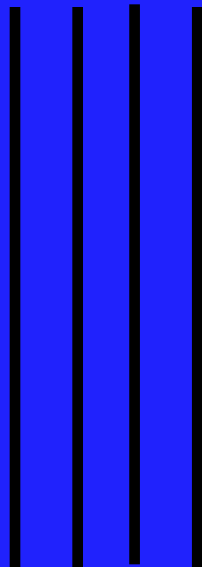




4008 W. Wackerly
PO Box 2225
Midland, MI 48641-2225



ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Adoption Option Inc.
4008 W. Wackerly
PO Box 2225
Midland, MI 48641-2225

Phone: 989-839-0534
Fax: 989-839-0537

Email: HHaremski@aoicw.org /
BFilhart@aoicw.org

www.AOICW.org

www.Facebook.com/AdoptionOptionInc



MISSION STATEMENT:
TO IMPROVE
THE LIVES OF THE
CHILDREN &
FAMILIES WE
SERVE.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Become a...

- ~ Foster parent
- ~ Adoptive parent
- ~ Mentor
- ~ Volunteer
- ~ Donor

More Resources:

[www.kinship.msu.edu](http://www.kinship.msu.edu/publications/index.php)<http://www.kinship.msu.edu/publications/index.php>

www.adoptionoptioninc.org

www.mafak.org

www.mare.org

COMMON MISCONCEPTION

If I choose to adopt, I will be on a waiting list for years before I become an adoptive parent.



TRUTH

The length of time a family waits for adoption can vary depending on a variety of factors. For example, if you are looking to adopt a child under the age of 5 years old, you may be waiting much longer than if you are willing to consider adopting a child over the age of 10.

Dear Prospective Foster / Adoptive Parents,

Thank you so much for requesting information regarding adoption/foster care from our agency, Adoption Option Inc. We are looking forward to answering all of your questions regarding the adoption/foster home licensing process from start to finish.

Hopefully, this brochure will help answer some of your initial questions. If you have any questions or would like more information, please call the office at 989-839-0534 so we can assist you.

You can visit our website at: <http://www.aoicw.org/> for further resources. Once you feel that you have gathered enough information and are ready to begin the adoption/licensing process, contact us to find out when the next orientation session is scheduled. Please be aware that there may be times when we have a waiting list of families.

Again, we appreciate your request for information and look forward to assisting you on your adoption/foster care journey.

Sincerely,

DeLois T. Leapheart

DeLois T. Leapheart
Founder & President



ADOPTION

THE ADOPTION PROCESS

1. Complete home study process and become approved as a licensed foster or adoptive parent (or both!).
.....
2. Partner with your adoption worker to be matched with a child.
.....
3. Begin the visitation process.
.....
4. Partner with your adoption worker to apply for adoption subsidy.
.....
5. Partner with your adoption worker to apply for consent of adoption.
.....
6. Partner with your adoption worker for supervisory visits.
.....
7. Partner with your adoption worker to request a court hearing to finalize the adoption.



TO LICENSE OR NOT TO LICENSE: WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER BECOMING LICENSED

The State of Michigan has designed the foster care licensing process to protect the safety, health, education and welfare of children who are placed in out-of-home care. As a result, the State of Michigan requires foster children to be in licensed foster homes.

If your goal is adoption and you are matched with a child, you would typically begin having visits with that child. Without a foster home license, you would be limited to short visits with the foster child and would be allowed to have limited overnight visits until a judge signs an Order Placing Child. This happens near the end of the adoption process.

As a licensed foster parent you will be able to have longer visits with the child in your home prior to the Order Placing Child or finalizing the adoption. This makes it is easier to assess whether a foster child fits into your family and vice versa.

As a licensed foster parent/home, you always have the option of declining the opportunity to take into your home any child you do not feel you can effectively meet the needs of because the goal is to place the child in a home that will help that child grow and develop.

**If you do become licensed, you will be required to complete 6 hours of training yearly. Annual home visits and home study renewals will also be required as long as your foster home license remains open.*

SECOND TIME AROUND

As you begin to do things such as retire from work, resume old hobbies you once loved, and consider your new life-phase with a loved one, the pitter-patter of little feet is a thought that may occasionally float through your mind.

At this stage, one usually equates that thought with grandchildren who might stay the weekend or for a week



during the summer. One couple was called to return to the role of full-time parent in order to keep a grandchild in the family.

Mark has been a part of the household since he was less than a year old. His grand parents have had to adapt to having a two-year-old in the home full-time, but would not trade the experience for anything in the world. They love having the energetic little one around and parenting all over again.

ADOPTION OF A FOSTER CARE CHILD WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



Children come into the foster care system primarily due to neglect or abuse. Foster care is meant to be a temporary situation for children and their families while they are working toward reunification.

Sometimes when reunification cannot be achieved, parental rights may be terminated and the child becomes available for adoption.

Foster children need a family who will accept them as they are, love them unconditionally, and work with them to re-pattern life and develop coping skills. An adoptive family is instrumental in helping the child grow into a healthy, happy, and productive adult.

