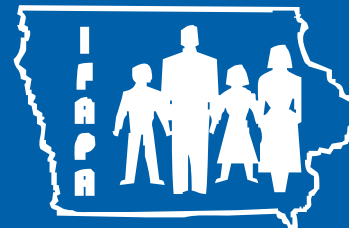


Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association
6864 NE 14 Street, Suite 5
Ankeny, Iowa 50023
(800) 277-8145
(515) 289-4567
Fax (515) 289-2080
ifapa@ifapa.org



Comm. 254

Navigating Iowa's Adoption Subsidy Program

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Notes

18 horizontal blue lines for writing.

Notes

Navigating Iowa's Adoption Subsidy Program

This publication is intended to be used as a resource for adoptive families. If a family needs legal advice or professional tax advice, contact a professional in that field.

NOTE: Additional information can be found in the Iowa DHS manual 13-C(1) Adoption Subsidy, 13-C Adoption Services, and 13-C Adoption Services Appendix at www.dhs.state.ia.us.



June 2007

- Supervisory Report (Form 470-0773). This form is completed by DHS to report the status and progress of the adoptive placement prior to the adoption finalization.

NOTE: Additional information and a copy of all DHS adoption subsidy forms can be found in the Iowa DHS manual 13-C (1) Adoption Subsidy, 13-C Adoption Services, and 13-C Adoption Services Appendix at www.dhs.state.ia.us.

Adoption Forms

During the adoption process, the adoptive family will be provided all relevant DHS forms to complete and sign for finalization of the adoption. The following is a list of Iowa adoption forms:

- Adoption Application for Subsidy (Form 470-0744). This form is used to apply for subsidy for the child. It will detail the child's needs and the family's ability to meet those needs.
- Adoption Information Checklist (Form 470-3614). This form is used to document information given to the adoptive family by the DHS adoption worker regarding the child's background and special needs.
- Adoption Notice of Decision (Form 470-0745). The DHS worker uses this form to close an adoption case and to notify adoptive parents regarding the child's subsidy benefits.
- Adoption Subsidy Agreement or Presubsidy Agreement (Form 470-0749). This form verifies the family's rights and responsibilities in an adoptive placement. The Adoption Presubsidy Agreement is used after a child is placed in an adoptive placement and prior to the finalization of the adoption. The Adoption Subsidy Agreement is used after the finalization of the adoption. The Adoption Subsidy Agreement outlines the services the child will receive after the finalization of the adoption. The DHS guardian or designee will review and sign this form after it is completed and signed by the family and the DHS adoption worker.
- Agreement of Placement for Adoption (Form 470-0761). This is a contract between the family and DHS that places the child in the adoptive home. The DHS guardian or designee will review and sign this form after it is completed and signed by the family and the DHS adoption worker.
- Agreement to Future Adoption Subsidy (Form 470-0762). This form is used to document eligibility for assistance in the future for children who are at risk of developing special needs and for subsidy cases that are initially inactive.
- Consent to Adoption (Form 470-0775). This form is completed and signed by the DHS guardian or designee and notarized to grant permission for the finalization of the adoption.
- Health Service Application (Form 470-2927). This form is used to establish Medicaid benefits after the adoption. After the child is adopted, a new Medicaid number will be issued for the child in the adoptive name.

Dear Parents,

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is pleased to have collaborated with the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) to make this Adoption Subsidy Handbook available to you. The handbook is an example of IFAPA's commitment to provide valuable resources and support to foster and adoptive parents. IFAPA and DHS have worked diligently to ensure the accuracy of information.

The handbook is intended to be a resource to you as you consider an adoptive placement and a reference guide after placement. Our goal is to educate families about the Adoption Subsidy Program to enable families to make an informed decision about adoption.

I hope you find the Adoption Subsidy Handbook helpful and informative. The Department of Human Services is working diligently to standardize adoption practice and service delivery across the state. The Subsidy Handbook will assist in these efforts.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to children.

Sincerely,



Kevin W. Concannon

Director

Iowa Department of Human Services

Table of Contents

9	Overview of Iowa's Adoption Subsidy Program
9	Eligibility for Iowa Adoption Subsidy
10	Is Special Needs Adoption Right for You?
12	The Iowa Adoption Placement Process
12	When Foster Parents Adopt
13	Foster Care and Adoption Service Differences
17	Negotiation of Adoption Subsidy
18	Resolving Subsidy Negotiation Disputes
19	Tips for Adoption Subsidy Negotiation
20	DHS Adoption Subsidy and Support Services
20	Maintenance Subsidy
21	Adoption Subsidy Maintenance Rates
21	Medical Assistance
22	Special Services Subsidy
25	Agreement to Future Adoption Subsidy
25	Exception to Adoption Subsidy Policy
26	Finalization of the Adoption
28	Review/Renegotiation of Iowa Adoption Subsidy
28	Change in Circumstances of the Child's Placement
29	Requesting a Modification of Special Services
29	Requesting Subsidy After Adoption Finalization
30	Services Available After a Child Turns 18
30	Termination of Adoption Subsidy Agreements

Van Buren

By Appointment Only
Cedar Rapids Service Area
Van Buren County Court House
Keosauqua, IA 52565
319-293-3791

Wapello

Cedar Rapids Service Area
120 East Main
PO Box 457
Ottumwa, IA 52501
641-682-8793
888-338-6067

Warren

Des Moines Service Area
901 East Iowa
PO Box 729
Indianola, IA 50125
515-961-5353
800-286-6424

Washington

Cedar Rapids Service Area
2175 Lexington Blvd., Bldg #3
PO Box 519
Washington, IA 52353
319-863-0049
866-863-0061

Wayne

By Appointment Only
Des Moines Service Area
117 West Jackson
Corydon, IA 50060
641-872-1820

Webster

Ames Service Area
330 First Ave N
PO Box 837
Fort Dodge, IA 50501
515-955-6353
877-529-6873

Winnebago

Waterloo Service Area
126 South Clark St
Forest City, IA 50436
641-585-3271
866-707-3271

Winneshiek

Dubuque Service Area
2307 US Highway 52 S
PO Box 286
Decorah, IA 52101
563-382-2928
800-611-7781

Woodbury

Sioux City Service Area
Trospen-Hoyt County Services
Building
822 Douglas St
Sioux City, IA 51101
712-255-0833
877-259-4992

Worth

By Appointment Only
Waterloo Service Area
95 Ninth St North
Northwood, IA 50459
800-217-6903

Wright

Ames Service Area
114 First St SW; PO Box 346
Clarion, IA 50525
515-532-6645
800-873-1759

Pocahontas

By Appointment Only
 Ames Service Area
 23 Third Ave NE
 PO Box F
 Pocahontas, IA 50574
 712-335-3565
 877-529-6873

Polk

Des Moines Service Area
 Administrative Offices
 City View Plaza
 1200 University Ave
 Des Moines, IA 50314
 515-283-9238

Pottwattamie

Council Bluffs Service Area
 417 E Kanesville Blvd
 Council Bluffs, IA 51503
 712-328-5661
 866-788-1805

Poweshiek

Ames Service Area
 927 Broad St
 Grinnell, IA 50112
 641-236-3149

Ringgold

By Appointment Only
 Des Moines Service Area
 109 West Madison, Courthouse
 Mount Ayr, IA 50854
 641-464-2247

Sac

By Appointment Only
 Council Bluffs Service Area
 116 South State St, Ste B
 Sac City, IA 50583
 866-202-5968

Scott

Davenport Service Area
 428 Western Ave, 3rd Floor
 Davenport, IA 52801
 563-326-8794

Shelby

By Appointment Only
 Council Bluffs Service Area
 719 Market
 Harlan, IA 51537
 800-396-9027

Sioux

Sioux City Service Area
 215 Central Ave SE
 PO Box 375
 Orange City, IA 51041
 712-737-2943
 800-337-2943

Story

Ames Service Area
 126 South Kellogg, Ste 101
 Ames, IA 50010
 515-292-2035
 800-232-7347

Tama

Ames Service Area
 129 West High St
 Toledo, IA 52342
 641-484-3406

Taylor

By Appointment Only
 Council Bluffs Service Area
 309 Main
 Bedford, IA 50833
 877-996-1199

Union

Des Moines Service Area
 304 North Pine Street, Suite 9
 Creston, IA 50801
 641-782-8502

31 Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Issues

- 31 Filing Your Taxes
- 31 Adoption Tax Credit
- 31 Additional Tax Information

32 Personal Leave from Work for Adoption**33 Moving Out of State****34 Adoption Subsidy and Supplemental Security Income****35 Adoption Resources**

