

Fall in Love with Adoption and Foster Care



A Guide for Families

Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
Department for Community Based Services
chfs.ky.gov

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Thank You

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster or adoptive parent with the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services. This guide is an overview of the great need for and many resources available to families who help care for the more than 7,000 children in state care.

Local staff is able to provide information beyond that presented here. Call the number for your county listed on pages 16-17. Or you may call the central office in Frankfort at (800) 232-KIDS.

On the Cover

The children featured on the cover of this brochure await adoption from the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) as of May 2007.

They are, clockwise from the top left: Latonia, born July 1991; Bethany, born December 1991; siblings Denisha, born December 1997, and Josh, born May 1995; and Michael, born March 1992.

Learn about these and other children online at <http://chfs.ky.gov/snap>.

Foster Care

The Department for Community Based Services' (DCBS) Division of Protection and Permanency is committed to keeping families together and safe. DCBS makes every effort to keep children together with their birth parents or relatives. However, sometimes a family is unable to care for their children, or the court decides that it is no longer safe for the children to remain with their birth family.

When it becomes necessary for children to be removed from their home, it is the agency's philosophy that children grow up better in families. Foster care is one of the many protective services offered to children and families. Foster families have been trained to help children deal with frightening and traumatic events in their lives.

Foster families provide temporary, 24-hour care in a home setting when it is necessary for a child to be separated from his or her birth family. Foster care is temporary until the child can be reunited with his or her family or is provided with another type of permanent living situation.

Facts About Children in Foster Care

There are approximately 7,000 children from the ages of birth to 21 who are living in out of home care in Kentucky.

- The greatest percentage (51 percent) of these children are age 12 and older.
- Many have brothers and sisters who also need care.
- They represent all races and many ethnic groups.
- Most have suffered some type of abuse and/or neglect by their birth family.
- Their needs may include medical problems, physical disabilities, developmental delays or behavioral and emotional disabilities.
- Many infants who come into care have experienced prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol.

- Most (75 percent) are able to return home when their birth families or relatives can provide appropriate care for them.
- Many utilize programs that assist them in obtaining education and job skill training after high school graduation.

Adoption

Of those children who cannot be safely returned home to birth parents or other relatives, many will become available for adoption. Adoption is a legal way of forming a family with a child who was not born to the adoptive parent. In many cases, foster parents choose to become the permanent and legal adoptive parents of children who have been in their home as foster children.

For those children who are not adopted by their foster families, other adoptive families are sought to become the permanent and legal family for the child.

For the federal fiscal year of 2006 (Oct. 1, 2005 through Sept. 30, 2006), 740 adoptions were finalized for children in the custody of DCBS. Of these, 89 percent were foster parent adoptions.

Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP)

SNAP is DCBS' Special Needs Adoption Program -- the primary adoption agency in Kentucky. SNAP began in 1979 in response to the increasing number of children who were spending too long in foster care without a permanent adoptive home.

Many of the children have emotional scars because of abuse, neglect or abandonment. SNAP children are legally available for adoption and do not have an identified adoptive family.

These children were removed from their birth parents by court order. Parental rights were terminated because the parents were unable or unwilling to provide proper care for their children.

Working together with the recruitment and certification teams (“R&C” workers) in Kentucky’s nine DCBS service regions, interested families are recruited and helped to prepare to adopt and/or foster children with no permanent home.

Who are the SNAP children?

There are currently about 350 SNAP children who are legally free for adoption and do not have an identified adoptive family. Kentucky has a critical need for adoptive families to provide safe, loving and permanent homes for these children.

Many people think that the term “special needs” indicates a child is mentally or physically disabled. While many of the children in SNAP have these issues, there are also many who do not.

Special needs criteria may include:

- A physical or mental disability;
- An emotional or behavioral disorder;
- A recognized/documented risk of physical, mental or emotional disorder;
- A member of a sibling group of two or more children in which the siblings are placed together;
- Previous adoption disruption or multiple placements;
- Age 7 or older with a significant emotional attachment or psychological tie to the foster family, and DCBS staff has determined that it would be in the child’s best interest to remain with the family; or
- An African-American child age 2 or older.

