

# Massachusetts

## Adoption Assistance- Who Do You Contact?

### State Contact information

<b>Adoption Assistance Specialist</b>	<b>ICAMA Compact Administrator or Contact</b>
<p>NAME : Leo Farley</p> <p>ADDRESS: Massachusetts Department of Social Services Central Office, 24 Farnsworth Street Boston, Massachusetts 02110</p> <p>EMAIL: <a href="mailto:Leo.Farley@state.ma.us">Leo.Farley@state.ma.us</a></p> <p>TELEPHONE: 617.748.2267</p>	<p>NAME : Leo Farley</p> <p>ADDRESS: Massachusetts Department of Social Services Central Office, 24 Farnsworth Street Boston, Massachusetts 02110</p> <p>EMAIL: <a href="mailto:Leo.Farley@state.ma.us">Leo.Farley@state.ma.us</a></p> <p>TELEPHONE: 617.748.2267</p>
<b>Adoption program manager or Contact</b>	<b>ICPC Compact Administrator or Contact</b>
<p>NAME: Mary Gambon</p> <p>ADDRESS: Massachusetts Department of Social Services Central Office, 24 Farnsworth Street Boston, Massachusetts 02110</p> <p>EMAIL: <a href="mailto:Mary.Gambon@state.ma.us">Mary.Gambon@state.ma.us</a></p> <p>TELEPHONE: 617.748.2248</p>	<p>NAME: Beryl Domingo (acting)</p> <p>ADDRESS: Massachusetts Department of Social Services Central Office, 24 Farnsworth Street Boston, Massachusetts 02110</p> <p>EMAIL: <a href="mailto:Beryl.Domingo@state.ma.us">Beryl.Domingo@state.ma.us</a></p> <p>TELEPHONE: 617.748.2345</p>
<b>Post Adoption Services Contact</b>	<b>Medical Assistance Specialist</b>
<p>NAME: Sharon Silvia, Director Adoption Journeys in Massachusetts</p> <p>ADDRESS: New Bedford Child and Family Services 66 Troy Street Fall River, Massachusetts 02720</p> <p>E-Mail: <a href="mailto:sharonnb@mindspring.com">sharonnb@mindspring.com</a></p> <p>TELEPHONE: 508.676.5708 or 800.972.2734</p>	<p>NAME: Mary Lutz</p> <p>ADDRESS: Massachusetts Department of Social Services Central Office, 24 Farnsworth Street Boston, Massachusetts 02110</p> <p>E-MAIL: <a href="mailto:Mary.Lutz@state.ma.us">Mary.Lutz@state.ma.us</a></p> <p>TELEPHONE: 617.748.2358</p>

## **Adoption Assistance- Who is Eligible?**

**A good place to start.** Public adoption in Massachusetts is administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS adoption link: [www.state.ma.us/dss/Adoption/AD\\_Adopting.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dss/Adoption/AD_Adopting.htm). Or phone 800.KIDS.508 (800.543.7508).

### **1. What specific factors or conditions does your state consider to determine that a child cannot be placed with adoptive parents without providing financial assistance? (*"What is your state definition of special needs?"*)**

A child with special needs is defined as a child that has at least one of the following needs or circumstances that may be a barrier to placement or adoption without financial assistance:

- A member of an ethnic or cultural minority for whom reasonable, but unsuccessful, efforts to place the child in a preadoptive home were made and documented
- A member of a sibling group of three or more to be adopted together
- A member of a sibling group of two to be adopted together and one of the children is eight years of age or older
- One or more special needs as a result of a mental, emotional, or physical impairment, behavioral disorder, or medical condition that has been diagnosed by a licensed professional who is qualified to make the diagnosis
- A birth and/or family history which places the child at risk of having special needs but, due to the child's age, a reasonable diagnosis cannot be made

Note: Children must be legally free for adoption and placed in a pre-adoptive home to be eligible for adoption assistance.

### **2. What are the eligibility criteria for your state-funded adoption assistance program?**

In order to be eligible for state-funded adoption assistance a child must be a special needs child as defined above, legally free for adoption, in the custody of the Department, and the Department must sponsor the adoption. State funded adoption assistance considers the resources of the family in determining the amount of assistance.

### **3. What is the maximum amount a family may receive in non-recurring adoption expenses from your state? Adoptive parents can receive reimbursement of certain approved, "one-time" adoption expenses incurred in the process of finalizing a special needs adoption.**

\$400.00 per child

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

Massachusetts offers deferred adoption assistance. Massachusetts requires that an adoption assistance application be submitted for every child being adopted through the Department of Social Services. In reviewing the application, the Subsidy Unit may determine that a deferred subsidy is the appropriate benefit

given the circumstances of the child. The adoptive family is notified of the Subsidy Units determination and if the child is eligible for the federal adoption assistance program (Title IV-E), DSS and the parents will negotiate the terms of the adoption assistance agreement. State funded adoption assistance terms are set by DSS and are not open to negotiation.