We are looking for committed individuals and families willing to have a positive impact on the life of a child.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When you adopt, you assume the same legal rights and responsibilities a birth parent has for their child.

While a child is in foster care, decision-making regarding that child is shared by several agencies, foster parents, the courts and, depending on the circumstances, birth parents.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF FOSTER CARE CHILDREN

1. Temporary court ward involves foster youth who are working on a plan that could involve reunification with their birth family.
2. Permanent court ward involves foster youth whose parental rights have been terminated and they are available for adoption.

OUR ARCHIVES

YOU CAN HELP MORE CHILDREN LIKE JENNY...

Jenny was a young girl that had to go through some very tough and trying times when her mother passed away. Her father was sick and because of his sickness was unable to care for Jenny.

Jenny was moved to a temporary foster home. Her foster mother was going to adopt Jenny at first, but that plan fell through. After the first adoption attempt, Jenny was asked who she would like to have adopt her. She replied that she would like her deceased mother's best friend, Sue, to adopt her. Sue agreed and the adoption occurred a few months later.

Despite the loss in both of their lives, they were able to come together and start their own family. For more stories about children like Jenny, please visit



WWW.MARE.ORG

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO CHANGE A LIFE?

The journey began as a favor to a friend. A woman became a licensed foster parent in order to help her friend who lost custody of her child. She had known the child since birth and did not want to see him sent to live with a foster family he did not know.

The more time she spent with the child, the more she fell in LOVE with him. As she grew closer to the child, her family did too. Her daughter bonded with him, her parents took him on overnight visits, and her siblings included him in family activities, treating him as their own. Ultimately, she knew she had to adopt him to legalize what was already in their heart. She breathed a sigh of relief once it was final.

Prior to this experience, she had always thought of adoption as a process that helps families who could not have a baby and wanted an infant to love and nurture as their own. However, through this experience, she discovered that there are older kids (like the one she adopted) who are in limbo with no family to go to. After their birth parents' rights have been terminated, these children wait for an adoptive family. "I was just helping a friend. Adoption never crossed my mind in the beginning... but now we could not imagine life without him."

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL FOSTER & ADOPTIVE PARENTS

- 1) Care deeply about children
- 2) Willing to help another family
- 3) Offer love without expecting it in return
- 4) Are able to make and keep commitments
- 5) Have a sense of humor
- 6) Are flexible, and able to adjust to the unexpected or unknown
- 7) Have a strong support network (friends, family, church etc.)
- 8) Are tolerant of other's mood swings, feelings, and beliefs
- 9) Are able and willing to make sacrifices to benefit your family
- 10) If married, both spouses are equally committed to foster care and/or adoption

In summary, a successful foster or adoptive parent has the willingness to adapt their expectations to reflect each child's unique behavioral, educational, emotional and developmental needs.

THE HOME STUDY PROCESS

WHAT IS A HOME STUDY?

- Also known as a “family assessment”

A detailed process during which our agency collects information required by the State of Michigan in support of your request to adopt or provide foster care.

All of the required documents are to ensure the safety and well-being of children who are in foster care.

Completion of a home study is an important part of obtaining a foster home license OR adopting, but not the only step in the process.

STEP 1: ATTEND AN ORIENTATION

- The licensing team completes small group Orientations either face to face or via Zoom. These are between two to three hours long.
- If the family decides to move forward, the assigned caseworker will send “homework” for the family to complete. This assists with the caseworker getting to know the family better.

STEP 2: INITIAL VISIT AND MEETINGS YOUR CASEWORKER

- Meet caseworker at your home to go over policy, process, and forms
- Request & complete a foster home application
- Caseworker will collect the “homework” that was previously sent
- Caseworker will complete a walk through of the home & document the layout
- Caseworker will schedule fingerprint appointments

STEP 3: INFORMATION AND DOCUMENT GATHERING

- Your caseworker will conduct interviews of all household members and possibly other relevant parties.
- Your caseworker will collect all supporting documents for the family’s finances, personal documents, fingerprint forms, and local background checks
- Discuss with your caseworker the type of child you believe you can parent effectively
- The number of your caseworker visits will vary
- Caseworker will gather physicals for all household members
- Family will complete the State’s required training (GROW) through
- Caseworker will gather three non-relative references (professional references may also be needed)

Caseworker will complete background checks for substitute caregivers

STEP 4: WAIT FOR APPROVAL

- Your caseworker will write your home study and submit to their supervisor who may ask for additional information
- This home study recommendation is submitted for approval or denial to the Division of Child Welfare Licensing, the agency who issues foster home licenses.
- For adoption only home studies, once the supervisor signs the home study, you are able to inquire on MARE.

STEP 5: AFTER APPROVAL

- If the Division of Child Welfare Licensing approves your home for licensure, you will receive a six-month provisional license. After that six months probationary period, your Caseworker will do a renewal for a two-year license. Your caseworker will need to come out to the home annually.
- Adoption only home studies are valid for one year. Your home study will need to be updated annually.