

Additional supports for adoptive families and legal guardians

Additional supports for adoptive families

Adoption assistance

At the time of an adoption through Oregon's child welfare system, families apply for adoption assistance (AA), which is financial and/or medical assistance to help with the costs associated with the adoptive child's needs. Families may apply for and access a monthly payment, reimbursement for nonrecurring costs associated with an adoption finalization, special payments and medical assistance, or they may sign an 'agreement only' which allows the family to access assistance if or when a need for payment and/or medical coverage arises prior to the child's 18th birthday. An adoptive family also may call their AA coordinator to request renegotiation of the existing financial assistance through AA if there are changes in the child's needs or the family's circumstances.

Though extremely rare, a family may not have applied for adoption assistance. The family may contact an AA coordinator to request an opportunity to apply for AA after the adoption has been finalized if there are extenuating circumstances.

Families who adopt children from other states' child welfare systems also may have access to such services from their child's state of residence prior to the adoption.

Adoption assistance coordinators in the central office are available to speak directly with families who have questions related to insurance coverage and financial supports that may be available through the AA program.

Voluntary Adoption Registry and assisted search

The Adoption Registry program maintains a registry of persons wishing to receive adoption information and provides information to eligible adoptees and eligible relatives of adoptees. The individuals involved in an adoption (adoptive parents, adult adoptees and birth families) seeking identifying or non-identifying information or requesting assistance in searching for others involved in an adoption should be referred to the Adoption Registry and assisted search programs at the central office adoption unit.

Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center (ORPARC)

DHS also contracts with the Oregon Post Adoption Resources Center to provide a variety of services such as training, information and referrals, access to a lending library, assistance with planning for respite care, and referrals to and assistance with the development of support groups. These services are available to families who adopt children through any state's child welfare system, as verified by their inclusion in the state's adoption assistance program, and to families who receive guardianship assistance through Oregon's child welfare system.

As a caseworker, you may not be well-versed in adoption issues or you may want some quick and helpful information about some of the special needs that children in post-

adoptive or post-guardianship homes may face. There are handy packets of information about a variety of children's special needs that can be e-mailed or mailed to caseworkers and eligible families. Topics explored in these no-return-necessary packets include the needs of a child who has been sexually abused; self-destructive behavior; ADD/ADHD; attachment; effective discipline; parenting children who have been exposed to methamphetamine; transracial parenting; mood disorders; and alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorders. Caseworkers also can borrow materials from ORPARC's lending library, obtain lists of adoptive family support groups, attend trainings, and receive information about and referral to services or providers who may be geared toward the unique needs of adoptive and guardian families. You may visit ORPARC on-line at www.orparc.org or call toll-free 1-800-764-8367.

Additional supports for legal guardians

Several supports are available to some legal guardians that do not require contact with the child welfare office to initiate services. However, families may not know about the resources or the process to access these services.

Subsidized guardianship

Some children who were in DHS custody at the time the guardianship was established may have qualified for 'guardianship assistance,' which refers to financial or medical benefits to guardian families for costs associated with the needs of the child under their guardianship. If enrolled in this program, the family likely is receiving a payment similar to a foster care payment.

In a guardianship, unlike an adoption, the biological family case file remains accessible, and historical information about the child and birth family also can be accessed by the caseworker if more information is needed about the child. A closed provider file may have additional information about the guardians.

Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center (ORPARC)

Please refer to the full description in the above section entitled "Additional supports for adoptive families" for more information about ORPARC services available for people who have an assisted guardianship through the department.