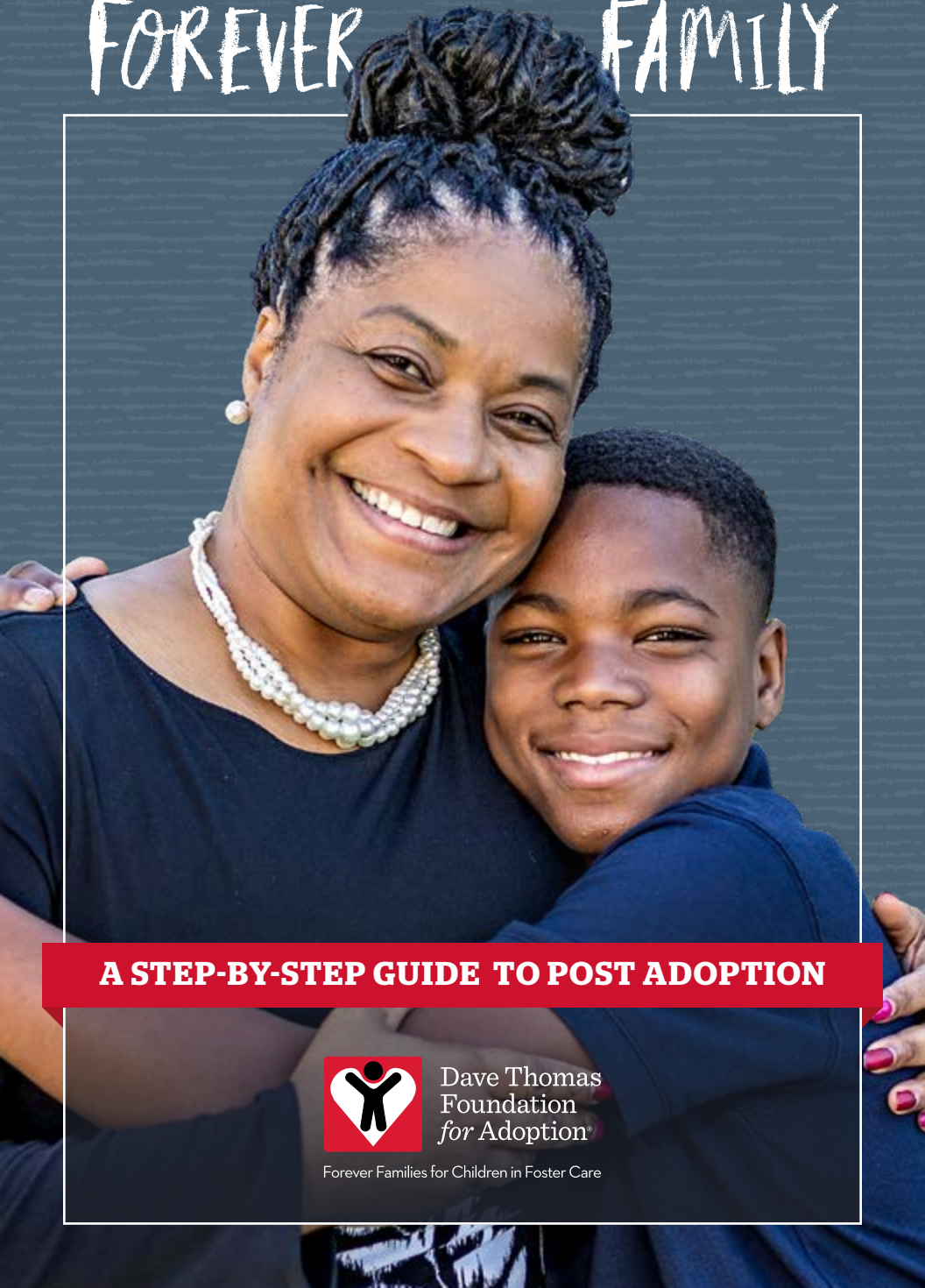


Strengthen your
FOREVER FAMILY



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO POST ADOPTION



Dave Thomas
Foundation
for Adoption[®]

Forever Families for Children in Foster Care

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Every family who adopts deserves the chance to succeed.

