

Wait No More®

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Finding Families for Georgia'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 in the area marked V3
- Determine which agency you prefer to work with
- 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 Georgia'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



Adoption Discovery

Service Area: Statewide

Adoption Discovery is an educational, multi-media program that assists participants in understanding all options available for the adoption process. The program addresses all types of adoption - foster care, domestic and international. Adoption myths and processes are explained in a straightforward curriculum with step-by-step information all within a community of support. Adoption Discovery small groups meet once a week for seven weeks.

Find a group near you at AdoptionDiscovery.org

Get real help, real support and real answers to your adoption questions.

Our mission as a nonprofit 501c3 is to educate and equip individuals to provide a permanent home for every waiting child.

Adoption Discovery groups are available in 12 states.

Adoption Discovery groups are free of charge, (\$12.00 workbook purchase, optional)

Adoption Discovery is not an agency but can help you accomplish your goal of adoption.

Contact Information:

1266 W Paces Ferry Rd #300

Atlanta, GA 30327

Phone: (404) 914-1113

Email: info@faithhopeadoption.org

Website: www.AdoptionDiscovery.org



All God's Children, Inc.

Service Area: Primarily Northeast Georgia and Metro Atlanta

All God's Children is a licensed nonprofit child placement agency based in northeast Georgia. Our primary mission is to find permanent adoptive families for waiting children in foster care. The waiting children are usually older school age children, brothers and sisters that need to be placed together in a family, and children with emotional and behavioral challenges. Some of the waiting children have developmental delays or special medical needs.

All God's Children is based on the belief that all children grow up best in loving and committed families. We are

committed to providing quality pre-service training to help families make informed decisions about adopting waiting children. We are equally committed to providing support to families after placement. We work closely with families through every stage of the adoption process.

Contact Information:

Emily Bailey

1671 Meriweather Drive, Ste 101

Bogart, GA 30622

Phone: (706) 316-2421; Fax: (706) 316-2423

Email: ebailey@agcadoptio.org

Website: www.agcadoptio.org



Bethany Christian Services

Service Area: Statewide

Bethany Christian Services is a not-for-profit, adoption and family services agency with more than 65 years of delivering compassionate, professional services to a hurting world. The staff of Bethany is dedicated to our mission: to manifest the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of children and families through quality social services. Bethany

envisions a world where every child has a loving family.

The largest adoption agency in the United States, Bethany has more than 80 locations in the U.S. and ministers to children and families in more than a dozen countries. Bethany is supported through fees and gifts from thousands of individuals, churches, corporations, and foundations.

For more than 20 years, Bethany Christian Services of Georgia has been a licensed, accredited adoption agency serving the needs of children and families throughout Georgia. The Georgia branch offers several adoption services, including older child adoption, domestic infant adoption, and intercountry adoption. Some of our other services offered include foster care, Safe Families, interim care, pregnancy counseling, post-adoption support, and clinical services.

Contact Information:

Abby Rising, Family Intake Specialist

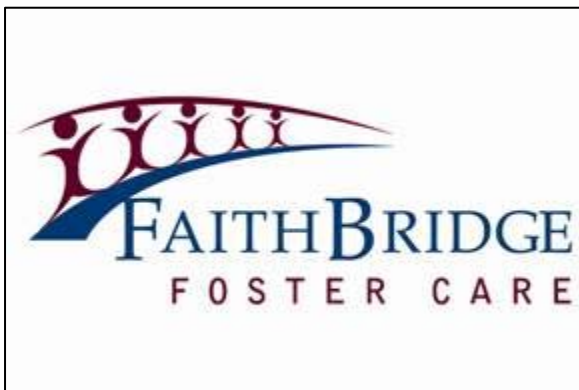
6645 Peachtree Dunwoody Rd.

