
Special Needs Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is a waiting child?

A. A waiting child is another term to describe children who have special needs or are hard to place. Through Catholic Charities, a waiting child is any child of any race or age who is in a foster care setting. These children have a range of characteristics that qualify them as "Special Needs." These children may have a physical handicap or developmental disability that may or may not be corrected by surgery or therapy; or a child who has a behavioral or emotional problem that may require special attention or treatment. Some children are born cocaine exposed but do not exhibit current medical problems. Sibling groups are also considered waiting children.



Q. How many of these waiting children are in need of adoptive families?

A. In Illinois, there are approximately 450 legally free children awaiting an adoptive family. In addition, there are children waiting for whom adoption is the plan, but their parent's rights have not been terminated through court action. There are Black children of all ages waiting for families. Most of the Caucasian children waiting for adoptive families are over the age of 10. There are more boys than girls available. Many of these children have varying degrees of physical and/or mental limitations. Most of the children have been abused or neglected at some time in their life and have emotional problems resulting from their past experiences and/or separation from their families. There are also sibling groups who need to be adopted together.

Q. What is the cost involved in adopting a waiting child?

A. Catholic Charities does not charge a fee for the adoption homestudy and licensing however there is a fee associated with the **Adopt Waiting Children** program which covers the extensive training that is essential to ensuring the best adoptive experience. In some cases the attorney fees for finalization of the adoption can be paid for by the State of Illinois. Some situations allow the child to continue to be insured by the medical card after the adoption. This is determined on a case by case basis; it is dependent on the specific needs of the child and the need of the adoptive parent.

Q. Why isn't Catholic Charities looking for foster families who wish to adopt a healthy, Caucasian child under the age of five?

A. Under the Illinois laws, a foster family has the first opportunity to adopt a foster child who has been in their home for a considerable length of time. Generally, healthy preschool children are adopted by their foster parents. This is called **Adoption Conversion** and there is no fee for this program.

Q. Will the waiting child I adopt come through Catholic Charities?

A. In most situations, the waiting child is under the guardianship of the State of Illinois through the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). DCFS is therefore involved in approving and monitoring the adoption. Most of the special needs adoptive families working through Catholic Charities have been listed in the state wide adoption book maintained by the Adoption Information Center of Illinois (AICI). DCFS and all private adoption agencies are always working together to find special families for these waiting children. In some instances families have used the national Adoptuskids website to assist in locating available children. Catholic Charities works closely with Adoptuskids to ensure the appropriateness of these out of State placements.

Q. What is an adoption subsidy?

A. An adoption subsidy is financial assistance given to the adoptive parents for the care of a waiting child whom they have adopted. The adoption assistance is a monthly payment to the adoptive parents at a rate that is the monthly payment for foster care. In addition, the adoption subsidy pays the attorney fees for the adoption and provides a medical card for the child. Counseling is also provided for the waiting child.

Q. How long does it take to be placed with a waiting child?

A. The amount of time a family waits for placement varies. Each child has a unique set of special needs and careful consideration is given to match the needs of the child with the abilities and desires of the adoptive family. Waiting child adoption requires a lot of flexibility; it is not for every family. It is important to find a family for the child, not a child for the family.

