

DHS Adoptive Parent Handbook



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Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Post Adoption Services

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) recognizes the valuable contribution families make when providing a permanent home to a child through adoption. This responsibility is one that will change lives forever.

Because you have made the commitment to raise this child, as adoptive parents your formal, day-to-day involvement with DHS has come to an end. Your family will now make all the important decisions for the child/children you have adopted. There are many resources through the department, other government agencies and in the community that can help you meet your responsibilities and thrive as an adoptive family. You — not a child welfare specialist — are responsible for finding information and programs.

This post-adoption services booklet is designed to offer families an overview of the services available to meet your child's ongoing needs.

- ▶ Part 1: Adoption assistance benefits
- ▶ Part 2: Post-adoption supportive services
- ▶ Part 3: Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)
- ▶ Part 4: Frequently asked questions
- ▶ Part 5: General information that may be of special interest to adoptive families

Please keep this booklet as a handy reference.

DHS post adoption services include both monetary assistance benefits and supportive services.

Adoption Assistance benefits may include any combination of the following:

- Medicaid Coverage
- Monthly Assistance Payment
- Reimbursement of Non-Recurring Expenses
- Special Services
- Employment-Related Child Care

Adoption Assistance benefits are designed to supplement the resources of an adoptive family. Unlike the DHS foster care program, adoptive parents assume primary responsibility for the child's support.

Post Adoption supportive services include:

- Respite Care Assistance
- Oklahoma Children's Services
- College Tuition Waivers
- Lending Library
- Mutual Consent Voluntary Registry
- Confidential Intermediary Search
- Information and Referral

Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) services are available to all children under age 21 who are eligible for Medicaid.



Part 1: Adoption Assistance Benefits

Adoption Assistance funds come from either:

- The Federal Government (often referred to as IV-E funding) or
- The State of Oklahoma

Both funding programs can provide eligible children with a monthly assistance payment, Medicaid, reimbursement of nonrecurring adoption expenses, and certain special services not covered by any other program. On occasion, there may be a difference in services due to the source of funding (federal vs. state).

If you have questions regarding benefits, contact your post-adoption assistance worker. You should receive the name and phone number of your assigned worker when you finalize your adoption. If not, the current staff for DHS Post Adoption Services can be found at www.okdhs.org. You can determine your assigned post adoption assistance worker by the first letter of your last name.

Eligibility for Adoption Assistance Benefits

A child must be determined to have special needs to be eligible for federally-funded adoption assistance, state-funded adoption assistance, or reimbursement of non-recurring adoption expenses. In order to receive these benefits, a child must meet each of following criteria:

- 1 The child cannot return home:** DHS has recommended that the child must not return to the home of his or her parents(s), and the court has determined that the child is legally free to be adopted.
- 2 Special factors or conditions:** DHS has determined that due to one or more factors or conditions listed below (A-G), the child may not be placed with the adoptive parent(s) without providing adoption assistance.
 - A Physical disability:** The child has a physical disability that requires regular treatment with a specific diagnosis given by the child's physician.
 - B Mental disability:** The child meets the eligibility criteria for educable multi-handicapped (EMH) or trainable multi-handicapped (TMH) classes, and has been evaluated by a licensed psychologist, psychometrist, school or recognized diagnostic center for this evaluation. The child exhibits a demonstrable need for intensive adult supervision beyond that required by other children of the same age.
 - C Age:** Eligibility based on the child's age is determined by (i) and (ii):
 - i Kinship placement.** There is no age requirement for a child placed with a relative who provides paid or nonpaid kinship care and who meets the specified degree of relationship.

ii Nonrelated and other relative placements. The child is 8 years of age or older. This includes adoption by a relative who was not the child's caregiver at the time of adoptive placement.

D Sibling relationship: The child is part of a sibling group as specified in (i) and (ii)

i A child of any age and at least one sibling are adopted by the same family at the same time or within one year.

ii A child younger than 3 years of age, previously determined ineligible to receive an adoption assistance payment at the time of the adoption assistance application, becomes eligible due to a sibling relationship.

