

# Wait No More<sup>®</sup>



## Finding Families for Washington'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 Washington'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



### ***A Family For Every Child***

A Family for Every Child is dedicated to finding loving, permanent families for every waiting child in foster care.

A Family For Every Child, a nonprofit organization, was started by Christy Obie-Barrett and dozens of dedicated and passionate volunteers. In 2006, AFFEC was formed and developed into an organization focused on finding permanent and loving adoptive homes for Washington's waiting children. Our intention is to develop programs that assist special-needs/challenging-to-place foster children in finding their own Forever Families.

We started with our first sole project called The Heart Gallery in November 2006, and now we have blossomed into ten incredibly successful programs. None of this could have occurred without the wonderful support from this community's sources, including volunteers, sponsors, photographers, in-kind donors and many more.

#### **Contact Information:**

*Heather Smith—Heart Gallery Director*  
880 Beltline Road  
Springfield, OR 97477  
Phone: (541) 343-2856; Fax: (541) 343-2866

Email: [heather@afamilyforeverychild.org](mailto:heather@afamilyforeverychild.org)  
Website: [www.afamilyforeverychild.org](http://www.afamilyforeverychild.org)



### ***Antioch Adoptions***

**Service area:** King, Pierce, Snohomish and Spokane Counties

Antioch Adoptions is a licensed child-placement agency that has been placing children in forever families for over 11 years without charging a fee for our services.

Although we provide the same services as any other fully-licensed adoption agency, we don't believe that children are a commodity to be bought or sold. Therefore, we ask the community as a whole to participate in covering the cost to help more families adopt children who otherwise may linger in the Foster Care system. Our desire is to find a family for every child. By uniting the Body of Christ, everyone can do their part in answering God's call to care for orphans. There is hope for these children...together we can make a difference.

#### **Contact Information:**

*Meri Ruth Singletary—Ministry Development Director*  
P.O. Box 2763  
Redmond, WA 98073  
Phone: (425) 558-0921; Fax: (425) 702-2171

Email: [foreverfamily@antiochadoptions.org](mailto:foreverfamily@antiochadoptions.org)  
Website: [www.antiochadoptions.org](http://www.antiochadoptions.org)



### **Bethany Christian Services**

**Service area:** State of Washington and Oregon

Bethany is a not-for-profit, child placing agency with more than 60 years of delivering compassionate, professional services. Our worldwide team of more than 900 professionals is dedicated to one mission: Bethany Christian Services manifests the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of

children and families through quality social services.

Bethany Christian Services serves orphans in more than 75 locations in the U.S and in countries on a total of five continents. Each year Bethany serves over 50,000 children and has the goal to serve 75,000 children per year by 2015.

Bethany Christian Services Northwest has been serving Washington and Oregon families since 1984 with offices in Bellingham, Seattle and Portland. Today, Bethany Northwest offers a variety of programs including International Adoption, Domestic Infant Adoption, State/Older Child Adoption, Foster Care, Full Service Counseling and Pregnancy Counseling for expectant mothers.

#### **Contact Information:**

*Mahina Johnson—Foster Care Supervisor*

12360 Lake City Way NE, Suite 301

Seattle, WA 98125

Phone: (206) 367-4604, (206) 455-1473; Fax: (206) 367-1860

Email: [mkjohnson@bethany.org](mailto:mkjohnson@bethany.org)

Website: [www.bethany.org/washington](http://www.bethany.org/washington)



### **City Ministries**

**Service area:** King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties

The Child Placement Agency is a private faith-based agency started by City Ministries that is licensed by the State of Washington to recruit, train and certify foster

parents and to provide case management services, visitation supervision and transportation in support of children in "out-of-home" placements. The Agency is currently recruiting new foster parents, respite providers and other volunteers to help accomplish its mission to serve the community.

