

Adoption assistance helps parents to meet their adopted children's varied — and often costly — special needs.

What does assistance include?

Assistance could include:

- **Monthly payments to help you meet the child's ongoing needs:**
You can't get more than what we would pay if the child was in foster care. The amount will be based on:
 - ⇒ The child's age,
 - ⇒ The child's special needs, and
 - ⇒ Your family's financial situation.
- **Reimbursement for one-time adoption expenses:**
You (*or a third party*) may get up to \$2,000 for one-time expenses related to adopting the child. In most cases, this will be a direct payment to the organization that is working to finalize the adoption (i.e., Project Family in Vermont).

This helps cover costs such as:
 - ⇒ Homestudy fees,
 - ⇒ Court costs, and
 - ⇒ Other expenses incurred before the adoption is legally finalized.

- **Medical benefits:**

If you live in Vermont, the child will be eligible for Medicaid, which helps cover the cost of doctor's visits, prescriptions, hospital care, mental health services, dental care, eye care, and more.

If you don't live in Vermont, medical benefits may be provided by the state where you live.

- **Special services:**

You may receive payment for special services that would be provided if the child was in foster care. However, before your request can be approved, you must get written approval from the DCF Commissioner or designee.

You must also demonstrate:

- ⇒ Financial need.
- ⇒ That neither Medicaid nor your family's private insurance (if the child is enrolled in it) will cover the service.
- ⇒ That neither the service nor the funding for it is available through another government program or local interagency process.

Who is eligible for assistance?

Children must meet *all* of the following criteria to be eligible. They:

1. Are either in:
 - ⇒ DCF custody, or
 - ⇒ The legal custody of someone other than a parent as the result of a CHINS or delinquency proceeding in Family Court.
2. Are legally freed for adoption.
3. Could not be placed without assistance (or it's not in their best interest to do so).
4. Are under 18 with *at least one* of the following special needs:
 - ⇒ Over the age of 3.
 - ⇒ To be adopted with a sibling.
 - ⇒ Diagnosed with a medical, physical, mental or emotional disability.
 - ⇒ Diagnosed at high risk for a serious disability based on known risk factors in the child/ family's background (e.g., prenatal exposure to drugs/alcohol, severe abuse or neglect or a parent's serious mental illness).

You must apply and be approved for adoption assistance before the adoption is legally finalized.

How do I apply?

1. Complete an application with the worker finalizing the adoption.
2. The worker completes a *Determination of Special Needs Form* and helps you gather the required supporting documents (e.g., income tax return and medical documents).
3. The worker submits your application to the Adoption Assistance Committee, which will determine if your child is eligible for assistance.
4. If your child is eligible, the Committee:
 - ⇒ Prepares an agreement that details the amount and type of the assistance and the terms and conditions. Your worker may present any concerns you have to the Committee.
 - ⇒ Submits the proposed agreement to the division's Deputy Commissioner for approval.
5. You sign the offered agreement and the worker returns it to our central office for processing.

Can we appeal a decision?

Yes. You may appeal the decision to the Human Services Board — a citizen's panel created by the legislature to hear appeals of decisions made by departments in the Agency of Human Services. To get a copy of the fair hearing rules and ask questions about the process:

- Call (802) 828-2536.
- Email contact.hsb@vermont.gov.

You must submit your request for an appeal in writing—within 30 days—to:

**Human Services Board Clerk
14-16 Baldwin Street, 2nd floor
Montpelier, VT 05633**

When does assistance end?

It usually ends when the child turns 18. However, if your child:

- Is in high school past age 18, it may be extended until graduation.
- Has a medical, physical, mental or emotional disability that warrants continued assistance (*determined by DCF*), it may be extended until age 21.

Any benefits provided beyond age 18 may be provided at a different rate.



**Adoption
Assistance
For Children
Involved With DCF**

DCF Adoptions Unit: (802) 241-0876