

STRENGTHEN YOUR

BOOKSHELF

A step-by-step guide to post-adoption

Developed with the
generous support of Jockey
International, Inc. through



DAVE THOMAS
FOUNDATION
FOR ADOPTION®

Finding Forever Families for Children in Foster Care



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EVERY FAMILY WHO ADOPTS DESERVES THE CHANCE TO SUCCEED.

Adopting a child can be the most rewarding and joyful event of your life. It can also bring a unique set of challenges. Children who are adopted – regardless of their age at adoption or the type of adoption – may need help with behavioral, emotional, or developmental issues.

As an adoptive parent, you have many resources you can rely on to help give your child the opportunity to thrive. This guide offers an overview of the post-adoption resources you may need and how to access them.

Rest assured that challenges are a normal part of the adoption process. With help and support, every child can be happy and healthy in a permanent, loving home.

Getting ready

Take steps to prepare for your child even before the adoption is finalized.

Get to know your child.

- Find out as much as possible about your child's history and physical, mental, and behavioral health. The law allows for full disclosure of information to the adoptive parents. Ask your pediatrician or family physician to review your child's medical records to help you prepare for your child's needs. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers a directory of adoption-competent physicians at aap.org.
- If your child has special needs, contact the related national advocacy organization for resources and local referrals.
- Ask your child's school for an evaluation and assessment of your child's learning needs to see if he or she should have an individualized educational plan (IEP). U.S. federal law requires the public education system to accommodate all children, no matter what their needs.
- If your child is attending college and was adopted from U.S. foster care, apply for college financial aid and scholarships. If your child was adopted after his or her 13th birthday, he or she can complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form as an independent student so that parental income will not be a factor in eligibility for assistance (Public Law 110-84). Scholarships are also available. Visit childwelfare.gov and enter "scholarships" in the search box.

Get connected.

- Ask your adoption agency or adoption professional to connect you with other adoptive parents before finalization. Offer to sign a waiver to share your contact information with other adoptive families.
- Subscribe to adoption magazines, e-newsletters, or blogs.

Get financial support.

- Negotiate an adoption subsidy. If you are adopting an eligible child with special needs from a public or private agency, you can receive federal or state benefits. You must negotiate the subsidy before the adoption is finalized.
- Ask your employer if they offer adoption benefits, such as financial reimbursement or paid leave. If not, order our free toolkit to propose adoption benefits at davethomasfoundation.org or **1-800-ASK-DTFA**.
- Ask your tax advisor about state and federal adoption tax credits and exclusions.

Identifying resources

A range of resources exist to help support your new family. They include education, counseling, and advocacy, and address challenges frequently shared by adoptees and their families. The services you need will depend on your child and your unique circumstances.

Here are a few of the most valuable:

- Mental health services like counseling and therapy that focus on adoptees and their families specifically. They are particularly effective in addressing issues like attachment, loss and grief, and for some children, the effects of abuse or neglect.
- Parent support groups, especially those specific to the child's culture or special needs, which may meet in person or online.
- Specialized educational support for school-aged children.
- Respite child care.
- Financial assistance and scholarships.
- Camps for children, couples, and families.
- Workshops, seminars, and publications addressing post-adoption issues.
- Birth parent search services.

Evaluate the resources you may need and put together a list of providers. By being proactive, you'll make sure you can find help right when you need it.



“It is critical for adoptive families to understand that the process does not end at finalization. Finding and using post-adoption resources can allow you to share the joys and address the challenges of adoption. We encourage you to take advantage of every resource at your disposal and connect, when possible, with other adoptive families.”

RITA L. SORONEN, President & CEO, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

“Every family deserves the support and resources that are critical for them to remain strong and successful together. It is heartbreaking to hear that without post-adoption services, families are at risk of dissolving. Even one failed adoption is too many; all children deserve to know the comfort of a loving, permanent home. We at Jockey are so proud to be able to support the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption through the creation of this resource for adoptive families.”

DEBRA S. WALLER, Chairman and CEO, Jockey International, Inc.



Finding resources

Many adoptive parents find referrals from other adoptive parents and local support groups to be their most valuable source for reliable information. Here are a few more places to find them:

- Ask your adoption agency for recommendations.
- Ask your medical professional for suggestions.
- Search national and regional post-adoption provider listings on the internet. See the Recommended Resources section of this publication for the most comprehensive online sites.
- Find out if your employer provides resources. This is usually handled by the human resources department. Some employers offer workplace support groups or online networks for adoptive parents. Many provide adoption support through their employee assistance program (EAP).

