

Rhode Island Adoption Assistance- Who Do You Contact?

State Contact information

<p style="text-align: center;">Adoption Assistance Specialist</p> <p>NAME: VACANT</p> <p>ADDRESS: Department of Children, Youth and Families 530 Wood Street Bristol, Rhode Island 02809</p> <p>E-MAIL:</p> <p>TELEPHONE: 401.254.7020</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ICAMA Compact Administrator Or Contact</p> <p>NAME: Paula M. Fontaine</p> <p>ADDRESS: Department of Children, Youth and Families 530 Wood Street Bristol, Rhode Island 02809</p> <p>E-MAIL: Paula.Fontaine@dcyf.ri.gov</p> <p>TELEPHONE: 401.254.7010</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Adoption Program Manager Or Contact</p> <p>NAME: Maureen Robbins</p> <p>ADDRESS: Department of Children, Youth and Families 101 Friendship Street Providence, Rhode Island 02908</p> <p>E-MAIL: Maureen.Robbins@dcyf.ri.gov</p> <p>TELEPHONE: 401.528.3799</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ICPC Compact Administrator Or Contact</p> <p>NAME: Everett Thornton</p> <p>ADDRESS: Department of Children, Youth and Families 530 Wood Street Bristol, Rhode Island 02809</p> <p>E-MAIL: Everett.Thornton@dcyf.ri.gov</p> <p>TELEPHONE: 401.254.7077</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Post Adoption Services Contact</p> <p>NAME: VACANT</p> <p>ADDRESS: Department of Children, Youth and Families 530 Wood Street Bristol, Rhode Island 02809</p> <p>E-MAIL:</p> <p>TELEPHONE: 401.254.7020</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Medical Assistance Specialist</p> <p>NAME: Kevin Savage</p> <p>ADDRESS: Department of Children, Youth and Families 101 Friendship Street Providence, Rhode island 02908</p> <p>E-MAIL: Kevin.Savage@dcyf.ri.gov</p> <p>TELEPHONE: 401.528.3628</p>

Adoption Assistance- Who is Eligible?

A good place to start. Public adoption in Rhode Island is administered by the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), Division of Family Services (DFS). DCYF and adoption links: www.dcyf.state.ri.us/, www.dcyf.state.ri.us/adoption.htm, and www.dcyf.state.ri.us/questions/quest_adoption.htm#begin_process. Or phone: 401.254.7009.

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:

- Twelve years of age or older
- Member of an ethnic or racial minority
- Member of a sibling group of two or more children being adopted into the same home
- Documented medical condition or a physical, emotional, or mental disability
- At high risk of developing a medical condition or a physical, emotional or mental disability, based upon family background or history
- Prior adoption disruption or dissolution

Note: Children must be legally free for adoption to be eligible for adoption assistance. If a child is at high risk of developing a medical condition or a physical, emotional or mental disability, based upon family background or history, they may be eligible for deferred adoption assistance. See Question #4 for information on deferred 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 and legally free for adoption.

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.

Rhode Island offers deferred adoption assistance. A child at high risk of developing a medical condition or a physical, emotional or mental disability, based upon family background or history, may be eligible for deferred adoption assistance, which would include medical assistance without financial assistance. In the event a disability, based upon family background or history, is diagnosed in the future, the child may then

be eligible to receive financial assistance. For a child to be eligible to receive deferred adoption assistance, an adoption assistance agreement must be created, signed, and approved prior to the finalization of the adoption. The specific background factor(s) or family history that might place the child at risk for future problems must be included in the adoption assistance agreement.

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

Adoption assistance payments and benefits may begin in Rhode Island after 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 or the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF/Department) may request an adjustment in the adoption assistance payment at any time during the term of the Adoption Assistance Agreement. To request a change in an adoption assistance agreement, a written request must be submitted to the adoption services unit, Adoption Subsidy Coordinator, with documentation attached that supports the request for change. A request for new or additional post adoption services is a change in the adoption assistance agreement and must be forwarded in writing to the Adoption Services Unit with supportive documentation attached to the request. Contact the Adoption Subsidy Coordinator by phone: 401.254.7020 or send requests for change to the following address:

Adoption Subsidy Coordinator
530 Wood Street
Bristol, Rhode Island 02809

1. In the event the adoptive parent(s) requests an increase in the adoption assistance payment, the adoptive parent(s) shall be responsible to document the changes in the needs of the child or the circumstances of the adoptive family to support the request for an increase in the adoption assistance payment not to exceed the limits set forth in DCYF policy.
2. The Department has the right to approve or deny the request by the adoptive parents to increase the adoption assistance payment.
3. In the event the Department denies a request to increase the adoption assistance payment, the adoptive parent(s) has a right to request a fair hearing.
4. The Department has the right to initiate a request to decrease the adoption assistance payment at any time during the term of the adoption assistance agreement.
5. Adoption assistance payments for a federal, Title IV-E eligible child may be reduced with the concurrence of the adoptive parent(s).
6. The provision of state funded services, including state funded adoption assistance payments, is subject to annual review and approval of the DCYF.
7. In the event the Department suspends or revokes the award of a state funded service, including a state funded adoption assistance payment, the Department shall provide the adoptive parent(s) with written notice of its determination of the suspension or revocation of said service.
8. In the event the Department revokes or suspends a state funded service as referenced above, the adoptive parent(s) has a right to request a fair hearing pursuant to the Department's procedure for Complaints and Hearings.
9. The Adoption Assistance Coordinator is responsible to negotiate with the adoptive parent(s) any adjustment to the adoption assistance payment.