Adopting a child can be the most rewarding and joyful event of your life. It can also bring a unique set of challenges. Children who are adopted – regardless of their age at adoption or the type of adoption – may need help working through behavioral, emotional or developmental issues at different stages in their lives.

As an adoptive parent, myriad resources are available to help give your child and family the opportunity to thrive, including education, counseling and advocacy. This guide offers an overview of post-adoption resources and how to access them.

Rest assured that challenges are a normal part of the adoption process. **With help and support, every child can be happy and healthy in a permanent, loving home.**

GETTING READY

Take steps to prepare for your child even before the adoption is finalized.

Get informed.

- Find out as much as possible about your child's history and physical, mental and behavioral health. The law allows for full disclosure of information to the adoptive parent(s). Ask your pediatrician or family physician to review your child's medical records to help you prepare for your child's needs. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers a directory of physicians with experience treating adopted children at **healthychildren.org**.
- Explore mental health services to help address issues like trauma, attachment, loss and grief, and for some children, the effects of abuse or neglect. Visit **nctsn.org** for free resources about child traumatic stress.
- Talk with your insurance company about how and when you can add your adopted child to your plan. Find out what their Medicaid coverage will be.
- Explore post-permanency resources for children with special needs at **childwelfare.gov**.
- Ask your child's school for an evaluation and assessment of your child's learning needs, including if they should have an individualized educational plan (IEP). U.S. federal law requires the public education system to accommodate all children and their individual needs.
- Research options for child care, including respite care available to foster, kinship and adoptive families in need of temporary support. Learn more about respite care services at **childwelfare.gov**.

Get connected.

- Engage with adoptive parents in your community or in groups online for additional resources and support. This can be especially valuable for families of color, LGBTQ+ parents and children and others who have been historically oppressed. Ask your adoption agency or adoption professional for recommendations.
- Follow adoption-related blogs, podcasts, social media accounts, newsletters and other channels for helpful information.

Get financial support.

- Negotiate an adoption subsidy. If you are adopting a child with special needs from a public or private agency, you may receive federal or state benefits. **You must negotiate the subsidy before the adoption is finalized.**
- Secure financial aid for college. If your child was adopted from foster care in the U.S. after their 13th birthday, they can complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form as an independent student so that parental income will not be a factor in eligibility for assistance (Public Law 110-84). Scholarships are also available. Visit **childwelfare.gov** and enter “scholarships” in the search box.
- Ask your employer if they offer adoption benefits, such as financial reimbursement or paid leave. The Foundation provides a free Adoption-Friendly Workplace™ toolkit for employers as well as a sample adoption benefits proposal for employees. Learn more at **davethomasfoundation.org/afw**.
- Contact your tax advisor about state and federal adoption tax credits and exclusions.

Evaluate the resources you may need and gather a list of providers. By being proactive, you’ll be prepared to seek help when you need it.



It is critical for adoptive families to understand that the process does not end at finalization. Finding and using post-adoption resources can allow you to share the joys and address the challenges of adoption. We encourage you to take advantage of every resource at your disposal and connect, when possible, with other adoptive families.”

RITA L. SORONEN

President & CEO, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption



Every family deserves the support and resources that are critical for them to remain strong and successful together. It is heartbreaking to hear that without post-adoption services, families are at risk of dissolving. Even one failed adoption is one too many; all children deserve to know the comfort of a loving and permanent home. We at Jockey® and Jockey Being Family® were proud to be able to support the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption through the creation of this resource for adoptive families.”

DEBRA S. WALLER

Founder, Jockey Being Family
Chairman & CEO, Jockey International, Inc.

FINDING RESOURCES

Referrals from other parents who have adopted and local support groups are often the most valuable source for reliable information.

