

Step 4

The child has lived with you for six months or more. Additional supervision time may be needed if the child is not legally free or on a case-by case-basis.

What can you do to move things along:

- a. Keep informed. Ask your caseworker about the legal status of your child.
- b. If your child is legally free, make sure that adoption assistance is open and vendor/non-vendor agreements have been received.
- c. Make sure you are informed of the adoption registry and ask if your adoption worker has provided verification of this notice to the Central Office of Adoption.
- d. Ask your worker if he/she has recommended finalization of the adoption. If not, why?
- e. If more paperwork needs to be submitted to Adoption Services, ask for specifics: what documents, who prepares these documents, when will it be submitted and to whom? Pinpoint time frames.

Step 5

Finalization of the adoption is the coming together of these 6 key elements:

- DHS has selected you as the adoptive parent
- The child has lived with you for a minimum of 6 months
- The child is legally free; all parental rights are severed
- Adoption assistance is open, vendor/non-vendor agreements received
- You are ready to finalize the adoption
- The DHS recommends finalization of the adoption

Now your attorney does his/her work. Keep in contact with your attorney. Ask him/her to tell you when the adoption petition is filed and when the adoption decree is signed by the judge.

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For additional copies, information or to receive information in an alternate format call your adoption worker.

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ADOPTION

Step by Step

Current Caretaker Adoptions

Key elements to finalize an adoption:

- Your family has been selected as the adoptive resource for this child
- The child has lived with you for the past six months or more
- The child is legally free; all parental rights are severed
- Adoption assistance is open if the child is eligible, attorney agreements received
- You are ready to finalize the adoption
- The Department of Human Services recommends finalization of the adoption

Step One

The Department of Human Services has made a formal decision to change the child's plan to adoption. To achieve adoption, the parent(s) with legal standing to the child will either relinquish his/her rights or DHS will file a petition with the court to terminate the parental rights.

What can you do as the adoptive parent to move things along?

Freeing the child for adoption is the responsibility of DHS. Keep informed on what is happening. Ask your caseworker to keep you updated on the status of the legal case.

Step Two

DHS must identify the adoptive placement for the child. This is done through an adoption committee, the Current Caretaker Committee. Should the committee decide to consider the current caretaker, an adoptive home study must be completed within 90 days. Under some circumstances the adoption assistance application can be done along with the home study process. Following completion of a positive home study, the local office signs a final approval for the foster family as the adoptive resource. When a current caretaker is being considered, along with others, the Central Office Adoption Committee will select the adoptive resource. After receipt of required material from the child's worker, your home is designated as the adoptive placement for your child.

What can you do to move things along?

- a. Complete your home study paperwork quickly.
- b. Schedule with your doctor to get a medical examination done as soon as possible.
- c. Make sure that you receive all the disclosure information on your child. Ask your adoption worker for the "Required Information for Adoption Workers and Adoptive Parents" CF(963).

Step 3

The application for adoption assistance can be processed upon selection as the child's adoptive parent. You are now considered the adoptive parents of this child. You know your child and his/her special needs. **Things to consider:** foster care continues until your child is legally free. A completed adoption assistance application enables switching financial assistance for the child's special needs to adoption assistance when the child is legally free. To avoid time loss, do things concurrently. Planning is critical. Foster care and adoption assistance are two very different programs. Adoption assistance may never exceed the foster care rate, is often less and is based on the special needs of the child.

What you can do to keep things moving along:

- a. Complete the adoption assistance application right after committee.
- b. Select an attorney from the vendor attorney list provided in your application packet and make sure your attorney returns the vendor agreement to your adoption assistance coordinator.