- 35 Area Education Agency
- 35 Children-At-Home Program
- 35 Community Mental Health Centers
- 35 Department of Human Services
- 35 Early Access
- 36 Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment
- 36 Family Support Subsidy Program
- 36 Home and Community Based Services Program
- 36 Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association
- 37 Iowa Public Libraries
- 37 North American Council on Adoptable Children
- 37 Support Groups
- 37 Books on Adoption Issues and Topics

38 Appendix

- 38 Terminology
- 40 Questions to Consider in an Adoptive Placement
- 43 DHS County Office Phone Numbers
- 52 Adoption Forms

Mills

Council Bluffs Service Area
101 Central Ste 124
PO Box 469
Glenwood, IA 51534
712-527-4803
800-486-1269

Mitchell

By Appointment Only
Waterloo Service Area
509 State St
Osage, IA 50461
888-417-9027

Monona

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Council Bluffs Service Area
Courthouse
610 Iowa Ave
Onawa, IA 51040
800-326-7732

Monroe

Cedar Rapids Service Area
103 South Clinton
PO Box 176
Albia, IA 52531
641-932-5187
888-818-2500

Montgomery

Council Bluffs Service Area
1109 Highland
PO Box 525
Red Oak, IA 51566
712-623-4838

Muscatine

Davenport Service Area
120 East Third St, 4th Floor
Muscatine, IA 52761
563-263-9302
877-272-0614

O'Brien

Sioux City Service Area
160 Second St SE
PO Box 400
Primghar, IA 51245
712-957-5135
800-392-3895

Osceola

By Appointment Only
Sioux City Service Area
300 Seventh St
Sibley, IA 51249
712-957-5135
800-392-3895

Page

Council Bluffs Service Area
121 South 15th, Ste C
PO Box 178
Clarinda, IA 51632
712-542-5111
877-996-1199

Palo Alto

By Appointment Only
Sioux City Service Area
2105 Main
Emmetsburg, IA 50536
800-449-6540
800-840-6525

Plymouth

Sioux City Service Area
19 Second Ave NW
LeMars, IA 51031
712-546-8877
800-546-8870

Keokuk

Cedar Rapids Service Area
 1303 South 200th Ave
 PO Box 308
 Sigourney, IA 52591
 641-622-2090
 800-745-1481

Kossuth

Sioux City Service Area
 109 West State St
 Algona, IA 50511
 515-295-7771
 800-840-6525

Lee – North

Davenport Service Area
 933 Ave H
 PO Box 188
 Fort Madison, IA 52627
 319-372-3651
 888-381-6831

Lee – South

Davenport Service Area
 307 Bank St
 PO Box 937
 Keokuk, IA 52632
 319-524-1052
 888-790-9757

Linn

Cedar Rapids Service Area
 411 Third St SE, Ste 160
 Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
 319-892-6700
 866-534-3112

Louisa

By Appointment Only
 Davenport Service Area
 407 Washington St
 Wapello, IA 52653
 319-523-2412
 800-423-4724

Lucas

By Appointment Only
 Des Moines Service Area
 125 South Grand
 PO Box 735
 Chariton, IA 50049
 641-774-5071
 888-818-1900

Lyon

By Appointment Only
 Sioux City Service Area
 315 First Ave, Ste 210
 Rock Rapids, IA 51246
 712-737-2943
 800-337-2943

Madison

Des Moines Service Area
 209 East Madison
 Winterset, IA 50273
 515-462-2931
 888-462-2931

Mahaska

Cedar Rapids Service Area
 410 South 11th St
 PO Box 290
 Oskaloosa, IA 52577
 641-673-3496
 800-407-6250

Marion

Des Moines Service Area
 3014 East Main
 PO Box 191
 Knoxville, IA 50138
 641-842-5087
 800-798-5524

Marshall

Ames Service Area
 206 West State St
 Marshalltown, IA 50158
 641-752-6741
 800-714-4588

Overview of Iowa's Adoption Subsidy Program

The purpose of the Iowa adoption subsidy program is to secure a permanent family for Iowa's children whose special needs present barriers to adoption. The subsidy program was created to enable families to make a permanent commitment to a child with special needs without placing an undue financial burden on the family.

The adoption subsidy program is only available to children who have special needs and are placed in the custody and guardianship of the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) or a licensed child placing agency. Adoption subsidy is not an entitlement, so an attempt will be made to place a child for adoption without a subsidy. When placement decisions are made, the child's best interest is paramount in determining the adoptive placement.

The DHS adoption worker will determine and document the child's special needs, background, and family history to establish the child's level of care and subsidy eligibility prior to subsidy negotiation and adoptive placement.

The Adoption Subsidy Agreement is negotiated between the child's adoptive parents and the DHS adoption worker prior to adoption finalization. The Adoption Subsidy Agreement could include a monthly maintenance payment, medical coverage, nonrecurring legal fees, and special services.

Eligibility for Iowa Adoption Subsidy

A child is considered to be a child with special needs when all three of the following criteria are met:

- The child cannot or should not be returned to the home of his or her biological parents, and Juvenile Court has terminated parental rights.
- Reasonable but unsuccessful efforts have been made to place the child with an appropriate adoptive parent without providing adoption assistance (subsidy).
- The child cannot be placed for adoption without a subsidy due to one or more of the following factors:
 - The child is age eight or older and Caucasian.
 - The child is age two or older and is a member of a minority race or ethnic group or the child's biological parents are of different races.
 - The child has a medically diagnosed disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities or requires professional treatment, assistance in self-care, or the purchase of special equipment.

- The child is a member of a sibling group of three or more who are placed in the same adoptive home.
- The child has been determined to be mentally retarded by a qualified mental retardation professional.
- The child has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional to have a psychiatric condition that impairs the child's mental, intellectual, or social functioning and for which the child requires professional services.
- The child has been diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional to have a behavioral or emotional disorder characterized by situationally inappropriate behavior that deviates substantially from behavior appropriate to the child's age or significantly interferes with the child's intellectual, social, and personal adjustment.
- To be eligible for assistance in the future, a qualified professional must determine the child is at high risk of developing a medical, mental, or emotional condition as defined above.

If the child meets the above criteria, they may be eligible for ongoing assistance or a future needs subsidy if documented needs arise in the future.

Is Special Needs Adoption Right for You?

All children need and deserve permanence. Parenting children with special needs can be rewarding yet challenging. Potential adoptive parents should consider the impact that a special needs adoption will have on their family. Adoption may impact a family's finances, personal relationships, and family relationships. Parents may also require more flexibility at work and more space in the home to accommodate the child.

When considering adoption of a child with special needs, it is important for a family to ask themselves, "What support services will my family require to address the needs of this child?" The family must consider if the child's special needs generate extra costs that will not be covered by Medicaid, private insurance, or school programs. The family and the DHS adoption worker must determine together if the family is able to address the child's needs with available support and community services.

The DHS adoption worker must provide all relevant information about the child to the potential adoptive family. This information should include a detailed background report, psychological and medical report, school information, placement history, and the child's eligibility for adoption subsidy.

Hardin

Ames Service Area
1201 14th Ave
Eldora, IA 50627
641-939-8141
877-486-8141

Harrison

Council Bluffs Service Area
204 East Sixth Street
PO Box 189
Logan, IA 51546
712-644-2460
800-326-7732

Henry

Davenport Service Area
205 West Madison
Mt Pleasant, IA 52641
319-986-5157
800-824-4295

Howard

By Appointment Only
Dubuque Service Area
205 East Second St
Cresco, IA 52136
563-382-2928
800-611-7781

Humboldt

By Appointment Only
Ames Service Area
Courthouse
Dakota City, IA 50529
515-332-3383
877-529-6873

Ida

By Appointment Only
Sioux City Service Area
239 West Maple
Cherokee, IA 51012
712-225-6723
866-640-7087

Iowa

By Appointment Only
Cedar Rapids Service Area
950 Franklin Ave
Marengo, IA 52301
319-472-4746
888-480-0062

Jackson

Dubuque Service Area
115 South Olive St
PO Box 1134
Maquoketa, IA 52060
563-652-2550
800-237-0089

Jasper

Ames Service Area
120 First St N, Ste 500
Newton, IA 50208
641-792-1955
800-342-0829

Jefferson

Cedar Rapids Service Area
51 West Hempstead
PO Box 987
Fairfield, IA 52556
641-472-5011
800-642-6249

Johnson

Cedar Rapids Service Area
911 North Governor
Iowa City, IA 52245
319-356-6050
866-886-9207

