



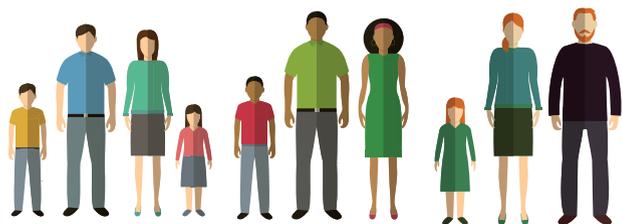
STEPS TO ADOPTION



For more information on Adoption in Virginia, call: 1-800-DO-ADOPT or visit: adoptva.com



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



Are you interested in expanding your family and making a difference in the life of a child through adoption? Are you interested in becoming an adoptive parent but are unsure about the steps you need to take? This pamphlet provides a step-by-step overview of what to expect about adoption through foster care in Virginia.

1 Call 1-800-DO-ADOPT



or submit an inquiry to www.adoptuskids.org/states/va/browse.aspx.

2 Invitation to orientation



The local department of social services should invite you to a meeting to learn more about waiting youth and the overall foster care and adoption process. You'll also have the opportunity to ask, and get answers to, your questions. If your local department of social services does not have orientation or training scheduled in the near future, ask them to provide you with a foster parent training contact for a neighboring local department of social services.

3 Attend foster parent training



Training provided by Family Services staff and trained foster/adoptive parents. Twenty-eight to thirty (28-30) hours of instruction is required.

4 Complete home study

During a series of individual or group meetings with all family members in your home, you will talk about your reasons for wanting to foster and/or adopt. Together you will decide whether you are ready to foster. This process could take up to 90 days.

5 Complete forms



Forms may require responses to personal questions in order to determine the type of child that will fit best in your family. Background checks and medical screenings are also required. Complete, sign, and return all required forms to the agency. Required forms may vary from agency to agency.

6 Contact you for placement

Once your foster home is certified and approved, and a child/sibling enter foster care or may require a change in placement, the local department of social services may contact you for a foster care placement or adoptive placement (depending on the child's goal). Placements depend upon the child's needs and the foster family's preferences/availability. Once a child enters foster care, the local department is to work towards permanency using the following foster care goals in the following order: Return Home (return home to parents), Placement with relatives, and Adoption. Local departments of social services are required to use concurrent planning when working with on these foster care goals. The length of time to achieve the primary foster care goal varies by court and local department of social services.

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Selection of a child/siblings:

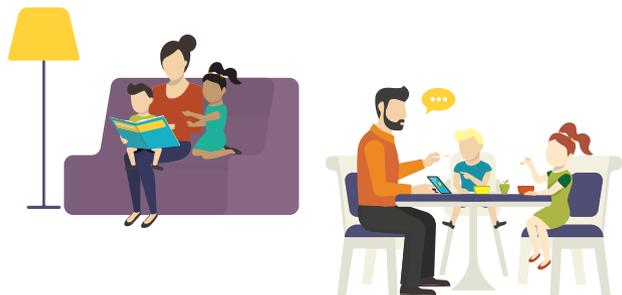
In Virginia, over 65% of foster youth are adopted by their foster parents

Once a child/sibling is free for adoption (has the goal of adoption and achieved termination of parental rights), you may be shown pictures and given more information about available children. You could also look at Virginia's waiting children at www.adoptuskids.org/states/va/browse.aspx. The local department of social services may review many home studies submitted on behalf of a child/sibling group. Once contacted for consideration, together, the local department of social services and the foster parent will consider whether your family may be a good fit for adoption of the child/sibling group. Local departments of social services are responsible for making placement decisions.

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Ready for adoption placement

The placement process depends on both the child and the prospective adoptive family's readiness to move forward in the adoption process. The process starts with visits between the child and the family. When the Family Services worker, the child and the prospective adoptive family feel that the child is ready to transition to a new family and that the family is ready to receive the child, arrangements should be made in collaboration with the former foster home for placement.



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Complete the adoption process

The process and paperwork can begin at the time a child/sibling is placed in your home. There are additional forms to be completed by the local department of social services and the prospective adoptive family. In addition, upon referral, if the child/sibling is eligible, adoption assistance will be negotiated by a representative with the Virginia Department of Social Services.

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Post-Placement Supervision

Virginia law requires the child to live in your home a minimum of six months and be visited at least three times or more before the adoption can be finalized. After the child is placed in your home, the Family Services worker will visit you at least three times within 90 days. The visits are to help you and the child adjust to this new situation. This is the time to discuss any concerns you may have as initial adjustment concerns are to be expected.

Remember: The Family Service worker is not looking for families without problems. The worker is looking for families who have successfully coped with life experiences.

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Legal procedures & finalization

To finalize the adoption, it is best to contact an attorney with adoption experience. The local department of social services has additional forms to complete in order to finalize the adoption. The attorney files all legal documents with the circuit court. Prior to finalization, the local department of social services is required to submit a suitability report to the court. The agency sends the report and the judge enters the final order of adoption. **This timeline varies and the process may take up to 90 days.**