Atlanta, GA 30328

Phone: (770) 455-7111, (877) 224-3458; Fax: (770) 455-7118

Email: bcsatlanta@bethany.org

Website: www.bethany.org/atlanta



FaithBridge Foster Care

Service Area: Cobb, Cherokee, Bartow, Floyd, Paulding, Douglas, Forsyth, Hall, Dawson, DeKalb, Spalding and Coweta County.

FaithBridge Foster Care is a Christ-centered, tax-exempt corporation intent on changing U.S. foster care. FaithBridge has a strategy and a model to mobilize, organize, equip and release local churches and communities to solve our country's foster care crisis. FaithBridge partners with local churches to create independent foster care ministries around a small group

model, called the Community of CareSM, which provides foster families with unparalleled support and resources. This relationship-enhanced model scales to create local foster family capacity with built-in stability and quality, bringing children and families together in a safe, loving community. Together, we stand in the gap for foster children and families.

Contact Information:

David Shaw

2655 Northwinds Parkway

Alpharetta, GA 30009

Phone: (678) 690-7115, (404) 276-3338; Fax: (678) 352-4393

Email: dshaw@faithbridgefostercare.org

Website: www.faithbridgefostercare.org



Families First

Service Area: Statewide

Families First is a Child Placing Agency providing foster care, foster to adopt, and adoption services. We have a contract with the DHR Permanency Unit to recruit and work with prospective adoptive families. We provide:

orientation, IMPACT training, home study assessments, matching and placement services, post-placement supervision, and assist the family until the adoption legally finalizes.

We work hard to recruit families who are able and willing to accept sibling groups, school aged children, and teens. Because children and youth in foster care have experienced trauma, interested families must be willing to engage in therapy.

Families who do not identify a child(ren) in GA are welcome to search in other states. Families First also offers: domestic infant, independent, and international adoption services.

Not only do we have a long history of working in adoption, our Adoption Social Workers are very experienced. We are passionate about the work we do and look forward to having the opportunity to share in a family's adoption journey. Together, we work to change lives in positive ways. We need YOU!

Contact Information:

Jane Hudson, LCSW, Adoption Program Manager
1105 W. Peachtree Street NE
Atlanta, GA 30309
Phone: (404) 853-2868

Website: www.familiesfirst.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

Website: www.iCareAboutOrphans.org



Foster Children's Foundation, Inc.

Service Area: Metro Atlanta and surrounding counties

The Foster Children's Foundation is a non-profit support agency providing for the material and emotional needs of former and current children in foster care through numerous programs and projects.

We have a resource center that is located in Norcross, Georgia, where referred clients can come and shop for clothing, hygiene products, and school supplies at no charge. These items raise the self esteem of youth who have been left parentless and without basic essentials.

We hold events throughout the year and have a mentoring program called Tomorrow Matters® where caring mentors teach independent living skills.

The organization is here to support children and their adoptive families during transition.

Contact Information:

Susan Philpott, Administrative Assistant

PO Box 2469

Duluth, GA 30096

Phone: (770) 597-5763, (770) 623-6135; Fax: (770) 623-6135

Email: philpottss@comcast.net

Website: www.fosterchildrensfoundation.org



Georgia DHS, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)

Service Area: Statewide

Recognizing that children deserve safe, loving and nurturing relationships with permanent families, DFCS and its partners will provide a continuum of available, accessible and effective services that enable and support the placement of children in adoptive families.

Adoption is a lifelong commitment, and for this reason, the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) provides adoption services that span a child's life. These include helping each child find a loving family, as well as providing a host of support services for the children and their families after an adoption takes place. Every county in Georgia has a local DFCS office dedicated to finding loving homes for the numerous children in permanent state custody who are available for adoption.

Contact Information:

Phone: (877) 210-KIDS

Email: snbackus@dhr.state.ga.us

Website: www.dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/adoptions



Georgia DHS, Wednesday's Child

Service Area: Statewide

Freddie Mac Foundation's Wednesday's Child – an Emmy-nominated program with a proven track record of success – is part of the Freddie Mac Foundation's national campaign to increase adoptions of children. Each week, a child in foster care who is awaiting adoption is featured on the local evening news. During a segment hosted by a popular local newscaster, viewers are encouraged to learn more about helping these children find homes and a phone number is provided.