The Rose Hill Cottages are a community of 22 single family residences with an average of four bedrooms and a community center. The community is owned by City Ministries and is adjacent to The City Church Kirkland campus. Its purpose is to provide affordable housing to families providing foster care. Some of the families licensed through the Agency will live in the Rose Hill Cottages.

#### **Contact Information:**

*Cheryl Haskins—Executive Director*

9051 132nd Ave NE

Kirkland, WA 98033

Phone: (206) 391-3907

Email: [cheryl.haskins@thecity.org](mailto:cheryl.haskins@thecity.org)

[infor@cityministries.org](mailto:infor@cityministries.org)

Website: <http://cityministries.org/cpa.html>



### ***Connected by Grace***

Mission Statement:

We are an Adoption/Foster Care/Orphan group that advocates for all.

We provide support, training and education in all focuses so that more children will find their forever families. We bring awareness to the needs of the fatherless and prepare families to be equipped in adoption or in

the support of orphan work domestically and abroad.

#### **Contact Information:**

*Lavonne Dideon—Founder*

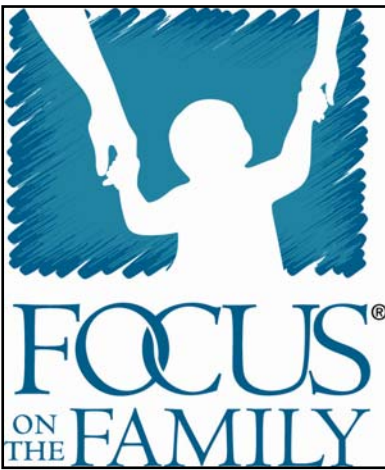
14013 SE 159th Place

Renton, WA 98058

Phone: (425) 577-4467

Email: [lavonned@mail.com](mailto:lavonned@mail.com)

Website: [www.connectedbygrace.org](http://www.connectedbygrace.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.

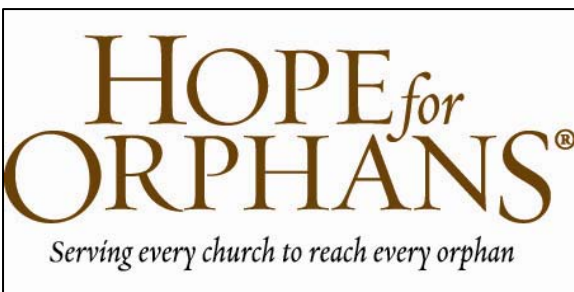
Our awareness and recruiting efforts are complemented by desperately needed post-placement resources for adoptive families that are both biblically based and relevant to their unique struggles. These resources also provide practical ways for churches and individuals to support the adoptive families in 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](mailto:orphancare@family.org)

Website: [www.iCareAboutOrphans.org](http://www.iCareAboutOrphans.org)



### ***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](http://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](mailto:smcbride@hopefororphans.org)

Website: [www.hopefororphans.org](http://www.hopefororphans.org)



**Mission 1:27—Lake Sawyer Christian Church**  
Service area: South King County

Our Purpose: To turn lost people into sold-out followers of Christ by demonstrating God’s love through caring for orphans and the families that provide for them daily. Two ways we look forward to serving and supporting foster and adoptive families in South King County is:

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Support Dinners:**

Join us as we gather together to support one another, receive state training hours (required for foster care), and fellowship. Childcare is provided. If you or someone you know is interested in attending these support dinners please send an email to Nicole Kittelson at [n-kittelson@comcast.net](mailto:n-kittelson@comcast.net) with your name, email address, city of residence, and # of children along with their ages. Dinners are held the last Friday of each month from 6-8pm starting in November at the Lake Sawyer Christian Church Event Center.

**Closet of Hope:**

Closet of Hope is a resource for foster and adoptive families to provide quality clothing and furniture. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact [hopecloset@gmail.com](mailto:hopecloset@gmail.com).

