



# Adoption Resource Exchange Fact Sheet

## Introduction

The Adoption Resource Exchange is run by the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services. This is not a resource for private or relative adoptions of children who are not in state custody. For that kind of resource, see our Adoption fact sheet by visiting [arlegalservices.org](http://arlegalservices.org).

## Requirements

Individuals seeking to adopt must be at least 21 years of age. There can be a maximum of 45 years' age difference between the adoptive parent and the adopted child. While you may be married (a minimum of two years), divorced (at least one year), or single, there can be exceptions, depending on the child's needs and family considerations.

### Other requirements include:

- having no illness or disability that interferes with your ability to be a parent
- having safe and adequate space in the home
- possessing enough income or resources to meet a child's needs
- completing pre-adoption training—the state Department of Human Services (DHS) provides this training for free
- being trained in CPR and First Aid
- completing an assessment called a “home study”

## Home Study

This is an evaluation of the new home life the child would enter. The DHS does not expect perfect families, but it does require a home to be suitable.

First, an adoption specialist will meet with household members individually and as a family. The specialist will visit your home. You will be asked about a range of issues: life experiences, relationships, lifestyles, parenting skills, expectations for children, support systems, problem-solving skills, adoption issues, communication skills, preferences for a child, and more.

You will need medical evaluations for all household members. You can choose your own doctor for this. The adoption specialist will also conduct a criminal background check on everyone in the household aged 18 or older and a child abuse and neglect check on everyone aged 14 or older. The DHS may be able to accept a “home study” conducted by a private adoption agency.

## Timeline

The home study usually takes four to six months, but it could take longer. After the home study is completed and approved, you will be available to be selected as an adoptive family. Matching with a child may take as little as a few months to a year. It will depend on your adoption preferences.

## Costs

The DHS does not charge a fee for adoption services, but you may have to pay medical examination costs for all the people living in your household. If required, you also must pay the cost of the federal criminal record check for each adult applicant. A DHS attorney will process most adoptions for you for free. If you cannot afford the court costs to finalize the adoption, you may qualify for some financial help after you have adopted a child.

## Getting Help to Raise the Child

You may qualify for a monthly adoption subsidy. The subsidy helps cover the child's monthly expenses, medical costs, psychological costs, and reimbursement for legal costs related to the adoption. Additionally, the federal government offers a tax credit for the first year of adoption. You may also receive reimbursement for expenses you paid related to the adoption.

### The DHS Adoption Services Unit

1-888-736-2820

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*This fact sheet is a collaboration of the Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc. These nonprofit organizations provide free legal assistance to eligible Arkansans who meet income, asset, and other guidelines. Legal assistance may also include advice and counsel, brief services, or full representation depending on the situation. For more information about civil legal aid in Arkansas, please visit [arlegalservices.org](http://arlegalservices.org). For information specific to Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc., visit [arlegalaid.org](http://arlegalaid.org). Apply for services online or by calling 1-800-9-LAW-AID (1-800-952-9243).*

*The information and statements of law in this fact sheet should not be considered legal advice. This fact sheet is provided as a broad guide to help you understand how certain legal matters are handled in general. Courts may interpret the law differently. Before you take action, talk to an attorney and follow his or her advice. Always do what the court tells you to do.*

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