The children who are featured are usually the most difficult to place since they are often older, in sibling groups, and may have health and developmental needs. The Freddie Mac Foundation's Wednesday's Child program started in the Washington, DC metropolitan area in 1992, a partnership with NBC-4 and the Council of Governments. Its phenomenal success there encouraged the Freddie Mac Foundation to expand the program nationwide. Freddie Mac Foundation's Wednesday's Child is now shown in five cities: DC, New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Philadelphia.

Contact Information:

Chanda Floyd-Bryant, Program Coordinator
2 Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 8-404
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: (404) 657-9386, (404) 579-4500; Fax: (404) 657-0212

Email: cabryant2@dhr.state.ga.us
Website: www.wednesdayschildga.com



Georgia Family Council

Service Area: Statewide

For 20 years, Georgia Family Council has been a voice for families throughout our state. We believe that a strong family is where human well-being begins.

Practical experience and research have proven that healthy marriages and strong families are essential for a society to thrive. We know that children who grow up in intact families are more likely to succeed in school, stay out of legal trouble, hold down decent jobs, and be better off emotionally and physically. We also know that most adults are happiest and healthiest in a strong marriage.

Strong families matter to our community and our state. That's why we are contending for the things that matter most, including working with lawmakers to make adoption safer in Georgia. We have a team of experts working for responsible government, stronger families and meaningful education reform.

Contact Information:

Stephen Daniels, Director of Communications
3500 Parkway Lane, Ste 460
Norcross, GA 30092
Phone: (770) 242-0001; Fax: (770) 242-0501

Email: stephen.daniels@georgiafamily.org
Website: www.georgiafamily.org



GCAC (*Giving Children a Chance*)

Service Area: Statewide

Welcome to GCAC of Georgia, "Giving Children A Chance." Our organization is a private child placement agency which provides foster care and adoption services throughout the state of Georgia. GCAC of Georgia is licensed by the Georgia Department of Human Services - Office of Regulatory Services as both a

- Foster Care Agency
- Adoption Agency

GCAC of Georgia works closely with the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services to ensure children are placed in safe, nurturing homes which promote permanency and well being for Georgia's children. GCAC of Georgia prides itself on a team approach to fostering as well as a seamless approach to adoption.

Contact Information:

Susan Lister, Executive Director

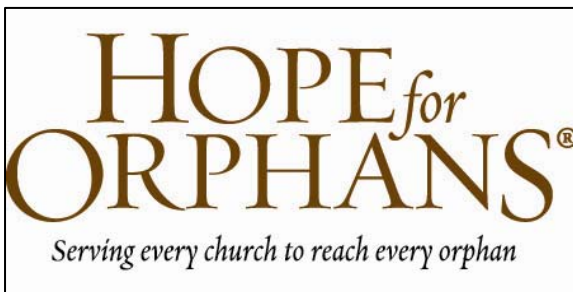
11805 Northfall Lane Suite

Alpharetta, GA 30009

Phone: (770) 255-1018; Fax: (770) 410-4041

Email: geoff@gcacofgeorgia.com

Website: www.gcacofgeorgia.com



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.

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

Website: www.hopefororphans.org



Lutheran Services of Georgia

Service Area: Statewide

Lutheran Services of Georgia (LSG), a statewide, not-for-profit social service agency, brings hope, healing and strength to people in need. LSG combines the resources of staff, donors, government agencies, volunteers and congregations in its efforts to bring quality programs and services to the people of Georgia. With multiple social service programs in place

statewide, LSG is able to serve diverse populations. In the past year, LSG served more than 5,300 people in need in 73 counties across the state.

Currently, LSG offers programs in the areas of adoption services including domestic, special needs children, foster-to-adopt and foster care with a focus on children with special needs; services for adults with mental retardation and developmental disabilities that enable them to live in the community with supports; family intervention services; refugee services, including resettlement, employment and social adjustment; and disaster response services as the local affiliate for Lutheran Disaster Response. All services are provided without regard to race, origin, creed, age, color or gender.