**Contact Information:**

*Sarah Borsheim—Ministry Coordinator*  
31605 Lake Sawyer Road SE  
Lack Diamond, WA 98010  
Phone: (206) 755-4137

Email: [sarahfromspokane@hotmail.com](mailto:sarahfromspokane@hotmail.com)  
Website: [www.lsc.org](http://www.lsc.org)



**Olive Crest**

**Service area:** Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, King and Pierce Counties

Since 1973, Olive Crest has transformed the lives of over 50,000 abused, neglected, and at-risk children and their families. Based on Judeo-Christian principles, we work tirelessly to meet the individual needs of kids in crisis by providing safe homes, counseling, and education for both youth and parents. Our many innovative programs reflect our conviction that strengthening the family is one of the most powerful ways to help heal children. With unwavering compassion, the Olive Crest family maintains a lifelong commitment to the youth and families we serve even after they have graduated from our programs. Olive Crest serves nearly 1,000 children and families each day throughout California, Nevada, and the Pacific Northwest.

Olive Crest believes the family is the ultimate source of hope and lasting change. In a positive family environment, children not only heal, but begin to thrive. Olive Crest is working to strengthen families and keep kids safe through the following programs: Safe Families for Children, Family Preservation, Foster Care, Mental Health, Independent Living Skills and Fostering Together.

**Contact Information:**

*Dory LeVander—MSW Program Supervisor*  
*Ruth Graham—Licensor*  
515 116th Ave NE Ste. 174  
Bellevue, WA 98004  
Phone: (425) 462-1612, (800) 550-CHILD; Fax: (425) 462-9268

Email: [dory-levander@olivecrest.org](mailto:dory-levander@olivecrest.org)  
[ruth-graham@olivecrest.org](mailto:ruth-graham@olivecrest.org)  
Website: [www.olivecrest.org](http://www.olivecrest.org)



## **Overlake Christian Church**

Overlake Christian Church (OCC) is passionate about looking after orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27). We believe we can help the millions of fatherless children both here and overseas by raising awareness to the OCC church body as well as the community. Although we do not operate as an agency, we

have an experienced and passionate team who is committed to educating, equipping, and empowering families in the area of orphan care and adoption. We also have years of professional experience as adoption attorneys, directors of adoption agencies, and leaders of orphan care ministries. We are happy to meet with you to discuss the many options that exist for foster care and adoption.

### **Contact Information:**

*Michele Schneider*  
9900 Willows Rd NE  
Redmond, WA 98052  
Phone: (425) 702-0303

Email: [micheles@occ.org](mailto:micheles@occ.org)  
Website: [www.occ.org](http://www.occ.org)



## **Restoring Joy—Emmanuel Baptist Church**

**Service area:** Skagit County

We desire to use our church and it's people to impact the community around us. Our goal is to offer foster and adoptive families in Skagit County a network to encourage, build hope and restore joy!

Here are a few different ways for you to get plugged in:

- Participate in the Faith based support group that meets the first Friday of each month
- Create comfort bags for foster children in need
- Deliver Project Appreciation Baskets to the social workers at the DSHA office once a month to show our support and appreciation for a job well done
- Foster parent recruiting and mentorship
- Become a prayer partner and receive monthly updates

### **Contact Information:**

*Shannon VanderArk—Coordinator*  
1515 E College Way  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273  
Phone: (360) 420-4250, (360) 424-1173; Fax: (360) 424-6840

Email: [shannon.vanderark@gmail.com](mailto:shannon.vanderark@gmail.com)



## **Washington DSHS Children's Administration**

**Service area:** State of Washington

Within the Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration works with children, families, caregivers and community stakeholders for the safety and well-being of children. While most of the children who enter foster care return to their families or are placed with relatives, some children are adopted by their foster parents or move on to an adoptive home. Just over 1,000 foster children in Washington are waiting for adoption, and while some will be adopted by the relatives or foster parents they live with, many still need a family to call their own.

