



Quick Facts

The Foster to Adopt Process



Step 1: Initial Contact

When you call 1-800-DO-ADOPT, the Adoption Resource Exchange of Virginia, you have taken the first step in the foster care and adoption process. After a few general questions, you may be referred to a local department of social services, or to a private child placing agency for more information.

Step 2: Orientation

You will be invited to a meeting to learn more about the types of foster care youth waiting for foster and adoptive families and about the foster care and adoption process. This may be a group meeting with other families who are interested in foster care and adoption, or may be an individual meeting with the agency Family Services worker. Feel free to ask questions. This is a time for you to get some of your questions answered.

Step 3: Training

A training curriculum which consists of 28 to 30 hours of instruction is required of every individual interested in becoming a foster to adopt parent. Several consecutive weeks of training are offered with Family Services workers and trained foster/adoptive parents as instructors. Some agencies utilize panels of former foster children, adoptive and/or foster parents to provide additional insight of parenting children from the foster care system. Also, other specialists such as therapists, mental and physical health clinicians, etc. offer information during the training.

Step 4: Home Study (Mutual Family Assessment)

During the home study, you will talk about your reasons for wanting to foster to adopt and the types of child your family can best parent. The Family Services worker will talk about the special demands of parenting a foster care child. All members of your family including your adult children may be involved. The home study will be completed through a series of meetings-individual or group. At the conclusion of the home study, you and the Family Service worker will decide whether you are ready to foster to adopt and what type of child you can best parent.

Step 5: Forms

Foster care youth who have had termination of parental rights and exhausted appeals are legally free for adoption. Some agencies will share the application at the beginning of the training and others will offer it prior to the foster care youth being placed for adoption. Adoption forms vary from agency to agency. The forms may require responses to personal questions. Complete it, sign it, and return it to the agency. The Family Services worker will explain during the home study how the information you provided will help to determine the kind of child that will fit best in your family.

Remember:

The Family Service worker is not looking for families without problems. The worker is looking for families who have successfully coped with life experiences.

Step 6: Selection

The Family Services worker may show you pictures of available children and will tell you about each child. There are also listings of Virginia's waiting children available on <http://adoptuskids.org/states/va/browse.aspx>. When you find a child you are interested in, together, you and the child's agency will consider whether your family may be right for this child.

Deciding against adopting a particular child will not prevent you from being considered for other children.

Step 7: Placement

The placement process starts with visits between the child and the family. The number of visits before actual placement depends on the child's needs and ability in being able to move into a new situation. When the Family Services worker feels that the child is ready to transition to a new family and that the family is ready to receive the child, arrangements should be made in collaboration with the former foster home for placement in the adoptive home, as this is best practice.

Step 8: Supervision (Post Placement)

After the child is placed in your home, the Family Services worker will visit you at least three times within 90 days. The visits are to help you and the child adjust to this new situation. It helps you to assume your new role as parents.

This is the time to talk with the worker about any concerns you may have.

Initial adjustment concerns are to be expected. Talk about them early on: waiting too long may cause problems later. The Virginia law requires the child to live in your home a minimum of six months and be visited at least three times or more, before the adoption can be finalized.

Step 9: Legal Procedures & Finalization

To finalize the adoption, it is best to get an attorney with adoption experience. The attorney will file a petition for adoption with the court. The court will request a report from the agency. The agency sends the report and the judge enters the final order of adoption.