Contact Information:

J. Anne Boyte, Heritage Adoption Program Coordinator

1330 West Peachtree Street, Ste 300

Atlanta, GA 30309

Phone: (404) 591-7063; Fax: (404) 591-1030

Email: aboyte@lsga.org

Website: www.lsga.org



Promise 686

Service Area: Metro Atlanta (financial and legal grants); North Fulton, Gwinnett, Forsyth (foster or adoptive family community of support)

Promise686 is an adoption and foster care ministry serving the metro Atlanta area. Our mission is to mobilize and serve Christian families to meet the needs of the "fatherless" both here and abroad. We achieve this by reducing barriers for families called to adopt or foster. Promise686 provides education, prayer support, consulting with potential adoptive or fostering families and financial and legal assistance to Christians living in the metro Atlanta area. Through our partnership with Perimeter Church and FaithBridge Foster Care, we also offer the training required to foster or adopt a waiting child as well as a community of support to foster and adoptive families, assisting with meals, babysitting, respite care, prayer, transportation, tutoring and other practical needs. We are a relatively young ministry that grew out of a church-based ministry at Perimeter Church and are more than happy to share with others wishing to begin a similar ministry in their own church or community.

Contact Information:

Amy Rider

3600 River Ferry Drive

Johns Creek, GA 30022

Phone: (770) 310-0675; Fax: (770) 270-5469

Email: info@promise686.org

Website: www.promise686.org

March 2011

All God's Children

- Saturday, March 19 – Pre-service training, 10:00am – 4:30pm, Five Forks Trickum Branch Library
- Saturday, March 26 – Pre-services training, 10:00am – 4:30pm, Five Forks Trickum Branch Library

Bethany Christian Services

- Tuesday, March 1 – Discover Adoption Information Meeting, 6:30 – 8:30pm, Liberty Hill United Methodist Church
- Thursday, March 10 – Older Child/State Adoption Orientation Meeting, 6:00 – 8:00pm, Victory World Church
- Thursday, March 24 – Older Child/State Adoption Orientation Meeting, 6:00 – 8:00pm, Bethany Christian Services

Families First

- Wednesday, March 2 – Meet the Author of “Three Little Words” – 7:00 – 8:30pm, Families First, Inc. Auditorium

Foster Children's Foundation

- Saturday, March 26 – Open House – call (770) 623-6135 to make an appointment

Lutheran Family Services

- Monday, March 7 – Adoption Orientation, 4:00 – 6:00pm
- Saturday, March 12 – IMPACT Training, 9:30am – 5:00pm, Pre-registration required
- Saturday, March 19 – IMPACT Training, 9:30am – 5:00pm, Pre-registration required
- Monday, March 21 – Adoption Orientation, 4:00 – 6:00pm
- Saturday, March 26 – IMPACT Training, 9:30am – 5:00pm, Pre-registration required

Promise686

- Sunday, March 13 – Foster and Waiting Child Adoption Orientation, 9:00 – 10:30am or 10:30am – noon, Perimeter Church
- Friday, March 25 – IMPACT Training, 6:00 – 10:00pm, Perimeter Church
- Saturday, March 26 – IMPACT Training, 8:00am – 5:00pm, Perimeter Church

April 2011

All God's Children

- Saturday, April 23 – Pre-service training, 9:00am – 4:00pm, All God's Children Office
- Saturday, April 30 – Pre-service training, 9:00am – 4:00pm, All God's Children Office

Bethany Christian Services

- Thursday, April 14 – Older Child/State Adoption Orientation Meeting, 6:00 – 8:00pm, Bethany Christian Services
- Thursday, April 21 - Older Child/State Adoption Orientation Meeting, 6:00 – 8:00pm, Victory World Church