Families adopting from foster care experience the challenges and opportunities in parenting children with difficult histories. Children adopted from foster care benefit greatly from your love and support. DSHS Children's Administration provides home studies, pre-service and ongoing training, child and family matching and placement, financial supports, finalization and post-adoption supports at no cost to applicants.

### **Contact Information:**

*Laurie Mayer, MSW—Program Manager,  
Adoption & Permanency Planning  
100 W Harrison St S100  
Seattle, WA 98119  
Phone: (425) 590-3081, Cell: (206) 310-0797; Fax: (425) 590-3082*

Email: [laurie.mayer@dsha.wa.gov](mailto:laurie.mayer@dsha.wa.gov)  
Website: [www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/general/index.asp](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/general/index.asp)



## **Youth for Christ/Tacoma**

**Service area:** Pierce, Kitsap, King, Thurston, Snohomish and Lewis Counties

Tacoma YFC Foster Care provides temporary or permanent out of home care for children and youth, ages 0-18. Our mission is to serve children in the foster care system whether it is for one night or permanently providing a family for them. YFC provides health and safety visits to the foster home, as well as monitoring children's progress in school, counseling, and other services. Our case managers team closely with DSHS and the courts throughout the foster care process. In addition, YFC helps support the biological parents whose children are placed into our program. We provide supervised visitation between children and their biological parents, both at our office and in the community. If a child is not able to return home to their biological family, YFC supports foster parents who seek to adopt. YFC believes that foster parents deserve a high level of support. YFC provides the initial PRIDE training for our families, as well as ongoing trainings, monthly support groups, and cell phone accessibility evenings and weekends.

### **Contact Information:**

*Jeff Clare—Foster Care Director  
1216 Center Street  
Tacoma, WA 98409  
Phone: (253) 572-7888, Cell: (253) 222-8230; Fax: (253) 572-7727*

Email: [jeff@tacomayfc.org](mailto:jeff@tacomayfc.org)



**Youth for Christ/West Sound**

**Service area:** Kitsap and Mason Counties

West Sound YFC Foster Care serves children of all ages in the foster care system by recruiting, training, licensing, and supporting Christian foster families. Our goal is to provide excellent care for children until they can be returned to a healthier, more functional family. For those children not able to return home, the Foster Care team works to connect them with Christian adoptive families. We license families in Kitsap and Mason County, serving as their advocate and support throughout the home study process. Once a family is licensed, we take great care to match children in foster care with that family's strengths. We support our families throughout the entire process of caring for a child, from placement to permanency. West Sound YFC supports our families by providing respite care, training dinners, and other special events – creating a community where families can meet and support one another. Additionally, we provide post-adoptive supports in the months following an adoption.

**Contact Information:**

*Christie Dotson—Foster Care Director*  
PO Box 867  
Poulsbo, WA 98370  
Phone: (360) 779-9929 x106, (360) 621-7978; Fax: (360) 779-1618

Email: [Christie@westsoundyfc.org](mailto:Christie@westsoundyfc.org)  
Website: [www.westsoundyfc.org/fostercare](http://www.westsoundyfc.org/fostercare)

## October 2011

### **Antioch Adoptions**

- Introduction Classes—1st Saturday of every month; contact Suzanne at [smerhej@antiochadoptions.org](mailto:smerhej@antiochadoptions.org) to sign up.
- PRIDE Classes—To register and find a training schedule in your area go to: [www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/preservice.asp](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/preservice.asp).
- First Aid/CPR Blood borne Pathogens Certification—Sign up for the class at [www.keepthebeatcpr.net](http://www.keepthebeatcpr.net).