Jones

Cedar Rapids Service Area
500 West Main St
Anamosa, IA 52205
319-462-3557
800-765-3522

Dickinson

Sioux City Service Area
1710 Gary Ave
Spirit Lake, IA 51360
712-336-2555
866-336-2555

Dubuque

Dubuque Service Area
799 Main St
PO Box 87
Dubuque, IA 52004
563-557-8251
800-650-6361

Emmet

Sioux City Service Area
220 South First St
Estherville, IA 51334
712-362-7237
800-449-6540

Fayette

Dubuque Service Area
129 A North Vine
PO Box 476
West Union, IA 52175
563-422-5634
800-632-0014

Floyd

Waterloo Service Area
1206 South Main
PO Box 158
Charles City, IA 50616
641-228-5713
888-417-9027

Franklin

By Appointment Only
Waterloo Service Area
123 First Ave SW
Hampton, IA 50441
800-873-1340

Fremont

By Appointment Only
Council Bluffs Service Area
414 Clay St
Sidney, IA 51652
800-486-1269

Greene

By Appointment Only
Council Bluffs Service Area
114 North Chestnut, Courthouse
Jefferson, IA 50129
515-386-2143
866-202-5968

Grundy

By Appointment Only
Waterloo Service Area
704 H Ave
Grundy Center, IA 50638
319-267-2594
888-887-4296

Guthrie

By Appointment Only
Council Bluffs Service Area
200 North Fifth St, Courthouse
Guthrie Center, IA 50115
877-455-3211

Hamilton

Ames Service Area
2300 Superior St
Webster City, IA 50595
515-832-9555
800-944-1764

Hancock

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Waterloo Service Area
120 East Eighth Street
Courthouse Annex
Garner, IA 50438
641-585-3271
866-707-3271

A family may need to research the child's background: read case information; talk with significant people in the child's life; meet with past and current foster care and service providers. Basic information such as: medical history, where the child has lived, and what has happened to the child before placement into foster care, is sometimes not known by DHS or private providers. The adoptive family must decide if they can make an informed decision about adopting the child and a life-long commitment based on the information available and their ability to provide for the child's needs.

The appendix contains a sample list of questions in the section, QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN AN ADOPTIVE PLACEMENT, page 40.

The Iowa Adoption Placement Process

A child becomes legally free for adoption when the Juvenile Court issues a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Order. The TPR Order severs the biological parents' rights to a child and places the child in the custody and guardianship of DHS. The child will be assigned a DHS adoption worker when the TPR Order is completed and signed by the judge. The DHS adoption worker may have begun working with the child prior to TPR if the child had a "concurrent" permanency plan. A concurrent permanency plan allows for two permanency goals that usually are (1) return the child to the birth parent's home and (2) adoption, if reunification efforts fail.

After TPR, DHS will hold an adoption staffing to select the most appropriate adoptive placement for the child.

- DHS staff will discuss the strengths and needs of the child and a prospective family's ability to meet these needs.
- Professionals involved with the child may be invited to attend.
- The child's foster parents and relatives will be given consideration for placement.
- After a thorough review of the information, the potential adoptive family will be selected.

All available relevant information about the child, including subsidy eligibility, will be given to the potential adoptive family to assist them in making an informed decision about adopting the child.

Foster parents are often selected as adoptive parents for the child in their care. In Iowa, approximately 76% of all DHS initiated adoptions are by foster parents. When a child has a concurrent permanency plan, foster parents may be asked about their interest in adopting a child in their care should the child become available for adoption. When foster parents are unable or choose not to adopt the child in their care, an adoptive family will be selected by DHS from the list of approved adoptive families in Iowa or other states.

When Foster Parents Adopt

Many foster parents become adoptive parents of children they have parented through the DHS foster care program. The adoption subsidy program does not provide the same benefits that are available to children in foster care. Foster parents must have a clear understanding of the difference between foster care benefits and the adoption subsidy program before they make an adoption decision.

Chickasaw

By Appointment Only
Waterloo Service Area
910 East Main
New Hampton, IA 50659
641-228-5713
888-417-9027

Clarke

Des Moines Service Area
115 North Main
PO Box 377
Osceola, IA 50213
641-342-6516

Clay

Sioux City Service Area
217 West Fifth St
PO Box 7977
Spencer, IA 51301
712-262-3586
866-536-2749

Clayton

By Appointment Only
Dubuque Service Area
Clayton County Office Building
100 Sandpit Road
Elkader, IA 52043
563-422-5634
800-632-0014

Clinton

Dubuque Service Area
PO Box 1180
121 Sixth Ave S
Clinton, IA 52733
563-242-0573
800-798-4737

Crawford

Council Bluffs Service Area
1527 Fourth Ave South
Denison, IA 51442
712-263-5668
800-396-9027

Dallas

Des Moines Service Area
902 Court St
Adel, IA 50003
515-993-5817
800-397-3232

Davis

By Appointment Only
Cedar Rapids Service Area
203 South Madison
PO Box 107
Bloomfield, IA 52537
641-664-2239
888-338-6067

Decatur

Des Moines Service Area
210 North Main St
Leon, IA 50144
641-446-4312

Delaware

Dubuque Service Area
721 South Fifth St
PO Box 500
Manchester, IA 52057
563-927-4512
866-927-4512

Des Moines

Davenport Service Area
409 North Fourth
Burlington, IA 52601
319-754-4622
800-423-4724

Black Hawk

Waterloo Service Area
 1407 Independence Ave
 PO Box 7500
 Waterloo, IA 50704-7500
 319-291-2441

Boone

Des Moines Service Area
 900 West Mamie Eisenhower
 Boone, IA 50036
 515-433-0593
 800-753-2136

Bremer

Waterloo Service Area
 209 20th St NW
 PO Box 822
 Waverly, IA 50677
 319-352-4233
 888-887-4296

Buchanan

Dubuque Service Area
 1415 First Street – West
 PO Box 753
 Independence, IA 50644
 319-334-6091
 800-642-6609

Buena Vista

Sioux City Service Area
 311 East Fifth Street
 Storm Lake, IA 50588
 712-749-2536
 800-205-8893

Butler

Waterloo Service Area
 713 Elm Street
 Allison, IA 50602
 319-267-2594
 800-873-1340

Calhoun

By Appointment Only
 Ames Service Area
 515 Court Street
 PO Box 71
 Rockwell City, IA 50579
 712-297-8524
 877-529-6873

Carroll

Council Bluffs Service Area
 608 North Court Ste C
 Carroll, IA 51401
 712-792-4391
 866-202-5968

Cass

Council Bluffs Service Area
 601 Walnut St
 Atlantic, IA 50022
 712-243-4401
 877-455-3211

Cedar

By Appointment Only
 Davenport Service Area
 101 Lynn Street
 Tipton, IA 52772
 563-886-6036
 877-272-0614

Cerro Gordo

Waterloo Service Area
 Mohawk Square
 22 North Georgia Ave Ste 1
 Mason City, IA 50401
 641-424-8641
 800-217-6903

Cherokee

Sioux City Service Area
 239 West Maple
 Cherokee, IA 51012
 712-225-6723
 866-640-7087

Foster Care and Adoption Service Differences**Foster Care**

Foster care is a temporary placement for children whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them. Children are placed in foster care by the Juvenile Court. While a child is in foster care, the biological parents are the child's legal parents. The Juvenile Court usually appoints DHS as the child's custodian. As the child's custodian, DHS is responsible for developing a permanency plan for the child and reporting periodically to Juvenile Court on the progress made toward achieving this plan.

The services and payments that foster parents receive for children in their care are an entitlement. Maintenance payments are not negotiated, and every child in foster care receives benefits regardless of the family's circumstances. Foster care is designed to meet the child's basic needs for clothing, food, and shelter.

Adoption

When a child is adopted, the adoptive parents become the child's legal parents. Adoptive parents have the same rights and responsibilities as if the child were born to them. This includes financial and legal responsibility and liability for the child. The adoptive family is primarily responsible for the child's care and support. The adoption subsidy program is designed to assist with the additional costs that may arise due to the child's special needs.

After an adoption is finalized, the DHS adoption worker no longer supervises the adopted child or family. If additional support services are needed, the family would need to contact the local DHS office for a possible resource referral.

Prior to adoption finalization, if other community resources are not available, adoptive parents may negotiate an Adoption Subsidy Agreement based on the child's special needs, the family's circumstances, and the availability of funds.

NOTE: See the chart on the following pages for a comparison of foster care and subsidized adoption services.