Giving Children a Chance

- Friday, April 29 – Sunday, May 1 – IMPACT Training
- Saturday, April 30 – CPI Training

Lutheran Family Services

- Monday, April 4 – Adoption Orientation, 4:00 – 6:00pm
- Monday, April 18 – Adoption Orientation, 4:00 – 6:00pm

May 2011

Bethany Christian Services

- Thursday, May 12 – Older Child/State Adoption Orientation Meeting, 6:00 – 8:00pm, Bethany Christian Services
- Thursday, May 26 - Older Child/State Adoption Orientation Meeting, 6:00 – 8:00pm, Bethany Christian Services

Focus on the Family

- Sunday, May 8 – Sunday, May 15: Foster Care Prayer Vigil
Calling followers of Christ together across the country to cry out to God on behalf of children and youth in our nation's foster care system, their families, their workers, and the church as it responds to the needs of those in the foster care system.
www.FosterCarePrayerVigil.org

Lutheran Family Services

- Monday, May 9 – Adoption Orientation, 4:00 – 6:00pm
- Monday, May 23 – Adoption Orientation, 4:00 – 6:00pm

Frequently Asked Questions about Adoption¹

1. What is adoption?

Adoption is a social and legal process that creates a new family, giving adopted children the same rights and benefits as those born into the family.

2. Who are these children? Why are they being adopted?

At any given time, there are hundreds of children in permanent state custody of the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) due to unresolved family crises. Most of the children come from difficult situations and live in foster homes. If the child is waiting for a permanent family, the parents may have volunteered to give up their parental rights, but usually these rights were terminated by the court system due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. Many of the children are in the adoptive category of Special Needs. To view a photo and description of children currently in need of a permanent home please visit the My Turn Website at www.myturnnow.com.

3. Who handles the adoptions?

Adoptions of children in state custody are handled through the county Departments of Family and Children Services (DFCS) or through licensed private adoption agencies.

4. How do you qualify to adopt a child?

If you are single, you must be at least 25 years old and at least 10 years older than the child you wish to adopt. Married couples must be at least 10 years older than the child they wish to adopt. A family only needs to make enough money to cover their own living expenses.

5. What is the process to adopt?

You will need to have a family assessment, called a "home study," done by DFCS or a licensed private adoption agency. This is a chance for the case manager to learn about you and your family, while you learn about the children who need homes. If DFCS performs your family evaluation, you will also attend a training program called IMPACT. IMPACT consists of 20 hours of training and home visits by a case manager.

6. What is the waiting period for adopting a child?

The waiting period for a child with Special Needs can be as short as six to ten months. Once the child is placed in your home, he or she must live with you for some time before the legal proceedings can begin. A case manager will help you with any questions or problems you have during that time. The adoption usually becomes final after the child has spent about six months in your home.

7. What is the definition of Special Needs?

- A child who has been in the care of a public or private agency or individual other than the legal or biological parent for more than 24 consecutive months.
- A child with physical, mental, or emotional disability, as validated by a licensed physician or psychologist.
- A child who is a member of a sibling group of 2 or more placed in the same home.

¹All information taken from <http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/portal/site/DHS-DFCS/menuitem.83054cda1a084d2f7da1df8dda1010a0/?vgnnextoid=7aba1de5f6940010VgnVCM100000bf01010aRCRD>.

8. How will I know if a child is right for me?

Once you are selected as a potential adoptive parent for a waiting child, you will be provided available information on the child to assist you in making this very important decision. You will be given an opportunity to ask any questions. If you and the case manager decide to move forward, you will have the opportunity to visit the child several times prior to the child joining your family.

9. What if there are problems after the adoption?

If there are any problems after the adoption becomes final, you can contact your case manager to discuss the situation. The case manager can help the family find resources such as counseling and respite care. Services are designed to support and guide the family as you and your child adjust.

10. Can the birth parents or relatives come and legally take the child away?

No. Before a judge terminates parental rights, DFCS looks for any relatives who could take care of the child. Once the adoption is finalized, the child becomes a permanent member of your family.

