

It's easier
than you think



to adopt a child
in British Columbia



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Children
and Family Development

Kids can't
wait to have
A family



adopt one of
British Columbia's
waiting children



You don't have to leave the country to adopt a child, and you don't have to be young, married, childless, or wealthy. You don't have to go to a certain church, or have a certain education. You just have to be a special person with special skills. In British Columbia there are lots of children who need families

There are over 600 children in the permanent care of the ministry who are waiting for a family to call their own – a special adult who cares for their future.

children require permanence
and the earlier this happens, the
more beneficial it is for them

The Ministry of Children and Family Development arranges about half of the adoptions that occur in the province. Most ministry adoptions are of children who come into its care under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*. Other adoptions are completed by licensed adoption agencies in Kelowna, Victoria, Vancouver and the Lower Mainland area. Adoption by relatives or step-parents, and adult adoptions proceed directly through the courts.



honouring fairness, balance, freedom of choice and the best interests of the child

Adoption is both a social and legal process. In British Columbia, adoption services are governed by the *Adoption Act* of 1996. The purpose of adoption is to provide children with the stability and security of a permanent family. In deciding what will be best for the child in the long term, social workers consider a child's needs, and when evaluating adoption applications consider factors like:

- > the child's safety
- > their physical and emotional needs
- > their level of development
- > the importance of continuous relationships, including those with birth parents
- > the child's ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural heritage
- > the child's views.

The older they are, the more children are able to have a say in the adoption process. For children between 7 and 12 years of age, the court requires a report indicating whether the child understands what adoption means, how it will affect them, and whether they wish to be adopted. Children over 12 cannot be adopted without their consent. They must be told how adoption will change their lives, and they must agree to any possible name change requested in the adoption application. A child who has consented to adoption has the right to change their mind at any time up to the moment the adoption is granted.

diversity and flexibility to best support kids

All children have the same rights. In addition, Aboriginal children over age 12 may decide whether their band or community should be involved in the adoption process. Aboriginal birth parents, like all others, have the right to choose homes for their children, which could include homes outside the Aboriginal community. When the ministry is responsible for the child's placement, the child's band or community will be consulted about planning.



WHO ARE THE CHILDREN?

in British Columbia there are lots
of children who need families

British Columbia's waiting children can be any age up to 19 years old. Most are between 4 and 10 years old but some are younger and some are older. More than a third of the children come with family ties, and every effort is made to place brothers and sisters in the same adoptive home.

Some children require families who share their cultural background, or who have skills in meeting particular medical needs the child may have. All of these children have some level of special service or placement needs due to their background and/or prenatal history. Parenting a child with one or more of these issues can be a difficult task; however, it can also be one of the most satisfying things you will ever do. To help these children fulfill their potential, they need special attention.

All of these children are anxious to find a place where they belong . . . a place where they are loved and feel secure, and a place for family holidays and get-togethers in the years to come.

We make every effort to find an adoptive family who best meets the specific needs of a child for the long term.

WHO ARE THE FAMILIES?

adoptive parents often find great joy and satisfaction in providing the love and support needed

The ministry looks for diversity in the families and parents who are interested in adopting children with special needs. Adoptive families require certain strengths, knowledge and experiences such as:

- > a healthy sense of self-esteem
- > a strong sense of commitment
- > the ability to provide love and affection to a child who may have difficulty returning those feelings
- > the ability to talk about feelings and to listen so children are able to talk about theirs
- > the flexibility to make major changes in lifestyle
- > the ability to advocate on behalf of the child
- > the ability to adjust to children whose values, attitudes and life experiences may not reflect their own
- > the patience to live with a child who may have low self-esteem
- > a support system of relatives and/or friends
- > a willingness to work with social workers and other professionals in the community for an indefinite period of time
- > a willingness to be involved with others who are significant to the child (for example birth parents, siblings, foster parents)
- > a sense of humour.

WHAT IS THE ADOPTION PROCESS?

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To begin the adoption process, phone the nearest Ministry of Children and Family Development office listed in the blue pages of your telephone book, or call 1-877-ADOPT-07. You will be connected with an adoption worker nearest you who will give you information on adopting a waiting child. You will also be given an application asking for basic information about you and your family. The social worker will answer any initial questions you have.

You will then be invited to attend the Adoption Education Program. This program will give you the opportunity and resources to learn about special placement needs of these children. It also gives you the opportunity to ask questions, clarify information and make contacts with other adoptive families.



considering the strengths of the family to meet the needs of the child

Once you have applied, you will also be asked to provide a medical assessment from your family doctor to confirm you are in good physical and mental health. You and anyone 18 years or older living in your home will be asked to undergo a criminal record check.

As well, you will need to provide four references; one of which should be a relative. The other two can be friends, family, or professionals who know you.

When these initial steps have been completed, you and your adoption worker will begin the homestudy. In the homestudy, the adoption worker will carry out family and individual assessments through home visits.

When you have been approved and have signed the written homestudy, your application and written homestudy are registered in the Adoption Management System, and the information becomes part of a database which matches children with prospective families.

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matching children with families

When a match has been made and you have accepted the proposal of a child, a series of pre-placement visits begins. If the child lives in a different community, you will be asked to travel there, at your own expense. These initial visits are structured and supervised, with your worker and/or the child's worker and caregiver present. As your relationship with the child grows, you will begin to spend time alone and have the child visit in your home.

When the pre-placement visits are completed to the satisfaction of both workers, the child will be placed in your home.



every adoption is as unique and individual as the family and child

Throughout the adoption process, it is important for you to remember that while the steps must be followed, it is also an individual process.

The average time from application to homestudy takes several months. How quickly you progress through the process will depend on many factors.

ADOPTION SUPPORT PROGRAMS

accessing services available for the whole family

Families who have a demonstrated need, might be eligible to receive financial assistance for services available not only to the child, but also to the family. These services include counselling, special services to children, parenting or other training, and adoption support and information. For information about the Post-adoption Assistance Program, call your local ministry Adoption office listed in the blue pages of your local phone directory.

As well as ministry programs, there are other agencies which can offer information and support. The agencies on the following page can provide opportunities for you to share your feelings, experiences, challenges and joys with other adoptive parents, either when you have adopted, are thinking about adopting or going through the adoption process.

ADOPTION SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The Adoptive Families Association of BC (AFABC) is a province-wide organization providing information and support to prospective adoptive families.

200 - 7342 Winston St
Burnaby BC V5A 2H1
Phone: (604) 320-7330
Fax: (604) 320-7350
www.bcadoption.com
General Email: info@bcadoption.com

The Society of Special Needs Adoptive Parents (SNAP) supports adoptive parents of children with special needs during and after placement.

101-2780 East Broadway
Vancouver BC V5M 1Y8
Phone: (604) 687-3114
Fax: (604) 687-3364
1-800-663-7627
www.snap.bc.ca
General Email: info@snap.bc.ca



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**Adopt one of
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All children deserve a permanent,
secure and loving family.

Adoptive families are needed.

If you want to open your home
to one or more of these children,
please contact your

local ministry office, listed in the
blue pages of your telephone directory.

Or, call our toll-free adoption line

1 877 ADOPT 07 (1 877 236-7807)

Also visit the ministry's web page at

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca



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