### **Bethany Christian Services**

- Fourteenth Annual Auction and Dinner—Saturday, October 1
- Seattle Information Night—3rd Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:30pm
- Bellevue Information Night (RSVP required)—1st Tuesday of the month

### **Connected by Grace**

- Book Club—Wednesdays, 2nd and 4th week of the month, 7:00-8:00pm, Panera Bread in Bellevue
- Mother's Support Group—2nd Friday of the month, 6:30pm, Panera Bread in Bellevue
- Father's Support Group—Coming soon!
- Family Support Class, Empowered to Connect Study—Sunday mornings at Westminster Chapel

### **Mission 1:27**

- Fostering Q&A Night—Friday evening TBA; for more information contact [n-kittelson@comcast.net](mailto:n-kittelson@comcast.net)
- “If You Were Mine” workshop—Sunday, Oct. 2 through Nov. 6, 9:00am, Lake Sawyer Christian Church; for more information contact [myall4him797@msn.com](mailto:myall4him797@msn.com)
- Closet of Hope donation collections—1st Sunday of every month at Lake Sawyer Christian Church

### **Olive Crest**

- Foster Parent Orientation—TBA
- 101 Meeting—1st Thursday of every month, 7:30am, noon or 5:30pm
- Wine Party—Wednesday, Oct. 12, LOT No. 3

### **Overlake Christian Church**

- Eastside Support Group—3rd Saturday of every month, 10:00am-12:00pm
- Meetup.com Group—visit [www.meetup.com/orphan-care](http://www.meetup.com/orphan-care) for info on upcoming trainings and events for foster and adoptive parents

### **Youth for Christ/Tacoma**

- Foster Care/Adoption Orientation—Tuesday, Oct. 11, 5:00-8:00pm, Trinity Church
- PRIDE Pre-Service Training—Oct. 14, 15, 28 and 29, 9:00am-5:00pm each day
- Foster Care/Adoption Conference—Saturday, Oct. 22, 9:00am-12:00pm, Living Water Foursquare Church

### **Youth for Christ/West Sound**

- Information Night—Tuesday, Oct. 4, 7:00pm at the Hub at Newlife Kitsap; RSVP: (360) 779-9929

## November 2011

### Antioch Adoptions

- National Adoption Day festivities—Saturday, Nov. 19; contact Bonnie at [bmonahan@antiochadoptions.org](mailto:bmonahan@antiochadoptions.org) for more information.
- Introduction Classes—First Saturday of every month; contact Suzanne at [smerhej@antiochadoptions.org](mailto:smerhej@antiochadoptions.org) to sign up.
- PRIDE Classes—To register and find a training schedule in your area go to: [www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/preservice.asp](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/preservice.asp).
- First Aid/CPR Blood borne Pathogens Certification—Sign up for the class at [www.keepthebeatcpr.net](http://www.keepthebeatcpr.net).

### Bethany Christian Services

- Seattle Information Night—Third Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:30pm
- Bellevue Information Night (RSVP required)—First Tuesday of the month

### Connected by Grace

- Book Club—Wednesdays, 2nd and 4th week of the month, 7:00-8:00pm, Panera Bread in Bellevue
- Mother's Support Group—2nd Friday of the month, 6:30pm, Panera Bread in Bellevue
- Father's Support Group—Coming soon!
- Family Support Class, Empowered to Connect Study—Sunday mornings at Westminster Chapel
- Orphan Sunday activities—Sunday, Nov. 6; Westminster Chapel
- National Adoption Day Celebration—Saturday, Nov. 19, 1:00-3:00pm

### Mission 1:27

- “If You Were Mine” workshop—Sunday, Oct. 2 through Nov. 6, 9:00am, Lake Sawyer Christian Church; for more information contact [myall4him797@msn.com](mailto:myall4him797@msn.com)
- Closet of Hope donation collections—1st Sunday of every month at Lake Sawyer Christian Church

### Olive Crest

- Foster Parent Orientation—TBA
- 101 Meeting—1st Thursday of every month, 7:30am, noon or 5:30pm

### Overlake Christian Church

- Eastside Support Group—3rd Saturday of every month, 10:00am-12:00pm
- Meetup.com Group—visit [www.meetup.com/orphan-care](http://www.meetup.com/orphan-care) for info on upcoming trainings and events for foster and adoptive parents

