

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE



WHAT IS ADOPTION ASSISTANCE?

Most of the children now available for adoption are those for whom it has taken agencies longer to find adoptive families. These children may have physical and mental disabilities or chronic illnesses. They may be older children, African-American children, or brothers and sisters who need a home together. They may require such intensive care and treatment from both adoptive parents and professionals that the typical family would soon be in financial difficulty if adoption assistance were not available.

Adoption Information Center of Illinois

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Se Habla Español

This information is updated
semi-annually.

Who is eligible for adoption assistance?

A child may be eligible for adoption assistance if parental rights have been terminated as a result of a court finding; is a resident of Illinois; cannot or should not be returned home as evidenced by a judicial finding of abuse, neglect or dependency or reason to believe that the child is abused, neglected or dependent; and has been determined by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to have special needs, which make it highly unlikely that he/she can be adopted without adoption assistance

The factors or conditions which may be considered "special needs" include: age, membership in a sibling group, documented medical conditions or physical, mental or emotional disabilities.

What types of assistance are available?

Eligible children may receive one or more of the following types of assistance:

- one time only payment for non-recurring adoption expenses, i.e., attorney fees, court costs, home study costs, and pre-placement expenses;
- payment, through issuance of a Medicaid Card, for medical services which are not covered through public or private insurance or other public resources;
- necessary counseling/therapy;
- day care for children up to 3 years old;
- therapeutic day care;
- monthly payment in an amount based on the foster care payment received prior to adoption;
- respite care for children meeting medical eligibility guidelines.

How is medical treatment funded?

All children adopted with adoption assistance receive a Medicaid Card through the Illinois Department of Public Aid.

How long is adoption assistance available?

Adoption assistance is available up to age 18 years (or 19, if the child is still in high school), and it may be provided at the option of DCFS until the child's 21st birthday if the child has a physical, mental or emotional disability. Adoption assistance agreements are reviewed periodically.

How does a family apply?

Following discussion of adoption assistance with the social worker, the family wishing to receive adoption assistance must complete an application form. An adoption assistance agreement would then be signed by the family and the agency prior to the adoption finalization.

The social worker will also explore with the family other resources that may be available for the child, such as family insurance coverage and other community resources. Often a social worker can arrange for services from the available resources.

If I apply to adopt through a private agency, would my child be eligible for adoption assistance?

Many private child welfare agencies in Illinois serve children with special needs who are under the guardianship of DCFS. If a child meets the special needs guidelines the child will be eligible for adoption assistance.

Adoption assistance is available to children for whom DCFS is not nor has ever been legally responsible who meet the special needs criteria. A determination would have to be made of the child's eligibility for Title IV-E (Federal) adoption assistance, Title IV-A, or SSI. Your social worker will assist you in following the necessary procedures to make an application.

Adoptive families should ask their social workers about the possibility for adoption assistance before the adoption is completed to see if their child meets the eligibility criteria.