Adoption Resources

There are many resources available to assist families in adopting and parenting these children. Some of the available services are as follows:

- **Medicaid** (Medical cards)
- **Monthly subsidy** – funds used to meet the special needs of the child
- **Nonrecurring adoption expenses** – \$1,000 per child to pay for attorney fees and court costs
- **Extraordinary medical expenses** – reimbursements for services/equipment not covered by the medical card
- **Adoption tax credit** – additional information is available at <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html>
- **Tuition waiver** – tuition for any Kentucky public college/university or a technical school in the Kentucky Community Technical College System (KCTCS) is waived for any special needs child adopted from DCBS.
- **Educational Training Voucher (ETV)** – available for children who were adopted from DCBS when they were 16 years of age or older. The maximum amount is \$5,000 per student per year. Allowable expenses include books, rent, day care, transportation, utilities and food.
- **Out-of-state travel expenses** – DCBS may reimburse travel expenses for out-of-state families (who cannot pay) to attend a pre-placement conference or visit a Kentucky child.
- **Post Adoptive Placement Stabilization Services (PAPSS)** – allows adoptive parents to place their child in a residential facility for short-term (i.e. 90 days) crisis stabilization, if necessary, when all other services have been exhausted.

Facts About Foster and Adoptive Parents

DCBS depends on the foster and adoptive parents it partners with to nurture the children in state care.

- There are more than 2,300 DCBS approved foster and adoptive homes in Kentucky.
- They represent all races and many ethnic groups.
- There is a continuous need for families willing to share their homes and their lives with children who need out of home care.
- They are willing to work as a team member with the agency, the birth family and other community partners.
- They are able to provide a safe, nurturing home which promotes the child's growth and development.
- Many foster and adoptive homes have two working parents.
- Foster and adoptive parents may also be called "**resource parents.**"

What are the requirements to be a foster or adoptive parent?

The program is free, and you are not obligated to become a foster or adoptive parent because you attended the program. The only cost that may be associated with the training and approval process is the cost of the required physical.

There are several requirements for adults who want to become foster or adoptive parents.

- Interested parents must attend an information meeting.
- Applicants must be at least 21 years old.
- Resource parents can be married or single.
- Resource families should be financially stable and have an income (separate from foster care per diems or adoption subsidies) sufficient to meet the family's needs.

- Applicants must be able to provide a safe, secure and healthy home for a child.
- Resource parents must be in good physical and mental health.
- The home must meet requirements for housing safety and space.
- All adults in the home must successfully complete 30 hours of pre-service preparation training, and all paperwork to help them make an informed decision about whether fostering and/or adopting is appropriate for their family.

How long does approval take?

The training, evaluation and approval process normally takes four to six months. The amount of time until a family receives a child depends on how flexible they are about the type of child they wish to parent. Foster parents may receive a child shortly after approval. Adoptive placements generally take longer because the move to an adoptive home must be planned and gradual so both the child and the family have time to adjust.

Specialized Foster Care Services

Once approved as a DCBS resource home, a family may choose to seek a specialized level of approval in order to care for children with extraordinary needs who may otherwise require residential placement. DCBS has two types of specialized foster care services: Care Plus and Medically Fragile. A family must complete additional and ongoing training and have the recommendation of the R&C worker in order to be approved as a specialized resource home.

Care Plus

The Care Plus program is for children who have emotional problems and display aggressive, destructive or disruptive behaviors. Care Plus homes allow a child to live in the least restrictive environment, where the resource parent role model is trained to use skills that lead to positive changes in a child's behavior. Care Plus families do not simply keep children. They send children back into the world emotionally stronger, well adjusted and able to maintain the highly supportive relationships developed with the Care Plus family.

Applicants are required to complete 24 hours of Care Plus training in addition to the training requirements of a basic resource home. It is recommended that they have additional training in parenting the sexually abused child and have at least one year of experience as a resource parent. The R&C worker determines whether the applicant resource home is appropriate for the program. A Care Plus resource home should have one parent who is a primary caretaker and is not employed outside the home.

Care Plus resource homes serve children who:

- Have emotional problems,
- Are due to be released from treatment facilities,
- Display aggressive or destructive behaviors,
- Are at risk of being placed in more restrictive settings,
- Are at risk of being institutionalized, or
- Have experienced numerous placement failures.

Medically Fragile

Medically Fragile resource homes meet the needs of children with significant medical issues, while allowing the children to remain with a family in a home environment. In addition to the training requirements for a basic resource home, applicants are required to attend an orientation session and complete 24 hours of training regarding the care of medically fragile children. If the resource home parent is a health professional (physician, physician's assistant, ARNP or registered nurse under the supervision of a physician), the professional experience related to the care of a medically fragile child may substitute for the required training if approved by agency staff. The primary caretaker in a medically fragile resource home should not be employed outside the home. Upon placement of a child, the medically fragile resource parents should be trained in the techniques of caring for the specific child to be placed in the home.

Licensed health care professionals may also be approved as Specialized Medically Fragile Homes. These homes are approved to care for children whose medical needs require professional health care daily. There is a tremendous need for Medically Fragile and Specialized Medically Fragile resource parents to meet the needs of children in care with medical issues.

