

Adoption Assistance: General Information



Adoption Assistance (AA)

Adoption assistance (AA) is a supportive resource for children who have been adopted and their families. AA provides Foster Care Medicaid and the chance to apply for a one-time reimbursement of up to \$2,000 in adoption-related expenses. For some children, AA also includes a monthly subsidy.

AA is established by an agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the adoptive parent(s). An AA agreement must be entered into before adoption finalization. AA is typically available until the child's 18th birthday or high school graduation, unless other circumstances exist.

Foster Care Medicaid

All children with active AA agreements are eligible to receive Foster Care Medicaid (also known as Title XIX Medicaid, FSTMA, or MA) in Wisconsin. If they move outside of Wisconsin, coverage may be transferred to the new state; you may contact 866-666-5532, option 3, to find out whether coverage can be transferred.

Foster Care Medicaid in Wisconsin has the same coverage as BadgerCare Plus but with no income restrictions, premiums, or copays. If the child was previously in foster care, this is the same coverage they had prior to adoption. Foster Care Medicaid may be used as secondary insurance if the child is also covered by a private insurance policy.

For more information about Foster Care Medicaid for Adoption Assistance recipients, see [Adoption and Medical Assistance: Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) \(DCF-P-5595\)](#).

One-Time Expense Reimbursement

All families with a signed AA agreement may apply for a one-time reimbursement of adoption-related expenses. DCF may reimburse adoptive families up to \$2,000 per child for costs reasonable and necessary to finalize the adoption of the child. For more information, see [Adoption Assistance: One-Time Expense Reimbursement \(DCF-P-PSF0747\)](#).

Monthly Subsidy

In some circumstances, AA may include a monthly subsidy. Children may be eligible for a monthly subsidy if they are determined to have special care needs at the time of adoption, as defined by [Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 50.09\(1\)\(b\)](#). This subsidy is paid by DCF to the adoptive parent(s) to help meet the financial demands of caring for a child's special care needs. The subsidy is the sum of three rates:

- **Basic Rate:** a standardized amount based on the child's age at the time of adoption
- **Supplemental Rate:** a variable rate calculated based on an assessment of the child's emotional, behavioral, and physical care needs, determined by the child placing agency at the time of adoption
- **Exceptional Rate:** a variable rate based on specific care needs of the child at the time of adoption

The total monthly subsidy cannot exceed the child's foster care maintenance rate or a maximum of \$2,000 per month.

Adoption Assistance Eligibility

A pre-adoptive child who meets **at least one** of the following criteria may be eligible for AA:

- The child is seven years of age or older.
- The child is a member of sibling group of two or more placed together.
- The child has five or more needs that are moderate or intensive in the areas listed in [Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 56.23\(2\)\(a\)1.a – e](#).
- The child is a member of a minority race that cannot be readily placed due to lack of appropriate resources.
- The child is an Indian child as defined in [Wis. Stat. § 48.02\(8g\)](#).
- The child is determined to be at high risk of developing moderate or intensive needs in the areas listed in [Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 56.23\(2\)\(a\)1.a – e](#).

For the child to be eligible for AA, the child must also meet **ALL** the following:

- The child must be under 18 years of age at the time of adoption;
- There has been a determination that the child cannot or should not return to the child's parents; and
- The child is under the guardianship of a child placing agency.

To learn more about AA or find out if a pre-adoptive child is eligible for AA, reach out to your local private, public, or tribal child placing agency.

Review and Appeal Rights

Adoptive parent(s) may request a review or an appeal hearing prior to adoption finalization for either of the following:

- A denial of eligibility for adoption assistance.
- The amount of the approved monthly adoption assistance subsidy.

A review is completed by the Administrator of the Division of Safety and Permanence or their designee. An appeal hearing is a formal motion before the Division of Hearings and Appeals in accordance with [Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 50.17\(1\)](#) and other administrative rules.

A request for review or an appeal hearing must be submitted within 10 days of the Notice of Adoption Assistance Application for Decision Determination. The request must be in writing, signed by the adoptive parent(s), and should include a short statement about the matter. Adoptive parents may request both a review and an appeal.

- Requests for a review should be sent to: Administrator of the Division of Safety and Permanence, PO Box 8916, Madison, WI, 53708.
- Requests for an appeal should be sent to: Division of Hearings and Appeals, PO Box 7875, Madison, WI, 53707.

Adoption Assistance Notification and Review

Adoptive parent(s) with active AA agreements are responsible for notifying DCF of major changes, as required in the AA agreement. Major changes include:

- Adoptive parent(s) address change
- Child acquires new Social Security Number (SSN)
- Child is no longer living with the adoptive parent(s)
- Adoptive parent(s) parental rights to the child have been terminated
- Adoptive parent(s) no longer supporting child
- Child enlists in the military
- Child gets married
- Child attains 18 years of age
- Child completes high school after attaining 18 years of age
- Child was determined eligible for AA under [Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 50.15\(3\)\(a\)3](#) and no longer has an individual educational program (IEP)
- Death of child

Adoption Assistance Amendments

A child may be eligible for an amendment to the adoption assistance agreement if (1) the child's emotional, behavioral, or physical needs have increased and (2) it has been at least 12 months since adoption finalization. An amendment is a one-year increase to the monthly subsidy. An amended monthly subsidy cannot exceed \$2,000 per month.

To apply for an adoption assistance amendment, contact DCFAAAmendments@wi.gov or call 866-666-5532, option 2, to receive the necessary forms. For more information, see [Adoption Assistance: Amendments \(DCF-P-5581\)](#).

Who do I contact if...?

I need to report any of the major changes listed above.	Email: DCFAdoptionAssistance@wi.gov Phone: (866) 666-5532, option 1
I need to discuss conditions for the termination or extension of my child's adoption assistance.	
I would like to learn more about or apply for an amendment.	Email: DCFAAAmendments@wi.gov Phone: (866) 666-5532, option 2
My child's medical providers won't speak to me because I am not listed on the ForwardHealth record.	Email: DCFMedicaid@wi.gov Phone: (866) 666-5532, option 3
My child's medical providers are saying that my child's coverage is inactive.	

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.