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# THE COMPASS



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A Family Guide to Post Adoption Resources in Colorado

## Preface

The information in **The Compass** is as accurate as was possible at the time of printing. Families may find that some information, including eligibility criteria and services available, changes over time and varies from place to place in the state. The accuracy of information in publications and websites to which **The Compass** refers is the responsibility of those who authored them.

The term children with *special needs* means different things to different agencies. Some use it to refer only to children with identifiable disabilities. Others use it also to refer to children who have been institutionalized, are part of a sibling group, have emotional/behavioral problems, are part of an ethnic/racial minority, have experienced abuse or neglect, and/or have lived in foster care. In **The Compass**, the term children with *special needs* refers to the definition that is used by the agency or system being described at the time.

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## Introduction

Adoption is a wonderful process *and* it can also be very challenging. The circumstances that led to your child separating from her birth family have created some special needs for her. Some adopted children carry emotional scars from those early experiences that surface in a variety of ways during their lives. Others have neurological or developmental difficulties from early nutritional deficiencies, parental substance abuse, physical abuse injuries or neglect. Still others have learning, cognitive, sensory or physical disabilities. Many will, at some time, have questions about their histories.

Many adoptive parents find that parenting adopted children is *different* from parenting birth children. They discover that they must learn new skills, find new resources, develop new support networks, gain new knowledge and deal with new agencies. They discover that adoption is a long process, not a one-time event that happens in the judge's chambers. And they learn that their child's history is now a permanent part of their lives too.

*The Compass* was written by an adoptive parent of three brothers with special needs who are now adults and who survived the ups and downs you're facing. A committee of adoptive parents shared their ideas based on their experiences. We want you to know that your family is not unique no matter how difficult the situations may be that you are facing, and that most families and children find a path that works for them.

Every adoptive parent is likely to find something of value in *The Compass*, but not every section will be helpful to every family. Some sections are more relevant to families of children with disabilities, while others will be more relevant to families of children with emotional/behavioral problems. Some sections speak to families of young children while others speak to families of teens. It is left to you to decide which areas are for your family.

View *The Compass* as a *starting point*. It is *not* an exhaustive list of the resources available to families in Colorado. You will find additional resources in your community as you talk with professionals and other parents along the way.

We suggest that you read *The Compass* cover to cover when you first receive it. Then tuck it away somewhere safe and return to it when you need it.

*We wish you and your family the best of luck!*

## Diagnostic Evaluations

At some time you may notice one or more of the following situations which may indicate that your child has a need for special services outside the family unit:

- ▶ he is falling behind in school and/or is frequently in trouble in school
- ▶ she is destructive to herself, others, animals or the environment
- ▶ he has few or no friends
- ▶ she lies frequently and for no apparent reason
- ▶ he doesn't seem to see or hear well or doesn't process information well
- ▶ she isn't meeting developmental milestones
- ▶ he rarely makes eye contact and doesn't like to be touched
- ▶ she is abusing/using alcohol or drugs
- ▶ he seems to feel no remorse
- ▶ she has inappropriate sexual behavior



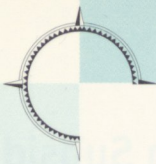
For these or other reasons you may observe, it may become important to seek an evaluation by an expert to determine what is going on, how you can help and what special services might be available.

Different types of evaluations are available through different sources and for children of different ages. You can call to find out exactly what an evaluation would include and select the type that will be most helpful.

### *Before the evaluation:*

- ▶ Give the specialist a list of your questions, concerns and observations to help him/her in the evaluation and to insure that your list is addressed.
- ▶ You may want to arrange with a friend or advocate to accompany you for the evaluation report to help you remember questions and answers and to support you.





### *After the evaluation:*

- ▶ Expect a written report as well as an in-person summary of the results.
- ▶ Expect practical suggestions as well as a diagnosis.
- ▶ Remember that only you can decide who should see the results of the evaluation.
- ▶ Feel free to arrange a second opinion if you desire one. A second evaluation may not be covered by any funding.
- ▶ Know that you do not need to make any decisions about treatment at the time you first hear the evaluation results. Take time to think about it.
- ▶ Know that you can call back later with new questions that may arise.
- ▶ Remember that in most cases **you** are the best expert on your child. You can accept some recommendations that you feel “fit” and not use others.

