

## HOW LONG DOES ADOPTING TAKE?

Adopting a child always requires a waiting period of some duration. When home studies are presented, the custodial agency for the child must assess the strengths of all the interested families and decide which family can best meet the needs of a specific child. The time frame is not predictable and it can be frustrating for families who are ready and prepared to adopt. A prospective parent who has abilities/strengths to meet the needs for a waiting child with special needs may wait 9 months or more.

## WHAT KIND OF CHILDREN ARE WAITING?

Most of the children who wait are:

- Age six years old or older and have been in foster care for eighteen (18) months or longer;
- Have a close relationship with brothers or sisters and are placed with their sibling(s);
- Are a minority, based on racial, multi-racial, or ethnic heritage;
- Have physical, mental, or emotional condition; or
- Have a hereditary tendency, congenital problem, or birth injury leading to substantial risk of future disability.

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO ADOPT?

There is no charge when you adopt a special needs child in the custody of a local department of social services.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE?

Adoption assistance, also called subsidized adoption is a means of providing a money payment and/or services to adoptive parent(s) on behalf of a child with special needs. Eligibility for subsidy is based on the needs of the child. Most children who have special needs are eligible for adoption assistance. When you are selected for a child, ask the adoption worker about the child's eligibility.



If you have more questions  
or need additional information:

Please call:

**1-800-DO-ADOPT**

OR

your local department of social services  
[www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/localagency)



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

Facebook: [Virginia Adopts](https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaAdopts)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Virginiaadopts>



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***“Thank you for asking  
about adoption!”***



**THE STEPS TO  
ADOPTION**

We hope this information will make your  
experience a little easier.

**1-800-DO-ADOPT**

# Change a lifetime. Adopting a child can be a rewarding experience... start today!



## STEPS TO ADOPTION:

### 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 adoption process. After a few general questions, you may be referred to a local department of social services or a to a private child placing agency for orientation.

### STEP 2 ORIENTATION

You will be invited to a meeting to learn more about the types of children waiting for adoptive families and about the adoption process. This may be a group meeting with other families who are interested in adoption or may be an individual meeting with the agency adoption 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 an adoptive parent. Several consecutive weeks of training are offered with adoption workers and trained foster/adoptive parents as instructors. Panels of former foster children, adoptive and/or foster parents 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 APPLICATION

Some agencies will offer the application at the beginning of the training and others will offer it at the end of the

training. Application forms vary from agency to agency. Do not be put off by the personal questions on the application. Complete it, sign it, and return it to the agency. The adoption 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.

### STEP 5 HOME STUDY (MUTUAL ASSESSMENT)

During the home study, you will talk about your reasons for wanting to adopt and the type of child your family can best parent. The adoption worker will talk about adoptive parenting, including parenting children with special needs. All members of your family including your adult children will be involved.

The home study will be completed through a series of meetings—individual or group. At the conclusion of the home study, your family and the adoption worker will decide whether you are ready to adopt and what type of child you can best parent.

**Remember: The adoption 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 adoption worker will show you pictures of available children and tell you about each child. There are also listings of waiting children available on [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org). 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 comfort in being able to move into a new situation. When the adoption worker feels that the child is ready to move and that the family is ready to receive the child, arrangements are made for placement in the adoptive home.

### STEP 8 SUPERVISION (POST PLACEMENT)

After the child is placed in your home, the adoption worker will visit. 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. Virginia law requires the child to live in your home a minimum of 6 months and be visited at least 3 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. The attorney will file a petition for adoption with the court. The court will request a report from the agency. The agency submits the report and the judge enters the final order of adoption.