster home for several days, weeks or months – perhaps even a year or longer – while birth parents are working to resolve the issues that brought the children into care in the first place. Sometimes, a child is unable to return home; it is then that the court terminates parental rights and the state identifies an adoptive family.

Adoptive parents become the child's legal parent. Their lifelong commitment and responsibility are no less important than if the child was born to them.

¹ All information adapted from <http://mare.org/Info/FAQ.html>.

3. What kinds of children are waiting for adoption?

In Michigan, there are three different types of adoption:

Waiting child adoption, often referred to as special needs adoption, means adopting a child from the foster care system.

“Special needs” often makes people think of children with severe problems or limitations, such as needing a wheelchair. In reality, waiting children fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Minority children of all ages (65% of waiting children are African American).
- Children who may have emotional, learning, physical, or developmental issues.
- Children who must be placed in the same home along with their brothers or sisters.
- Children over the age of five (the majority of waiting Caucasian children are over the age of nine).

In most cases, these children have had traumatic past experiences that may include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and/or severe neglect. Others may have been drug and/or alcohol exposed. All of these children have experienced the grief and loss of having been separated from their families.

International adoption means adopting a child from a country other than the United States. The kinds of children available vary by country. Also, each country has certain restrictions about the types of families that can adopt, including age and marital status. Adoption fees for an international adoption can range from \$10,000 and up.

Infant adoption involves adopting an infant at birth. Birth parents often choose the family they wish to adopt their child, and there is usually some “openness” in infant adoption. The amount of openness in an infant adoption is decided by the birth parents and adoptive parents, and may include photographs, letters, and possibly even visits. Families adopting an infant spend thousands of dollars, and may wait upwards of three years for a placement. It is estimated that each year there are 25,000 infants available for adoption – and one million families waiting for those infants.

4. Should I become a foster parent so I can adopt a younger child?

Because foster care is considered to be a temporary placement, it will not be possible to adopt every child that comes into your home. A foster parent is expected to work with the agency and birth parents, in the hopes that the family will be reunited. A foster parent must be objective and must be able to assist a child if and when it comes time for that child to leave the foster home.

Sometimes, however, children are unable to return home. Once parental rights are terminated, relatives and foster parents are given consideration for adoption.

5. What does “foster-to-adopt” mean? What about “dual licensing”?

“Foster-to-adopt” means families become foster parents with the hope and intent that they will adopt a child that comes into their home as a foster placement. In Michigan, we call this same process “dual licensing.” Families complete the foster care licensing requirements and the adoption requirements at the same time. It saves time and reduces duplicate paperwork. It is also beneficial to children because they won’t move as often.

6. Do I have to be married to adopt or be a foster parent?

You don’t have to be married to adopt or foster a child or children.

7. Do I have to own my own home?

You don't have to own your own home to adopt or foster a child. A rented house or apartment is fine, as long as there is adequate bedroom space per child. The home must be free from health and fire hazards and must have a safe play area for children.

8. Do I need to make a lot of money?

You do not have to be rich to adopt or be a foster parent. Even if you receive some type of financial assistance, you are still eligible to adopt or provide foster care as long as you have adequate financial resources to provide for your family and the additional children you wish to bring into your home.

9. Why are so many of the children awaiting adoption from foster care older? Are there any younger children available for adoption?

In Michigan, more than 92% of waiting children are adopted by foster parents or relatives. While half of all adoptions from the foster care system are of children under the age of five, almost all of them are adopted by a foster parent or relative. Many of those children are also part of a sibling group that includes older children, where all of the children need to be placed together.

10. Can I adopt just one child in a sibling group?

Children in the foster care system have already experienced a great deal of loss. They have lost their parents, their friends and families, even their homes. Often, they have also lost their school, their neighborhood, their toys, and their clothes. In many cases, the only connection they still have is to their brothers or sisters. Michigan's policy is to act in the best interests of the children. Siblings are placed together unless there's an important reason to separate them. If for some reason siblings cannot be placed together, it's possible they will need to continue to visit with each other, even after they are placed in separate families.

11. What is an adoption homestudy?

The home study (also called a family assessment) is done by a social worker at a licensed adoption agency and typically takes at least six months to complete. The home study consists of a series of meetings between the family and the adoption worker, with at least one meeting occurring in the family's home. It provides an educational opportunity for the family to learn more and seriously consider their motivations and expectations for adoption. It also gives the adoption worker a chance to get to know the family.