### *Some sources for evaluation are:*

- ▶ Child Find: call the public schools, free of charge
- ▶ Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT): see page 6
- ▶ Early Childhood Connections: see page 11
- ▶ Health Care Program for Children with Special Needs (HCP): free of charge with income eligibility, see page 7
- ▶ Public schools: birth to 21 if child receives special education services
- ▶ Private hospitals and private providers: check with your private insurance
- ▶ Ask other parents, teachers, friends, and therapists for other sources for evaluations

## Federal and State Adoption Subsidies

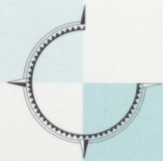
Families who adopt USA-born children with special needs who meet eligibility requirements may be entitled to adoption assistance. Adoption assistance may include Medicaid, medical assistance, a dormant subsidy, or a payment for a long or short period of time to help cover the cost of providing for those special needs (physical, medical, emotional and therapeutic). This is true in every county in Colorado.

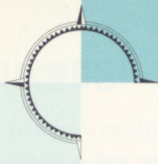
This assistance is critical to families who may discover only after time passes just how expensive meeting a child's special needs can be. It is also critical to the child who deserves the best in every type of care and service. The most basic purpose of adoption assistance is to remove barriers so that children with special needs can be adopted. Do *not* feel hesitant to request comprehensive adoption assistance coverage so that a barrier will not prevent you later from meeting one of your child's needs.

Your child may be eligible for Medicaid and/or you may have an excellent private insurance policy. Medicaid and your private policy, however, may not cover the cost of everything your child needs, and you may not always have that same policy.

The process for securing adoption assistance is a negotiation between the county and family. The county should inform you if the child is one who is eligible for adoption assistance. If they do not mention adoption assistance, however, you should ask about the child's eligibility and request a copy of the adoption assistance application. Adoption assistance is based on the child's eligibility and special needs. It is extremely important to make complete arrangements for adoption assistance *before* the adoption is final. If you wait until after finalization, securing assistance can be very difficult, it may involve a legal process and may include establishing if the child meets eligibility requirements.

Consider the time before finalization to be a fact-finding period. Investigate your state and county policies on adoption assistance. Ask about both monthly "adoption assistance payments" and medical assistance for services that are not covered by Medicaid. The National Adoption Assistance Training, Resource and Information Network (NAATRIN) may have helpful information for you that is specific to Colorado. NAATRIN can also provide you with a copy of P.L. 96-272 of the Social Security Act, as amended, which can be helpful.





It is important to document every special need (physical, medical, emotional and therapeutic) currently known and to list potential “at risk” elements that have been identified by the worker or professional who has assessed the child’s needs. Information that is documented may be used at a later date to add services that may not be needed at the present time. This process allows the family to identify the barriers and receive a *dormant* adoption assistance or medical subsidy. This preserves your right to access services *as needed*. There is an appeal/negotiation process available to you before finalization if you cannot reach an agreement on the adoption assistance amount.

After finalization you will need to review and renew the adoption assistance agreement annually. Do not remove anything from the agreement. Increasing allocations or adding new assistance after finalization is usually very difficult. You may want to purchase the book *Adoption Subsidy* by Tim O’Hanlon or *Achieving Permanence for Every Child: The Effective Use of Adoption Subsidies*. Some families find it helpful to consult with other adoptive parents and/or the NAATRIN hotline for advice, although the adoption assistance negotiation is strictly between the family and the county only.

National Adoption Assistance Training, Resource and Information  
Network Hotline (NAATRIN): .....1-800-470-6665

Book: *Adoption Subsidy* by Tim O’Hanlon .....(202)-638-2952

Booklet: *Achieving Permanence for Every Child:  
The Effective Use of Adoption Subsidies* .....1-800-470-6665

State of Colorado, Child Welfare Services,  
Adoption Unit: .....(303) 866-3228



## Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT)

EPSDT is a federally mandated program for children ages birth to 21 who are receiving Medicaid benefits. All children who receive Medicaid because of foster care or adoption are eligible for EPSDT and can receive services under EPSDT as soon as their Medicaid eligibility begins.

EPSDT services include regular medical, dental, vision and hearing check ups, diagnosis of problems, and treatment services for all *medically necessary* conditions. Medical services are provided through a child's chosen primary care physician (PCP). Dentists who accept Medicaid reimbursement provide dental services. Referrals for treatment of *medically necessary* concerns must be made by the child's PCP as a result of a comprehensive screening exam. This exam includes a complete health, nutritional and developmental history, a "head to toe" unclothed physical examination, health education, a growth and developmental check, appropriate urine and blood tests (including lead screening for children at 12 and 24 months), immunizations and any necessary additional tests. The PCP may do initial hearing and vision screens. Referrals, if needed, may include home health care needs, behavioral and nutritional concerns, growth and development and special care needs. After the screening, alternatives for treatment are considered and any *medically necessary* treatments for children with special needs are identified in a treatment or service plan and then are covered by Medicaid for children on EPSDT. Some treatments may require prior authorization.

To take advantage of EPSDT services for your child, contact your primary care physician, HMO or local public health agency. EPSDT Case Managers and Outreach Workers are available in all Public Health Departments and County Nursing Services.

