

Maine

Adoption Assistance- Who Do You Contact?

State Contact Information

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Adoption Assistance- Who is Eligible?

A good place to start. Public adoption in Maine is administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS), Bureau of Child and Family Services (BCFS). DHS and adoption links: www.state.me.us/dhs/ and www.afamilyforme.org.

- 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:

- Five years of age or older
- Minority status
- Member of a sibling group of two or more children placed in the same household
- Physical handicap, mental or emotional handicap
- Medical condition
- Requires educational benefits beyond high school
- At risk for future emotional difficulties due to having been a victim of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or neglect
- At risk for future problems due to factors in his/her family background such as severe mental illness, substance abuse, prostitution, genetic or medical conditions or illnesses

Note: Children must be legally free for adoption and in the custody of the state of Maine or other licensed child-placing agency 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, and in the custody of the state of Maine or other licensed child-placing agency.

- 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.**

\$2000.00 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.**

Maine offers deferred adoption assistance.

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

Adoption assistance payments and benefits may begin in Maine at adoption placement.

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?

An adoptive parent can request a change in the adoption assistance agreement any time there are changes in the needs of the child or circumstances of the family. Requests must be made in writing to the Department and parental documentation of need is required. Documentation is supplied via forms supplied by the Department at the time of request. The adoption assistance agreement specifies:

- How adoptive parents shall notify the Department in writing of changes in the needs of the child or the circumstances of the family that would affect their eligibility for, or the amount of, assistance required
- A statement concerning interstate continuance of the agreement, specifying payments and services for which Maine will remain responsible if the family moves out of state
- A statement specifying how adoptive parents shall be notified of any changes in the rates of adoption assistance payments and how they may request changes in the adoption assistance agreement
- A statement of the terms of continued eligibility for adoption assistance
- A statement regarding the right of the family to appeal decisions concerning adoption assistance and the procedure for doing so

Send requests to the following address and contact information:

Susan D. Harris
Maine Department of Human Services
221 State Street, SHS #11
Augusta, Maine 04333

E-mail and phone: susan.d.harris@maine.gov and 207.287.5060

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 Maine are administered by the Department of Human Services through an eight-district system of DHS and parent sponsored programs. Post adoption services include the following examples:

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| 1. Information and referral | 4. Adoption Reunion Registry | 7. Respite |
| 2. Adoption sensitivity training | 5. Therapeutic intervention | 8. Residential treatment in cost share agreements with family |
| 3. Support groups | 6. Advocacy | |

Support programs in Maine take several forms. Examples include the following:

1. The Maine Adoption Guides (MAG): MAG is for parent, child, and adolescent groups. Maine Post Adoption Resource Guide link: www.cwti.org/PostAdopt/PARGuide.htm.
2. Parent-run programs: Some districts in Maine fund post adoption support groups. Support groups by county link: www.cwti.org/PostAdopt/PAS.htm#county.
3. Adoption and Foster Families of Maine: A private group that runs support programs throughout the state. Adoption support groups link: www.cwti.org/PostAdopt/PAS.htm#Support.

Application for children adopted from the Department of Human Services can be made through the District office where the child was adopted or the DHS office where the child is currently living and can be made over the phone. DHS office locator link: www.state.me.us/dhs/DHSaddresses.htm. Maine's DHS post adoption services link: www.cwti.org/PostAdopt/PAS.htm.

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

Adoption Assistance- Medical Assistance

8. What mental services are provided by your state?

Public mental health services for children in Maine are administered through the DHS, Bureau of Family Independence. The medical assistance program is formerly known as Medicaid and now called MaineCare. MaineCare medical assistance services include the following examples: psychotherapy, family, play, and group therapy, attachment therapy, neurofeedback, inpatient and outpatient hospitalization, and prescription drugs. DHS MaineCare link: www.state.me.us/dhs/bfi/MaineCare.htm and MaineCare covered services link: www.state.me.us/dhs/bfi/mainecare/What%20MaineCare%20Covers.htm.

Maine's Child Welfare Training Institute's (CWTI) Mental Health Resources link: www.cwti.org/PostAdopt/MHR.htm and CWTI Child Develop Services link: www.cwti.org/PostAdopt/CDSHMR.htm.

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?

Maine offers the following additional services to children receiving adoption assistance. The services must be explicitly identified in the adoption assistance agreement if the needs are known at the time. It is possible to modify agreements with Central office approval to include specified services after the adoption assistance agreement is drafted.

Supplemental Services. Severely handicapped children are eligible for supplemental services, including therapeutic equipment not covered under state Medicaid, therapeutic summer camp (upon professional recommendation) and education beyond high school depending on annual funding allocations.

Limited Period Assistance. May be a monthly payment for a limited period of time, or a payment (on a recurring basis for a specified period of time) for medical or mental health costs, such as orthodonture, medical treatment, physical and mental health therapy, etc., or, if the child meets relevant criteria, educational benefits.

One-Payment Assistance. A one-time, nonrecurring payment can be made to meet a special need of a child. Examples include payment for an operation necessitated by a child's medical condition, payment of legal fees (up to \$400), or payment for special orthopedic devices.

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.

Any adoptive parent, who has applied for, is receiving, or whose application for adoption assistance is not acted upon in a timely manner, is entitled to appeal the decision through what is known as an Administrative Hearing. Parents must send a written request for an administrative hearing to Maine's Department of Human Services Commissioner within ten days of receipt of the contested decision. Maine adoption assistance workers are responsible for making individuals interested in adopting with assistance aware of their rights to appeal Department decisions. Maine's administrative hearing (fair hearing) process:

Adoptive parents have the right to appeal any decision made by the Department concerning Adoption Assistance through an Administrative Hearing procedure. To appeal the Department's decision to increase or decrease adoption assistance benefits, parents must make a written request within ten days from receipt of decision notice, in accordance with the provision of 5 MRSA 1003. Reasons for disagreement with the decision must be given in the request for Administrative Hearing. Failure to respond in ten days will result in this decision becoming final. An Administrative Hearing Officer will review the Department's decision and a decision will be made. If a parent disagrees with the decision of the Hearing Officer, they have the right to appeal to Superior Court.

Send requests for an Administrative Hearing to the following address:

Commissioner (or designee) of the Department of Human Services
Department of Human Services
State House Station #11, 221 State Street
Augusta, Maine 04333.

Adoption Assistance- Web/Internet Information

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

Maine's general adoption assistance links: www.afamilyforme.org/adopt.shtml, www.state.me.us/dhs/bcfs/fosteradopt.htm, and www.adoptuskids.org/states/me/

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

Maine's adoption assistance link: www.cwti.org/PostAdopt/PAS.htm. (DHS BCFS information is provided under CWTI on its Post Adoption Services page). Or phone: 877.505.0545.

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

Maine's state-specific medical assistance link: www.state.me.us/dhs/bfi/MaineCare.htm. Contact Susan D. Harris at 207.287.5060 or write the Department of Human Services, 221 State Street, SHS #1; Augusta, Maine 04333