E Emotional disturbance: This requires determination by a physician, clinical psychologist, or psychiatrist and should include documentation of a specific diagnosis, treatment and prognosis. This should be corroborated by the social worker, caregiver or child care personnel.

F Racial or ethnic factor: Pacific Islander, Native American, Hispanic, Asian and African-American children 3 years of age or older.

G High risk of physical or mental disease: The child who exhibits high risk of physical or mental disease from conditions which are not presently being treated may qualify. If no other special factors or conditions are met, no monthly payment is made until there are documented symptoms of physical or mental disease.

3 Unsuccessful efforts to place the child without assistance: A reasonable but unsuccessful effort has been made to place the child without providing adoption assistance. An exception can be made in cases that would be against the best interests of the child due to factors such as a strong emotional tie to a foster parent who plans to adopt the child, or placement with a relative.

Note: International adoptions are not eligible for adoption assistance.

Medical

Children who are approved for adoption assistance are eligible for services within the scope of the Oklahoma Medicaid program provided by an approved Medicaid provider. Coverage includes pre-existing conditions prior to finalization.

The Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) is the agency that oversees Oklahoma's Medicaid benefits. For information about what your child's medical plan covers, contact OHCA either by phone or the website, www.ohca.state.ok.us. OHCA also issues and distributes the medical cards.

Monthly Assistance Payment

A child may be eligible for a monthly assistance payment to provide financial support to families who adopt children with special needs. Payments are made on behalf of eligible children. The standard monthly adoption assistance payments correspond to the child's age as well as their individual special needs.

The eligibility for monthly assistance payments for children adopted from DHS, private agency or tribe requires that:

- For IV-E funding, a child must be in the legal custody of DHS, a licensed private agency, or a federally recognized tribe at the time of adoption
- For state funding, a child must be in the legal custody of DHS or a federally recognized tribe at the time of adoption
- A child must meet the special needs criteria as determined by DHS; assistance payments must be approved prior to the finalization of the adoption
- A prospective adoptive parent cannot have a prohibited felony record

Reimbursement of Non-Recurring Expenses

Non-recurring adoption expenses are the reasonable and necessary adoption fees, court costs, attorney fees and other expenses that are directly related to the legal adoption of a child with special needs. Assistance is limited to documented actual expenses incurred up to a maximum of \$1,200 per child upon adoption finalization. It is not required that the child is in the custody of DHS or a federally recognized tribe at the time of finalization; however, the request must be approved prior to the finalization of the adoption.

Special Services

A special service is usually a one-time payment and is used to meet a child's needs that cannot be met by the adoptive parents and are not covered under any other program for which the child would qualify. These services may include corrective medical equipment, such as leg braces, prostheses and walkers. Tutoring and private school tuition are not covered as special services since the public school systems are mandated to provide all children with an appropriate public education.

Child Care

Effective Oct. 1, 2009, employment-related child care services for children age 5 and younger may be paid by DHS as part of adoption assistance benefits. Also effective Oct. 1, 2009, adoption assistance payments will no longer be considered as countable income in the DHS Child Care Subsidy Program. These policy changes apply to children adopted through DHS or a federally recognized Indian tribe.

Negotiating the Adoption Assistance Agreement

When a child has been identified as being eligible for adoption assistance, it is very important that the placing agency and the prospective adoptive parents discuss the special needs of the child. This meeting should include how the needs of the child will continue to be met once he or she is placed in the adoptive home. It is also an appropriate time for the placing agency to define their role with the child and family once placement is complete. After this meeting has occurred, the family and agency will typically agree on a payment amount (not in excess of the allowable amount) that the family feels comfortable with.

The adoption assistance payment amount may be readjusted periodically when warranted by a change in circumstances and with the concurrence of the adoptive parents. The parent(s) can request a modification of the adoption assistance agreement at any time. Typical requests are for an increase due to a change in circumstances or for difficulty of care. All requests must be made in writing.

