



# *Frequently Asked Questions about* **ADOPTION**

## **What is adoption?**

Adoption provides a permanent home for a child. After the birth parents have voluntarily given up their parental rights or the court has terminated the parents' rights, the adoption can be finalized in a court of law. The adoptive parent then becomes the child's legal parent and has the same formal and legal responsibility for the child as if they were the biological parents.

## **Can I adopt a healthy infant through West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services?**

The State mostly works with special needs children. Healthy children of all races under the age of 8 are handled by licensed private adoption agencies.

## **What are special needs children?**

These children may be:

- older
- members of sibling groups who need to be placed together
- members of a racial or ethnic minority
- children with a disabling conditions such as physical, mental or emotional problems
- living in foster homes, group homes, and residential treatment facilities

## **What are the general guidelines for an adoptive parent?**

- Be at least 21 years of age. Older persons are also considered, however adoptive parents generally should be of an age to have naturally parented the child they seek to adopt.
- Married couples and single people may be reviewed as potential parents.
- Must be in good physical and mental health as demonstrated by a current medical statement about their physical and emotional capacity to care for children.
- Have sufficient income to meet the immediate and future needs of the child.
- Working parents will be considered although appropriate child care arrangements must be provided.

- Must pass a health/fire/safety inspection of their home (for both renters and those who own their own home).
- No active child protective services case at any time.
- No criminal involvement. Everyone in the home over age 18 will be fingerprinted for a criminal investigation background check.
- Must complete and pass a home study.
- Must demonstrate the ability to commit to a child, provide the child with maximum opportunities for personal development, and respond honestly to the child.

**In order to adopt, do children need individual bedrooms?**

No. Each child must have his or her own bed and individual space in which to keep personal items. A child can share a room with another child of the same sex. A child cannot share a bedroom with an adult, except for an infant under two years of age.

**What will I know about the child placed in my home?**

All the known information on the child's:

- health
- personality
- habits
- education
- any unusual events in the child's life which may impact how the child will respond to the placement in your home

**What if a child has habits different from our family?**

You should expect that any child placed in your home will have some habits, values, beliefs, and ways of living that are different from your own. Children need to be accepted as they are. They need to be given a lot of time to adjust and to learn the family's style of living and expectations. Every family is different.

**What is a trial adoption?**

When the child moves in and actually lives with the chosen family.

**Once the child is placed in my home, how long before the adoption becomes legal?**

West Virginia requires a minimum of 6 months in a Trial Adoption before the adoption can be finalized (made legal).

**Is financial help available for adoptive parents to care for children?**

Yes. Adoption subsidies are available for eligible children who have special needs including children over 8 years of age.



### **Are there supports for adoptive parents?**

Yes. There is a state association for foster and adoptive parents with local chapters in some areas of the state. There are also local support groups for foster and adoptive parents. Often speakers give presentations on educational topics for part of the support group time. Social workers can also provide support to adoptive parents on specific individual child needs.