HMOs, PCPs and EPSDT Case Managers have varying levels of expertise in accessing EPSDT services. If a medical service that your child needs is denied, it is often because a strong enough case for its medical necessity was not made. When your PCP, HMO or EPSDT Case Manager cannot help you, contact Medicaid Customer Service and or the Managed Care Ombudsperson. Medicaid has an appeals process and you can appeal any decision. A re-statement of the case for medical necessity is often successful.

For an EPSDT Case Manager, call your local Public Health Department or Nursing Service listed in the county section of the phone book

Medicaid Customer Service: . . . (303)-866-3513 or 1-800-221-3943

Managed Care Ombudsperson:

Inside Metro Denver . . . . .(303)-744-7667

Outside Metro Denver . . . . .1-877-HELP-123



# Other Sources

Sometimes items or services that can't be funded through medical insurance *can* be funded through other sources. Many families find that they benefit from seeking assistance from a variety of sources.

You may want to contact the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council to request a copy of the booklet *A Guide to Adoption Benefits in Colorado*. Outlined in this booklet are the Department of Social/Human Services Adoption Subsidy Program, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the non-recurring adoption expenses reimbursement, the Health Care Program for Children with Special Needs (HCP), and the Family Support Services Program (FSSP).

### *Other sources of financial assistance you may want to explore are:*

- ▶ Federal Tax Credit: Adoptive parents can claim a one-time tax credit on their federal income tax return for qualified adoption expenses. Talk to your accountant or tax preparer.
- ▶ Employee Benefits Programs: See your employer.
- ▶ Special Subsidies for adoptive families in the military: Check with your Family Support Center.
- ▶ Adoption Loans: Talk with your banker or credit union. Also contact the National Adoption Foundation for information about their grants and loans.
- ▶ Consumer Involvement Fund: With this fund, the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Planning Council can reimburse people with disabilities and family members for expenses to attend conferences and advocacy activities. Call the Council.
- ▶ Women, Infant and Children Program (WIC): Children eligible for Medicaid are also eligible for WIC through which they can receive cereal, milk, peanut butter, juice, eggs and cheese. Call your local Department of Social/Human Services.

Colorado Developmental Disabilities  
Planning Council: .....(303) 894-2345  
National Adoption Foundation: .....(203) 791-3811  
Booklet: *How to Make Adoption  
an Affordable Option* .....1-800-451-5246

## Educational Supports

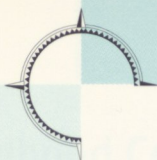
Children whose special need is significant enough to meet established guidelines can receive help in the public schools through IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Eligibility for special education services is determined with a multi-disciplinary evaluation and then is reviewed every three years with a repeat of the testing, if appropriate. You or your child's teacher can begin the referral process to receive special education services.

**Special Education** services include a wide variety of supports geared toward helping the child reach her *educational* goals. They address the child's unique needs and are provided at no cost to the parent. They offer special full or part day classes, help in the regular classroom, therapies, social work and psychological support, special equipment, adaptations in scheduling, grading and expectations. Your child's involvement with special education services is planned yearly at a meeting where an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed and written.

Parents can learn about how best to work with the school and to advocate for your child through the IEP process from PEAK Parent Center or by attending a weekend conference called Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP). Also many local Arc programs can help you prepare for the IEP meeting and a representative may attend with you if you desire. The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People may also be helpful if problems arise with the school program.

Some areas where parent involvement and advocacy are especially necessary include: educating school staff on adoption and adoption-related issues, negotiating the amount of staff support your child will receive, determining your child's educational placement, and developing a proactive behavior support plan if it is needed.

You can receive information about special education services by calling the Special Education Department of your local school. You will need information about the services available, eligibility, and your and your child's rights. You also can receive a booklet called *Handbook of Rights to Special Education in Colorado: A Guide for Parents* from the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Planning Council.



Children with special needs who do not meet the criteria for IDEA may qualify for a 504 PLAN under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Some classroom “modifications” and “accommodations” may be available through this plan. Many parents have found that their child’s school is not well informed about 504 regulations. You may want to contact the Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People for a low cost booklet about 504.

At some schools, social workers, counselors and psychologists lead **Groups** for students with similar special needs. Students may or may not have to be eligible for special education services to attend. The focus may be on: substance abuse, social skills, anger management, and so on. Contact the school counselor at your child’s school.

You may find that your child could benefit from one-on-one instruction from a private **Tutor** of your choice. Some schools maintain lists of tutors who parents can hire. You also can advertise and/or learn of tutors from other parents.

You can usually locate area **Private Schools** by looking in the yellow pages under Schools, Private.