Modification of the Adoption Assistance Agreement

1 Modification Based on a Change of Circumstances

You may request an increase based on a change of circumstances, such as the age of a child. However, age increases are not automatic for adoption assistance payments. The request will need to be made in writing and may be stated as a request for the “maximum assistance allowed” for your child’s age. Requests should be sent to:

**Oklahoma Department of Human Services
Post Adoption Services
P.O. Box 25352
Oklahoma City, OK 73125**

2 Modification Based on Difficulty of Care (DOC)

DOC payments may be requested in addition to the standard monthly adoption assistance payments. Renegotiation or modification of a child’s adoption assistance agreement may be requested when a child needs more medical, behavioral mental health or special services. For example, a child:

- Develops new behavioral issues as a result of known or unknown conditions at time the adoption was finalized
- Receives a new medical or behavioral mental health diagnosis that was not evident at the time of adoption
- Exhibits issues or behaviors that now affect the child’s physical, mental or emotional health and the parent’s ability to care for the child

A request for difficulty of care must include a written statement from the adoptive parent(s) that includes an explanation of the child’s medical condition, behavioral problems, mental illness or disability. The request must also be accompanied by a current statement (within six months of your request) signed by a licensed physician, psychiatrist or clinical psychologist describing the

condition, including diagnosis, prognosis and treatment.

Updated documentation may be required by DHS from time-to-time to establish a child's ongoing eligibility for a particular DOC support rate.

Forward requests to: **Oklahoma Department of Human Services**
Attn: Post Adoption Services
P.O. Box 25352
Oklahoma City, OK 73125

Duration of Benefits

Once an agreement is signed and in effect, it can only be terminated if one of the following conditions occurs:

- 1** The child reaches 18 years of age; however, a child may continue to receive assistance until the child turns 19 if he or she either:
 - A** Continues to attend high school
 - B** Meets the criteria for an adoption assistance DOC rate, as determined by DHS
- 2** The adoptive parent(s) fails to submit, no later than 60 days prior to the child reaching age 18, a request for adoption assistance to continue beyond age 18.
- 3** DHS determines that the adoptive parent(s) is no longer legally responsible for the support of the child.
- 4** DHS determines that the adoptive parents are no longer providing financial support to the child. If a child is placed in out-of-home care including psychiatric, residential, therapeutic or foster family care and the adoptive parents continue to provide financial support to the child, adoption assistance may continue. The rate of payment may be renegotiated, as appropriate.
- 5** All of the child's adoptive parents are deceased. Any child, who was receiving Title IV-E adoption assistance at the time of the death of his or her adoptive parents, or at the time the adoption was dissolved, may be eligible for adoption assistance if the child is adopted again after Oct. 1, 1997. A child receiving state-funded adoption assistance is eligible if adopted after May 29, 1988. To be eligible, the child must continue to meet the special needs criteria and all of the following requirements:
 - A** The prospective adoptive parent(s) must make the application for assistance.
 - B** If requesting pre-finalization adoption assistance, the prospective adoptive parents(s) must provide a copy of a file-stamped Petition for Adoption from a district or tribal court. However, if requesting adoption assistance to begin after an adoption is finalized, a Final Decree of Adoption is required.
 - C** DHS must be able to document that a child was receiving IV-E or state-funded assistance at the time of the death of the adoptive parent(s) or at the time the adoption was dissolved.
 - D** Documentation must be provided to DHS that verifies the new adoptive parent(s) is/are not the biological parent(s).

Annual Review of The Adoption Assistance Agreement

DHS is required to complete an annual review of each family each year. The primary purpose is to determine if the parent(s) remains legally responsible for the child and is providing financial support for the child. The annual review form must be returned within 30 days of receipt. **The annual review form also serves as the federally mandated re-determination claim for Medicaid eligibility.**

Notification of Change

DHS should be notified within two weeks if one of the following occurs:

- Change in the family's address
- Change in the child/children's legal guardian
- Child enters military service
- Child gets married
- Child is no longer in the home
- Child is in inpatient care
- Death of a child or adoptive parent
- Adoptive parent is no longer financially supporting child
- Adoptive parent is no longer legally responsible for the child
- Child is no longer attending school

