

Parent Roadmap

For adoption in Washington, DC through the Child and Family Services Agency

When you see a photo or a video of a child in foster care who is available for adoption, what happens next? Though the process can vary from case to case, the following is a general description of a typical process for adopting a child who is in the foster care program and for whom the team is actively recruiting a family.

- 1. Orientation** – The very first step in the process is attending a two hour orientation at the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency. It is facilitated by the recruitment department and a trainer from licensing and monitoring. During orientation, an overview of the process is provided, and the application—which is key to initiating this process—is explained and completed. In addition, they provide a sign-up sheet for an upcoming MAPP training. Orientation takes places twice a month: the second Saturday and fourth Thursday of every month, except during the months of November and December. Training times are Saturdays from 10am-12pm and Thursday from 6pm -8pm.
- 2. Training** – Adoption and foster care training is typically 27-30 hours of classroom time. If you have taken an approved course within the last 5 years, you can present that certificate to get credit. If not, you can sign up for DC CFSA training if you live in DC or MD, or you can sign up for the Adoptions Together training in Silver Spring if you live in MD. To sign up in DC, you need to attend an orientation. To sign up in Silver Spring, you can call 301-422-5115 and leave a message with the best time to reach you.
Length of time: Approx. 2 month once you sign up and begin classes.
- 3. Home Study** – You will receive the paperwork to start your home study during, or soon after, the 27-30 hour training. The home study process includes visits to your home, and interviews with all members of the household and with your references, conducted by a social worker.
Length of time: Approx. 4 months
- 4. Matching Tool Meeting** – You will be asked to fill out a “Matching Tool Form” if you have not already completed one. This is a document that helps us understand your preferences and strengths as a parent to determine which child will be the best match for your family. The child welfare professionals involved in the child’s case will meet as a team to review the Matching Tool Form, your home study and other documents. Sometimes, more than one family will be considered for a child. The committee decides if a family and a child are a match. In order for a family to be considered for a child through a Matching Tool Meeting, the family must have a current, approved home study and a Matching Tool Form that is no older than one year.
Length of time: It depends, but often this takes weeks or months to schedule with all parties. Sometimes we need to wait for other families who are close to becoming licensed and are also being considered for the child.
- 5. Response from Matching Tool Meeting** – After the Matching Tool Meeting, a representative from the agency will call you to let you know if you are a match with a child or if you are not going to be considered as a resource for the child. If you have been matched with the child, you will have the option to move forward to the next step, the Background Conference. This is not the point in time when you make a commitment to that child.
Length of time: Up to a week after the Matching Tool Meeting
- 6. Attend Background Conference*** – You will be invited to attend this meeting in-person. It is a chance for you to gather information and hear about the child from all available members of the child’s team. The team works to present a snapshot of the child, relaying current, accurate information from all areas of the child’s life (e.g. social, emotional, educational, psychological and physical).

Those attending the meeting usually includes the Resource Development Specialist (this is the person who coordinates the matching process) the Resource Development Specialist’s Supervisor, the Guardian Ad Litem (referred to as the GAL, this is the child’s lawyer), the child’s social workers, the current foster parent(s), the

therapist and any other important adults in the child's life. If some individuals cannot attend in-person, they are given the option to join the meeting via telephone conference. Sometimes not all of these individuals can attend in-person or on the telephone.

During the meeting, there is a time to present the information about the child, a time to hear from the prospective adoptive parent(s) and a time for Q&A.

Length of time: It can take anywhere from a week to a month, sometimes longer, to schedule the Background Conference after the Matching Tool Meeting. The meeting itself lasts two hours or longer.

**Sometimes, the Resource Development Specialist at CFSA requests a "Preliminary Background Conference." This usually involves the prospective adoptive parents, the social workers on the case, the Resource Development Specialist and the Resource Development Specialist Supervisor. The meeting takes place between the Matching Tool Meeting and the Background conference if the team needs more information from the prospective parents in order to adequately assess the viability of a match.*

7. **Give an answer** – After the background conference, you will have time to consider all the information presented and ask follow-up questions. You will then need to give CFSA a decision whether or not you will move forward with adoption. It is likely that you will not yet have met the child, but you will have had the chance to consider all the information from the child's team. This is the point at which you need to make a commitment to the child or tell the agency that you are not prepared to adopt her/him.
Length of Time: You are typically given a week after the background conference to make your decision, but the length of time varies on a case-by-case basis.
8. **Attend Transition Meeting** – If you decide to move forward with the adoption, the adoption social worker, the foster parent(s) and yourself will meet soon afterwards to establish a transition schedule. This schedule will include the visits schedule (usually starting with short visits and moving up to overnight visits), family therapy visits and the placement date.
Length of Time: It can take several weeks to schedule the transition meeting after the background conference.
9. **Visits** – Once the transition schedule is established, it may still be several days or weeks before visits start. Visits usually start out short (1-2 hours) and slowly progress to overnight visits over the course of a few months.
Length of time: Varies on a case-by-case basis, but the process typically spans several months.
10. **Transition into home** – On the day the child is placed, the social worker usually arranges a meeting at the foster family home to pick up the child and the remainder of his/her belongings. The social worker and the child go to an approved medical clinic to do a medical screening. This is done to ensure the child is healthy and has no urgent medical needs as he enters his or her new home. The social worker then brings the child to his or her new pre-adoptive home.
11. **Placement of child:** Once the child is placed, the new adoptive social worker will be visiting the child in the home at least once a month. The licensing agency will also be monitoring your home with frequent visits. This adoption social worker will help you through the steps to adoption. Some of these include: helping you find a lawyer to file an adoption petition, working with you so that you can take over the therapeutic, medical and educational care of the child, and helping you establish relationships with the child's providers.
12. **Finalization** – The adoption cannot be finalized until the child has been placed for 6 months and the court has approved the adoption petition.

For questions or more information, contact the Permanency Opportunities Project:

Phone: 301-422-5115

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www.PermanencyOpportunitiesProject.org