Call the Colorado Department of Education for a full information packet on **Home-Schooling**, including a list of support groups. School districts are required to allow home schooling parents to order materials. They also are required to allow home schooled children to participate in extra-curricular activities and to attend classes part-time on a space available basis.

- Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP): . . . . .(303) 688-4756
- Arc of Colorado (Ask for the office nearest you): . . . .(303) 864-9334
- Legal Center for People with Disabilities  
and Older People: . . . . .(303) 722-0300
- PEAK Parent Center: . . . . .1-800-284-0251
- Colorado Developmental Disabilities  
Planning Council: . . . . .(303) 894-2345
- Colorado Department of Education: . . . . .(303) 866-6600

## Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSFP)

The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSFP) is guided and funded by the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act, Title IV-B, sub-part 2. Local projects provide a variety of family preservation and family support services to many families. One of the areas in which these projects are required to work is adoption promotion and support.

By October of 1999 there will be 26 PSSFP projects in Colorado. Some projects link with large established community projects. Others remain independent. All select their own name. These projects design their adoption promotion and support activities based on the needs of their particular community, and so services vary from place to place in the state.

In general, their adoption related services are focused on providing information to families considering adoption, helping to coordinate with local agencies to meet the extensive needs of adoptive and kinship families, supporting specialized training about adoption, providing flexible funding to fill gaps in services, and advocating for families with service systems.

Some of the specific services provided by PSSFP projects around the state might include but are not limited to: adoptive parent support groups, training sessions and written materials on adoption topics, respite care, summer camp scholarships, emergency assistance, home visitation, mentoring, Spanish translation, preparing families for involvement in systems such as the courts or social services with “walk-throughs,” and helping families in crisis situations to link with service providers.

When you contact a PSSFP project, you will be connected with a Family Advocate who can help you get involved in services that fit your family’s particular needs. There is no fee for service. Remember that PSSFP projects are committed to responding to needs in their community—they invite you to identify your family’s unique strengths and needs.

*To locate the PSSFP project nearest you, call one of these offices:*

Urban Children’s Mental Health Coalition: . . . . .(303) 308-1859

La Gente Project: . . . . .(719) 589-5851

# Early Childhood Connections (ECC)

When a family adopts a child who is at risk or has special needs and is age birth to 3 years, they are entitled to some services under Part C of the federal "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act." In Colorado these services are provided under the name of Early Childhood Connections for Infants, Toddlers and Families (ECC).

Children are eligible if they have a significant delay in one or more of these areas: communication, motor, sensory, cognition, social/emotional, self-help. Also eligible are children who have specific conditions that are associated with significant delays such as Down Syndrome, Fragile X, Spina Bifida, blindness or deafness, PKU, AIDS, Cerebral Palsy, low birth weight, and attachment disorder, to name a few.

### *The services available through Early Childhood Connections are:*

*A free screening or multi-disciplinary evaluation* will be used to determine if your child is eligible for service and the information should be helpful in planning for his needs.

*An Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)* is the written record of the planning meeting completed to identify the supports and services your child needs, how those will be provided and by whom.

*A Service Coordinator* can be assigned to your family to help you locate the services your child needs, coordinate with health providers, help monitor services, coordinate evaluations, and help develop a plan to prepare your child to transition to activities after age 3.

There is no charge for these specific ECC services. Your Service Coordinator and your IFSP team will help you to locate sources for other services that may be identified in the planning meeting.

When you call the toll-free statewide number for Early Childhood Connections you automatically will be forwarded to the office of the ECC Coordinator of the county from which you are calling.

Early Childhood Connections statewide  
toll free number: .....1-888-777-4041  
ECC Administrative Office at the Colorado  
Department of Education: .....(303) 866-6710

## Developmental Disabilities Services

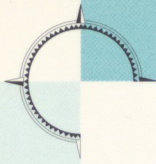
Colorado's Developmental Disabilities Services contracts with local agencies called ***Community Centered Boards*** (CCB) which are responsible for a full range of services to people with developmental disabilities from birth through old age. There are 20 CCBs serving various areas of the state. CCBs may provide the services themselves, contract with local agencies for services or do both. There is no charge to families for services.

If your child is over 5 years old and has a disability that began before age 22, is expected to be life-long, and impacts several areas of his life such as communication, mobility, social, self-care, independence, physical abilities and has a cognitive disability with an IQ below 70, he may be eligible for services. Children younger than 5 may be eligible if they have a developmental delay.