11. Can I seek an adoption through a non-licensed agency?

Adoption through an agency not recognized by DHR is considered unlawful in the State of Georgia. For more information on how an agency becomes licensed or for a listing of licensed agencies, visit the Office of Regulatory Services.

12. What if I want to adopt a child or an adult child I already know?

In certain situations, you may want to adopt a person you know. For instance, grandparents might want to adopt their grandchild or a stepparent might wish to adopt a stepchild. For children under 18, both birth parents must give their consent for this to occur. To adopt a child who is 18 or older, only the child's consent is necessary. Both of these complex requests should be handled through an attorney, who will file an adoption petition. Visit the Georgia Bar Association Web site for a list of attorneys specializing in adoption. You may also go to the Georgia Adoption Resource Center Web site and choose an attorney from their recommended list.

13. Are there fees for adopting a child?

There are no fees for a parent who requests to adopt a child through DHR. In addition, DHR has contracts with certain private agencies that do not charge fees under the agreement. However, you will incur fees during the qualification process. These include services such as home safety inspections and legal fees. If the child is considered Special Needs, up to \$2,000 may be reimbursed through financial Adoption Assistance.

14. Is financial assistance available?

Specialized rates may be available and are based on the extraordinary needs of the child, and/or the additional parenting skill needed to raise the child.

If a child receives a specialized family foster care rate, a foster care worker can submit an application to the Adoption Unit for a determination for a higher per diem based on the exceptional special needs of the child. The foster care rate is determined by the Provider Relations Unit.

Adoption assistance payments can be up to 100 percent of the applicable DHS/DFCS family foster care per diem that the child was receiving immediately prior to the adoptive placement. The rates are dependent on the current level of functioning of the child.

Note: DHR/DFCS specialized family foster care rates may be lower than a private therapeutic foster care agency's rates. For negotiating specialized adoption assistance, the rate can only be negotiated up to the DHS/DFACS family foster care rates.

15. What are the tax benefits for adoption?

State Tax Credit

The State of Georgia offers a Tax Credit of \$2000 to parents for qualified adoptions. Qualification is defined as a child who is under 18 years of age, and is in a foster home or otherwise in the foster care system under the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). This credit will be available beginning the tax year the adoption becomes final and ending with the year the child turns age 18. Adoptive parents should consult with their tax professional before filing.

Federal Tax Credit²

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.

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

Ten Questions for Parents Preparing to Adopt or Foster³

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?

³ 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 Process⁴

The length of the adoption process varies according to the circumstances of the child, but can take as few as six to ten months. By providing extensive training and support, the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) ensures that you and your family are ready when the time to adopt arrives. The steps in the process are outlined below.

Step 1: Inquiry

You can begin the adoption process by making initial contact with DHR by phone. After answering some basic questions, you will be scheduled for an individual or group inquiry interview with an adoption case manager. Call 1-877-210-KIDS to complete this step.

Step 2: The Orientation

Step two involves attending a meeting to learn fundamental information about the adoption process and the requirements for adopting through DHR.

You will also get a chance to see pictures of the children currently waiting in Georgia. After the orientation, we ask that you take some time to carefully consider the information provided before moving to the next step.

Step 3: (I) Initial Interest, (M) Mutual selection, (P) Pre-service training, (A) Assessment, (C) Continuing development, (T) Teamwork (IMPACT)

When you are ready to move forward with the adoption process, this step requires you to attend the adoption preparation program offered through your County Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). You may also attend a comparable adoption preparation program offered through a private licensed adoption agency under contract with DHR. The DFCS adoption preparation program, called IMPACT, consists of 20 classroom hours of training.

Participants include those interested in adoption through the DHR, as well as those interested in foster parenting. The classes offer an opportunity for you to learn about a variety of topics related to the adoption experience, including:

- Information about the children
- The possible impact of adoption on your family
- Behavior management techniques
- The agency's role and more

During this time, a case manager will meet individually with your family to complete the assessment process and to create your Family Evaluation. This evaluation includes visits to your home, gathering of information (such as medical reports, criminal records check, financial statement, etc.), and discussions about your views on adopting.

