

Reimbursable Expenses when Adopting Children with Special Care Needs

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
Division of Safety and Permanence



1. Who is eligible for reimbursement of adoption expenses?

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families provides reimbursement of non-recurring adoption expenses to families who adopt a child with special care needs or a child at risk of developing special care needs. To be eligible for reimbursement, a signed Adoption Assistance Agreement must be in effect with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. The adoption must be finalized before submitting the request for reimbursement of adoption expenses.

2. What are the general guidelines for reimbursement of adoption expenses?

- The maximum reimbursement determined by federal regulations is \$2,000 per child.
- The Department of Children and Families requests that the reimbursement claim be submitted within two years from the date of the adoption finalization.
- Reimbursement can be provided only for the expenses that were necessary for the adoption to occur.
- Reimbursement is paid directly to the adoptive parents, not to service providers (e.g., the adoption agency or attorney).
- Travel expenses, which may include lodging, meals or mileage, are reimbursed at the allowable reimbursement rate in effect at the time the expenses were incurred.
- If the expense is reimbursed by other sources, repayment to the adoptive family by the Department of Children and Families is not allowable.

3. What nonrecurring adoption expenses are eligible for reimbursement?

Nonrecurring adoption expenses are costs incurred by the adoptive parents after the termination of parental rights that were necessary for the adoption to occur. The expenses must be directly related to the legal adoption of a child with special care needs, must not be in violation of any state or federal laws, and have not been reimbursed by the adoptive parents' employer or other source. Reimbursable expenses may include:

- *agency adoption fees* necessary for the adoption (e.g. home study fee);
- *adoption-related attorney fees* after the termination of parental rights;
- *fee for obtaining a new birth certificate* for the adopted child;
- *court fees* for finalization of the adoption;

- *transportation expenses* (vehicle mileage reimbursement, bus fare) incurred for attending home study interviews or pre-placement visits with the child, which are reimbursed at the allowable state rate in effect at the time the expense was incurred. Only required pre-placement visits are eligible for expense reimbursement;
- *airfare costs* when necessary to complete the adoption. The necessity of this cost must be verified by the adoption social worker and will be inclusive of one round trip flight;
- *meal / snack costs* for the adoptive parents and child to be adopted when participation is required to complete the placement or adoption process. These costs are reimbursed at the allowable state rate in effect at the time the expense was incurred;
- *lodging expenses* incurred when participation by the adoptive parents is necessary to complete the placement or adoption process. This cost is reimbursed at the allowable state rate in effect at the time the expense was incurred. One room rental is allowed for reimbursement for the adoptive parents and pre-adoptive child. Additional rooms are at the adoptive family's expense. Costs incurred for additional members, video games, rental of movies and room service are not reimbursable;
- *health and psychological examinations* for the adoptive parents or household family members requested by the adoption worker (if not already paid by Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance);
- *necessary long distance telephone charges* that are documented by enclosing a copy of the telephone bill and identifying the purpose of the call;
- *seminar / course registration fees, required course workbook and mileage reimbursement for the adoptive parent* when attendance is required by the adoption worker. The need for these costs must be documented by the social worker; or,
- *miscellaneous expenses* incurred as a result of a directive by the adoption worker. These expenses must be submitted with the adoption worker's written authorization.

4. What costs are not considered one-time adoption reimbursable expenses?

- expenses incurred prior to termination of parental rights (e.g. attorney costs, medical and school appointments, and visits by birth parents and other relatives);
- travel costs for relatives, friends and siblings unless verified by the adoption worker as expenses necessary for the adoption to occur;

- attorney fees for estate planning (preparation or updating wills, setting up trusts, etc.);
- home remodeling, special accommodations for child, medical equipment and supplies;
- veterinary checkup expenses for household pets and vaccinations;
- immunizations for household members;
- medical expenses and mileage for medical visits for the child in foster care status or pre-adoptive status;
- clothing for the child, toys, adoption party, entertainment expenses, child and family photos;
- copies of adoptive parent birth certificates and marriage license; or,
- birth mother's medical bills or trip expenses incurred when visiting the birth mother and family.

5. How do I request reimbursement?

Complete the One-Time Expense Reimbursement form (DCF-F-CFS0459-E). The form can be obtained from:

- the adoption worker who assisted in the adoption process;
- the adoption portfolio that was provided during the adoption process;
- the Internet (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/pdf/0459.pdf>); or,
- by calling the Adoption Assistance toll-free telephone number (866-666-5532)

6. What needs to accompany the request for reimbursement?

- All original receipts applicable (as noted on the reimbursement request form) and an explanation of how each expense relates to the adoption must be included. Attorney costs and medical costs must be itemized. (Handwritten receipts are not acceptable.)
- A copy of the signed Order of Adoption or Record of Adoption should also be included with the request.

7. When should reimbursement be requested?

Reimbursement can only be requested after the adoption is finalized and the request must be submitted no later than two years after the adoption finalization date.

8. Where should the “One Time Reimbursement Request” form be sent?

The completed form and supporting documentation should be submitted to:

Adoption Assistance
DCF/DSP
P.O. Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916

Telephone: (866) 666-5532 (toll-free)
Fax: (608) 264-6750

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

9. What happens when the department receives the request for reimbursement and when can reimbursement be expected?

When the reimbursement request is received, expenses are reviewed and a determination made for reimbursement. Appropriate contact will be made with the adoptive parents as necessary to clarify or obtain additional information. A check for reimbursement of approved expenses will be sent to the adoptive parents within eight weeks of receiving complete documentation.

10. Who may I contact if I have questions when completing the reimbursement form?

Contact the Adoption Assistance Program Accountant at (866) 666-5532 (toll-free).

DCF is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access this information in an alternate format, or need it translated into another language, please contact 608-266-8787 or 711 TTY. For civil rights questions call (608) 422-6889 or 711 TTY (toll-free).