

THE ADOPTION SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Adoption Support Program helps offset some of the cost related to adopting children who, because of their special conditions or needs, face barriers to adoption. This program's ability to provide support and financial assistance has allowed many foster children to be adopted. The majority of children who are adopted from the foster care system qualify for adoption support and most of the children who receive adoption support were in the legal custody of the Department of Social and Health Services when they were adopted.

Prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to apply to the Adoption Support Program. If the child qualifies for the program, DSHS and the prospective adoptive parents negotiate a contract (the Adoption Support Agreement) which outlines the support to be given to the adoptive parents to assist them in caring for the child. This contract must be signed by the adopting parent(s) and the Adoption Support Program Manager before the adoption is finalized.

Benefits described in the contract may include:

- **Medical and Dental Services** - under the state's Medicaid program (adoptive parents' insurance is the first source of pay ----)
- **Counseling** (Pre-authorized)
- **Training**
- **A negotiated monthly cash payment** based on the child's special needs and the family circumstances.
- **Reimbursement for one time costs incurred by the adoptive parent in finalizing the adoption.**

LIMITATION OF THE ADOPTION SUPPORT PROGRAM

Monthly Cash Payments

Like any parent, adoptive parents are financially responsible for the needs of their children. The program supplements parents' and community resources to assist in covering the ordinary and special needs of the child. The extent of assistance is determined through discussion and negotiation between the adoptive parents and the Adoption Support Program staff. The law limits the amount a family can receive as monthly cash payments to a maximum of the foster care maintenance payment the child would receive if the child were in a foster family home.

One Time Payments

The Adoption Support Program offers a lump sum or one time payment when a child has an extraordinary need requiring immediate attention. The one time amount received is decided through discussion between the adoptive parents and the Adoption Support Program staff. One time payments are rare. Considerations are individualized. As with the monthly cash payment the amount a family can receive must not be greater than the amount the child would receive if the child were in a foster family home.

Residential Placement or Group Care

The law does not permit the department to pay for residential placement or group care to a child not in its custody. Adopted children receive the same services, including foster care placement, to the same extent as any child in the general population. Adoption Support Program staff will refer adoptive parents to their local Department of Children and Family Services to discuss services offered.

Accessing Mental Health Services

Adoption Support offers assistance with individual therapy. Individual therapy means treatment focused on child's needs, behaviors and interaction with family. Accessing individual therapy is fully detailed in the booklet titled "*Post Adoption Services Questions and Answers*", pages, 10-13. The booklet is available from an adoption social worker or adoption support staff and this website:

http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/adopt/res_Resources.asp.

Adopted children have access to other mental health services available to any child in the general population. The Mental Health Division has created a parents guide online at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/>

Eligibility for mental health services, the nature of the services, and funding are subject to change. To find out what services are currently available contact your adoption support program manager at 1 800 562-5682. For crisis situations, call your local 24 hour crisis line. If a life threatening emergency exists, call 911.

Availability of Mental Health Services and Assistance with Funding

Families report many challenges in obtaining mental health services for their children whether birth or adopted. Some challenges include: cost of services exceeding available family resources; availability of mental health providers in certain areas and a lack of providers who have the expertise to address foster care/adoption issues. The Adoption Support Program provides limited mental health services funding. Talk to your regional Adoption Support Program Manager about the current availability of mental health services funding.