Here are a few ways to connect:

- Ask your adoption agency, adoption professional or medical provider for recommendations.
- Search national and regional post-adoption provider listings. See the Recommended Resources section for the most comprehensive list.
- Ask your employer about resources for employees who adopt, such as workplace support groups or online networks for adoptive parents. Many provide adoption support through their employee assistance program (EAP).

Choose professionals who understand the needs of adopted children and their families.

Ask these questions of licensed counselors and therapists before working with them:

- Do you have experience with foster and adoptive families?
If so, how much?
- How often do you work with them?
- What adoption-related training have you received?
- Can you connect me with one or two families willing to give a reference?
- Do you offer therapy for the family and the child?
- Will you accept payments from my insurance provider?





GROWING SUPPORT

If you are unable to find resources to support your family and child following adoption, remember that every existing resource started with just one person who cared.

Advocate for your child:

- Organize a parent support group. Learn more at nacac.org.
- Share resources with your local mental health care professionals, educators and medical providers to assist in treating adoptees and their families. Visit adoptionssupport.org to find adoption-competent training and reading materials.
- Make the case to your employer about the value of supporting employees who adopt. Download the Foundation's Adoption-Friendly Workplace™ toolkit with helpful resources at davethomasfoundation.org/afw.
- Contact your federal and state legislators to advocate for the needs of adopted children and their families.



SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Adoption is a significant and emotional event for a child. Experiencing feelings of loss and developmental learning delays are all common. Adjusting to a new environment or culture is often difficult as well.

Understand that it's normal to have challenges along the way, even years after the adoption. Life events and natural developmental stages can sometimes trigger new issues for a child who is adopted.

Most importantly, adopted children need the permanence of a forever family and your unconditional love.



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Adoption Learning Partners

Provides a variety of low-cost, online education options for parents and professionals. **adoptionlearningpartners.org**

Adoptions Together

Offers online education for parents, educators and adoption professionals. **adoptionstogether.org**

AdoptUSKids

Offers a variety of resources, services and tools for families and child welfare professionals. **adoptuskids.org**

American Academy of Pediatrics

Offers a directory of physicians experienced in treating adopted children as well as advice for parents and practitioners. **healthychildren.org**

ARCH National Respite Network

Provides listings of respite care providers by state and a searchable database as a program of the Chapel Hill Training-Outreach Project. **archrespite.org**

Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.)

Offers information about adoption-competent training and recommended reading for children, parents, adoption professionals and educators. **adoptionssupport.org**

Colage

Unites youth with LGBTQ+ parents or caregivers through peer support spaces, resources and 1:1 support. **colage.org**

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Offers a variety of free resources to support individuals and families with every step of the adoption journey. **davethomasfoundation.org**

Family Equality

Offers support for LGBTQ+ parents and prospective parents, including peer support groups, digital resources on family building and family support. In addition, Family Equality offers LGBTQ+ competency training for family-building professionals. **familyequality.org**

Jockey Being Family Foundation

Strengthens adoptive families through post-adoption services by funding national and local nonprofit organizations. **jockeybeingfamily.com**

North American Council on Adoptable Children

Provides information on adoption subsidies, advice on how to start a parent support group, answers to adoptive parents' frequently asked questions and articles on parenting adopted children. **nacac.org**

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Offers education and resources to help children heal. **nctsn.org**

The Trevor Project

Offers support for LGBTQ+ youth. **thetrevorproject.org**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child Welfare Information Gateway

Lists adoption assistance by state, gives examples of model programs, highlights research findings on post-adoption services and provides links to publications for adoptive parents. **childwelfare.gov**

*Most states offer post-adoption resources to families.
Be sure to search online to find the resources that your state offers.*



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ABOUT THE DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION FOR ADOPTION

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is a national nonprofit public charity dedicated to finding permanent homes for the more than 140,000 children waiting in North America's foster care systems. Created by Wendy's® founder Dave Thomas, who was adopted, the Foundation implements evidence-based, results-driven national service programs, foster care adoption awareness campaigns and innovative grantmaking.

davethomasfoundation.org or call **1-800-ASK-DTFA**.



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