Other Considerations

Helpful Tips

- Keep the disclosure you were given in a safe place; the disclosure contains valuable medical information
- Keep your adoption assistance agreement. This is a legal document and a contract between you (the adoptive parent) and DHS
- Keep a copy of anything you sign
- Keep a log of conversations and be sure to include who, what, when, where and why these conversations took place
- Notify Social Security of adoption even if there is not a name change

Arranging Future Plans for Your Child

Families are often concerned about planning for an adopted child in their care in the event something unforeseen occurs. Children who were adoption assistance eligible at the time of the adoption or guardianship will typically remain eligible in the future. It is important to remember that you will need to contact your post adoption assistance worker to assist with planning for a new adoption. The new adoption assistance agreement must be completed, signed and approved prior to the finalization of the new adoption.

Part 2: Post Adoption Supportive Services

Respite Services

The Respite Voucher Program provides financial assistance to families who have adopted a child who was once in the custody of DHS or a federally recognized tribe. Vouchers are awarded based on availability of funds. Vouchers are available one per year per family. You may contact Post Adoption Services for an application.

Oklahoma Children's Services

Comprehensive Home-Based Services (CHBS) are available statewide to support and strengthen families. These services are child-focused and adoptive families can access them through SWIFT adoption staff (pre-finalization) or post-adoption staff (post-finalization).

College and/or Vo-tech Tuition Waivers

College and/or vo-tech tuition waivers are available for children placed for adoption after the age of 16 years and 9 months from DHS or tribal custody. The waivers are valid until the individual reaches age 26 or completes his/her degree, whichever comes first. This service is available through Independent Living Services.

Education and Training Voucher Program

The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendment of 2001 amended section 447 of the Social Security Act to add a new purpose to the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. This purpose was the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV). The ETV program provides financial assistance of up to \$5,000 per academic year (depending on the total cost of attendance) for use at any post-secondary institution that meets the definition of higher education as defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965. Eligible youth include those adopted from foster care after reaching the age of 16.

Youth who participate in the ETV program can receive assistance until age 21. If they are participating in the ETV program on their 21st birthday and they are making satisfactory academic progress, they can continue to receive



the ETV voucher until age 23. This service is available through Independent Living Services.

Mutual Consent Voluntary Registry

The Mutual Consent Voluntary Registry is a service to facilitate contact between adult adoptees or adults whose birth parents parental rights were terminated and the members of their birth family. If the adoptee is under the age of 18 or mentally incompetent, his/her adoptive parent or legal guardian may register for the adoptee.

If both adoptee and a birth family member register, a “match” can result in a reunion. The adoptee may request non-identifying medical and background information exclusive of requesting a reunion. There is a nominal fee of \$20 for the registry service. For a listing of who is eligible to register, those ineligible to register, or a registry form, please contact post adoption services. If a “match” does not occur, the individual must remain on the registry for at least six months before requesting a confidential intermediary search.

This service is limited to adoption and termination of parental rights proceedings completed in Oklahoma. The registry was established by state statute in 1997 and allows individuals and their birth family to indicate a willingness to have their identity and whereabouts disclosed to one another.

The Confidential Intermediary Search Program

The Confidential Intermediary Search Program is a service established for the same population as the Mutual Consent Voluntary Registry by state statute in 1997. The program allows adoptees and biological families to search for each other.

To submit an application to the Confidential Intermediary Search Program, an individual must have been registered with the Mutual Consent Voluntary Registry for at least six months without a match having been made.

If the confidential intermediary is able to locate the subject of the search, the intermediary will make a discreet and confidential inquiry to determine whether the person who is the subject of the search will consent to share identifying information, communicate or meet with the person who initiated the search. The inquiry is made without disclosing the identifying information about the person who initiated the search.

For a listing of who is eligible to register, who is not eligible to register, or to receive a search form, please contact Post Adoption Services.

