

Adoption

When children in foster care are not able to return to their parents, adoption gives children in need of a loving family a permanent home. Adoption is the legal and social process by which a child born to one set of parents becomes the child of another parent or set of parents. The adoptive parents then assume all of the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of the birth parents, just as if the child had been born to them.

Guidelines Relating to Adoptive Applicants

- Must be at least 21 years old
- Physical and emotional capacities will be considered in determining whether age is a deterrent to placement
- The child shall be given the opportunity for religious or spiritual and ethical development
- Must have sufficient income to provide reasonable economic support
- If married, you must have been married for at least one year. Single people are also eligible.
- An agency application must be completed
- Training class is required as part of the home study process
- The completed home study will be reviewed by an adoption committee
- A fingerprint check will be completed on each applicant.

Application Process

Applicants should call the Durham County Social Services Hotline 919-560-8092 for more information on getting started.

Post Adoption Services

A post adoption social worker provides post-adoption services, including supportive counseling, information and referral, as well as identification of resources to adoptees and their families.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Adoptions

How long does it take to adopt?

The length of time varies for each individual situation. Average time to complete a home study is 3-6 months. The home study includes meeting with your assigned social worker (an average of 3-5 meetings) and attending MAPP/GPS. Once the home study is completed and you are approved by the Adoption Committee, the search for a child appropriate for your family begins. Depending on the type of child a family is looking for and the children currently available for adoption, the time it takes to match a child to a family can vary significantly from family to family.

Who are the adoptive families through DSS?

Most families who adopt through DSS provide foster care first. We find that by the time a child goes through the process of becoming available for adoption, he/she has bonded with the foster parents and many times it is this foster family who adopts the child. There are times when it isn't the right match for the current foster parent to adopt the child and in those cases we look to our other families interested in adoption to make a connection. Our families come from all different racial backgrounds and live in all communities across the county. We have many single parents as well as couples who adopt.

Can unmarried couples adopt?

Unmarried couples can foster. In that situation both adults are fully licensed as foster parents, however, when it comes time for adoption, only one party can actually petition the court to adopt.

Do my child's birth parents have any legal rights?

They do not retain any legal rights; however, some children may have an emotional bond with their birth parents and should stay in contact with them.

What information is available to adopted children who are curious about their background?

No identifying information can be shared. However, non-identifying information regarding a child's background and medical history can be shared.

How much background information will be shared with me?

The law requires that the agency provide specific information to the adopting parents at or before placement of the child. If known, we will provide the following:

Age of biological parents

Their race, nationality and ethnic background

General physical appearance of biological parents

Detailed medical histories of the child, biological parents, and their relatives.