Foster Care and Subsidized Adoption Services Differences

	Foster Care	Subsidized Adoption
Ancillary Services	Ancillary services such as recreation fees, in-home tutoring, specialized classes (not covered by education funds)	Not Available
Child Care	Child care (child care eligibility for children in foster care is based on the child's needs per the case permanency plan when the foster parents are employed)	Not Available
Clothing Allowance	Clothing allowance up to \$250 per child in the first year of foster care and \$200 per child each additional year in foster care	Not Available
Funeral Expenses	Funeral expenses in the death of a child (\$650 maximum)	Funeral expenses in the death of a child (\$650 maximum)
Home Insurance	Coverage under the foster home insurance fund	Not Available
Legal	Child in the custody of DHS Child in the guardianship of biological parent(s)	Child in the custody and guardianship of adoptive parent(s)
Medical	Every child in foster care receives medical, mental health, and dental coverage through Medicaid	Medical coverage is only available to a child who is eligible for adoption subsidy For eligible child, medical, mental health and dental care coverage through Medicaid

- Questions to ask when other children are in the adoptive home:
 - What impact will this new placement have on the other children in the home?
 - Will the physical aspects of the home accommodate the additional child?
 - How will the new placement affect all of the children's privacy, special needs, or family relationships?
 - Is there a potential for abuse between the children? What additional supervision may be needed?
 - How will the age of the new child impact the other children? Will another child in the home be the same age or in the same grade? Will the birth order change?
 - Will the older children in the home take over some of the caretaking roles? Are they able and willing to do this?
 - What support systems are available to help with transitioning and blending the child into the family unit?

DHS County Office Phone Numbers

Adair

By Appointment Only
Des Moines Service Area
400 Public Square
Greenfield, IA 50849
641-743-2119
888-462-2931

Adams

By Appointment Only
Des Moines Service Area
500 Ninth Street, Courthouse
Corning, IA 50841
641-322-4031

Allamakee

By Appointment Only
Dubuque Service Area
Courthouse
Waukon, IA 52172
563-382-2928
800-611-7781

Appanoose

Cedar Rapids Service Area
209 East Jackson
PO Box 488
Centerville, IA 52544
641-437-4450
888-820-0804

Audubon

By Appointment Only
Council Bluffs Service Area
210 North Market
Audubon, IA 50025
877-455-3211

Benton

Cedar Rapids Service Area
114 East Fourth Street
Vinton, IA 52349
319-472-4746
888-480-0062

- Do the biological parents support the adoption?
 - Did the child have a good-bye visit with the biological parents? What was said to the child?
 - If the child wants to search for the biological parents, how will they be able to contact them?
 - Are there safety concerns regarding contact with the biological parents?
 - Are there any photos or keepsakes available for the child from the biological family and foster family?
4. What services are available to meet the child's needs?
- What services has the child received?
 - What services are available in the community?
 - What services will be provided prior to the adoption?
 - What services will be available after the adoption?
 - What can the adoptive family contribute toward the care of this child?
 - Can the adoptive family adopt the child without subsidy?
 - Is the child eligible for special services subsidy?
 - If the child needs additional services or has a crisis, whom should the adoptive parents contact?
5. Questions to ask when considering a relative placement:
- How will parenting the child affect the relationships with other family members?
 - How will parenting the child affect the relationship with the child? (i.e., grandparents are now the parents; aunts are now mothers, etc.)
 - Will it be necessary to set limits on the relationship between the biological family and the child? If so, how will this be done?
 - Does the biological family support the placement?
 - How will the placement affect the roles of each member of the family?

Monthly Maintenance Payment	Payment in an entitlement: every child in care receives assistance	Not every child in care receives a monthly maintenance payment
How Monthly Maintenance Payment Rate is Determined	Amount of the monthly maintenance payment based on the child's age and special needs	Payment is negotiated for children with special needs based on the needs of the child, age of the child, and the rate received while in foster care
Rehabilitation	Rehabilitative treatment services (therapy and counseling, supervision services, and restorative living skills)	Not Available
Respite	Up to 24 days of respite care per calendar year	For children receiving subsidy, five days of respite care per year per child at the rate of \$15 per day (administered by the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association)
School Fees	School fees (\$50 per calendar year)	Not Available
Staff	Assigned DHS caseworker and supervision of placement	No ongoing staff supervision; DHS subsidy worker if child receives subsidy
Tangible Goods	Tangible goods (building modifications, medical equipment, and communication devices not covered by Medicaid; specialized educational materials not covered by education funds)	Negotiated; see next page
Transportation	Transportation expenses for medical care (not covered by Medicaid)	Negotiated; see next page

Continued on next page

Foster Care and Subsidized Adoption Services Differences (continued)

Special Services for Subsidized Adoption Only

Negotiated services based on the needs of the child and availability of funds

Nonrecurring fees (attorney fees and court costs necessary to finalize the adoption) up to \$500 per child

A one-time payment of \$500 per child when a sibling group of three or more is placed together

Outpatient counseling and therapy not covered by the Medicaid program at the Medicaid rate in the following circumstances:

- Services are not available from a Medicaid provider within a reasonable distance from the family
- The child is receiving therapy or counseling from a non-Medicaid provider, and it would not be in the child's best interest to disrupt the service
- Available Medicaid providers lack experience in working with foster, adoptive, or blended families

Reimbursement up to \$2000 to offset the expenses for transportation or lodging related to adoption pre-placement visits of Iowa children

Medical transportation not covered by Medicaid and the state rate for lodging and meals, if necessary, when the child receives specialized care, and the child and parent are required to stay overnight as part of the treatment plan

Supplies and equipment (i.e., over-the-counter medications and supplements, wheel chairs or other adaptive equipment, home modifications, etc.) as required by the special needs of the child and unavailable through other resources

The additional cost to add the child to the family's health insurance plan if the family is not eligible for the Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPP) Program for Iowa Medicaid recipients

- How does the child do in school?
 - What does the child like to do? Does the child have any special skills or talents?
 - Does the child have favorite toys, foods, sports, television shows, or other activities?
 - Does the child attend religious services? If so, what kind?
 - What forms of discipline have been used with the child, and which ones have been successful?
2. What is the child's placement history? Why did the child enter foster care?
 - Was the child abused or neglected?
 - Who was in the home at the time of the removal?
 - Is there a history of sexual abuse? If so, by whom, and what happened to the perpetrator?
 - Is there a history of drug use by either biological parent? What was the frequency and type of drugs used? Did the biological mother use drugs during the pregnancy?
 - Is there a history of alcohol abuse? Did the biological mother drink alcohol during the pregnancy?
 - Who were any previous foster parents? How many foster care placements has the child had? If they had more than one placement, why were they moved?
 - How often did the biological parents have visits with the child? When was the last visit? What was this contact like for the child?
 - Why were the parental rights terminated?
 - What does the child understand about the reasons for the termination of parental rights?
 3. What is the child's family history?
 - Does the child have biological siblings? If so, where are they? What visits or contacts are planned? Why are they not placed together?
 - Are there biological relatives with whom the child will remain in contact?
 - Do either of the biological parents have a family history of mental illness, learning disabilities, mental retardation, or physical problems? What treatment was used and what was successful?

child due to a disability. The payment is made to the adoptive family to reimburse the provider.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): SSI is a federally-funded need-based disability program for adults and children that provides a monthly cash benefit and medical eligibility.

Termination of parental rights: A process involving a court hearing whereby a judge enters a decree permanently severing all legal parental rights to a child. This must occur before a child is considered legally free for adoption. Termination of parental rights may be voluntary (the birth parent(s) choose to relinquish their rights and make an adoption plan for their child) or involuntarily (the legal rights of the birth parents are terminated by the court without their signed consent).

Title IV-E assistance: A federally-funded program that provides matching funds to a State to offset the cost of public assistance for a child's subsidy maintenance payment. Title IV-E children are either AFDC (TANF) or SSI eligible prior to the adoption. A portion of the support is federally-funded, and the remaining portion may be state dollars. If a child is non-IV-E eligible, public assistance is paid using state funds only.

Questions to Consider in an Adoptive Placement

Below are sample questions to assist the potential adoptive family in the adoption decision. This list of questions was created as a tool for potential adoptive families to use to consider placement of a child with special needs. Some questions may not be applicable to all children in need of an adoptive placement. The potential adoptive family should contact the DHS worker to verify the information available on a child.