Medically fragile resource homes serve children who have:

- A medical condition that may become unstable or change abruptly resulting in a life-threatening situation,
- A chronic or progressive illness such as cancer, organ transplant, renal problems requiring dialysis or a terminal illness,
- A need for a special service or ongoing medical support such as nasal-gastric tube feeding, continuous oxygen administration, intravenous lines or tracheotomy,
- A medical condition that requires frequent monitoring by a health care professional,
- Neurological difficulties related to prenatal substance abuse,
- Neurological or physical impairments to a degree that the child is nonambulatory and requires 24-hour care.

Services for Children in Foster Care

Medicaid

Most children in out-of-home care are eligible to receive a medical card. For those who are not eligible, DCBS is responsible for medical expenses.

Foster Care Reimbursement

Foster parents receive a daily rate or per diem, which is a reimbursement for meeting the child's needs, based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) estimated cost to care for a child. The per diem is provided to cover expenses for housing, food, school and recreational expenditures, nonmedical transportation, baby-sitting, respite, some clothing expenses and an allowance for the child.

Treatment Services

The child's worker will assist with making necessary referrals to community service providers and coordinating needed services for the child. This may include counseling or other mental health services, evaluation and therapies for developmental delays or other services to meet identified needs.

Independent Living Services

The John Chafee Independence Program mandates that all children in care age 12 and older receive independent living services. These services may include instruction in the foster home on daily living skills, formal Life Skills classes and financial assistance for postsecondary education. Assistance provided for youth to continue their education or vocational training includes:

- Tuition Assistance. Youth ages 18 to 21 who extend their commitment to DCBS for educational purposes are eligible for tuition assistance to attend college or vocational training.
- Tuition waiver. Tuition for any Kentucky public college/university or a technical school in the Kentucky Community Technical College System (KCTCS) is waived for any child committed to DCBS when he or she turns 18 or any special needs child adopted from DCBS.

- Educational Training Voucher (ETV). Available for youth who left foster care at the age of 18 or who were adopted from DCBS when they were 16 years of age or older. The maximum amount is \$5,000 per student per year. Allowable expenses include books, rent, day care, transportation, utilities and food.

Please see "Web Links" (page 19) or call (502) 564-2147 for additional information about this program.

Resources and Supportive Services for Foster and Adoptive Families

Training

A variety of training is offered by DCBS or coordinated with community partners to provide resource parents with opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills on topics related to meeting the needs of children in care. Approved foster parents are required to receive a minimum of six hours of ongoing training each year.

The Resource Parent Mentor Program

Newly approved resource families are matched with experienced resource parent mentors in their area, who will provide emotional and practical support. The mentor parent will make weekly contact with the newly approved family for a period of six months after approval. The mentor is also available as needed to respond to questions, concerns, or provide support during challenging times. Additional information about the Resource Parent Mentor Program is available at: <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/trc/mentor.html> or by calling (877) 440-6376.

Adoption Support for Kentucky (A.S.K.)

A.S.K. is a consortium of parent-led adoptive parent support groups throughout the state. These support groups are for any family formed through adoption, whether through the state,

private, relative or international adoption. The services are for families who adopted years ago, recently, or may still be awaiting placement of a child.

Services provided by A.S.K. include group and individual support, mentoring with an experienced adoptive family, information on policies and procedures, educational and training programs, advocacy assistance and referrals to needed resources. Additional information about Adoption Support for Kentucky is available by calling (877) 440-6376 or online at: <http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/trc/adopt.html>.

The Kentucky Foster and Adoptive Parent Training Support Network

“The Network” has regional teams of experienced resource parents throughout the state. The primary objectives of the Network are to provide peer support and training and to help recruit new resource homes.

Team members are available to answer questions and have received specialized training to provide short-term crisis intervention for other resource parents during times of stress, frustration and difficulty. The overall goal of the Network is to retain resource parents and help to minimize placement disruptions. Additional information about the Network is available by calling (877) 70HEART.

Kentucky Foster/Adoptive Care Association (KFACA)

The KFACA is dedicated to the empowerment and encouragement of foster and adoptive families through advocacy and training. Membership in the KFACA allows families to advocate collectively for the needs of foster and adoptive families, and children in care, at both the state and national level. KFACA is a source of information about issues that affect resource families.

KFACA also works in partnership with DCBS to develop and provide training for resource families. Additional information about

KFACA is available at: <http://www.angelfire.com/ky3/kfaca/kychildren.html>.

Local Foster/Adoptive Care Associations

Most regions have at least one local foster/adoptive care association. Information about these associations may be obtained from recruitment and certification staff within the local regions.