⁴ All information taken from <http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/portal/site/DHS-DFCS/menuitem.76e501556de17147077a8110da1010a0/?vgnextoid=de8a2b48d9a4ff00VgnVCM100000bf01010aRCRD>.

Step 4: Family Evaluation

You may proceed to step four upon completion of an adoption preparation program and the assessment process. Upon reaching this step, your Family Evaluation will be forwarded to the Adoption Exchange. Your family will then be considered a resource for a waiting child.

Step 5: Pre-Placement

The time between qualifying for a child and placement of a child in your home varies from family to family, although identifying a child may shorten your waiting period. During the interim, you can periodically review the Photolisting and you will also have the opportunity to attend adoption galas and matching meetings. Information about support groups in your area is available through your case manager.

Step 6: Placement

During this step, you may identify a child, or a Georgia county with a child available for adoption may select your family for consideration. If all agree that your family is a possible resource, then you will have the opportunity to review detailed information about the child.

If you and the case manager decide to move forward, a meeting will be held to share additional information, answer questions and schedule pre-placement visits.

After a series of visits, you will sign a placement agreement and the child will join your family. At this time the agency will help you apply for Adoption Assistance if the child is in the category of Special Needs, as defined for the purpose of adoption. During the time before the adoption is finalized, your case manager will visit with you and the child to offer support as you begin your new life together.

Step 7: Finalization

While your child may live with you and become part of your family, you must make the child legally your own through the court system. Upon receiving a release from DHR, your attorney will file the adoption petition.

A hearing will be held by the Superior Court Judge in your county to finalize the adoption. The cost should be nominal and may be reimbursable for children with Special Needs. When you become the legal parent, visits are no longer required, but the agency is always a resource for you.

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 Georgia. 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

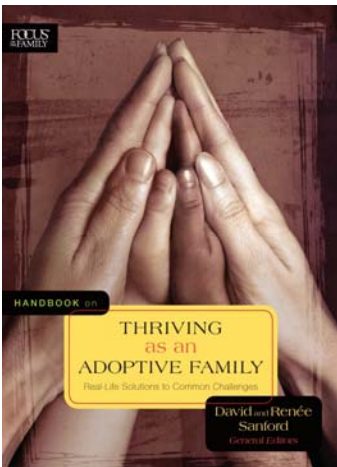
4. Evaluate the agency's program (some good questions to ask)

- 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

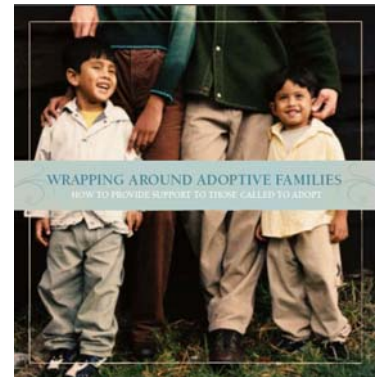


Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family

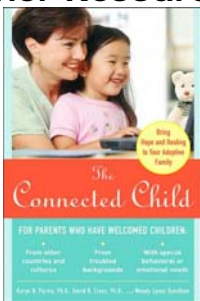
Adoption is a high calling from God, and the Christian home is primary soil for planting seeds of faith. But how will post-adoption challenges affect this growth? Many families do not feel adequately prepared for unexpected challenges like a child who has been adopted fighting with his new siblings, 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



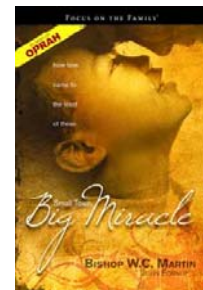
The Connected Child



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.

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).

Special Thanks to...



VICTORY
WORLD CHURCH

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

Date	First Name(s)	Last Name
Address		
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: Katie Porter 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.