

Adoption Assistance

Changes in Adoptive Family Circumstances



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families

Adoption Assistance Overview

Adoption Assistance (AA) provides support to children and families after adoption finalization. AA consists of Title XIX Medicaid (MA) and, in some circumstances, a monthly subsidy. This subsidy is paid by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) to the adoptive parent(s) to help meet the financial demands of caring for a child with special care needs. The AA Agreement is an agreement between DCF and the adoptive parent(s) and cannot be transferred. This document answers common questions about what happens when there is a change of circumstances in the adoptive family, including the death of an adoptive parent(s), the divorce or remarriage of the adoptive parent(s), or the adopted child re-entering out-of-home care.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): Death of an Adoptive Parent

Will the adoption assistance be transferred or continue for the spouse of an adoptive parent who dies?

The spouse of an adoptive parent who dies must be a signatory to the adoption assistance agreement to receive AA. If the adoptive parent married the spouse after the original adoption, the spouse must complete a stepparent adoption to be added to the adoption assistance agreement.

Can the adoption assistance be transferred to the child's guardian?

No. The adoption assistance agreement is between DCF and the adoptive parent(s). If all adoptive parents listed on an AA agreement die, the agreement is terminated. The agreement does not transfer from the adoptive parent(s) to the child's guardian. MA and the monthly subsidy end.

How can the guardian receive adoption assistance for the child?

AA can only be received if the guardian adopts the child, meets all eligibility requirements, and enters into an active adoption assistance agreement. If the guardian wishes to adopt the child, the guardian must apply and be approved for adoption. The guardian will not automatically be approved for adoption or adoption assistance. To learn more about the adoption process and requirements, contact the Wisconsin Family Connections Center.

Does the guardian have to adopt the child?

No. The guardian is not required to adopt the child. AA will not be provided if the child is not adopted.

If the guardian adopts the child, will the adoption assistance amount be the same?

AA will be redetermined. AA eligibility and the monthly subsidy rate will be based on the needs of the child at the time of the new adoption.

How will costs be covered before the guardian adopts the child or the guardian does not adopt the child?

Costs will not automatically be covered. The guardian may explore receiving assistance from social security benefits, life insurance, or inheritance. To learn more about these and other supports, contact your local human services department. Some assistance may be provided if the guardian is a kinship caregiver, foster parent, or adoptive parent. The guardian may be eligible for monthly payments and the child certified for MA.

If an adoptive parent has a terminal illness, can they do anything to prepare?

Yes. The adoptive parent can designate a guardian. If the guardian is interested in adopting the child, the guardian may begin the foster and adoptive home licensing process before the death of the adoptive parent.

FAQs: Re-entry into Out-of-Home Care

Does adoption assistance end if a child re-enters out-of-home care (e.g., foster care or a residential facility)?

Not necessarily. AA will end if the adoptive parent(s) is/are no longer supporting the child or when parental rights of the adoptive parent(s) have been terminated. If the adoptive parent(s)' rights have not been terminated and they are still providing support to the child, the adoption assistance agreement may remain active.

Can adoption assistance payments be re-routed?

All or part of the monthly subsidy may be directly rerouted to a child placing agency (e.g., the county Department of Human Services) by means of a child support order, other court order, or at the direction of the adoptive parent(s). AA will not be rerouted to a third party other than a child placing agency.

FAQs: Divorce or Re-Marriage of the Adoptive Parent(s)

What happens to adoption assistance after the adoptive parent(s) get divorced?

This depends on the adoptive parent(s) divorce decree or marital settlement agreement. Adoptive parent(s) should address the stipulations of the AA with their legal counsel.

If one adoptive parent gets remarried, can the new stepparent receive adoption assistance?

Only if the stepparent has been completed a stepparent adoption of the child. Once the stepparent adoption is complete, contact the Adoption Assistance Program for further details.

Reporting Major Changes

Adoptive parent(s) are responsible for notifying DCF within 30 days of major changes, as these could impact adoption assistance. These include:

- The child is no longer living in the adoptive home
- The adoptive parent(s) stop supporting the child
- The child dies
- The child gets married
- The child enters the military
- The family's address changes
- The adoptive parents' parental rights are terminated
- The child is enrolled in high school after age 18
- The child acquires or changes SSN

Report these major changes to DCF by calling 1-866-666-5532 or sending form [DCF-F-CFS0962](#) to DCFAdoptionAssistance@wisconsin.gov.

Adoption Assistance Help

If you would like more information about adoption assistance, please contact the Adoption Assistance Program, as listed below.

If you would like more information about adoption and post permanency supports, please contact the Wisconsin Family Connections Center:

Phone: 1-800-762-8063 (toll free)

Website: WIFamilyConnectionsCenter.org

"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 Adoption and Interstate Services Section at (608) 422-6931.

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."

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/adoption/assistance>

Emails: DCFAdoptionAssistance@wisconsin.gov or

DCFAAEligibility@wisconsin.gov

Phone: 1-866-666-5532 (toll free)

Address: Adoption Assistance

DCF/DSP

P.O. Box 8916

Madison, WI 53708-8916