National Foster Parent Association (NFPA)

This national organization strives to support foster parents, and remains a consistently strong voice on behalf of children. Their purpose is to bring together foster parents, agency representatives and community partners who wish to improve the foster care system and enhance the lives of children and families. The primary activities of the association are to:

- Promote the delivery of services and supports to foster families;
- Support quality foster care by promoting excellence and best practice;
- Provide services and supports to state and local foster parent associations;
- Develop and provide education and training and disseminate information to members and the public;
- Advocate at the local, state and national level;
- Promote networking and collaboration; and
- Promote positive image of family foster care and encourage active involvement.

Additional information about the NFPA is available online at <http://www.nfpainc.org> or by phone at (800) 557-5238.

Recruitment and Certification (R&C) Workers

During the approval process, a recruitment and certification worker will be assigned to complete the family's home study. Each approved family also has an assigned worker. The family's worker

will make home visits, respond to questions or needs the family may have, provide training information, ensure that ongoing certification requirements are met and provide other supportive services.

Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children (KPFC)

KPFC is a private, nonprofit organization which provides resources and support to families caring for children with emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges. Additional information about KPFC can be obtained online at <http://www.kypartnership.net> or by phone at (800) 369-0533..

Incentives for Resource Parents

Recruitment Bonus

Approved resource parents receive a recruitment bonus for each family they refer who becomes approved to provide foster care services for the Cabinet.

The referring resource home parent receives a \$100 bonus for the first two new resource homes approved, a \$150 bonus for the third and fourth resource home approved, and \$200 for the fifth and sixth resource home approved. After the sixth resource home referred, the bonus is \$250 for each newly approved resource home.

Tuition Assistance

Tuition assistance is available to resource parents who have been approved for at least three years, have a child placed in their home under the custodial control of the cabinet, are current in training hours and have a positive annual evaluation. The resource home parent may be reimbursed for up to nine semester hours during a regular semester. Programs of study must have a direct relationship to the work of the agency and the improvement of the parent's effectiveness as a resource home.

What are the next steps?

- If you have not already done so, call to express your interest. Your information will be recorded and you will be notified of the next information meeting in your area. Please see the regional listing on the following pages for the phone number for your county, or call **(800) 232-KIDS** in Frankfort.
- Attend an information meeting to receive additional information about the children who need care and the approval process.
- Attend and participate in the pre-service meetings. The 30 hours of preparation training are designed to help interested families better understand the needs of children in care and to make an informed decision about whether fostering or adopting is right for your family.
- While attending the preservice meetings, you will complete the necessary paperwork for your home study, including background checks.
- A recruitment and certification worker will complete two family consultations in your home during the approval process. This provides an opportunity for the worker to gain more information about the family and for the family to ask questions outside of the group setting.

Once the family has completed the necessary pre-service meetings, all necessary paperwork and the two family consultations, the recruitment and certification worker will complete the home study narrative on the home and submit for approval.

DCBS Regions

Cumberland Region

Bell, Clay, Harlan, Jackson, Laurel, Knox, Rockcastle and Whitley counties: (606) 330-2001

Adair, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Green, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, Taylor and Wayne counties: (606) 677-4086

Eastern Mountain Region

Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin and Pike counties: (606) 788-7100

Breathitt, Lee, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, Perry and Wolfe counties: (606) 633-0191

Jefferson Region

Jefferson County: (502) 595-KIDS (5437)

The Lakes Region

Caldwell, Christian, Crittenden, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Muhlenberg, Todd and Trigg counties: (270) 889-6570 or (888) 761-8961

Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, Marshall and McCracken counties: (270) 247-2979

Northeastern Region

Bath, Bracken, Fleming, Lewis, Mason, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, Robertson and Rowan counties: (606) 845-2381

Boyd, Carter, Elliott, Greenup and Lawrence counties: (606) 920-2130

Northern Bluegrass Region

Boone, Bourbon, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Harrison, Kenton, Nicholas, Owen, Pendleton and Scott counties: (859) 292-6632

Salt River Trail Region

Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson and Washington counties: (270) 766-5099

Anderson, Bullitt, Franklin, Henry, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, Trimble and Woodford counties: (502) 633-2055 or (888) 698-2221

Southern Bluegrass Region

Boyle, Clark, Estill, Fayette, Garrard, Jessamine, Lincoln, Madison, Mercer and Powell counties: (859) 245-5488

Two Rivers Region

Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson and Warren counties: (270) 746-7447

Daviess, Hancock, McLean and Ohio counties: (270) 687-7491
Henderson, Union and Webster counties: (270) 826-7178

Web Links

Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP)

<http://chfs.ky.gov/snap>

DCBS Adoption Services

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/adoptionsservices.htm>

DCBS Out of Home Care

http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/out_of_home_care.htm

John Chafee Independence Program

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dpp/>

[The+Chafee+Independence+Program.htm](#)

DCBS Resource Parent Handbook

<http://chfs.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/E5F11E11-7244-41F6-B462-F5C2912E7857/0/ResourceParentHandbook.pdf>