

# Considering Adoption?

## If you can offer:

- A stable and safe home environment
- A feeling of love and belonging
- A lifelong commitment of family through adoption

## Then Adopting a Child May Be For You!

### Did You Know?

**There are over 150 available children in Hillsborough County alone waiting for adoptive families.**

- These children range from age 2 to 17 (majority being over 8 years old).
- You do not have to earn a high income to adopt; you just need enough money to provide the basic needs for your family.
- Adoptive parents can be married, single, divorced, or widowed and have children of their own or other adopted and foster children.
- Adopted children's medical care is paid by the State of Florida until the child's 18th birthday.
- An adoption subsidy is available, in many instances, until the child's 18th birthday to help adoptive parents care for children.
- If you adopt a child from the child welfare system, they are eligible to a 4-year paid college tuition in any Florida state college.

## Adoption Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: Who can be an adoptive parent?

**A:** Individuals that are willing to support a special child, and able to offer their time, attention and understanding to that child. Adoptive parents may be young or older, single or married - with or without children - and must have completed Florida's FREE standardized course of MAPP (Model Approaches to Partnerships in Parenting) training. A family's annual income isn't as important as their ability to open their hearts and homes to a special child.

### Q: What kind of children are in need of adoptive families?

**A:** Children seeking adoption are no different than children with families - only they lack the love and support offered by caring, loving parents. These children's ages range from birth to 17 years and may be part of a sibling or minority group.

### Q: What sort of help is offered the children and their adoptive family?

**A:** Children and their adoptive families receive support from adoption professionals, which may include referrals for individual therapy, support groups, 24/7 on-call support and paid Medical.

### Q: What steps must I take to become an adoptive parent?

**A:** There are six basic steps in the adoption process:

1. **Orientation**  
Attend an informational meeting in your area to learn more about the requirements of being a foster or adoptive parent.
2. **Preparation and Selection**  
If you meet the basic requirements you are invited to attend MAPP, a free parenting and training course (offered nights and weekends), which is provided by local adoption network agencies.
3. **Family Study**  
A family development specialist will visit your home and meet your family. You will discuss your

personal history, family interests, and lifestyle to determine the type of children that would best fit in your home.

4. **Home Study and Application Approval**

Once your home study is approved, adoption staff will begin searching for children that may fit your family based on your family's strengths.

5. **Matching Children and Families**

Once a child has been identified, the meeting and visitation process begins. If everything goes well, the child will eventually move into your home.

6. **Adoption Finalization**

After a three month supervision period of the child living in your home, the adoption process is completed by going to court to finalize the adoption

**Q: How long does the entire adoption process take?**

**A:** In most cases, the entire process takes between 8-12 months before a child's placement in your home is finalized.

**Q: Is adopting a child expensive?**

**A:** In the State of Florida, all children classified as "special needs" are adoptable by a qualifying family with little or no cost. All major expenses related to the adoption process are paid by the State and the family normally incurs costs only for outings with the child, the purchase of any gifts, etc.

**Q: What happens once the adoption is finalized?**

**A:** Once finalized in a Florida Court of Law, the child becomes a permanent member of the adopting family, affording parents all rights and responsibilities that would come with a biological birth child.

**Q: Does the adopted child or family receive any benefits?**

**A:** In most cases, the State of Florida offers a monthly subsidy for the continued care of the child. Most children are eligible for Medicaid Health Insurance and, with minimal qualification, four years of college tuition at a State funded college or university.

## Can't Adopt But Want to Help?

**You can:**

- Foster a child.
- Tutor or mentor a child.
- Offer job training to a teen in care.
- Donate your expertise to enhance the lives of children in foster care.
- Donate items such as clothing, school supplies and toys.