### Youth for Christ/Tacoma

- Foster Care/Adoption Orientation—Tuesday, Nov. 8, 5:00-8:00pm, Trinity Church
- Foster Care/Adoption Q&A—Friday, Nov. 18, 7:00-8:00pm, Lake Sawyer Church

## December 2011

### **Antioch Adoptions**

- Introduction Classes—First Saturday of every month; contact Suzanne at [smerhej@antiochadoptions.org](mailto:smerhej@antiochadoptions.org) to sign up.
- PRIDE Classes—To register and find a training schedule in your area go to: [www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/preservice.asp](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/preservice.asp).
- First Aid/CPR Blood borne Pathogens Certification—Sign up for the class at [www.keepthebeatcpr.net](http://www.keepthebeatcpr.net).

### **Bethany Christian Services**

- Seattle Information Night—Third Tuesday of the month, 6:30-8:30pm
- Bellevue Information Night (RSVP required)—First Tuesday of the month

### **Mission 1:27**

- Closet of Hope donation collections—1st Sunday of every month at Lake Sawyer Christian Church

### **Olive Crest**

- 101 Meeting—1st Thursday of every month, 7:30am, noon or 5:30pm
- Luncheon—Thursday, Dec. 1, Westin Bellevue
- Foster Christmas Party—Sunday, Dec. 4, Castle Ice in Renton

### **Overlake Christian Church**

- Eastside Support Group—3rd Saturday of every month, 10:00am-12:00pm
- Meetup.com Group—visit [www.meetup.com/orphan-care](http://www.meetup.com/orphan-care) for info on upcoming trainings and events for foster and adoptive parents

# Frequently Asked Questions about Adoption<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Who can adopt a child through DSHS?

- Married or single people, over the age of 18
- People of any race
- People of any religion or no religious preference
- People who work out of their home
- People who rent or people who own their own homes
- People with high or low incomes but can support the addition of a child
- People with or without children
- People willing and able to parent a child with a wide range of life experiences

## 2. What does it take to adopt a child?

Like deciding to parent any child a successful adoptive parent has:

- A belief in adoption and a commitment for life
- Understanding
- Patience and perseverance
- Unconditional love and ability to accept without judging
- A good sense of humor and talent for keeping life in perspective
- Awareness that healing doesn't always come quickly
- Flexibility
- Optimism
- Creativity
- Empathy
- Advocacy
- Resourcefulness

## 3. How do I decide what agency to work with?

It is recommended that you contact several agencies that provide adoption services and ask about their adoption program. You want to find an agency that can support your needs. You can locate agencies by looking through the yellow pages and/or going to the DSHS website and downloading information from the adoption website at [www.dshs.wa.gov/](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/).

## 4. What types of children are waiting for adoption through DSHA?

Children waiting for adoption through DSHS usually are:

- Older—over the age of 6
- May be part of a sibling group in need of placement together
- May have emotional, behavioral, physical, educational, psychological and/or developmental disability issues.
- May not yet be legally free for adoption, but the agency is moving towards the termination of parental rights and would like to move a child into a prospective adoptive home prior to the child becoming legally free.

## 5. How much does it cost to adopt?

DSHS does not charge any fees for adoption services. However, adoptive parents do have to pay legal fees to finalize the adoption. DSHS completes adoptive home studies for free to families that are interested in adopting a child that is in foster care.

## 6. Is 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 Credit <sup>2</sup>

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.

<sup>1</sup> All information adapted from <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/Publications/22-1096.pdf>

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

## Ten Questions for Parents Preparing to Adopt or Foster<sup>3</sup>

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?

<sup>3</sup> 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 Process<sup>4</sup>

## Step 1: Contacting DSHS

To receive further information about adoption from DSHS:

Contact your local office. A worker will answer any questions, send out an information packet, and provide information on adoption procedures for their office.

Sign up for pre-service training courses through your local office. You are required to have 30 hours of training to learn about adoption and foster issues. Once training is complete, you will be assigned a social worker.