## **5. When may adoption assistance payments and benefits begin in your state?**

Adoption assistance payments and benefits may begin in Massachusetts at adoption finalization.

## **6. How are changes made to the adoption assistance agreement in your state?**

- a. When can a parent request a change in the adoption assistance agreement?
- b. How does a parent request a change in the adoption assistance agreement?
- c. What if a parent does not receive the change they request in the adoption assistance agreement?

Adoptive parents may request a change in the adoption assistance agreement at any time. Requests must be made in writing to the Subsidy Manager and supported by documentation of a significant change in the child's special need. The significant change must be based on the current needs of the child and documented by a professional qualified to make the diagnosis. If the change in the special need would have resulted in a different rate if the child were in a home based foster care situation, the adoption assistance payment may be increased. The Subsidy Manager will review the request and the documentation provided to support it. The family will be provided with a written decision within a reasonable period of time. The Department of Social Services must provide written notice prior to any proposed change in the adoption assistance agreement, unless there is reason to believe that the family is no longer providing any support for the child.

## **Adoption Assistance- Post Adoption Services**

### **7. What types of post adoption services are available in your state and how do I find out more about them?**

Post adoption services in Massachusetts are funded by the Department of Social Services and are provided through Adoption Journeys in Massachusetts, formerly known as Adoption Crossroads. Services are available to all adopted children in Massachusetts and include the following:

1. Information and referral (24 hr.)
2. Adoption competency training
3. Support groups, parent liaisons
4. Adoption counseling
5. Respite
6. Regional Response teams (short-term crisis support)

Contact Adoption Journeys in Massachusetts, phone: 800.972.2734. Massachusetts also provides a tuition waiver for Massachusetts's state colleges, universities, and community colleges to children up to twenty-five years of age who were adopted from DSS by residents of Massachusetts.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker or post adoption services specialist for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

## **Adoption Assistance- Medical assistance**

### **8. What mental health services are provided by your state?**

Public mental health services for children in Massachusetts are administered by the Division of Medical Assistance. The program, known as MassHealth, covers a number of services, currently including rehabilitation and therapeutic services, behavioral health, inpatient and outpatient hospital services, prescription drugs, pharmacy services, and physician services. Massachusetts does not fund specific services, but provides health insurance through the MassHealth program. Massachusetts Medicaid links: [www.cms.gov/medicaid](http://www.cms.gov/medicaid), and [www.state.ma.us/dma/questions/questionapp.htm#Anchor-Bac-26514](http://www.state.ma.us/dma/questions/questionapp.htm#Anchor-Bac-26514). Massachusetts Medicaid Helpline: 800.841.2900.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker or medical assistance specialist for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

**9. Does your state provide additional finances or services for medical or therapeutic needs not covered under your state medical plan to children receiving adoption assistance?**

Massachusetts offers what is known as *Supplemental Reimbursements*. If parents request payments for supplemental reimbursement in addition to the standard adoption assistance payment rate, the adoption social worker provides relevant documentation describing ongoing, additional expenses that are paid above the current foster care rate and which are not expected to be absorbed by other resources, services, or third party payments following the final decree of adoption. Need must be documented in the adoption assistance agreement. Massachusetts also offers a *Clothing Allowance*. Quarterly clothing allowances may be paid in addition to the standard adoption assistance rate. Parents are directed to contact their adoption assistance worker at 800.835.0838.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

## **Adoption Assistance- Fair Hearings**

**10. What is your state's process for applying for a fair hearing? A fair hearing is a legal, administrative procedure that provides a forum to address disagreements with agency decisions.**

Adoptive parents can request a fair hearing when they disagree with a DSS decision that affects their child's adoption assistance benefits. Requests must be in writing. If adoption assistance has been denied or an existing adoption assistance benefit has been reduced or terminated, the Subsidy Administrator notifies applicants in writing of the denial or approval at a lesser rate. A statement of reasons for denial is included, with notice that the applicants have a right to request a fair hearing to appeal the decision.

Send requests for fair hearing to the following address:

Director of the Fair Hearing Unit  
24 Farnsworth Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02110

## **Adoption Assistance- Web/Internet Information**

**11. What is your state Web address for general adoption information?**

Massachusetts general adoption link: [www.state.ma.us/dss/Adoption/AD\\_Adopting.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dss/Adoption/AD_Adopting.htm)

**12. What is your state Web address for adoption assistance information?**

Massachusetts adoption assistance link: [www.state.ma.us/dss/Adoption/AD\\_Subsidies.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dss/Adoption/AD_Subsidies.htm)

**13. What is your state Web address for state-specific medical assistance information for children?**

Massachusetts state-specific medical assistance link:  
[www.state.ma.us/dma/masshealthinfo/applmemb\\_IDX.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/dma/masshealthinfo/applmemb_IDX.htm)