Behavioral Mental Health Services

Medicaid in Oklahoma is provided through the adoption assistance benefits and pays for behavioral mental health services such as assessment, treatment, psychotropic medications, inpatient, outpatient and residential treatment services. The agency that has oversight of the Oklahoma Medicaid services is the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. A listing of behavioral health providers and treatment centers in Oklahoma that accept Medicaid can be found on the website of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority at www.ohca.state.ok.us or you may contact the Sooner Care helpline at 1-800-652-2010.

Part 3: Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)

ICAMA and Adoptive Families

Families often worry about what will happen to their child's adoption assistance if they move out of state. Oklahoma is a member of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance, which assists adoptive families moving in or out of Oklahoma.

If the child is IV-E eligible he or she will be eligible for services within the scope of the receiving state's Medicaid program. When the medical is state-funded rather than federally funded and the adoptive family moves out of state, their adopted children will be eligible for services within the scope of the receiving state's Medicaid program with the exception of the following states: District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire and New Mexico.

If you plan an out-of-state move after an adoption is finalized, contact the Oklahoma ICAMA administrator for information on the steps that will be taken to ensure the new state has all of the necessary information. Oklahoma will continue to process your monthly assistance payment and you may contact your assistance worker as needed. Please call (405) 521-2475 for the current phone number of the program manager for post adoptions service who is also the ICAMA compact administrator.



Part 4: Frequently Asked Questions

Q Must the child remain in Oklahoma to receive adoption assistance?

A No. Adoption Assistance Agreements remain in effect even if a family moves out of Oklahoma. Oklahoma continues to make monthly payments and IV-E children can receive Medicaid regardless of where the family resides. State-funded children may be eligible to receive Medicaid in the state where they reside. The scope of the Medicaid coverage may vary from state to state. DHS staff assists adoptive families with securing Medicaid benefits in other states of residence and helps ensure that proper paperwork is submitted in a timely manner.

Q What is SSI and what is SSA?

A Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a program administered by the Social Security Administration for blind and disabled persons with little or no income or resources. The Social Security Administration makes the determination of eligibility based on a person's diagnosed health or behavioral mental health condition, school information, and documentation from other sources.

There is also a federal program for children whose parent is retired, deceased or disabled, called SSA (Social Security Administration). Based on the parent's earning history, the SSA determines the benefit amount. Therefore, the amount (if any) that a child is eligible for will vary.

Q Can I receive both SSA and adoption assistance for my child?

A If a child was receiving SSA benefits while in DHS care, that child will remain eligible for benefits. In this case, the adoptive parent or guardian can receive both an adoption assistance payment and the SSA benefit that a child is entitled to because of the death or disability of his or her birth parents.

Q Can I receive both SSI and an adoption assistance payment for my child?

A Most adoptive parents or guardians will not be eligible for both SSI and a subsidy. However, if a child has been determined to have a qualifying disability, the Social Security Administration will determine whether or not the child is eligible to receive SSI funds. If the household income, including wages, adoption assistance payments, other public benefits and assets is sufficiently low, the Social Security Administration may determine that your child is eligible for a benefit. The most you will receive is the difference between the amount of the subsidy and the full SSI benefit.

Q Is Medicaid of benefit if the adoptive parent adds the child to his/her health and medical insurance?

A Yes. However, claims must be issued to the private insurance vendor first. Medicaid will pay only if a Medicaid-eligible child is using a Medicaid vendor, and then only if the insurance amount is less than the amount Medicaid would pay, or if a service is Medicaid compensable but not compensable on the family insurance.

Example One:

An adoptive child is on private insurance and Medicaid. The private insurance is a plan that covers only in-network providers. The adoptive child is receiving physical therapy (PT). The PT is covered by the primary private insurance but the parent wants to use a physical therapist that is out of network. Will Medicaid pick up the payment?

No. If the primary insurance covers the physical therapy, and the only reason it is not being covered is because the family has chosen to use a provider that is out of network, then Medicaid as the secondary insurer will not cover the service.

Example Two:

An adoptive child is on private insurance and Medicaid. The child receives a service that is not covered by the primary insurance but is covered by Medicaid. Will Medicaid cover the service?

If the provider of the service is a Medicaid provider, the answer is yes. If the provider of the service is not a Medicaid provider, the answer is no.

