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Inside this Brief

- **Adopting Through the State of Oregon Legislative Administration**
- **Adoption Benefits**
- **What Children Need Homes**
- **Who May Adopt**
- **The Adoption Process**
- **Adoption Assistance Program**
- **Rights of the Original Birth Family**
- **Staff and Agency Contacts**

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Background Brief on ...

Adoption

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Adopting Through the State of Oregon

Children at risk of abuse or neglect can be removed from their homes by the Oregon Department of Human Services (**DHS**) Children Adults and Families division (**CAF**) and placed in foster care for their safety. CAF works with the family to address problems with the goal of keeping the family intact. If a child cannot be safely reunited with a parent on a permanent basis within a year, CAF implements an alternative plan, such as guardianship, long-term relative care, foster care, or adoption.

Adoption Benefits

When children experience a variety of settings through foster care, the resulting emotional and psychological impairment may last the child's lifetime. Adoption is viewed as a way to give children the kind of security and stability they need and may have been lacking within their birth families or in foster care.

Balanced with the need for a speedy placement is the need for the placement to be a good one, one that will last, and one that best meets the individual needs of the child.

What Children Need Homes

CAF is a "special needs" adoption agency. Eligible children have at least one of the following conditions or factors:

- Are over the age of eight
- Have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities
- Are members of a minority population
- Are siblings
- Are "at-risk" for future problems
- Have significant emotional ties to adoptive family while in their care as a foster child

Healthy infants or young children are rarely available through CAF. Families wishing to adopt a healthy newborn infant or toddler are encouraged to contact one of Oregon's licensed private adoption agencies.

CAF Finalized Adoptions							
1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
665	755	831	1071	1118	854	943	1033

Who May Adopt

According to the CAF web page, potential adoptive families have the following characteristics:

- Are single, married, or divorced of all ages and incomes
- Live in a house or apartment
- Can work with social workers and/or therapists and support people
- Have not been convicted of a violent crime or a crime against a child
- Are flexible, energetic, and able to care for a child
- Work inside or outside their home
- Are open to learning new things
- Can talk with adoption workers about themselves and their families

Prospective adoptive parents are recruited by CAF through newsletters, waiting child columns in newspapers, public service announcements, church bulletin inserts, adoption parties, and the CAF web page. Preference is given to the child's relatives who are interested in adopting.

The Adoption Process

An individual or family interested in adopting a special needs child contacts an adoption worker through their local CAF branch or the Special Needs Adoption Coalition. Prospective adoptive parents must undergo pre-adoption training to prepare them for the challenges of a special needs child. Prospective adoptive families must also undergo a "home study," where a caseworker visits the family's home and evaluates the prospective adoptive parents' suitability to adopt and parent a special needs child and whether they meet the minimum standards as set out in CAF rules.

Once a child is available to be legally adopted, the caseworker reviews the home studies for possible matches. A three-person adoption committee reviews up to three possible matches for each child and selects one. The child is then placed with a family, and is supervised by CAF for approximately one year, after which adoption can be legally finalized.

Adoption Assistance Program

To remove financial barriers to adoption and to ensure that families who adopt have the necessary services and financial resources to meet their children's ongoing needs, Congress enacted the Adoption Assistance Program in 1980. CAF assesses the child's needs and determines the amount of the subsidy on a case-by-case basis.

Rights of the Original Birth Family

Mediation services are available through the adoption program to assist the birth parents and adoptive parents in coming to agreement on the level of openness in the adoption, and the amount of contact the adoptee has with relatives.

Staff and Agency Contacts

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For More Information:

DHS Adoption Services webpage,
<http://www.dhs.state.or.us/children/adoption/>