1. What are the strengths and needs of the child? What are the child's special needs (physical, emotional or psychiatric, learning or behavioral disabilities)? What special skills, training, or equipment will be needed to manage these needs?
- What are the child's health needs or issues? What treatment has the child received? Where was the treatment provided and by whom? What is the prognosis for the condition? What is the frequency of appointments?
 - Does the child have any dangerous behaviors?
 - What kind of attachment behavior has the child exhibited?
 - How does the child relate to adults and other children?
 - What are the child's special qualities?

Negotiation of Adoption Subsidy

When a child is legally free for adoption, the child's eligibility for subsidy is determined by the DHS adoption worker and supervisor. This determination is documented in the case file. When an adoptive family is selected for placement of a child, the DHS adoption worker will meet with the adoptive family. The adoptive family and DHS adoption worker should:

- Discuss the strengths and needs of the child and the family's ability to meet these needs.
- Discuss the plan for pre-placement visits if the child is not already residing in the home.
- Discuss the child's specific circumstances and legal issues in order to determine the anticipated time frame required to finalize the adoption.
- Discuss and complete the Adoption Information Checklist (Form 470-3614). Does the adoptive family have access to the information on the checklist? Seek out information that is unclear or unknown and discuss any questions with the DHS worker.
- Discuss the child's eligibility for the adoption subsidy program.
- Negotiate the child's eligibility for presubsidy. Presubsidy is the assistance provided to the child after the adoptive placement agreement is signed by all parties and prior to the adoption finalization. When the adoptive placement agreement is signed, the child is no longer eligible for foster care benefits.
- Negotiate the child's eligibility for subsidy maintenance payments and available special services. The family must consider if the child's special needs generate extra costs that will not be covered by Medicaid, private insurance, or school programs. The family may be asked to adopt the child without assistance.
- Sign and complete, with the DHS adoption worker, the relevant adoption and subsidy forms. The adoptive family should keep a copy of all the forms they have signed and completed.

NOTE: The Application for Subsidy (Form 470-0743) and the Adoption Subsidy Agreement (Form 470-0749) must be approved and signed by all parties prior to adoption finalization.

Some questions for the adoptive parent(s) and the DHS adoption worker to discuss:

- **What can the adoptive family contribute toward the care of the child?**
- **What is the amount of subsidy needed to address the special needs of the child?**
- **What is the maximum amount of subsidy for which the child is eligible?**
- **What services and resources are available in the community to assist in meeting the needs of the child now and in the future?**
- **Does the child receive any unearned income?**

Resolving Subsidy Negotiation Disputes

With proper documentation, subsidy negotiation should be a smooth process. If an adoptive family is unable to reach an agreement with the DHS adoption worker on the child's eligibility for subsidy and special services, the adoptive family may contact the DHS adoption worker and supervisor to request a clarification and review of the special needs of the child and level of care prior to the adoption finalization. An evaluation or assessment of the child's needs may be warranted. If there is still a disagreement about services and assistance, the DHS worker will inform the family of their right to appeal the decision or request an exception to adoption policy. The adoptive family can continue to pursue the process by contacting the next person in the chain of command.

The DHS chain of command:

- Adoption worker
- Adoption Supervisor
- Social Work Administrator
- Service Area Manager
- Office of Field Support

Any individual who has applied for or is receiving adoption assistance is entitled to appeal a decision made by DHS concerning adoption assistance that is considered adverse or unfair. To appeal DHS's decision, the family must make a request in writing for a Fair Hearing and Review within thirty days after receiving the decision. This request can be sent to:

International adoption: An adoption in which the child and the adoptive parent(s) are from two different countries.

Kinship adoption: An adoption in which the adoptive parents are biologically related to the child, such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, or other relatives.

Maintenance subsidy: A monthly payment to assist the adoptive family in covering the additional costs of raising a child with special needs.

Mental health professional: A person who is a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, psychiatric nurse, or mental health counselor who holds a current license as required by law.

Mental retardation professional: A person who has at least one year of experience working directly with persons with mental retardation or other developmental disabilities and who is one of the following: a doctor of medicine or osteopathy, a registered nurse, or a person who holds at least a bachelor's degree in a human service field.

Nonrecurring expenses: One-time expenses that include reasonable and necessary adoption fees, court costs, and court filing fees.

Open adoption: An adoption that allows contact between the birth parent(s), adoptee, and adoptive parent(s). This can range from picture and letter sharing, to phone calls, to contact through an intermediary, to open contact between all parties.

Presubsidy: Payment for maintenance or special services for a child with special needs who is placed in an adoptive home with a signed Adoptive Placement Agreement but whose adoption is not finalized. A child in presubsidy is no longer eligible for foster care benefits including day care, respite care, clothing allowance, and school fees.

Physician: A licensed medical or osteopathic doctor.

Private or independent adoption: An adoption arranged without the involvement of a state or private agency. An attorney is often involved.

Private agency adoption: An adoption handled by a private, licensed agency. Such agencies are not government sponsored and must meet state requirements to obtain and maintain a license.

Public agency adoption: Adoptions handled by Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS is responsible for the adoptions of children in the foster care system.

Special services subsidy: A negotiated payment for medical, dental, or other therapeutic services, or equipment or appliances required by a

Appendix

Glossary of Common Adoption Terminology

The following glossary contains many of the terms commonly used in adoption.

Adoptee: A person who joins a family through adoption.

Adoption: A permanent, legally binding arrangement whereby persons other than the birth parents parent a child.

Adoption plan: The individual plan the birth parent(s) initiates for the adoption of their child.

Adoptive parent(s): The person(s) who become the permanent parent(s) of a child. They have the same legal rights and responsibilities incumbent upon a birth parent.

Birth parent(s): The biological parent(s).

Child with special needs: A child who has specific medical, mental, and/or emotional disorders, an older child, or siblings who must be placed together. See page 9 for additional information on Iowa's definition of a child with special needs.

Closed adoption: An adoption in which the birth parent(s) and the adoptive parent(s) have no contact.

Child: A person who has not attained the age of 18, or a person with a physical or mental disability who has not attained age 21.

Department of Human Services: In this booklet the Department of Human Services is referred to as DHS.

Disruption: The situation that occurs when a child leaves the adoptive home prior to the finalization of the adoption. This occurs when (1) the birth parents revoke their consent to the adoption; (2) the adoptive parent(s) choose not to finalize the adoption for reasons of their own; or, (3) the agency terminates the adoption if the adoptive parent(s) are not complying with post-placement requirements or are endangering the child.

Dissolution: A disruption that occurs after the adoption has been finalized.

Foster care: A temporary legal arrangement in which a person other than the birth parent(s) care for a child. Foster parents do not have the legal rights of birth or adoptive parents.

Department of Human Services
Appeal Section, Hoover Bldg 5th Floor
1305 East Walnut
Des Moines, IA 50319

The county DHS office may be contacted for assistance in filing an appeal.

Tips for Adoption Subsidy Negotiation

The adoptive family must be informed about the child's strengths and needs. If the adoptive parents do not have a clear understanding of the child's needs, the adoptive parents should contact the DHS adoption worker to request additional information. This may include additional reports and meetings with the child's physician, therapists, and teachers. The adoptive parents should:

- **Verify services currently available through the community and DHS.**
- **Verify any unearned income the child receives or is eligible to receive.**
- **Discuss and determine if the family is able to adopt the child without assistance.**
- **Discuss and determine what the family expects to contribute toward the care of the child. This can include, but is not limited to: health insurance coverage, camp or registration fees, school fees, and incidental expenses.**
- **Look to the future to anticipate and plan for the child's needs.**
- **Document in writing the child's needs and eligibility for assistance.**

The adoptive family must work with DHS to obtain documentation that verifies the child's need for special services. The documentation could include a report or letter from a physician, a mental health professional, or mental retardation professional, that clearly documents the child's need for special services subsidy.

DHS Adoption Subsidy and Support Services

A child with special needs may be eligible to receive adoption subsidy and support services. Types of subsidies include: maintenance subsidy, medical coverage, and/or special services subsidy. The adoptive family will negotiate the child's subsidy maintenance payment and special services prior to the adoptive placement. The child is eligible for the negotiated adoption assistance from the time the Agreement of Placement of Adoption and Adoption Subsidy Agreement is signed by all parties. Assistance is provided as presubsidy prior to the adoption finalization and as a subsidy after adoption finalization. A child receiving presubsidy and subsidy is no longer eligible for foster care benefits including daycare, clothing allowance, foster care respite, and school fees.

After adoption finalization, the adoptive family must contact the DHS adoption worker if there is a change in the family's circumstances or in the placement of the child that would require a change in the Adoption Subsidy Agreement.

Approval for continuation of special services of \$500 or more must be obtained annually at the beginning of each fiscal year, which begins on July 1st. Special services subsidy eligibility is based on the ongoing needs of the child and the availability of funds.

