

# Strengthen your

# FOREVER FAMILY

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***A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO POST ADOPTION***



Dave Thomas  
Foundation  
for Adoption

Forever Families for Children in Foster Care



**JOCKEY**  
BEING FAMILY.

*Strengthening Adoptive Families*



# Every family who adopts deserves the chance to succeed.

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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 with behavioral, emotional, or developmental issues.

As an adoptive parent, there are many resources to help give your child and family the opportunity to thrive, including education, counseling, and advocacy. This guide offers an overview of the post-adoption resources you may need 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 to know your child.

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- 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 parents. 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 adoption-competent physicians at **healthychildren.org**.
- Talk with your insurance company about how and when you can add your adopted children to your plan. Find out what their medicaid coverage will be.
- If your child has special needs, contact the related national advocacy organization for resources and local referrals.
- Ask your child's school for an evaluation and assessment of your child's learning needs to see if he or she should have an individualized educational plan (IEP). U.S. federal law requires the public education system to accommodate all children, no matter what their needs.
- If your child is attending college and was adopted from U.S. foster care, apply for college financial aid and scholarships. If your child was adopted after his or her 13th birthday, he or she 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.

## Get connected.

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- Ask your adoption agency or adoption professional to connect you with other adoptive parents before finalization. Offer to sign a waiver to share your contact information with other adoptive families.
- Subscribe to adoption magazines, e-newsletters, or blogs.

## Get financial support.

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- Negotiate an adoption subsidy. If you are adopting an eligible child with special needs from a public or private agency, you can receive federal or state benefits. **You must negotiate the subsidy before the adoption is finalized.**
- Ask your employer if they offer adoption benefits, such as financial reimbursement or paid leave. If not, order our free toolkit to propose adoption benefits at **[davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.org)** or **1-800-ASK-DTFA**.
- Ask your tax advisor about state and federal adoption tax credits and exclusions.

## Identifying resources

**A range of resources exist to help support your new family. They include education, counseling, advocacy, and address challenges frequently shared by adoptive families. The services you need will depend on your child and your circumstances.**

### Here are a few of the most valuable:

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- Mental health services like counseling and therapy that focus on adoptees and their families specifically. They are particularly effective in addressing issues like trauma, attachment, loss and grief, and for some children, the effects of abuse or neglect.
- Parent support groups, especially those specific to the child's culture or special needs, which may meet in person or online.
- Specialized educational support for school-aged children.
- Respite child care.
- Financial assistance and scholarships.
- Camps for children, couples, and families.
- Workshops, seminars, and publications addressing post-adoption issues.
- Birth parent search services.

**Evaluate the resources you may need and put together a list of providers. By being proactive, you'll make sure you can find help right when you need it.**



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***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.”***

**RITAL. SORONEN**, President & CEO, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption



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*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® are proud to be able to support the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption through the creation of this resource for adoptive families.”*

**DEBRAS. WALLER**, Founder of Jockey Being Family, Chairman & CEO of Jockey International, Inc.

# Finding resources

**Many adoptive parents find referrals from other adoptive parents and local support groups to be their most valuable source for reliable information.**

## **Here are a few more places to find them:**

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- Ask your adoption agency for recommendations.
- Ask your medical professional for suggestions.
- Search national and regional post-adoption provider listings on the internet. See the Recommended Resources section of this publication for the most comprehensive online sites.
- Find out if your employer provides resources. This is usually handled by the human resources department. Some employers offer workplace support groups or online networks for adoptive parents. Many provide adoption support through their employee assistance program (EAP).

**When choosing professionals, it's important to make sure they understand the needs of adopted children and their families.**

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

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- 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 both the family and the child?
- Will you accept payments from my insurance provider?





## Creating resources

**If you are unable to find resources within your community, remember that every existing resource started with just one person who cared.**

### **You are the best advocate for your child:**

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- Organize a parent support group. Advice on organizing a parent support group is available at **[nacac.org](http://nacac.org)**.
- Suggest resources for your local mental health care professionals, educators and medical professionals so they can become proficient in treating adoptees and their families. Invite them to include adoption-training workshops in their professional development conferences. To provide or recommend adoption competent training and reading materials, visit **[adoptionssupport.org](http://adoptionssupport.org)**.

- Ask your employer to support adoptive families in the workplace. Order our free toolkit to propose adoption benefits, such as financial reimbursement and paid leave at [davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.org).
- Understand child traumatic stress. Find free resources at the National Child Traumatic Stress Network at [nctsn.org](http://nctsn.org).
- Contact your legislators to advocate for funding of resources in your area.

## Setting expectations

Of course, your experience will depend on the background and characteristics of your child and the circumstances of your adoption. Some common issues include attachment issues, feelings of loss, and developmental learning delays. The challenges of adjusting to a new environment or culture are often difficult as well.

Adoption is a significant and emotional event for the child. Other family members may also need help adjusting to the adoption. 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 the adopted child, usually concerns about their identity or feelings of abandonment by their family of origin.

**Most importantly, be wholly committed to your child and the adoption. Adopted children need the permanence of a forever family and your unconditional love.**



# Recommended resources

## Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Offers a variety of free resources, including a toolkit to propose and establish workplace adoption benefits, adoption awareness materials, and adoption attitudes research.

**800-ASK-DTFA (800-275-3832) / [davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.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. **800-394-3366 / [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov)**

## Adoption Learning Partners

Provides a wide variety of low-cost online education for parents and professionals. **800-566-3995 / [adoptionlearningpartners.org](http://adoptionlearningpartners.org)**

## Adoptions Together

Offers online education for parents, educators, and adoption professionals. **301-439-2900 / [adoptionstogether.org](http://adoptionstogether.org)**

## Adopt U.S. Kids

Offers a variety of resources, services, and tools to both families and child welfare professionals. **888-200-4005 / [adoptuskids.org](http://adoptuskids.org)**

## American Academy of Pediatrics

Offers a directory of adoption-competent physicians and advice for parents and practitioners. **800-433-9016 / [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)**

## **ARCH National Respite Network**

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

## **C. A. S. E.**

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

**301-476-8525 / adoptionssupport.org**

## **Jockey Being Family Foundation**

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Strengthening adoptive families through post-adoption services by funding national and local non-profit organizations. **jockeybeingfamily.com**

## **North American Council on Adoptable Children**

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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. **651-644-3036 / nacac.org**

## **National Child Traumatic Stress Network**

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





## **ABOUT THE DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION FOR ADOPTION**

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is a national nonprofit public charity dedicated exclusively 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. To learn more, visit:

[davethomasfoundation.org](http://davethomasfoundation.org) or call 1-800-ASK-DTFA.



@DaveThomasFoundationforAdoption



@DTFA

## **ABOUT JOCKEY BEING FAMILY**

Jockey Being Family® is Jockey International, Inc.'s corporate initiative dedicated to providing comfort to families touched by adoption. Jockey Being Family naturally reflects Jockey's values as a family-owned company and its dedication to outfitting individuals with the comfort and support they need to live their best lives. Recognizing the unmet need, Jockey® selected post-adoption services as an issue where Jockey Being Family could make a significant impact. Jockey believes that by strengthening adoptive families, we can ensure permanence for children and strengthen families in our communities. We believe that every child deserves to grow up with a loving family in a forever home. To learn more, visit:

[jockeybeingfamily.com](http://jockeybeingfamily.com) and [jockey.com](http://jockey.com).



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