Currently, under federal law, when a child — who is eligible for Medicaid — uses a Medicaid vendor and the primary insurance company pays, the family does not owe the difference between the total fee and the amount of the insurance. Again, this will only take place when using a Medicaid vendor.

Q Do I have a choice about placing my adoptive child on my private insurance? Can I choose to just have him/her covered by Medicaid?

A Yes

Q What if I do not agree with DHS's decision regarding my application for adoption assistance or subsequent requests?

A You have a right to an administrative fair hearing if your application is denied, not acted on with reasonable promptness, approved in an amount less than requested, modified without your concurrence, or terminated.

Q I think that my child may have Native American heritage. How can I find out?

A DHS may not provide identifying information directly to an adult adoptee to establish tribal rights or membership, but will provide identifying information to the tribe, court or secretary of the interior for purposes of establishing Native American heritage. In addition, this information is located in the disclosure packet that was given to the adoptive parent.

Q Does Oklahoma enter into deferred adoption assistance agreements? In some states, adoptive parents can enter into an agreement in which they choose to defer the receipt of a Medicaid card, the monthly assistance payment, or both, and can elect to receive the Medicaid card and/or monetary payment at another time.

A Yes, it is referred to as “Agreement only” adoption assistance. “Agreement only” children must meet the special needs criteria or be at risk of developing a special need, and the adoptive family must apply prior to adoption finalization. The application process is the same for deferred adoption assistance as it is for adoption assistance, except that the family indicates on the application that they are requesting “Agreement only” adoption assistance. This means that the family will not receive benefits at the present time but is eligible to receive benefits in the future if needed.

Q When will adoption assistance payments and benefits begin?

A Adoption assistance payments and benefits may begin in Oklahoma at adoption finalization or at adoptive placement, depending on circumstances. If Oklahoma foster parents who receive foster care maintenance payments for a child adopt the child, agreements are set up to begin the day of finalization and foster care payments continue until the day before finalization. In other situations, families may request payment at the time the child is placed with them for adoption.

Q What behavioral mental health services are provided?

A Public behavioral mental health services for children in Oklahoma are administered by the Oklahoma Health Care Authority and include the following: behavioral mental health services (psychological/behavioral counseling), outpatient and inpatient hospitalization, substance abuse services, and prescription drugs. Oklahoma offers all medical services compensable through the state’s fee for service Title XIX (Medicaid) program. Some services require prior authorization by the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA).

Q What is your state website for post-adoption information?

A Visit us at www.okdhs.org. Post-adoption services are located under the program area of “Adoptions.”

Part 5: Additional Family Resources and Information

Financial Information for Adoptive Families

Federal Adoption Tax Credit for Special Needs Adoption

The Federal Adoption Tax Credit was passed as a way to make it possible for more families to afford to adopt special needs children from the U.S. foster care system. The Federal Adoption Tax Credit is one of the best financial incentives for adoptive parents. This is a dollar-for-dollar reimbursement for specific adoption-related expenses from the tax dollars they owe that year. Beginning in 2003, families adopting a child with special needs from foster care were able to access a federal adoption tax credit without needing to document expenses. The tax credit amount changes yearly. The adoption tax credit is a valuable benefit for adopting families, but one of the most complicated tax law provisions applicable to middle-income families. You will need to consult a tax advisor for the details of the tax credit.

You will find more information regarding this tax credit at www.irs.gov.

Earned Income Tax Credit

The earned income credit is a special tax benefit for people who work full-or part-time. Families that owe less in taxes may be able to receive a tax credit. Benefits and eligibility may change each year. More information on earned income tax credit can be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service.

Oklahoma's Promise (OHLAP)

What are the application requirements for adopted children?