On average, it takes six months to finalize an adoption after a child is placed in your home. During this time your adoption worker will visit you regularly to see how your new family is adjusting. Counseling and support services may be available after a child is placed in your home. The home study generally includes the following:

Personal History – A complete history and evaluation of your current family life and past experiences – and how they will affect your capacity to parent an adoptive child – is written. This helps the adoption worker decide how a child will fit into your family and determine what type of child might do best in your home. Children living in the home are also interviewed (depending on their age and level of understanding) about how they feel and what adoption means to them. Any other adult in the home (parents, aunts, cousins, etc.) will also be interviewed.

Health Statements – Everyone in your home will need to provide a medical history and a recent physical (within one year). Medical conditions that are under control (high blood pressure, diabetes, etc.) usually will not prevent a person from being approved to adopt.

Criminal Background Check- All adults living in the home will need to complete a State Police check and Protective Service clearance. Some counties may also require local police clearances as well. Adoptive parents will also need to provide fingerprints.

Income Statement – You will be asked to provide proof of your income, such as a copy of an income tax form, a paycheck stub, or a W-2 form. Bank statements and insurance policies may also be requested.

Personal References- You will be asked to provide the names, addresses, and phone numbers of three unrelated individuals who can share their knowledge about your experience with children, the stability of your marriage and/or household, and your motivation to adopt.

Training – You will need to complete a minimum of 12 hours of Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) training.

12. What happens once my home study is completed? How long will it take for a child to be placed in my home?

Once your home study is complete, you may start inquiring about children your family is interested in. Your adoption worker will share information about your family – including your homestudy– with the child’s worker. Usually children’s workers gather information on multiple families at the same time in order to find a family that best meets the needs of the child. Once the family has been chosen, the child’s worker will share more in-depth, detailed information with the family’s adoption worker. Usually called a Child Assessment, this report contains information such as how the child came into foster care, how long the child has been in care, how many placements the child has lived in, and any diagnoses the child may have. It is then up to the family to decide if they want to proceed with an adoptive placement.

Families and children need time to get to know one another. Visitation will take place in a way that is best for the child and family, and may include afternoon visits, overnight visits, and even weekend visits. It is up to the child’s case worker to determine the schedule, including when a child will make the final move into a family’s home.

These same procedures apply for families adopting a child from another state. Families need to be prepared to travel to the state the child lives in for at least an initial meeting and visit and perhaps even for an extended stay.

13. Is there some kind of financial assistance available if I choose to foster or adopt a child?

The Adoption Subsidy Program provides financial support subsidy and/or medical subsidy for families adopting children from the foster care system. There is also financial assistance available for those who provide foster care. Support subsidy assists with the payment of expenses related to caring for and raising the child. Medical subsidy assists with the costs of necessary treatment for physical, mental, or emotional conditions which existed, or the cause of which existed, prior to adoption. Neither is meant to cover all expenses incurred in raising a child; rather, these payments are meant to help offset some of the cost.

The amount paid is dependent on the needs of the child, not the family. The amount is set by the State agency responsible for the child’s care. In the case of adoption, subsidy eligibility must be determined before the petition for adoption is filed, and a subsidy agreement must be signed before the adoption is final. Not all children will qualify for adoption subsidy. It is dependent upon each child’s individual needs.

Federal Tax Credit²

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.

14. What are the qualifications for becoming a licensed foster parent?

Foster care is seen as a short term solution to an emergency situation. Agencies need committed individuals who are:

- Willing to work with the child’s birth parents
- Supportive of efforts to return the child home
- Able to work with children who have significant emotional and behavioral needs
- Able to encourage teens toward independent living

Anyone applying to become a foster parent must be between 18 and 65 years of age, and be able to:

- Complete a licensing application
- Successfully complete background clearances for all adult household members
- Provide medical statements for all household members
- Have an environmental inspection (when applicable)
- Provide three acceptable references
- Pass on-site visits to the home by the licensing worker
- Attend training pertinent to foster care issues

² All information taken from <https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/images/stories/documents/adoptionadvocate21.pdf>.

Ten Questions for Parents Preparing to Adopt or Foster³

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?

³ All 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.