Situations that may justify an increase or decrease in payments or services include:

- Changes in SSA or VA benefits
- Change in the adoptive family's situation (including an increase in family income or availability of funds)
- Request for an increase in amount of adoption assistance by adoptive parent(s) up to the amount the child would receive in a Department foster care home
- When an adopted child is placed in out of home care. The Department will review and may negotiate a reduction in payment for the duration the child's placement in out of home care
- Shortage of state or federal funds
- Lack of availability of a program

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 Rhode Island are administered and provided by the Department of Children, Youth and Families, Division of Family Services, and through community services and parent organizations. Post adoption services include the following examples:

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| 1. Information and referral | 4. Respite |
| 2. Support groups | 5. Daycare services (up to age six) |
| 3. Respite | 6. Mediation/search services |

Eligibility for childcare services is based upon family income and the need for care. In the event an adoptive parent(s) is not found eligible for childcare services through DCYF, the adoptive parent(s) may apply to this Department for childcare services for a child up to the age of six (6) as part of the adoption assistance agreement. The adoptive parent(s) must provide verification of denial of eligibility for childcare services through DCYF. If an adoptive parent has questions regarding adoption assistance, the Adoption Services Unit is available to help the family, including assisting with referrals for community services. The DCYF provides many of the same services to families adopting older/special needs children as would be provided by private adoption agency. Examples of these services include: preparation of the children to help them understand and accept the adoption experience, preparation of the family to help them gain an understanding of the children's past experiences, on-going supervision from Family Service Social Worker knowledgeable in community resources that will help access services.

General resources link: www.dcyf.state.ri.us/link.htm and Day Care Provider Directory link: www.dcyf.state.ri.us/provider.htm. Several organizations offer a variety of respite options. Rhode Island Respite Programs link: www.respitelocator.org/p2states.htm. Adoptive Families in Action provides educational functions and supports to adoptive families in the Cranston area, link: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AFiA> or phone: 401.944.2342, contact person: Paul Wynn.

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 health services are provided by your state?

Public mental health services for children in Rhode Island are administered by the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), Division of Children's Behavioral Health and Education and include the following examples: diagnostic assessment services, day treatment, residential counseling centers, residential treatment, psychiatric hospitalization, educational services, and prescription medication.

The Division of Children's Behavioral Health and Education is responsible for the design, implementation, and monitoring of a continuum of therapeutic and clinical services to seriously emotionally/behaviorally disturbed children and youth, as well as providing programs aimed at maintaining healthy family functioning through an array of community-based therapeutic/supportive services. Children who are placed in the custody of the Department due to abuse, neglect, and dependency, as well as children who remain in the custody of their parents or legal guardians, are eligible for these services. Most of these services are delivered in community-based settings, and are accessed primarily through the eight Community Mental Health Centers. Children's Behavioral Health and Education link: www.dcyf.state.ri.us/cbh.htm.

The Project REACH federal grant provides funding for non-traditional wraparound services through local coordinating councils established in each of the eight Community Mental Health Center catchments areas. These local coordinating councils have evolved from the Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP), which provided a community-based family-focused, inter-disciplinary model for providing care coordination for seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth. Additionally, these REACH funds have enhanced the service capacity within the CIS programs, providing more counseling and home-based services for children and families. The REACH federal grant was a five year \$15.8 million research-based service implementation grant awarded in 1994 from the Center for Mental Health Services, providing the Division of Children's Behavioral Health about \$3-million annually.

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Services for Children and Families administers the Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid), link: www.dhs.state.ri.us/dhs/famchild/dfcmap.htm and www.dhs.state.ri.us/dhs/famchild/dchspec.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?

Rhode Island offers *Other Services*. Funding is available for medical needs not covered by the family's private insurance or Rhode Island Medical Assistance (Medicaid). The need for this service must be substantiated and included in the adoption assistance agreement. Services include the following examples: day care, respite, and psychological/emotional/behavioral counseling.

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 whenever a DCYF decision affects their child's adoption assistance benefits. Requests for fair hearing are made by filling out a written request for fair hearing form sent by the DCYF in response to a decision affecting adoption assistance benefits. Parents are directed to complete and return the form to their adoption assistance worker or Adoption Assistance Coordinator. Parents must then be available for the fair hearing when scheduled. A fair hearing will be scheduled and parents will be notified of its date, time, and place. Send written requests to the following address:

Hearing Officer
101 Friendship Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

DCYF policy, link: www.rules.state.ri.us/rules/released/pdf/DCYF/DCYF_1053_.pdf (See Page 2 for information on the first step in the hearing process, known as *Supervisory and Divisional Appeals*, and Page 4 through 6 for information on the second step in the hearing process, *The Formal Hearing*, for complete information on the fair hearing process.)

Adoption Assistance- Web/Internet Information

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

Rhode Island's general adoption links: www.dcyf.state.ri.us/ and Adoption Frequently Asked Questions: www.dcyf.state.ri.us/questions/quest_adoption.htm

See also Adoption Rhode Island: www.adoptionri.org/ (independent, non-profit link)

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

Rhode Island's adoption assistance link: www.dcyf.state.ri.us/questions/quest_adoption.htm#services (See Questions About Adoption, *What services does DCYF provide to families adopting children of the child welfare system?*)

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

Rhode Island's state-specific medical assistance links: www.dhs.state.ri.us/dhs/famchild/dfcmap.htm, www.dhs.state.ri.us/dhs/famchild/dchspec.htm, and www.hrsa.gov/tpr/states/Rhode-Island-Medicaid-Covered-Services.htm