The CCB system offers a wide array of supports to families with minor children who have developmental disabilities and live at home with family. The Family Support Services Program (FSSP) offers a financial benefit to families on behalf of the child. The amount of the payment differs depending on the level of need in the family. The payment is for costs related to the child's special needs such as: respite care, transportation, special diets or equipment, home or vehicle adaptations and/or repairs, therapies, family support, recreation and leisure needs. Through the CCB, families with minor children can also connect with parent training, early childhood programs, a loan fund, the Children's Extensive Support Waiver and the Children's Medical Services Waiver. The waiver programs can offer home health services, medical and dental assistance, and homemaker services.

The CCB system also offers an array of supports to adults with developmental disabilities who live at home with families. Vocational services, community participation activities, transportation, assistance with medical and dental expenses, personal care assistance, therapies, home modification and hearing/vision assistance are some examples. The CCB system also serves adults with developmental disabilities in residential placements such as group homes, host homes and other supervised living situations.

By calling the state office for Developmental Disabilities Services you can receive a booklet called the *General Comparison of Community Services* which gives a detailed outline of all the service categories available through CCBs. It also lists names and phone numbers of each local CCB office.

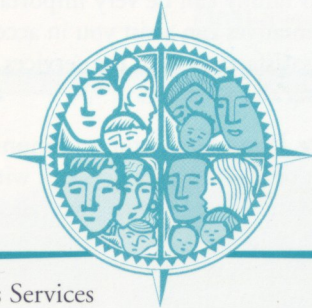


Families are urged to complete the application process even if they do not need services immediately. To begin the process, call your local CCB and set up an appointment to discuss your needs, fill out an application and hear about the local services. After your child's eligibility is determined, the CCB has 30 days to hold a staffing at which your child's involvement will be planned. Staffings then are held at least annually.

Philosophically the CCB system is working toward community integration and individualized lifestyles based on the choices of the customer. Programs do still exist which are *not* integrated. This is a large system and so to ensure the best individually tailored program for your child with developmental disabilities, it is important to remain actively involved. In addition there are long waiting lists for some services and many people find this frustrating. You may want to ask your Case Manager about adult services and place your child on the waiting list for those at age 14.

One convenience of large statewide systems is that there is a mechanism to transfer from place to place within the state. If your family moves within Colorado your child will remain eligible for CCB services, although the services may vary from place to place.

Developmental Disabilities Services has a **Mediation Pilot Program** to assist consumers who are dissatisfied with some aspect of their service. A trained mediator can assist you to communicate and work with the CCB to resolve any differences. In addition, many local Arc agencies can assist you if you are dissatisfied.



Colorado Developmental Disabilities Services  
(ask for the CCB nearest you): .....(303) 866-7450  
The Mediation Pilot Program: .....1-888-815-6684  
Arc of Colorado  
(ask for the Arc nearest you): .....(303) 864-9334

## Mental Health Supports

Each area of the state has a *Community Mental Health Center (CMHC)* which is funded by state and federal dollars, and a *Mental Health Assessment and Service Agency (MHASA)*. The CMHC is the agency which provides mental health services to members of the local community; the MHASA is the agency which is responsible for providing necessary mental health services to people who are Medicaid eligible. In some areas of the state, the CMHC and the MHASA are the same agency.

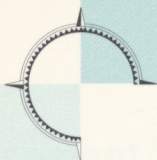
If you desire mental health services for your child who has Medicaid, you should contact the MHASA first. They maintain a network of service providers in the community on contract and on staff at CMHCs. If you have private insurance or will pay privately for services, you can contact the CMHC first.

Help is available for a range of difficulties including adjustment problems related to adoption or disability, early childhood issues, adolescent problems, conduct disorders and attachment disorder, as well as conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. The services available at a CMHC vary from place to place but may include: out-patient therapy, school based therapy, in-home support, day treatment, hospitalization, residential care, crisis intervention support and medication management. Limited respite care and mentors may also be available.

It is important to tell the staff person who first meets with you if you prefer to work with someone with experience in adoption, disability, attachment, child or adolescent issues, or whatever your special needs may be. Your advocacy for your family can be very important. Family Advocates and Consumer Representatives can assist you in accessing the services you need and in resolving any dissatisfaction with the services you receive. You can appeal any decision regarding the services.

*Private Providers* in the community may accept Medicaid insurance if they are part of the provider network with a MHASA or they may have a sliding scale. Many accept private insurance. When you contact a private provider, you can request an introductory meeting which may or may not be free of charge. You then can interview the provider and share information about your family situation.





Whether you work with a CMHC, a MHASA or a private provider, you can interview the provider selected to work with your child or family. You may want to ask about the following:

- ▶ His training, experience and specialty. Is he licensed? Where and what did he study? What is his adoption experience? (Many families find that personal experience is better than professional experience in adoption).
- ▶ Her fees, billing and payment arrangement.
- ▶ His approach. Will he meet individually with your child or in a group? Will he meet with the family? Are there groups that he recommends for your child or your family?
- ▶ Her availability for after-hours crisis support. How can you reach her?