NOTE: The bi-annual subsidy review was eliminated July 1, 2004. Adoptive parents may request a review of the Adoption Subsidy Agreement at any time when the family's circumstances change or the child's needs change.

See the REVIEW/RENEGOTIATION OF IOWA ADOPTION SUBSIDY section in the appendix, page 28, for additional information.

Maintenance Subsidy

A maintenance subsidy is a monthly payment to assist in covering the cost of room, board, clothing, and spending money for a child with special needs. A family may be asked to document the additional expenses they anticipate as a result of the child's special needs. A maintenance payment lower than basic rate may be negotiated to help cover these costs. The amount of the subsidy maintenance payment is negotiated between the adoptive family and the DHS adoption worker considering the family's circumstances and the needs of the child. The negotiated maintenance payment amount is documented in the Adoption Subsidy Agreement.

Iowa Public Libraries

The local public library is a great low-cost source of information regarding adoption and parenting. The local librarian is trained to help people connect with needed information. If the library does not own specific materials, library collections all over Iowa and the United States are accessible using the inter-library loan system.

North American Council on Adoptable Children

The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) is a resource for adoptive families. They have many relevant articles and publications for families who parent children through foster care and adoption.

Address: 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114
Phone number: 612-644-3036 or 800-470-6665
Email: adoption.assistance@nacac.org
Website: www.nacac.org

Support Groups

Many support groups exist throughout Iowa for adoptive parents and children. There are groups for specific behavioral and emotional problems, as well as groups for medical conditions and disabilities. Contact your DHS adoption worker for more information. IFAPA has a listing of support groups on their website (www.ifapa.org).

Books on Adoption Issues and Topics

Tapestry Books
P.O. Box 359
Ringoes, NJ 08551
Toll free number: 800-765-2367
www.tapestrybooks.com

Pact Books
An Adoption Alliance
3220 Blume Drive, Suite 289
Richmond, CA 94806
Toll free number: 866-722-8257
www.pactadopt.org

The IFAPA website lists books pertaining to adoption and parenting and children's books that are adoption-sensitive.

and development. Information may be obtained by calling 800-779-2001 or by visiting the website: <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/cfcs/ea/index.html>.

Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPDST)

EPDST is a federally-funded program for children eligible for Medicaid. In Iowa the program is called EPDST Care for Kids. Families may obtain information on the program by calling 800-369-2229.

Family Support Subsidy Program

The Family Support Subsidy Program consists of a monthly cash payment made to families who have a child with a disability. The subsidy is available to help keep families together by defraying some of the additional costs of caring for a child with disabilities at home. This program has eligibility requirements based on the child's age, disability, residency, and the net taxable income of the family. Since funding is limited, a statewide waiting list has been set up for families who apply and are determined eligible for the program.

For an application and additional information:

Marian Kresse, Iowa Department of Human Services
Hoover State Office Building, 5th Floor, Des Moines, IA 50319
Phone: 515-281-4522 Email: mkresse@dhs.state.ia.us

Home and Community Based Services Program (HCBS)

HCBS is a waiver to Iowa's Medicaid program. Services are provided to assist a person who would otherwise require care in a medical institution to remain in their own home or community. The HCBS program has separate Medicaid waivers that include Mental Retardation, Mental Health, Brain Injury, Ill and Handicapped, and AIDS/HIV. For additional information on Medicaid Waivers contact DHS at 515-281-5233 or by e-mail: ssstairs@dhs.state.ia.us. Website: www.ime.state.ia.us

Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA)

(IFAPA provides support, resources, and referrals to foster and adoptive parents including:

- Support groups
- Respite services
- Training opportunities
- Specialized staff
- Resources

Address: 6864 N.E. 14th Street, Suite 5, Ankeny, IA 50023

Phone number: Des Moines area: 515-289-4567

Toll free: 800-277-8145

Website: www.ifapa.org

Adoption Subsidy Maintenance Rates

The child's special needs and level of care in foster care determine the maximum subsidy rate the child is eligible to receive. Subsidy maintenance payments are based on daily rates, and payments are issued at the beginning of each month.

A child with physical, mental, or emotional problems may qualify for an additional daily stipend. If a child was in group care prior to adoptive placement, the maximum daily subsidy rate the child is eligible for is the rate the child would have received in a foster family placement.

At the time of placement, if the adoptive family does not believe their resources and this level of care address the needs of the child, the family may request a policy exception for a higher rate of payment. The DHS Director will consider policy exceptions in cases of extreme need. Consideration will be given to the needs of the child, the exceptional circumstances that would justify an exception in otherwise similar circumstances, and whether other resources have been exhausted.

The Iowa Legislature may approve a yearly cost of living adjustment to the maintenance rates based on availability of state funds. Families may be notified when a cost of living adjustment is approved. In some cases, DHS will make the change automatically. A cost of living adjustment was approved for state fiscal year 2006, which began July 1, 2005.

Iowa DHS currently has three rate levels for special needs adoption subsidy:

- The Basic Maintenance daily rate is the maximum rate available to a child with special needs. This rate is based on the child's age.
- The Basic Maintenance daily rate plus Special Care Allowance of \$5.00 per day is the maximum rate available for additional expenses associated with the special needs of the child.
- The Basic Maintenance daily rate plus the "difficulty of care" Special Care Allowance of \$15.00 per day is the maximum rate for a child when the child requires treatment level care.

To verify current subsidy maintenance rates contact the local DHS office. Rates may also be found on the DHS website (www.dhs.state.ia.us) or the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association website (www.ifapa.org).

Medical Assistance

A child with special needs is eligible to receive Medicaid (Title XIX) coverage. Medicaid is designed to cover most of the child's medical, dental, pharmacy, hospitalization, psychiatric, and special medical services. A

current medical card will be provided monthly for the child. Medicaid requires prior authorization for some services, and Medicaid does not cover all services. The adoptive family should inform the provider that the child carries Medicaid and verify that services are covered for Medicaid recipients before services are rendered. The provider will need to obtain the approval for services through Medicaid.

If the adoptive parents have private health insurance and the child is eligible, the family should place the child on the private insurance plan. The private insurance company would provide primary coverage for the child. Medicaid would provide secondary coverage for the child. If there is an additional cost to add the child to the private health insurance plan, the family can negotiate this cost as a special services subsidy in the Adoption Subsidy Agreement.

Special Services Subsidy

Special services subsidy eligibility is based on the needs of the child and the availability of funds. The adoptive family and DHS adoption worker must negotiate the child's need for special services subsidy prior to adoption finalization. The adoptive family may be asked to document the additional expenses they anticipate as a result of the child's special needs. The needs of the child and required special services must be documented on the Application for Subsidy and the Adoption Subsidy Agreement.

Special services may include:

- Outpatient counseling and therapy services. Reimbursement may be made for a non-Medicaid provider at the Medicaid rate only with approval from the Adoption Program Manager when one of the following applies:
 - Services are not available from a Medicaid provider within a reasonable distance from the family.
 - The child and family were already receiving therapy or counseling from a non-Medicaid provider, and it would not be in the best interest of the child to disrupt the service.
 - Available Medicaid providers lack experience in working with foster, adoptive, or blended families.
- The additional cost to add the child to the family's health insurance plan.
- Medical services not covered by the Medicaid program shall be limited to the additional cost to include the child in the family's health insurance coverage plan. (An adoption subsidy payment shall not supple-

Adoption Resources

Area Education Agency

The Area Education Agency (AEA) has many resources and programs for children with special needs. The adoptive family may contact their local school district to request more information. The AEA website includes a map with contact information for the AEA offices:

www.state.ia.us/educate/aea/map

Children-At-Home Program

The Children-At-Home program is a pilot project funded by DHS to assist families in securing services and supports necessary to help their child with a developmental disability remain living in the family home. Financial assistance is available to obtain services and supports which are not met by other programs. The family's net taxable income must be less than \$60,000. This program is piloted in the following Iowa counties using local agencies: Clinton / Jackson, Johnson, Dubuque, Black Hawk, Floyd / Mitchell / Chickasaw, Mills / Montgomery / Cass, Wapello / Mahaska, and Story. For additional information:

Marion Kresse, Iowa Department of Human Services

Hoover State Office Building, 5th floor, Des Moines, IA 50319

Phone number: 515-281-4522 Email: mkresse@dhs.state.ia.us

Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC)

CMHC are available throughout Iowa and may be accredited to provide any of the following services: evaluation, outpatient, day treatment, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient treatment, emergency treatment, psychiatric rehabilitation, and supportive community living. Families may obtain a list of accredited CMHC by calling 515-242-5994.