The Adoption Process⁴

A **simplified view of the legal process** of an adoption, without a temporary placement, is presented here in an effort to make it clear how the adoption process in Michigan works:

- The prospective adoptive parent petitions the court to adopt a specific child. The petition is filed in the court of the county where the child is found or where the adoptive parent resides.
- The petition and other legal forms are normally accompanied by a consent signed by the parent, a child placing agency, a court or the DHS, depending on the type of adoption.
- The court orders an investigation to assure that the interests of the adoptee are protected.
- Following receipt of a completed report of investigation and satisfied that the adoptee's best interests are served, the court will issue an order terminating the rights of the parent, the child placing agency, court or the DHS. The court makes the adoptee a ward of the court, and orders placement in adoption, and assigns a child placing agency, the DHS or an agent of the court to supervise/monitor the adoptive placement.
- Six months after the placement or longer if the court finds it in the adoptee's best interest, the court will enter an order of adoption. The order of adoption completes the process.

There are other considerations or aspects of adoption in Michigan that are common regardless of the type of adoption. Some of these are:

1. Adoption makes the adoptee an heir of the adopting parent.
2. The family name of the adopting parent may or may not become the name of the adoptee at the discretion of the parties.
3. A court appointed guardian must act on behalf of any unemancipated minor parent who consents to an adoption of a child or who releases a child to a child placing agency for adoption.
4. An adoption subsidy may be available to assist with the financial burden of care for a child with special needs. A pamphlet explaining adoption subsidy is available from child placing agencies, the DHS or attorneys.
5. At the time of an adoption, written non-identifying information about the adoptee, the adoptee's health history, and the adoptee's family background is made available to the adopting parents. In direct and agency placements identifying information is withheld unless the adoptee's parent and the prospective adoptive parent elect to exchange identifying information.
6. All fees connected with an adoption must be approved by the court. Permissible costs, fees, and any exchange of goods or services, are specified in the law. They must be reported to the court prior to formal placement, and again before the court issues the final order of adoption.
7. Placement of a child for adoption can be done only by the parent of the adoptee, a child placing agency, the DHS, or a court that has the legal and physical custody of the adoptee.
8. Only prospective adoptive parents may solicit biological parents for adoption. ("Solicit" means contact in person, by telephone or telegraph, by letter or other writing, or by other communication directed to a specific recipient.)
9. Before a formal placement the rights of both parents must be terminated.

⁴ All information taken from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-PUB-0823_221566_7.pdf

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 Georgia. 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

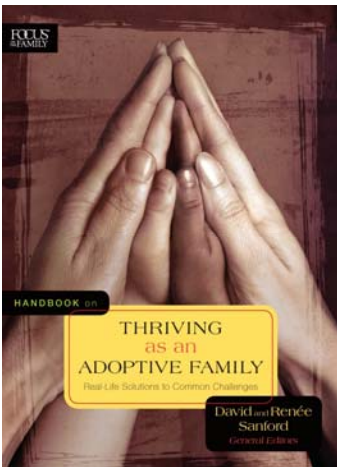
4. Evaluate the agency's program (some good questions to ask)

- 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.

Focus on the Family Support Resources

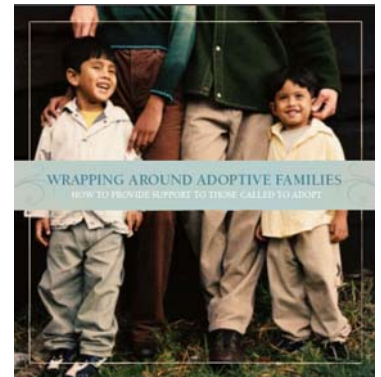


Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family

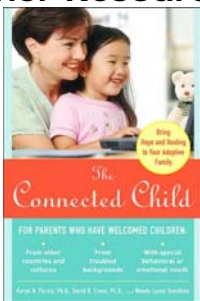
Adoption is a high calling from God, and the Christian home is primary soil for planting seeds of faith. But how will post-adoption challenges affect this growth? Many families do not feel adequately prepared for unexpected challenges like a child who has been adopted fighting with his new siblings, 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



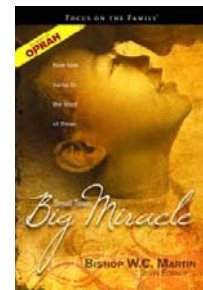
The Connected Child



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).

Special Thanks to...

