

## FAQs (Adopting and Foster Care)

**Q.** How can I become a Foster or Adoptive Parent?

**A.** for children in Connecticut are licensed or approved according to the regulations of the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF). The first step is to attend an open house offered by one of our 14 area offices. At the open house, staff provide an overview of the agency's mission, what we do and who we serve, our philosophy of foster care, and the licensing process and requirements. DCF staff will conduct an assessment of you, your family and your home and write a home study. The home study process includes attendance at classes and home visits by a social worker.

To begin this process, please call: **1-888-KID-HERO**. You can also check our Open House Schedule for the location most convenient for you.

**Q.** Are there age requirements for applicants?

**A.** Yes. you must be at least 21 years old.

**Q.** Who can adopt?

**A.** Any adult, single or married, who is/are able to provide a safe, loving home to a child, is eligible to adopt. There is no discrimination of race, age, gender identity and/or expression, marital/partner or cohabitation status or actual or perceived inherent sexuality. Adoptive/Foster parent(s) can be as young as 21 or they can be seniors. Parent(s) may be renting a residence or may own their home. (NOTE: All prospective parents must attend a series of classes which meet at a variety of locations and times around the state. The course covers a wide range of subjects that may be helpful in parenting a child with special needs, and includes a home study. In addition, prospective parents must pass federal, state and local criminal history and DMV background checks. In total, the licensing process may take 4 months or more to complete.)

**Q.** Does a recent marriage, divorce, birth of a child, death of a loved one or other major change/event in the family affect the application process?

**A.** Yes. Any major life change will be assessed on an individual basis. Sometimes a brief wait is encouraged. Families need stability before considering the addition of a child.

**Q.** Is there a minimum income requirement?

**A.** The family must have sufficient income to cover their living expenses (rent, heat, electric, food, insurance, medical, etc.) without the monthly reimbursement fee for the care of the foster child.

**Q.** Is home ownership a requirement?

**A.** No. You can rent or own an apartment, single-family house or condominium. You need to have a separate bed for each foster children and separate rooms for children of the opposite sex ages three and older.

**Q.** Can I work outside of my home?

**A.** Yes, provided the plan is approved by the child's social worker and is guided by the age and the needs of each child.

**Q.** Does the child have medical insurance?

**A.** Yes, Each child has coverage through a managed care company.

**Q.** Is there a limit to the number of children allowed in my home?

**A.** Yes. The maximum number of children allowed is six. The maximum number of foster and/or pre-adoptive children placed in the home is three at the same time.

**Q.** Can single individuals or parents foster and/or adopt?

**A.** Yes. Foster care and adoption by single parents is permissible and supported. LGBTQ single individuals are also allowed and encouraged to foster and adopt in Connecticut.

**Q.** Can same gender couples foster and/or adopt?

**A.** Yes. Foster care and adoption by same gender couples (both married and those couples living in the same household) is permissible and supported.

**Q. How long does it take to adopt a waiting child?**

**A.** The timeframe varies, based on the needs of the waiting child and the type of child you are willing to consider. After placement, the average length of time from placement to finalization is six months to a year for those children who are legally free. The Department is making an effort to shorten the timeframe in individual situations when appropriate. Supportive services from the Department are available during the pre-adoptive time period to ensure that the best plan is in place for the child and the adoptive family.

**Q. Can I adopt if I already have a child or children?**

**A.** Yes, you can. Families who have parenting experience are a great resource for waiting children. Some families adopt children while their biological children are still in the home. Many families who have grown children may experience "empty nest" feelings and will adopt, most often adopting an older child or sibling group.

**Q. Are there subsidies available for adoptive families?**

**A.** Yes, any family adopting a special needs child in Connecticut may be eligible to receive a medical and/or financial subsidy for their child. Children who have special needs include children with physical, intellectual or emotional disabilities, sibling groups, older children, and children with complex medical needs. The Department also has a College Assistance Program that contributes to the cost of college tuition for all children adopted from DCF's legal custody after January 1, 2005 who attend an accredited college, university, or post-secondary program.

**Q. Are there certain health requirements for adoptive parents?**

**A.** Agencies will require physical examination reports from a doctor for the primary caretakers and all members of the household. This does not mean that you must be in perfect physical condition. Adoptive families must be physically and mentally capable of providing care to a child.

**Q. What is a "Legal Risk" Adoptive Placement?**

**A.** Legal risk adoption placements allow children whose parental rights have not yet been terminated to be placed in a pre-adoptive home. Although the permanency plan for the child may be adoption, the child is not free for adoption until the court rules in favor of the termination of parental rights. The Department offers support to the pre-adoptive family during this time but cannot guarantee the outcome of the court proceedings. The greatest challenge of legal risk placements is the uncertainty for the pre-adoptive family.

**Q. How long Does It Take To Adopt a Child Who is Already "Legally Free" for Adoption?**

**A.** The time frame can vary depending upon the age of the child you want to adopt and the needs and availability of children waiting to be adopted. After the initial placement of a child with an adoptive family, the average time to the finalization of the adoption is 6 mos.-1 year.

**Q. What are the Adoption Fees?**

**A.** There is no cost whatsoever to adopt a child who is in the care and custody of the state. In fact, you will receive stipend as well as medical coverage from the time the child is placed in your care until the adoption is finalized. The State sometimes provides ongoing financial assistance and/or medical coverage, on a case-by case basis, to families that adopt sibling groups or to help families parenting children who have medical, emotional or behavioral issues.

**Q. After the Adoption is Complete, are Adoptive Families Provided with Support?**

**A.** Yes, there are various support services available to adoptive families. Services include family counseling, adoption support groups, life book preparation and other support services while the adoption is being processed and up to a year after finalization.

**Q. Is There Assistance Available to help Adoptive Families Pay for an Adopted Child's College Tuition?**

**A.** In Connecticut, DCF offers college funds to children who were legally committed to the care of DCF in Connecticut before their adoption, who are full time students and have demonstrated a minimum grade point average. The amount paid by DCF is limited to the amount of in-state college tuition costs at the University of Connecticut.

For additional questions not answered above, call **1-888-KID-HERO**  
or e-mail [KidHero@cafafct.org](mailto:KidHero@cafafct.org)