



Alberta's Waiting Children

Open your heart
Let adoption
be their future



Introduction

Making the decision to pursue adoption is a big one. It is a decision that will change the course of your life, and affect you and your family in profound ways. This brochure will offer preliminary information on what adoption of Alberta's waiting children represents. It will provide an introduction to who these children are, what is meant by "special needs", what is required of an adoptive parent, how to get started, and what resources and supports are available to help adoptive parents.

There are many children waiting for the gift of permanent, loving homes in Alberta. This information is intended to assist you in evaluating your ability and desire to offer one or more of these children a future where the security of a family through adoption can be theirs.



The Children

Alberta's waiting children have been removed from the care of their birth parents and are in the permanent care of the Alberta government. They are most often in foster care and are waiting for a permanent family through adoption. They may be toddlers, teenagers, single children, or part of a sibling group. They might have physical disabilities, medical conditions, psychiatric diagnoses, specific cultural needs, or birth family relationships that need to be maintained. Many have been exposed prenatally to alcohol and/or drugs, the effects of which can vary from mild to severe.

Each of these children has their own story, journey, needs, talents, and gifts. Each is unique in personality, temperament, ability, and capacity. Their histories, struggles, and experiences will have influenced their development, behaviour, and what they will need from their adoptive family. What they all share is a need for stability, continuity, and the sense of belonging that adoption can provide.



Their Needs

Adoption of Alberta's waiting children is referred to as "special needs" adoption. These special needs are as diverse as the children themselves, and can be seen individually or in combination. Understanding what is meant by special needs is important, as is a basic understanding of what these will mean for a child's day-to-day functioning and overall development. A child being diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, being part of a sibling group of three or more, being part of an ethnic minority, exhibiting behavioural and emotional issues due to a history of abuse and trauma, living with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or having developmental delays, are common examples of the special needs affecting Alberta's waiting children.

Children over the age of six who are waiting to be adopted are considered "older" children, and their age represents a special need in itself. Approximately 70 percent of children waiting for adoption in Alberta are "older",





most being between seven and 12-years-of-age. The majority of approved adoptive families are seeking to adopt very young children, with few such children available. Families are encouraged to give consideration to expanding the age range they will accept. The advantages to doing so are many, including the possibility of being matched more quickly, and offering a deserving child the benefit of a more secure future.

To see a representative sample of some of the children waiting for adoptive families here in Alberta, visit www.humanservices.alberta.ca/adoption. There are always more children available for adoption than are featured on the website.

Getting Started

Once your family has made the decision to adopt a child in government care, or you wish to find out more about the process, you will need to contact your nearest Child and Family Services Authority or Delegated First Nations Agency to begin. Adoption intake services are regionally delivered, so to find the appropriate contact name and number, please e-mail HS.AdoptionServices@gov.ab.ca, or call: Toll-free: **310-0000** + **780-422-0178**. A referral to the appropriate office will be made.

You may be invited to an information session, and then provided with an application package. All applications are reviewed to ensure that the applicant:

- resides in Alberta
- is at least 18 years old
- demonstrates financial and domestic stability, and
- appears to be physically and mentally capable of parenting an adoptive child

In applying, families must also identify a minimum number of special needs they are willing to consider. These are identified from a list of the most common special needs affecting waiting children. There are no costs to the applicant in applying, becoming approved, or being placed for adoption with a child in the permanent care of the Alberta government, other than obtaining Criminal Record Checks and medical reports.

Mandatory training is provided to prospective adoptive parents as part of the application and approval process to help them learn about these and other needs. Training is helpful in providing a realistic picture of the children available for adoption, the most common issues affecting them, and what might be expected in parenting a child with



special needs. Training will also help prospective adoptive parents develop a better understanding of the kind of child or children they wish to adopt and feel capable of parenting.

Once training is completed, all documentation has been reviewed, and the decision is made to proceed with your application, a caseworker or a contracted home study practitioner will be assigned to complete your home study report. If the home study is approved at its conclusion, an adoption caseworker will be assigned to:

- support the family through the time it may take to be matched for adoption
- assist the family through the adjustment and transition period after placement, and
- be responsible for activities relating to adoption finalization

Once approved, you are encouraged to take an active role in your adoption journey. The wait for a match and placement can be difficult, but staying involved and active in the process can make a difference!

Available Supports

In recognition of the additional demands that adoption of a child in government care can represent, the provincial government offers the Supports for Permanency Program (SFP). Families who have obtained Private Guardianship or an Adoption Order of a child with permanent guardianship status are eligible for this program, and may receive supports and services until their adopted child is 18-years-of-age. Agreements are negotiated on a yearly basis and may include:

- Basic Maintenance rate available for a child in foster care
- Parental Respite (up to 576 hours of respite hours per year, per family. Hourly rates of reimbursement are negotiated)
- Counseling (up to 10 sessions per year, if the child has emotional or behavioural needs)
- Additional Needs Funding (up to \$70 per week can be negotiated to purchase services that will meet the child's emotional and behavioural needs)
- Reimbursement of the cost of transportation for a First Nation child to the child's band for the purpose of maintaining cultural ties
- Treatment in an Alberta residential facility if it is believed the placement will break down if such treatment is not provided



Other provincial and federal programs available to families who have adopted may include:

- Canada Child Tax Benefit
Call 1-800-387-1193
- Universal Child Care Benefit
Call 1-800-387-1193
- Maternity, Parental or Sickness Benefits
Call 1-800-206-7218
- Child Disability Benefit
Call 1-800-387-1193
- Child Care Subsidy Program
Call 1877-644-9992
- Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD)
Call 1-877-644-9992
- Alberta Child Health Benefit
Call 1-877-469-5437



To get the contact information for the adoption
intake office in your area, please e-mail:
HS.AdoptionServices@gov.ab.ca, or
call: Toll-free: **310-0000** + **780-422-0178**.

Please also visit:
www.humanservices.alberta.ca/adoption