## Step 2: Adoptive Home Study

All prospective adoptive parents must undergo an adoptive home study. The purpose of the adoptive home study is to evaluate whether parents are qualified to adopt. The process involves education and preparation as well as the gathering of information about the prospective parents.

An adoptive home study includes:

- Application. Provided by the agency.
- Preparation classes. You are required to take 30 hours of Pre-service Training (and a First Aid/CPR and Blood Borne Pathogens course to become a licensed foster parent). Class schedule information can be found on the Foster Parent Training site.
- Criminal history background check. Organized through your social worker, an in-state criminal history check must be completed on every person over the age of 16 residing in the home. A national fingerprint check must be completed on all adults in the home (age 18 and above).
- Child abuse and neglect inquiries. This is part of the background check. Washington State records will be checked for everyone in the home ages 16 and older. If anyone in your home, age 18 and above, has lived in another state during the past 5 years, a check will be made of records in other states. This will be organized through your social worker.
- Personal information. There is a DSHS form used to provide your social worker with information about you. There are no right or wrong answers; this is just a way for the social worker to get to know you.
- Medical statements on persons adopting. This is a confidential form that your physician will fill out regarding current and historic medical conditions. Your social worker will provide you with the form.
- Income/financial statements. A worksheet is provided to you by your social worker that will identify family resources.
- References. Four references (only one can be a relative). References are generally used to get a picture of a family from an outsider. A questionnaire asking specific questions must be filled out by your references. Your social worker will send the questionnaire directly to your references.
- Contacts with social worker. At least four contacts will be made with your social worker and one must be in the family home to better understand your lifestyle and family dynamics. Issues discussed (per RCW 26.33.190) at these visits will include:
  - ◆ The concept of adoption as a lifelong developmental process and commitment
  - ◆ The potential for the child to have feelings of identity confusion and loss regarding separation from the birth parents
  - ◆ Disclosure of the fact of adoption to the child
  - ◆ The child's possible questions about birth parents and relatives
  - ◆ The relevance of the child's racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage
- Documentation of marriages and divorces (copy of decrees). For information on obtaining marriage and divorce certificates, contact the Washington State Department of Health.

### *Home Study Approval*

The home study has to be approved to continue with the adoption process. The length of time from the last contact with the social worker to approving the home study varies, but the agency goal is to have it completed within 90 days.

### *Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE)*

Once the home study is approved, have your social worker register you with the Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE). If you don't already have a child in your home, this service will enable other social workers to see that there is a family with an approved home study waiting for a child.

## **Step 3: Child Selection**

### *Child identification*

There are various ways to select a child:

- A social worker contacts you about a specific child.
- You contact the social worker about a child you either found on a web site or heard about.

### *Disclosure of information*

You and your social worker need to be in contact to get background information about the child. At this point, you may start working with two different social workers - yours and the child's.

Statutorily, the full history on the child's family, medical, and social background must be disclosed to you (WAC 388-27-0090). Once this is done, you and the respective social workers need to decide if this is a good placement.

If the decision is made that this is in the best interest of the child, then steps are made to move forward with visitation and placement.

## **Step 4: Visitation & Placement Process**

Ensure that there has been a complete disclosure of the child's family, medical, and social background. (WAC 388-27-0090)

### *Visitation begins*

It can take two weeks to several months to place the child in your home depending upon the child's needs. Factors include:

- Age
- Location of adoptive family to current placement
- Therapy and medical issues
- School
- Child's well-being

Visitation usually begins at a location considered safe for the child (foster home, McDonalds, etc.). The first visit starts with just a couple of hours. Gradually visits lengthen in time, leading to a first overnight. Visits get progressively longer until the child officially moves to their new home.

## **Step 5: Post Placement**

### *Services*

Your social worker continues working with you until the actual adoption finalization. Together, you will arrange for any needed services (child and family, medical, counseling, schooling, etc.).

