You can provide hope to a child.

Couples and individuals come to the idea of adoption in different ways. Some are unable to give birth to children, others want to add to an existing family, and some simply enjoy providing young people with an opportunity for a happy and productive life. When you make the decision to open your heart and home as an adoptive parent, you bring invaluable love, guidance, and support to a child in need.

Who are these children?

These young people come from every walk of life and their ages range from small children to teenagers. Many are already in the foster-care system and have lived in an environment marked by abuse, neglect, abandonment, or substance abuse. While the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare first attempts to enable children to live safely with their birthfamilies or a responsible relative, this is not always possible. When this situation occurs, the Department strives to place the children in adoptive homes once they have been legally freed to do so by the courts. These children generally have characteristics that fall within these areas:

- *physical, medical or emotional disabilities — or at risk in these areas*
- *an age that makes them difficult to place*
- *part of a sibling group that should be adopted together*

They have all faced challenges in their lives and are waiting for someone to offer them a permanent family life and a chance to learn, play, and grow in a nurturing environment.

Are you ready to adopt a child?

The Department of Health and Welfare is interested in talking with any qualified individual or couple interested in adoption. You don't necessarily need prior experience with parenting, and your current income only has to be enough to ensure the expenses of adoption don't provide a hardship for the child or your family. There are a number of avenues available to obtain more information or set up an appointment with a regional adoption representative.

For more information and contact information, visit www.idahochild.org or call the Idaho CareLine at 211, where an operator will discuss your level of interest and send you appropriate materials and contact information.

Do you wish to contact your birthparents or children?

If you have a desire to locate your birthparents or a child given up for adoption, the Idaho Voluntary Adoption Registry may be of assistance. It is designed to match individuals who have authorized the release of their contact information. For more information, call (208) 334-5990.

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

450 West State Street, 5th Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036

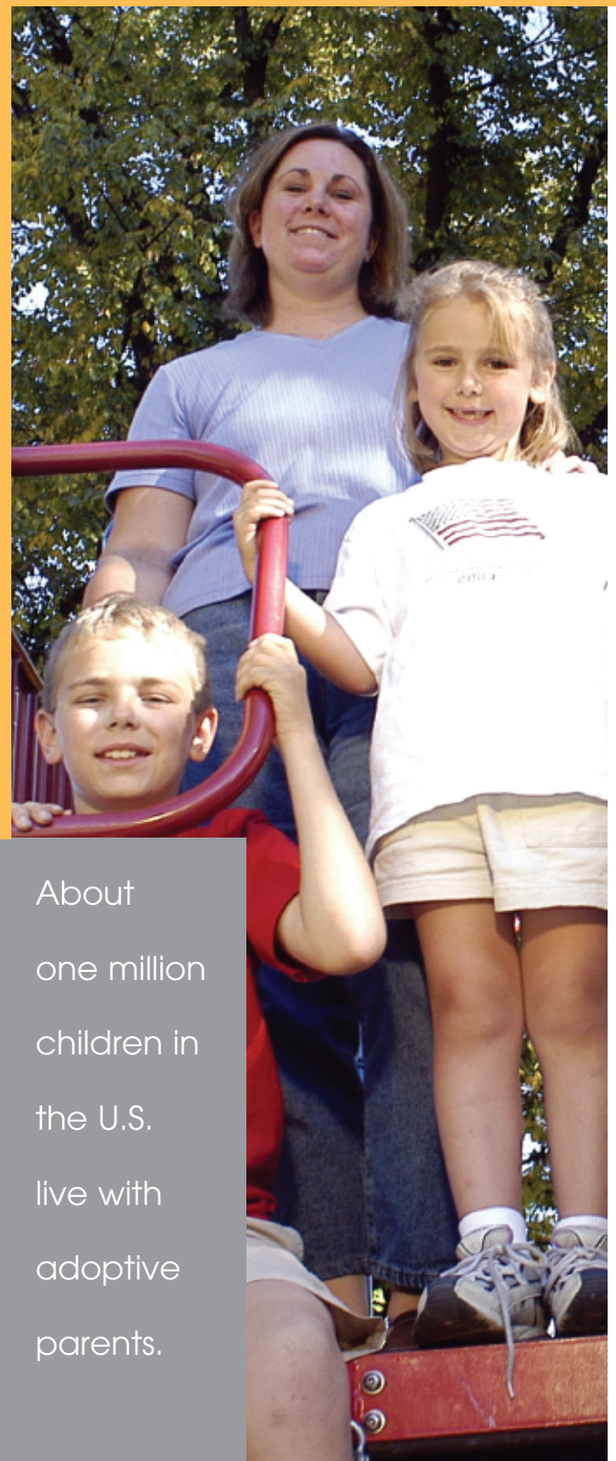
Costs associated with this publication are available from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare

Adoption

Open Your Heart & Home

BECOME AN ADOPTIVE PARENT

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE



About one million children in the U.S. live with adoptive parents.

Open your heart and home to a child.

Who can adopt a child?

Adoption is ideal for adults who enjoy children and are willing to provide a safe, loving environment for youth who have suffered neglect or abuse. You do not need to own your own home and your income level is not a critical factor. The bottom line is that nearly any person or couple over the age of 25 that has a strong desire to help a child can apply for adoption. You should be of good character and be willing to undergo a review of your living environment and life experiences.

Are you interested in adopting a child?

Adoption is an important decision for the entire family. Talk to them and consult with friends whose opinions you trust. Give consideration to the personal resources you bring to the relationship and the community resources available to your family once a child is placed in your home. You might also consider becoming a foster parent to more fully understand the challenges and benefits that come with having responsibility for a child.

The steps leading to adoption

1. Once you make the decision to proceed, contact a local Health and Welfare adoption representative to indicate your interest. Additional information and contact information can be found at **www.idahochild.org or by calling the Idaho CareLine at 211.**

2. We recommend you attend adoption/foster-care training sessions.

3. The next step is an educational and information-gathering process called a home study. This is a mutually beneficial step that:

- *shares information about adoption*
- *prepares you and your family for the transitions that will occur*
- *helps to determine if you can provide a safe and nurturing living environment for the child*
- *clarifies the type of child you are most interested in adopting*
- *provides information about your life experiences*
- *provides you with assistance in completing an adoption application*
- *assists adoption workers in matching a child to your family's strengths and needs*

4. Once the home study is successfully completed, your adoption worker will help you learn about state and national registries that list children who are available for adoption.

What happens once your home study is completed?

Once you have been approved to become an adoptive parent, the selection process can take a fair amount of time. It is important to understand that adoption workers look for a family who can best meet the individual needs of a child. If you find a child listed on a registry that you think might be a good match, you can request to have your social worker send your home study to the child's worker for consideration.

At this point, the child's worker will review submitted home studies and contact the family chosen as the adoptive family. Visitation with the child will be scheduled and a pre-adoption placement decision will follow.

Assistance provided to adoptive families

Every child has an adoption worker who assists prospective parents for at least six months after placement. Your worker will visit regularly and answer questions, help make the transition as smooth as possible, and help you find appropriate medical, counseling, and other social services. They will also guide you toward a variety of support groups, social activities, and training opportunities available for adoptive families.

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare offers the Adoption Assistance Program, which can help provide additional support and financial assistance. Eligibility and the specific dollar amount is based on the child's age and needs and is negotiated individually for each child and family. This support is designed to help cover medical and counseling services, provide limited reimbursement for non-recurring adoption costs, and to aid families in meeting costs related to a child's special needs.