Department of Human Services

When the adoptive family has questions or concerns, they may contact the DHS adoption worker who finalized the adoption or DHS staff in the county or area office. The DHS adoption worker can answer questions about the programs and services available to address the needs of the child. He or she can also assist if a referral for services is needed. A list of DHS county offices is included at the end of this booklet.

Early Access

Early Access is a program for infants and toddlers under the age of three who have a condition or disability that is known to have a high probability of later delays without early intervention services. It is also available for children who already have a 25% delay in one or more areas of growth

Adoption Subsidy and Supplemental Security Income

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a monthly payment made to children and adults who have serious disabilities. To be eligible for SSI, the child must have a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that results in severe functional limitations for a substantial period of time. After adoption, SSI eligibility is based on both the income and resources of the adoptive parents and the child's disabilities.

An adoptive parent can apply for SSI benefits for their child through the local Social Security Administration (SSA) office. The local SSA office will arrange an interview to discuss the child's circumstances. SSA sends the completed application to the Disability Determination Service (DDS) to determine if the child is disabled as defined under the law.

If a child is eligible to receive SSI benefits, the child may receive benefits from SSI and adoption subsidy concurrently.

The adoptive parents may choose to decline adoption subsidy and choose to receive only SSI for the child. If an adoptive family chooses this option, it is important to negotiate an Adoptive Subsidy Agreement for Medicaid or special services and verify that the child will be eligible for subsidy benefits in the future.

For additional information or an SSI application, contact the local Social Security Administration.

ment the Medicaid payment rate to a Medicaid or non-Medicaid provider).

- Medical transportation not covered by Medicaid and the state rate for lodging and meals, if necessary, when the child receives specialized care, and the child and parent are required to stay overnight as part of the treatment plan.
- Supplies and equipment as required by the special needs of the child and unavailable through other resources.
- If house modification expenses paid through DHS were authorized to accommodate the special needs of the child and the family sells the house, the family shall repay DHS the equity amount attributable to the increase in the value of the home.
- Attorney fees and court costs necessary to finalize the adoption up to \$500 per child.
- Five days respite care per year per child at the rate of \$15 per day (funded by a contract with the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association).
- A one-time payment of \$500 per child may be authorized when a sibling group of three or more is placed together.
- Reimbursement up to \$2000 may be authorized to offset the expenses for transportation or lodging related to the pre-placement visits of Iowa children.
- Funeral expenses in the amount allowed for a foster child (\$650).
- Reimbursement for nonrecurring expenses (attorney fees, court filing fees and other court costs related to adoption finalization) for children with special needs entering the United States to be adopted is limited to \$500.

NOTE: The adoptive family's health insurance, Medicaid, or any service available free of charge must be utilized prior to the expenditure of subsidy funds.

The DHS adoption worker will complete a request for approval for special services of \$500 or more and submit it to the DHS Adoption Program Manager. The DHS adoption worker issues special services payments when he or she receives approval as specified in the Adoption Subsidy Agreement (Form 470-0774). The adoptive parents shall use this payment to pay the provider. If adoptive parents do not pay a provider as agreed, the adoptive parents may be subject to legal action initiated by the provider.

DHS requires prior approval by the DHS Adoption Program Manager for single special services and ongoing special services that cost \$500 or more. A condition of the Adoption Subsidy Agreement is that every fiscal year the adoptive family must request DHS approval for continuation of any special services of \$500 or more. These requests are processed through the DHS adoption worker. The DHS adoption worker will submit the request for special services to the DHS Adoption Program Manager.

The subsidy program does not provide reimbursement for residential treatment services. If a child resides in Iowa, residential treatment services must be obtained through the foster care system. If an Iowa adopted child resides in another state, the adoptive family must access residential treatment services through the family's state of residence.

CHILD CARE: Beginning July 1, 2004, child care for children with special needs is available to eligible families through the DHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCA). The amount of the adoption subsidy payment is excluded from consideration in determining a family's eligibility for CCA.

Families who finalized adoptions or entered into a presubsidy or subsidy agreement with DHS that included child care services prior to July 1, 2004, are "grandfathered in." This means that the family will be exempt from the CCA eligibility guidelines and will continue to receive child care reimbursement through the adoption subsidy program. The maximum child care rate is limited to the maximum rate allowed for the child's age and type of care under CCA guidelines.

If a family who entered into a presubsidy or subsidy agreement prior to July 1, 2004, believes the maximum rate for child care is not sufficient, the family may request a policy exception. The DHS Director will consider policy exceptions in cases of extreme need. Consideration will be given to the needs of the child, the exceptional circumstances that would justify an exception in otherwise similar circumstances, and whether other resources have been exhausted.

For families that finalize an adoption after July 1, 2004, policy exceptions may not be granted regarding the child care rules or payment of additional attorney fees over \$500. These rule changes are established in Iowa state law, and DHS does not have the authority to make exceptions to provisions set in state law.

NOTE: For additional information and clarification, contact the local DHS adoption office.

Moving Out of State

When a family moves out of Iowa, the child's maintenance and special services subsidy will continue to be paid by Iowa. Iowa or the new state of residence will provide medical services.

Iowa is a member of the Interstate Compact Agreement of Medical Assistance (ICAMA). The purpose of ICAMA is to assist families who have adopted a child with special needs to obtain medical assistance when they move from one state to another. Families who adopt a child from Iowa DHS must notify the Iowa DHS adoption worker of their move. The Iowa DHS adoption worker will complete the ICAMA referral and forward it on to the state where the family will reside. The ICAMA referral notifies that state of the child's eligibility for medical coverage.

When the ICAMA referral is received, a worker in the new state should contact the adoptive family to determine the child's eligibility for medical coverage. This worker will also be a contact to identify additional resources in the community.

If the child is Title IV-E (federal assistance program) eligible, the child should receive Medicaid coverage in the new state. The child will receive the services that the Medicaid program in the new state provides. These services may be different than those provided by the Medicaid program in Iowa. If the child is non-IV-E eligible, the child will continue to receive Medicaid through Iowa. If the new state does not accept Iowa Medicaid, the family will need to discuss with the Iowa DHS worker how they can be reimbursed for medical services not provided by private insurance.

If a family moves out of Iowa with an adopted child, and the child is in need of treatment services, the family will need to verify the availability of funds and services in the state where they reside.

Personal Leave from Work for Adoption

Adoptive families may wish to take a leave of absence from work for the adoption of a child. The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act allows individuals to take up to twelve weeks off, unpaid with benefits, without jeopardizing employment when a child is adopted. The leave is not exclusively an adoption benefit since it is available to anyone who works for a company with fifty or more employees. Adoptive parents must verify with their employer the benefits and specific programs available.

Agreement to Future Adoption Subsidy

The adoptive family may negotiate an Agreement to Future Adoption Subsidy (Form: 470-0762) with DHS prior to finalization in the following situations:

- The child is eligible for subsidy, but the child or family does not currently need assistance.
- The child is “at risk” of being determined a child with special needs by a physician, a qualified mental retardation specialist, or a qualified mental health professional. This includes a written qualifying statement from a specified professional to support the at-risk determination.

If the child meets the special needs criteria in the future, the adoptive family may contact the local DHS office and negotiate an Adoption Subsidy Agreement.

In the Agreement to Future Adoption Subsidy, the adoptive family may request reimbursement up to \$500 for attorney fees and court costs for the adoption finalization.

Exception to Adoption Subsidy Policy

If the child has documented needs that far exceed the scope of the subsidy program, the adoptive parents may contact the DHS adoption worker for additional assistance in identifying available community resources.

In some rare circumstances, it may be necessary to request a Director's Exception to pay for additional services through the adoption subsidy program. The adoptive family must be able to document why the additional funds are needed and what they will be used for. The DHS Director will consider exceptions to adoption subsidy policy on a case-by-case basis when funds are available. Consideration will be given to the extreme needs of the child, the exceptional circumstances that would justify an exception in otherwise similar circumstances, and whether other resources have been exhausted. The DHS Director will consider the additional services needed by the child that exceed the maintenance payment, the family's personal resources, Title XIX, special services subsidy, and community resources.

For families that finalize an adoption after July 1, 2004, policy exceptions may not be granted regarding the child care rules or additional attorney fees over \$500. These rule changes are established in Iowa law, and DHS does not have the authority to make exceptions to provision set in state law.

NOTE: Procedures for submitting an exception request can be found at: <http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/Exceptions.asp>. The local DHS service area office can also be contacted for assistance.