Children who are adopted while in the permanent custody of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services or in the court-ordered custody of a licensed, private, nonprofit child-placing agency or federally recognized Indian tribe are eligible for special provisions. No income verification is required at the time of application in the eighth, ninth or 10th grade for qualifying students. In order to qualify for OHLAP services proof of the legal adoption is required. Adopted students will be subject to a second income limit at the time the student enters college. The second income limit for students who were adopted between the ages of birth and 12 will be \$150,000. The second income limit for students who were adopted between the ages of 13 and 17 will be \$200,000. Parents of adopted children who do not fall under this provision of the law will be subject to the \$50,000 initial income limit.

College Cost Reduction and Access Act

This law, enacted in September 2007, expands the definition of an "independent student" and became effective July 1, 2009. Under this law, youth who are adopted after they turn 13 do not need to include their adoptive parents' income, assets or other information for the purpose of determining need for federal student financial aid.

Resources for Older Parents

DHS Aging Services provides grandparents with information on resources, grandparent conferences and services. Call DHS information and referral at (405) 521-3646 for the current DHS Aging Services phone number and contact person.

The number of support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren is increasing in Oklahoma. Many of the groups offer child care so that both grandparents and their grandchildren have a chance to participate in the group.

There is also a wealth of information for adults over age 50 through the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). AARP maintains a separate Grandparent Information Center for grandparents raising grandchildren and offers a free grandparent newsletter. Visit the organization's website at www.aarp.org.

Resources for Individuals with Disabilities

DHS Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) provides services to persons ages 3 and older who have a primary diagnosis of mental retardation (IQ of 69 or below). The individual served may also have other developmental or physical disabilities in addition to mental retardation.

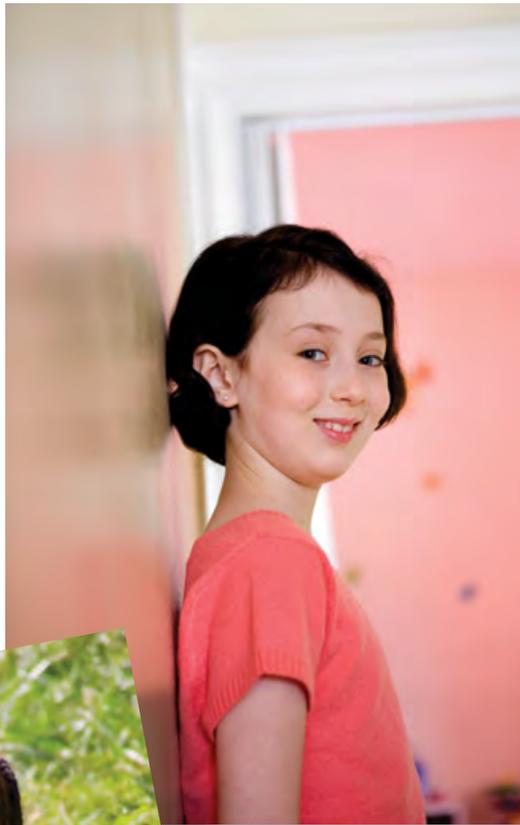
A developmental disability is a term that includes disabilities which occur in the developmental years (before the age of 22). It may be caused by a physical or mental impairment or a combination of both. Developmental disabilities cannot be cured — they are lifelong and chronic. Some examples of developmental disabilities include, but are not limited to, mental retardation, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism, Down syndrome and Prader-Willi syndrome.

A person with a developmental disability will have substantial functional limitations in three or more areas of major life activities such as self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Adopted children may receive both adoption assistance and selected developmental disabilities services.

Applications are available through your area DDS office. Area offices are listed on the DHS website. If you do not have Internet access, you may contact DHS information and referral at (405) 521-3646 for the location of the DDS office in your area.

SoonerStart

SoonerStart is Oklahoma's early intervention program designed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. The program is a joint effort of the Oklahoma Departments of Education, Human Services, Health, and Behavioral Mental Health Services; and the Commission on Children and Youth. To enroll in SoonerStart, call 1-800-426-2747.



Information in this handbook is provided for educational or general purposes only and should not be interpreted as detailed state or federal policy. For DHS policy please visit www.okdhs.org. While we have made every attempt to ensure that the information contained in this handbook is accurate, elements will change over time and the contents may become outdated.



Child Welfare Services

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