

(continued)

The HHS adoption worker must provide all relevant information about the child to the potential adoptive family. This information should include:

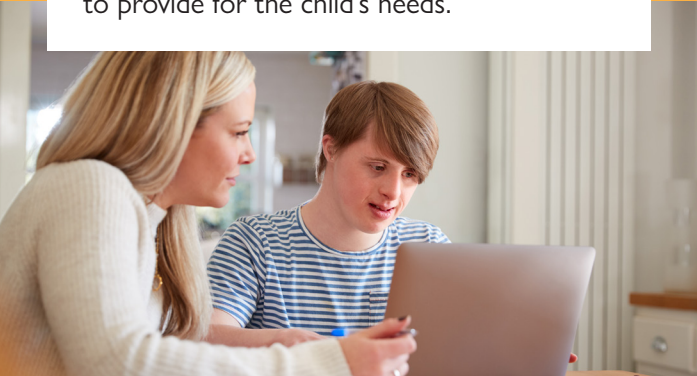
- ▶ A detailed background report,
- ▶ Psychological and medical report,
- ▶ School information,
- ▶ Placement history, and
- ▶ The child's eligibility for adoption subsidy.

A family may need to:

- ▶ **Research the child's background;**
- ▶ **Read case information;**
- ▶ **Talk with significant people in the child's life;**
- ▶ **Meet with past and current foster care and service providers.**

Basic information such as medical history, where the child has lived, and what happened to the child before placement into foster care, is sometimes not known by HHS or private providers.

The adoptive family must decide if they can make an informed decision about adopting the child and make a life-long commitment based on the information available and their ability to provide for the child's needs.



PURPOSE OF IOWA'S ADOPTION SUBSIDY PROGRAM

The purpose of the Iowa adoption subsidy program is to secure a permanent family for Iowa's children whose special needs present barriers to adoption. The subsidy program enables a family to make a permanent commitment to a child with special needs without placing an undue financial burden on the family.

The adoption subsidy program is only available to children who have special needs and are placed in the custody and guardianship of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or a licensed child placing agency. Adoption subsidy is not an entitlement, so an attempt will be made to place a child for adoption without a subsidy. When placement decisions are made, the child's best interest is paramount in determining the adoptive placement.

The Iowa HHS adoption worker determines and documents the child's special needs. The *Adoption Subsidy Agreement* is negotiated between the children's adoptive parents and the HHS adoption worker before adoption finalization. The *Adoption Subsidy Agreement* could include:

- ▶ A monthly maintenance payment
- ▶ Medical coverage
- ▶ Nonrecurring legal fees, and
- ▶ Special services

Monthly maintenance payments for subsidy cannot exceed what the child received or would be eligible to receive in foster care.



STATE OF IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
Health AND Human
SERVICES

Overview of Iowa's

Adoption Subsidy Program

Future Solutions Now

ELIGIBILITY FOR IOWA ADOPTION SUBSIDY

A child is considered to be a child with special needs when all three of the following criteria are met:

- 1. The child cannot or should not be returned to the home of the child's biological parents** and juvenile court has terminated parental rights.
- 2. Reasonable but unsuccessful efforts have been made to place the child with an appropriate adoptive parent** without providing adoption assistance (subsidy).
- 3. The child cannot be placed for adoption without a subsidy** due to one or more of the following:
 - ▶ *The child is a member of a sibling group of three or more who are placed in the same adoptive home.*
 - ▶ *The child is age five or older*
 - ▶ *The child has a medically diagnosed disability that limits one or more major life activities or requires professional treatment, assistance in self care, or the purchase of special equipment.*
 - ▶ *The child has been determined to be intellectually disabled by a qualified professional.*

- ▶ *The child has been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder that impairs the child's functioning and requires professional services.*
- ▶ *The child has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional to have a behavioral or emotional disorder characterized by behavior that is inappropriate to the situation and which deviates substantially from behavior appropriate to the child's age or significantly interferes with the child's intellectual, social, and personal adjustment.*
- ▶ *If the child has been determined by a qualified professional to be at high risk of developing a qualifying medical, mental, or emotional condition, but does not currently have special needs, a future needs agreement may be negotiated. More noted below under **Agreement to Future Adoption Subsidy**.*

Adoption subsidy ends at age 18, regardless of whether the child has graduated high school. If the youth has a disability or condition diagnosed within one year of the youth's 18th birthday, subsidy may continue up to age 21.

AGREEMENT TO FUTURE ADOPTION SUBSIDY

The adoptive parents may negotiate an agreement to future adoption subsidy with Iowa HHS before finalization in the following situations:

- ▶ The child is eligible for subsidy, but the child or family does not currently need assistance.
- ▶ The child is "at risk" of being determined a child with special needs by a physician, a qualified intellectual disability specialist, or a qualified mental health professional. This includes a written qualifying statement from a specified professional to support the at-risk determination.

IS SPECIAL NEEDS ADOPTION RIGHT FOR YOU?

Children need and deserve permanence. Parenting children with special needs can be rewarding, yet challenging. Potential adoptive parents should consider how adoption impacts their family's finances, personal relationships, and family relationships. Parents may require more flexibility at work and more space in their home to accommodate the child.

When considering adoption of a child with special needs, it is important for a family to ask, "What support services will my family need to meet this child's needs?" The family must consider if the child's special needs produce extra costs that will not be covered by Medicaid, private insurance, or school programs. The family and the HHS adoption worker must determine if the family can address the child's needs with available support and community services.

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Additional Resource
www.ifapa.org