When choosing professionals, it's important to make sure they understand the needs of adopted children and their families. Ask these questions of licensed counselors and therapists before working with them:

- Do you have experience with foster and adoptive families? If so, how much?
- How often do you work with them?
- What adoption-related training have you received?
- Can you connect me with one or two families willing to give a reference?
- Do you offer therapy for both the family and the child?
- Will you accept payments from my insurance provider?



Creating resources

If you are unable to find resources within your community, remember that you are the best advocate for your child, and that every existing resource started with just one person who cared.

- Organize a parent support group. Advice on organizing a parent support group is available at nacac.org and adoptamericanetwork.org.
- Suggest resources for your local mental health care professionals, educators,

and medical professionals so they can become proficient in treating adoptees and their families. Invite them to include adoption-training workshops in their professional development conferences. To provide or recommend adoption-competent training and reading materials, visit adoptionsupport.org.

- Ask your employer to support adoptive families in the workplace. Order our free toolkit to propose adoption benefits, such as financial reimbursement and paid leave, and our workplace publication "Beyond Benefits: More Ways to Be Adoption-Friendly" at davethomasfoundation.org.
- Contact your legislators to advocate for funding of resources in your area.

Setting expectations

Of course, your experience will depend on the background and characteristics of your child and the circumstances of your adoption. Some common issues include attachment disorders, feelings of loss, and developmental or learning delays. The challenges of adjusting to a new environment or culture are often difficult as well.

Adoption is a significant and emotional event for the child. Other family members may also need help adjusting to the adoption. Understand that it's normal to have challenges along the way, even years after the adoption. Life events and natural developmental stages can sometimes trigger new issues for the adopted child, usually concerns about their identity or feelings of abandonment by their biological families.

Most importantly, be wholly committed to your child and the adoption. Adopted children need the permanence of a forever family and your unconditional love.

Recommended resources

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Offers a variety of free resources, including a toolkit to propose and establish workplace adoption benefits, adoption awareness materials, and adoption attitudes research.

800-ASK-DTFA (800-275-3832)

davethomasfoundation.org

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Information Gateway

Lists adoption assistance by state, gives examples of model programs, highlights research findings on post-adoption services, and provides links to publications for adoptive parents.

800-394-3366

childwelfare.gov/adoption

Adoption Learning Partners

Provides a wide variety of low-cost online education for parents and professionals.

800-566-3995

adoptionlearningpartners.org

Adoptions Together

Offers online education for parents, educators, and adoption professionals.

301-439-2900

adoptionstogether.org

American Academy of Pediatrics

Offers a directory of adoption-competent physicians and advice for parents and practitioners.

847-434-4000

aap.org

ARCH National Respite Network

Provides listings of respite care providers by state and in a searchable database as a program of the Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project.

archrespite.org

Center for Adoption Support and Education

Offers information about adoption-competent training and recommended reading for children, parents, adoption professionals, and educators.

301-476-8525

adoptionssupport.org

Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute

Addresses the critical need for post-adoption services through research and advocacy.

212-925-4089

adoptioninstitute.org

National Adoption Center

Offers an online community, publications, and education for children and parents.

800-TO-ADOPT

adopt.org

North American Council on Adoptable Children

Provides information on adoption subsidies, advice on how to start a parent support group, answers to adoptive parents' frequently asked questions, and articles on parenting adopted children.

651-644-3036

nacac.org

About the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

We are America's only nonprofit public charity foundation dedicated exclusively to finding permanent homes for the 115,000 children waiting in foster care to be adopted. We are driven by Dave's vision: Do what is best for the child.

In our unwavering pursuit of this goal, we award grants to adoption professionals who connect children with families, raise funds to support our awareness and advocacy programs, and offer free resources to prospective and adoptive parents.

Learn. Donate. Adopt.

Because we depend on people like you to help us fulfill our mission, please visit davethomasfoundation.org or call **1-800-ASK-DTFA** (1-800-275-3832) to find out how you can help.

About Jockey Being Family[®]

Jockey Being Family is Jockey International, Inc.'s corporate citizenship initiative dedicated to providing comfort to families touched by adoption. Jockey Being Family naturally reflects Jockey's values as a family-owned company and its dedication to outfitting individuals with the comfort and support they need to live their best lives. Recognizing the unmet need, post-adoption services were selected as an issue where Jockey could make a significant impact. Jockey believes that by strengthening adoptive families, we can help ensure permanence for children and the strength of families in our communities. Visit us on our website at Jockey.com and JockeyBeingFamily.com.