You can call the Mental Health Licensing Boards to learn if any complaints have been filed against a provider.

To locate the MHASA or  
CMHC nearest you: ..... (303)-866-7400  
Consumer and Family Affairs,  
Colorado Mental Health Services: .....1-800-811-7648  
Mental Health Licensing Boards: .....(303)-894-7749



## Respite Care

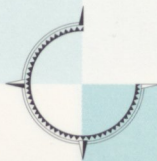
Most adoptive parents discover that respite care options are rather limited. Experience has shown that it is more common for programs to assist families with respite care by providing a reimbursement for the costs of the care, rather than by supervising and placing respite providers. Families, however, report that they have difficulty finding people with the skills and motivation to provide care for their children no matter how much money they offer. Unfortunately, *The Compass* does not have any easy answers either.

Parents may want to ask every professional with whom they have contact if they know of sources for respite care. Parents should also explore options through the local Community Mental Health Center (page 14), the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Project (page 10) and the Community Centered Board (page 12). Sometimes YMCAs, schools, parenting centers and community centers have programs that free parents for periods of time.

Often parents advertise in the newspapers and hire respite care providers themselves. You may want to advertise, screen and train applicants *before* you need them, as some time and effort are required. Standard applications for employment are available at many office supply stores. You can ask for and check references. You can also request chosen applicants to provide you with recent results of both a background check from the Central Registry (which keeps records of child abuse allegations) at the Colorado Department of Human Services and fingerprinting from the local police department. There are fees for both. After recruiting, interviewing and screening applicants, parents then handle the training themselves and can explore local programs for re-imbursement.

For teens, some communities have emergency or runaway shelters designed to offer short-term housing and support. They can be helpful as a place for an adolescent to “cool off” after a difficult time at home. The family or teen may be able to make arrangements for the teen to stay at a shelter on their own. Many are grant funded and free of charge to families. The local Department of Social/Human Services may be able to tell you if a shelter exists in your community.

Central Registry: .....(303)-866-3003



## Law Enforcement/Juvenile Justice System

Some adopted children, especially adolescents, bring themselves and their families into contact with law enforcement authorities and the juvenile justice system, sometimes even repeatedly. Acting in ways that lead to involvement with law enforcement and juvenile justice can be one of the ways your child/teen acts out his confusion and anger about his history and identity.

For most adoptive families, contact with the police, courts and judges, detention centers and probation officers is the least expected and most frightening experience they encounter. It's a system with which they've had little or no experience. Adoptive families also often find little understanding from neighbors, family and friends when their child becomes involved in this system.

There are typically three ways a child or adolescent may enter contact with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system:

- ▶ The child/teen refuses to go to school. Because school attendance is mandated by law, schools have a responsibility to report to authorities in chronic cases. If your child has an attendance problem, you should be able to meet with school staff and work out an agreement for communication and consequences.
- ▶ The child/teen engages once or repeatedly in illegal behavior in the community which leads to his arrest. In this situation, you may want to hire a private attorney or have one assigned to your child's case by the Public Defender's Office. Many cities have diversion programs which may provide helpful consequences for your child. These programs often involve community service, probation, mandatory substance abuse treatment or classes such as anger management.
- ▶ The child/teen may do things at home which are dangerous and/or illegal and she may be unwilling to accept your limits or controls. She may threaten or become violent or destructive at home, run away repeatedly and for significant periods of time, refuse the structure of family rules such as curfew, or steal from family members. After they have tried everything, many parents contact the police themselves for help. This can sometimes lead to new services for your child/teen.

If you do find yourself facing this arena, be certain to seek support from your child's therapist, other adoptive parents and supportive friends and family. Ask the judge at your child's first court appearance if your judicial district is one that has a court Case Manager to help families negotiate the system, and how you can contact him/her if it does.

## Out-of-Home Placements

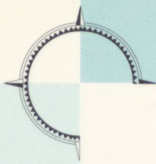
It is not unusual for children who are adopted to need to live outside their families for periods of time for increased structure, intensive therapy or diagnostic evaluation. This kind of living arrangement does not necessarily mean the adoption is disrupting. The adoptive family can continue to parent the child even while she lives somewhere else for a long or short period of time. For families, the decision to arrange for their child to live somewhere else can be very difficult, but for some children, this kind of placement is another type of special need.

A wide range of family support services exists in most communities. Families who do consider or seek out-of-home placement do so only after they exhaust all those options and continue to face severe and/or dangerous behavior at home, and/or as a way to avert those extreme situations from occurring at home. If you are in this situation, it may be helpful to document behaviors of concern, as well as efforts you have made to alleviate them.

