

Core Postadoption Services

Service Type	Needs	Delivery Aspects	Resources for More Information
Educational and Information Services			
Information and referral (I&R)	Adoptive families need information about services and resources available to them, including community-based resources.	I&R services can be provided through one-on-one meetings or in workshops, and via websites, resource directories, telephone hotlines, or warmlines.*	Adoption Assistance by State Database (Question 7) http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_assistance/
Parenting education	Families need education on what to expect following adoption; how to address their child’s grief and other emotions; and how to deal with attachment, behavior, and development issues. Some parents seek educational resources specific to their family type (e.g., single parents, or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) families) or the type of adoption (e.g., open, special needs, transracial).	Parenting information can be made available through in-person training (lectures, workshops, seminars), publications (pamphlets, books, newsletters), or online services (websites, blogs, and webinars).	Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_parenting/training.cfm Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, Adoptive Parent Preparation Project http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/policy/2008_02_parent_prep.php
Marriage and relationship education	Families may benefit from services that build relationship and communication skills, address strains that may arise during the adoption experience, and promote healthy family life. A cluster of Children’s Bureau demonstration projects reported positive outcomes from marriage education services, including gains in family functioning (James Bell Associates, 2011).	Programs may use varied instructional formats that range from weekly workshops to day-long programs or weekend retreats. Formal instruction may be supplemented with support groups and other support services.	National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, <i>Marriage and Relationship Education: Tips for Practitioners Working With Adoptive Couples</i> http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org/resource-detail/index.aspx?rid=2860 ACF, Healthy Marriage Initiative http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage
Background information	Adoptive families need information about their children’s medical, genetic, and social histories, as well as help in understanding the potential implications of those histories for needs and services.	Most States have laws and agency policies that guide disclosure of background information.	Child Welfare Information Gateway, <i>Providing Background Information to Adoptive Parents</i> http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_backgroundbulletin.cfm
Openness, search, and reunion support	Adopted persons, as well as their birth and adoptive parents, may need support in accessing information and adoption records, arranging reunions with birth families, and dealing with resulting emotions.	In accordance with State laws, agencies enable access to adoption information and registries. Some will provide additional services to facilitate and prepare triad members for reunions.	Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/birth/for/connections.cfm <i>Searching for Birth Relatives</i> http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_search.pdf National Foster Care and Adoption Directory http://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/index.cfm?event=viewSearchForm

*While hotlines generally provide 24-hour assistance for urgent issues, warmlines offer nonurgent support, frequently from peers, during business hours (Monday–Friday, 9–5).

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Clinical Services			
Therapeutic interventions for children and families	Therapeutic interventions are increasingly recognized as vital to help adopted children and their families (Freundlich, 2007). Therapy and counseling can help adopted children address issues that result from early trauma, separation, loss, identity confusion, and crisis events. Services help adoptive parents address problems in adoption adjustment, respond to their children’s issues, and deal with the impact of adoption on their families. Research shows adoptive families use mental health services more frequently than other families (Howard, Smith, & Ryan, 2004; Vandivere, Malm, & Radel, 2009), which seems to reflect both greater needs and a greater willingness to use services (Smith, 2010).	Therapeutic interventions include individual and family counseling and adoption preservation services. A continuum of options—from home- and community-based services to intensive residential treatment programs—serve varying needs. Some programs have specialized services for crisis intervention.	<p>Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/postplacement/stability/treatment.cfm</p> <p><i>Selecting and Working with a Therapist Skilled in Adoption</i> http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-therapist.pdf</p> <p>Adoption Assistance by State Database (Question 8) http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_assistance/</p> <p>North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), <i>Post-Adoption Services: Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Children Adopted from Foster Care</i> http://www.nacac.org/policy/postadoptpaper.pdf</p>
Adoption-competent community services	Adoptive families often express concerns that community professionals are not sensitive to the unique issues that arise in adoptive families (Smith, 2006). These professionals may include therapists, school personnel, doctors, and attorneys.	Some agencies are partnering with schools of social work and private agencies to develop adoption-competent education and certificate programs for service providers. These initiatives range from brief training sessions to comprehensive certificate programs.	<p>National Resource Center for Adoption, <i>Adoption Competence: A Guide to Developing an Adoption Certificate Program for Mental Health Practitioners</i> http://www.nrcadoption.org/resources/practice-tools/</p> <p>Center for Adoption Support and Education (CASE), <i>Adoption-Competent Training</i> http://www.adoptionssupport.org/train/index.php</p>
Material Support			
Financial assistance	Families use Federal or State financial assistance (adoption assistance or adoption subsidies) to purchase community services (e.g., tutoring, counseling) that help meet the child’s educational, physical, or emotional needs. For families adopting from the child welfare system, financial assistance is the most commonly received service and often rated the most essential (Barth, Gibbs, & Siebenaler, 2001; Howard & Smith, 2003).	Dollar amounts, eligibility requirements, and what can be covered under financial assistance varies widely across States and within States for children with different special needs. Financial assistance policies can change over time in response to State budgets and other factors. Regardless of policy changes, existing adoption assistance agreements remain legally binding at the agreed-upon subsidy and service levels.	<p>Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/postplacement/finassistance.cfm</p> <p><i>Adoption Assistance for Children Adopted from Foster Care</i> http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-subsid.pdf</p> <p>Adoption Assistance by State Database (Questions 1–6) http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_assistance/</p>

