

Who will be the contact for the Adoption Assistance payment when the adoption is finalized?

The Adoption Assistance program is administered by a unit of specialized staff persons across the state responsible for maintaining and managing the Adoption Assistance record. Prior to finalizing the adoption process, prospective adoptive parents are provided with the name and contact information of the person who will be responsible for managing their Adoption Assistance case.



Contact your Subsidy Specialist to report all changes including those which could make your child ineligible for the program or eligible for a different payment amount.

Other than the Adoption Assistance payment, what other benefits are offered through the Adoption Assistance program?

Other benefits may include the following:

- Non-recurring, one-time expenses related to the adoption to assist in the finalization of the adoption
- Medicaid benefits (TennCare)

Does Tennessee provide any services to adoptive families after the adoption is finalized?

Post Adoption Services: Tennessee offers post adoption services through the Harmony ASAP program to include:

- Individualized, in home
- Crisis Intervention
- Post Adoption Relief Team Building
- Support Groups
- Adoption Preparation Classes
- Advocacy
- Community Education

Families may directly contact the ASAP hotline to get started at 1-888-848-2727 or visit the ASAP website at tnasap.org.

Independent Living Services: Parents who are adopting teenagers can contact the Independent Living office if the youth was age 16 or older at adoption finalization. Visit the Youth in Transition section of the DCS website at TN.Gov or contact (844) 887-7277 for more information about the services that are available and who is eligible for those services.



Adoption Assistance

Helping Tennessee's
Adoptive Parents &
Children Succeed



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What is Adoption Assistance?

Adoption Assistance is a program designed to remove barriers to adopting special needs children. By providing financial assistance and services to help parents meet the needs of a special needs child, Adoption Assistance can aid families of any economic level in giving a child a permanent home.



Who is eligible for Adoption Assistance?

Any child who meets the definition of special needs will qualify for Adoption Assistance in Tennessee as long as they are under the age of 18 and a U.S. citizen or a qualified legal alien.

How is special needs determined?

A child's eligibility for Adoption Assistance is based on a three part requirement established by section 473 (c) of the Social Security Act. All three parts must be met in order for a child to be considered a child with special needs and qualify for Adoption Assistance. The determination must be made by an authorized representative of the Department of Children's Services (DCS) prior to the adoption being legally finalized in court.

What is the three-part requirement to be eligible for Adoption Assistance?

Part 1: DCS must determine the child cannot or should not return to the home of his or her parent(s) which means the child must be legally free for adoption and in full guardianship of DCS or a Licensed Child Placing Agency* prior to the adoption.

Part 2: DCS must make a reasonable effort to place the child for adoption with an appropriate adoptive parent(s) without providing Adoption Assistance or Title XIX medical assistance also known as Medicaid or TennCare, in Tennessee.

The Adoption Assistance program is designed to remove barriers to adopting children with special needs.

Part 3: DCS must determine that there exists a specific factor or condition which makes it reasonable to conclude that the child cannot be adopted without providing Adoption Assistance or Title XIX medical assistance/ Medicaid (TennCare) which means the child must meet at least one of the special needs factors or conditions as described below.

- The child is of a minority race or ethnic group, 2 years of age or older;
- The child is Caucasian, 9 years of age or older;
- The child is a member of a sibling group of two or more children to be placed in the same adoptive home;
- The child has a medically diagnosed disability which substantially limits one or more major life activities, requires professional treatment, and assistance in self-care;
- The child is diagnosed to be intellectually disabled by a qualified professional;
- ◆ The child is diagnosed by a qualified professional to have a behavioral or emotional disorder characterized by inappropriate behavior, which deviates substantially from behavior appropriate to the child's age or significantly interferes with child's intellectual, social, and personal functioning;

- The child has a moderate to severe medical, physical or psychological condition, diagnosed by a licensed physician, psychologist or licensed mental health professional and the identified condition requires treatment;
- The child's life experience include three or more consecutive years in Tennessee Department of Children's Service state custody;
- The child's life experience include neglect, physical abuse or sexual abuse which rises to the level for severe child abuse as indicated by DCS or adjudicated by a court.
- The child meets all of the medical and disability requirements for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).



How is Adoption Assistance eligibility determined?

Adoption Assistance eligibility is determined through a certification of eligibility process within the Tennessee's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, or TFACTS, system.

When does the Adoption Assistance payment begin and end?

Adoption Assistance payments begin the date the adoption is legally finalized in court and end when the child or youth reaches the age of 18 or in some cases 21. Adoption Assistance is reviewed periodically for continued eligibility

**For LCPA, additional eligibility requirements apply.*