Finalization of the Adoption

A child must reside in an adoptive home at least 180 days prior to finalization of the adoption. In a foster parent adoption, the time in the home as a foster child could count toward the 180 day requirement.

The Agreement of Placement for Adoption (Form 470-0716), Application for Subsidy (Form 470-0744), and Adoption Subsidy Agreement (Form 470-0749) should be completed and signed by all parties prior to the adoptive placement. When the child is legally free for adoption, the DHS adoption worker will initiate and complete the following documents to prepare for adoption finalization:

- **Adoptive Home Study.** The Adoptive Home Study should be updated annually. If necessary, it will be updated by DHS prior to the adoptive placement.
- **Consent to Adoption (Form 470-0775).** The Consent to Adoption can be issued by DHS when the child is legally free for adoption and the family is prepared to finalize the adoption. The Consent to Adoption grants permission for the family to adopt the child. The DHS guardian or representative will review and sign the Consent to Adoption and have it notarized.
- **Adoptive Placement Supervisory Report or Report to the Court (Form 470-0773).** This report details the child's current situation, the family's situation, adjustments, and recommendations.
- **Final Report.** This report will verify the facts of the case, the child's needs, the family's ability to meet those needs, and the worker's recommendation for adoption. Attached to this report will be the Supervisory Report(s), Child Study, and the Adoption Subsidy Agreement.

NOTE: The adoptive family should request copies of all the adoption finalization documents.

The DHS adoption worker will forward the adoption documents to the adoptive family's attorney. The attorney will initiate and complete the following:

- Draft and file the Adoption Petition and Adoption Decree (including all required documents and attachments).
- Set the final hearing date.
- Verify any name changes.
- Apply for a new birth certificate for the child.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Issues

Filing Your Taxes

Beginning in tax year 2005, the definition of a qualifying child to claim a child as a dependent has changed. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has additional information regarding the four tests that must be met for dependency. These new rules may affect your ability to claim the child as a dependent on your tax return. IRS publication 501: [Exemptions, Standard Deduction, Filing Information](#), and IRS publication 503: [Child and Dependent Care Expenses](#) has additional information.

Adoption Tax Credit

The federal government enacted a flat tax credit of approximately \$10,000 for families who adopt a child in 2003 or later. The tax credit does not require qualifying expenses for the adoption of a child with special needs. The credit can be applied against federal tax liability over the five-year period following the adoption. The tax credit has been approved to continue until December 31, 2010, through the Sunset Provision Section 901 of Public Law 107-16. IRS publication: [Tax Benefits for Adoption](#) has additional information.

Additional Tax Information

For additional tax information, contact the IRS or a tax professional. The IRS can be reached at 1-800-829-1040 or www.irs.gov. To order forms or publications, visit www.irs.gov/formspubs.

IFAPA does not claim to be an expert on adoption tax law. Families should verify this information with the IRS or a tax professional.

tion and eligibility information. DHS will conduct an administrative review of the facts to determine if the child is eligible for adoption subsidy. Eligibility will be effective when the Application for Subsidy (Form 470-0744) and the Adoption Subsidy Agreement (Form 470-0749) is completed and signed by all parties.

Any individual who has applied for or is receiving adoption assistance is entitled to appeal any decision made by DHS concerning adoption assistance that he or she considers adverse or unfair. To appeal a DHS decision, the family must make a request in writing for a Fair Hearing and Review within thirty days of receiving the decision. A request is sent to:

**Department of Human Services
Appeal Section, Hoover Bldg 5th Floor
1305 East Walnut
Des Moines, IA 50319**

Services Available After a Child Turns 18

When a child turns 17½, DHS will complete a subsidy review to document a child's special needs status and eligibility for assistance after age 18. If the child has a diagnosed mental or physical disability, he or she may be eligible for DHS adoption assistance after turning 18 and until age 21. This disability must be diagnosed by a physician, a qualified mental health professional, or mental retardation professional. The diagnosis must be current within one year of the child's 18th birthday.

Termination of Adoption Subsidy Agreements

Adoption subsidy benefits will terminate when any of the following occur:

- The adoptive child no longer meets the definition of child in DHS Administrative rule 441-201.1(600).
- The child marries.
- The adoptive parents are no longer using the maintenance payment to support the child.
- Death of the child or the parents of the child (one parent in a single parent adoption and both in a two-parent adoption).
- Upon conclusion of the terms of the agreement.
- Upon request of the adoptive parents.
- The family fails to participate in the renewal process.

Reinstatement of subsidy will be made if the adoptive family: begins to use the maintenance payment to support the child, requests the subsidy be reinstated, or participates in the renewal process.

The attorney will send the adoptive parents and DHS a bill for services. If attorney fees were negotiated in the Adoption Subsidy Agreement or the Future Adoption Subsidy Agreement, DHS will issue a payment to the adoptive parents for these services. It is the family's responsibility to pay the attorney with these funds. DHS will reimburse attorney fees and court costs for the adoption finalization up to \$500 per child.

It is important for adoptive families to retain copies of the adoption reports and forms. These documents should be stored in a safe place that is accessible for personal review when needed. The adoption documents verify the child's eligibility for assistance. If they are not available, this may impact the child's ability to access assistance in the future.

See the ADOPTION FORMS section in the appendix, page 52, for a list of forms used in the Iowa adoption process.

Review/Renegotiation of Iowa Adoption Subsidy

DHS does not routinely review adoption subsidy agreements. The adoptive family must notify DHS immediately to request a review of the Adoption Subsidy Agreement if there is a change in the child's circumstances that would affect the child's subsidy eligibility.

If a child who receives an adoption subsidy maintenance payment becomes eligible for unearned income, the adoptive family must notify the DHS adoption worker. Unearned income includes, but is not limited to: veteran benefits, railroad compensation, the family's insurance, and trust funds.

Change in Circumstance of the Child's Placement

A change in circumstances would include:

- A change in placement of the child
- The child ages into a higher rate of maintenance payment
- The child becomes eligible for unearned income
- The child turns 18
- The child dies

If a child adopted through DHS is placed into an out-of-home setting, the adoptive family must contact the DHS adoption worker immediately to determine if the adoption subsidy agreement should be renegotiated.

The adoptive family should consider negotiating a reduced subsidy if the child no longer resides in the home. This subsidy maintenance payment can be used for supplies and expenses for the child while in care, for transportation expenses to visit the child, and to provide for the basic needs of the child.

If a child is placed in a Psychiatric Medical Institute for Children (PMIC), the adoptive family should consider reducing the monthly maintenance subsidy payment to no more than a \$30 stipend to be used for the child's needs while the child resides in the facility. This \$30 stipend should be paid to the facility. If the family continues to receive a full subsidy maintenance payment while the child is in a PMIC placement, the maintenance subsidy payment will be considered as the child's unearned income. The adoptive family will be assessed that amount as the child's participation fee in the PMIC program. A PMIC is a Medicaid funded facility and is subject to Medicaid rules.

The Iowa adoption subsidy program does not provide residential treatment services. For a child living in Iowa, residential treatment services must be accessed through the foster care system. If a child adopted from Iowa resides in another state, the family must access residential treatment services through the family's state of residence.

Requesting a Modification of Special Services

If the child's circumstances change, the adoptive parents may request a review of the child's eligibility for special services as negotiated in the Adoption Subsidy Agreement. The adoptive family will need to contact the DHS adoption worker and provide the documentation that verifies the additional needs. The DHS adoption worker will determine if any special services are available to the child.

Special service subsidies of \$500 or more are reviewed by DHS each fiscal year. Special service subsidy eligibility is based on the needs of the child and the availability of funds.

Requesting Subsidy After Adoption Finalization

At the time of the adoption, all families adopting children from Iowa DHS should be informed of benefits available to children with special needs. If the adoptive family was not informed of subsidy benefits, they may request a review of the child's situation and apply for benefits. Federal policy states there are six allegations that constitute grounds for a fair hearing (previously known as extenuating circumstances):

- Relevant facts regarding the child were known by the state agency or child-placing agency and not presented to the adoptive parents prior to finalization of the adoption.
- Denial of assistance based on a means test. (Eligibility is determined by the child's needs, not the family's income.)
- The adoptive family disagrees with the determination by DHS that the child is ineligible for adoption assistance.
- Failure by DHS to advise potential parents about the availability of adoption assistance for children in the state foster care system.
- Decrease in the amount of adoption assistance without the concurrence of the adoptive parents.
- Denial of a request for change in payment level due to a change in the adoptive parents' circumstances.

The adoptive parents may contact the DHS service area office for applica-