**Core Services** through the Department of Social/Human Services are programs offered to families of eligible children as alternatives to out-of-home care or in conjunction with out-of-home care to either reduce the level of placement needed or to facilitate the child being able to remain at home. The basic Core Services are: home based intervention, intensive family therapy, life skills, day treatment, sexual abuse treatment, special economic assistance, mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and county designed services in some counties. Contact the County Department of Social/Human Services.

Hospital placements are usually **Short Term Placements**. In-patient evaluations are often completed in the hospital setting and may take a few days to several weeks. In addition, after a severe crisis, placement in a psychiatric unit may occur for intensive, highly structured treatment, typically for a few weeks. With private insurance, the family often can arrange for an in-patient evaluation or hospital treatment on their own. If your child has Medicaid, the MHASA (see page 14) would make the referral if hospitalization is determined to be necessary.

Foster care and long term group care are types of **Long Term Placements**. Often foster parents receive on-going training and support from professionals to care for troubled children and adolescents. Long term group care settings often serve children/teens for 6 months to 2 years. Some are on campuses with an on-grounds school, while others are small group homes and residents



attend public schools. These programs vary widely in terms of their structure, services and philosophy. Families may be able to visit in advance of placement to learn about the program.

The cost for long term out-of-home care is extremely high and most families seek assistance from the state. Families generally are expected to contribute a portion of the cost based on their income. For families where no abuse or neglect has occurred, the Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) or MHASA (see page 14) is the agency involved in arranging long term placement. Recently passed House Bill 1116 enables families to work through the CMHC to access state funding for out-of-home placement, when deemed appropriate, without court involvement.

Community Mental Health Centers and MHASA

(see page 14): .....(303)-866-7400

To request a list of residential treatment programs statewide,  
call Child Care Licensing: .....(303)-866-5958



## Search and Reunion

When the time comes that your child or you want information about her birth family, there are many sources of help.

For non-identifying information for children adopted through counties, Colorado Senate Bill 96 allows non-profit adoption agencies to search for and release that information to adopted persons over age 21 and to adoptive families. Currently Adoption Options is the only agency authorized to search for and release that information. Once they receive a formal request and the fee from you, they will have an adoption counselor search the record and release to you any non-identifying information that is available. Call Adoption Options for the current fee schedule and more details.

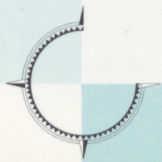
For non-identifying information for children adopted through private agencies, adopted persons over 21 or adoptive families should contact the private agency which handled the adoption. They can search and release to you what information is available.

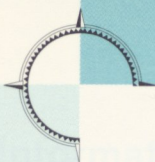
For identifying information and reunion, the Colorado Confidential Intermediary Service trains confidential volunteer intermediaries to perform a search for an adult adoptee, adoptive parents, birth parents or siblings. The adoption had to have taken place in Colorado and you petition the court in the county where the adoption occurred. The fees are based on the cost of the search. Call for current fee information and for more details.

The Colorado Voluntary Adoption Registry will release information if both the adoptee and the birth parent have registered. The adoptee must be 21 years or older.

Effective September 1, 1999, records (including the original birth certificate) of adoptions finalized on or after this date shall be open for copying by an adult adoptee or his/her adoptive parent, grandparent, spouse or legal representative. There are some restrictions which can be initiated by either the birth parent or an adult adoptee. For more information, contact the Adoption Unit of the Colorado Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services.

In the case of international adoption, families will need to research the laws of the particular country involved. Many families find that little or no information about the birth parents is available. Alternatives to specific





information might be visiting the country and/or community where your child was born. On the Internet you may be able to find a support network of parents who adopted children from the same country as you and from them you can learn about where to start.

For many people the search and reunion process can be stressful and may or may not bring the desired results. There are support groups on the Internet and in local communities for people who are searching. Many Internet websites feature support groups. Two community groups in Colorado are: Adoptees in Search and The Adoption Triad Group. They may be able to suggest other groups as well.

Check the Adoption Information page in this booklet (page 23) for names of catalogs of books on adoption topics. There are many printed now on the search and reunion process from the perspective of all parties involved.

Adoption Options: . . . . .	(303)-695-1601
Colorado Confidential Intermediary Service: . . . . .	(303)-237-6919
Colorado Voluntary Adoption Registry: . . . . .	(303)-692-2188
Adoptees in Search Hotline: . . . . .	(303)-232-6302
Adoption Triad Support Group: . . . . .	(719)-593-1435
State Adoption Unit . . . . .	(303)-866-3228



## Support Groups

Many adoptive parents find that no one really understands what they are going through except other adoptive parents. These are some of the kinds of support groups where you can meet others with the same experiences:

***Adoptive Parent groups:*** The group may be for new or experienced adoptive parents, persons considering adoption, or parents who have adopted internationally.