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Medical assistance	Families may seek postadoption assistance with health care coverage, treatment services, and specialized medical equipment to meet their children’s medical needs.	Eligibility requirements and what can be covered vary across State programs.	Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance http://aaicama.org/cms/index.php/medical-assistance/title-iv-e Adoption Assistance by State Database (Question 9) http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_assistance
Support Networks			
Peer support services for adoptive parents	Being with other adoptive families reinforces that the adoptive family experience is normal, even if it is different from that of nonadoptive families. Peer support offers opportunities to freely express one’s frustrations without being judged (Chamberlain & Horne, 2003). Research indicates that families value group services for emotional support as well as a source for needed information (Bryan, Flaherty, & Saunders, 2010). Peer support services have been linked to reduced isolation and improvements in parenting knowledge, confidence, and commitment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2005).	Support networks may be professionally facilitated or self-help oriented. In addition to support group meetings, some agencies offer group outings, special events, and informal gatherings. Mentor or buddy programs pair adoptive parents with more experienced adoptive parents or others in similar circumstances. Web-based chat groups can provide ongoing opportunities to link families.	National Foster Care and Adoption Directory http://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/index.cfm?event=viewSearchForm Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_parenting/services/postadoption.cfm NACAC, <i>Developing a Parent-to-Parent Support Network</i> http://www.nacac.org/adoptalk/parent2parentnetwork.pdf
Peer support services for children	For many adopted children and youth, a peer support group is a valuable opportunity to interact with other adopted persons and to see that their experiences and feelings about being adopted are normal. Peer groups provide a safe environment where children and youth can talk about their birth and adoptive families and share their fears and concerns.	In addition to support group meetings, some agencies offer camps or other specialized activities specifically for children and youth who have been adopted and sometimes for specific family types (LGBT, single parent, or transracial). Websites and online forums can provide ongoing support that supplement in-person activities.	

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Support for transracial/transcultural adoptions	Adoptive parents whose children are of a different race or culture may seek resources specific to supporting their children, promoting their child's heritage, and coping with racism.	Services may include seminars, educational resources, support groups, cultural events, special outings, heritage camps, and heritage tours to home countries. Some programs tailor services for specific groups, such as repatriation and healing programs for tribal adopted persons and their families.	Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/postplacement/transsupport/ New York State Citizen's Coalition for Children http://nysccc.org/family-supports/transracial-transcultural/ PACT http://www.pactadopt.org/app/servlet/HomePage
Respite care	All parents need periodic breaks from their children. This may be especially true for parents of children who require high levels of attention due to specific medical and emotional needs. Respite care can be helpful in diffusing stress to avert crisis situations. While surveys of adoptive parents report the need for respite care, those needs are often unmet (Barth, Gibbs, & Siebenaler, 2001; Festinger, 2006; Hudson et al., 2006).	Respite care may be offered to parents in their home on an individual basis or in group settings through weekend outings or summer camp. Sometimes, support group members provide informal respite to each other's children.	ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center, <i>Respite as a Support Service for Adoptive Families</i> http://archrespite.org/images/docs/Factsheets/fs_33-adoptive_families.pdf AdoptUSKids, <i>Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Respite Care in your Community</i> http://www.adoptuskids.org/assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf
Cross-Cutting			
Advocacy	Many adoptive parents report needing support in dealing with schools and community service providers to raise awareness of adoption-related issues and to address their child's specific needs as they evolve over their lifespan.	Professionals may need to intervene directly on a family's behalf to effectively navigate bureaucratic requirements. Service providers or experienced parents also may model advocacy skills to parents, enabling them eventually to advocate for their children on their own.	NACAC, <i>Advocating for Post-Adoption Support</i> http://www.nacac.org/postadopt/PostAdoptToolkit.pdf
Case management	Families need support in accessing and coordinating needed services and resources.	Where provided, a single coordinator can help access services across agencies and systems or organize and facilitate a team meeting to assist a family.	Child Welfare Information Gateway http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/postplacement Adoption Assistance by State Database http://www.childwelfare.gov/adoption/adopt_assistance