### *Health and safety checks*

The social worker comes out to your home to check on the well-being of the child and family at least once every 90 days until the adoption is finalized.

### **Step 6: Legal Procedures and Finalization**

1. Contact an attorney. You may find your own or ask your social worker for a list.
2. Complete the Adoption Support application provided to you by your social worker. When the application is completed and filed, an Adoption Support Program Specialist will be assigned to you. The program specialist will review your application to determine if the child qualifies for the program according to state and federal rules. A negotiated contract (called an agreement) outlining program benefits and terms will then be presented for signature. The adoption must not be finalized until the agreement is signed by you and the DSHS representative.
3. Your social worker completes a post-placement report. This report provides the court with an update on the child's and family's well-being since placement.
4. DSHS provides a Consent to Adopt. This is a written statement authorizing that the child may be adopted.
5. Your social worker sends your attorney a packet containing documents needed to finalize the adoption.
6. Your attorney prepares the documents to present to the court, files the petition to adopt, and gets a court date to finalize the adoption.
7. On the date of finalization you will go to court as advised by your attorney. You may take as many family and friends as you want. You may also bring cameras and video to record this special event.

# 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 Washington. 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

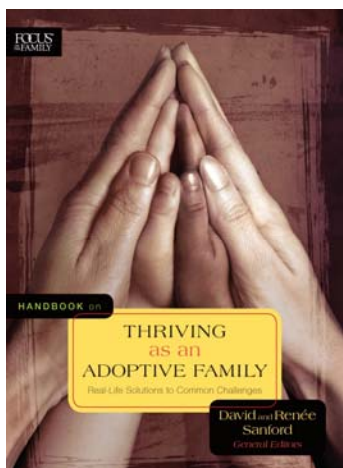
## 4. Evaluate the agency's program (some good questions to ask)

- 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

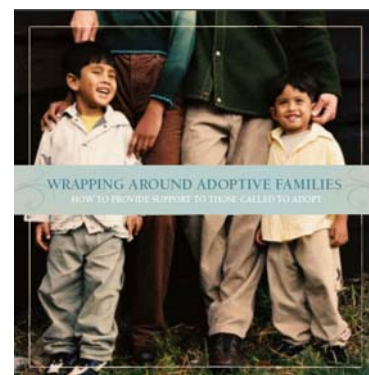


### ***Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family***

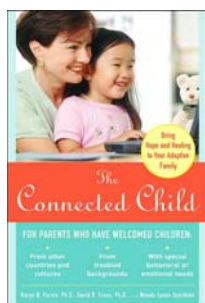
Adoption is a high calling from God, and the Christian home is primary soil for planting seeds of faith. But how will post-adoption challenges affect this growth? Many families do not feel adequately prepared for unexpected challenges like a child who has been adopted fighting with his new siblings, 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](http://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) or contact our counseling help line directly for a consultation at 1-855-771-HELP.

**Special Thanks to...**



**Wait No More Initiation Form**  
**Your Passport to Initiating the Process of Adopting from Foster Care\***

Date	First Name(s)	Last Name
<b>Address</b>		
Address:		City:
County:		Zip:
Home Phone:		
Cell Phone:		
Email:		
Best way and time of day to reach you:		
Are you interested in a particular child? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, give the child's name: If no, what type of child would be of interest to you?		
Are you open to a sibling group? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Number of children desired: Age range you are interested in: Race/ethnicity: Gender Preferred: <input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Either		
Please list the agency you prefer to work with:  <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> No Preference</div>		

In order for us to best serve you, please **do one of the following**:

- Drop this form into one of the receptacles before you leave today
- Fax it to 719-548-5947
- Mail it to Focus on the Family Attn: Erin Eberspacher Colorado Springs 80995

\*Initiation of the Process will be followed by several steps including, but not limited to, attending an orientation and submitting an official application. Please see the agency of your choice for additional information and thank you for initiating the process of adoption from foster care.