***Special Needs groups:*** Some groups are for parents of children with a specific special need such as Down syndrome, ADHD, autism, substance abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome/effect, emotional/behavioral problems to name a few.

In some groups the focus is on sharing among parents, while in others it is on advocacy and in still others on education and training. Each group may combine all of these at one time or another.

Some groups are on-going; others meet for a specified number of weeks. Some are open to anyone; others have specific criteria. Some meet in members' homes, others in community locations such as churches or schools. Some are affiliated with an agency and facilitated by a professional; others are independent and the group members facilitate. Some have a fee; others do not. All groups should have a confidentiality agreement.

To locate an existing group, call The Adoption Exchange. They try to keep an updated statewide list of support groups. Also check with your Social/Human Services Worker and ask your child's therapist. Many support groups are also listed on the Internet.

Consider starting your own group. Plan a first meeting date, time and place and advertise through word of mouth, school newsletters, flyers, and the newspaper. At the first meeting, members can decide together the specifics of the group such as meeting frequency, time and place, as well as the balance between sharing, advocacy and education.

The Adoption Exchange: .....1-800-451-5246



## Adoption Information

The **Internet** offers a wealth of information on adoption. If you don't have a computer or don't know how to use one, check with a friend or your local library. You can search under the word "adoption" or under a related topic such as "attachment disorder" or "Down Syndrome," for instance. You can make contact with other adoptive parents, find support groups, find general information about adoption, look at photolistings of waiting children and do research on adoption on the Internet. There are literally hundreds of listings on adoption related websites on the Internet. A good place to start is with the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse ([www.calib.com/naic](http://www.calib.com/naic)). This site includes a fact sheet on how to evaluate the reliability of other websites, resource listings, and information.

At your local library or a college library, you can ask the librarian's help in locating adoption-related titles of **Books**. Most libraries will purchase books at the request of patrons. In addition, your librarian can use the Inter Library Loan System to borrow books for you from other libraries across the state.

These are two excellent **Catalogs** which list the titles and descriptions of books on adoption related topics:

Adoption Book Catalog, Tapestry Books: . . . . . 1-800-765-2367  
[www.tapestrybooks.com](http://www.tapestrybooks.com)

Adoption Families of America,  
The Bookstore: . . . . . 1-800-372-3300

The National Adoption Assistance Training, Resource, and Information Network (NAATRIN) maintains an up-to-date adoption assistance database on both a national and state by state basis, staffs a hotline, and offers adoption assistance training sessions for adoptive parents and adoption workers. Hotline number: 1-800-470-6665.

Talking with other parents, you can learn of their favorite websites, books, articles and other information sources on any topic. You'll be amazed at how much is out there!

## Colorado Resources

*The Adoption Exchange* (1-800-451-5246 or [www.adoptex.org](http://www.adoptex.org)) is a non-profit organization that has connected over 2600 children with special needs with a permanent family during the past seventeen years. Core services of recruitment, training, and advocacy are provided through a central office in Aurora, Colorado, as well as branch offices in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, for its eight member states. A library of adoption-related books and videos are available to the public, as well as a variety of other resources.

*Promoting Safe and Stable Families* (see page 10) work in adoption promotion and support throughout Colorado.

The book *How to Adopt in Colorado* describes the nuts and bolts of the adoption process in this state, lists all of the licensed adoption agencies in Colorado and provides a resource list including websites on adoption, a bibliography and agencies providing on-going support and services. It can be purchased from Colorado Parents for all Children at (303)-567-4436.

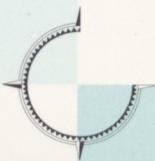
The *Adoption Unit* of the Colorado Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Services is at (303)-866-3228 or try [www.cdhs.state.co.us](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us).

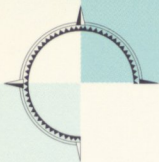
## Other Colorado Resources

The *PEAK Parent Center* (1-800-284-0251) provides information on activities and issues relating to parenting children with special needs and on inclusion in the school setting. Their focus is statewide.

The directory *Start Here: A Guide to Resources and Services for Families of Children with Disabilities* is updated annually. It is available from the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Planning Council at (303)-894-2345.

*The Colorado Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division*, Colorado Department of Human Services, oversees a statewide system for public prevention and treatment programs for alcohol and drug abuse problems for residents of Colorado, including adolescents and adults. To locate the program nearest you, call the state office at (303)-866-7480.





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The Colorado Department of Human Services provides administration and public oversight for all adoption programs in the state, as well as specialized services for children with developmental disabilities. The Adoption Exchange is a private non-profit agency with a 17-year history of connecting waiting children with special needs with permanent families.



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