

Frequently Asked Questions about Adoption Support and Subsidies

NOTE: Policy and procedure about adoption support and subsidies is subject to change. These answers are general guidelines. Talk to your caseworker or the Permanency Planning Specialist for any changes in procedures or policies.

Why does OCS provide adoption subsidies? How do I know if my child is eligible for an adoption subsidy?

OCS encourages adoption of children from the foster care system. Under federal and state law, a subsidy may be provided to families who would not be able to offer an adoptive home to a hard-to-place/special needs child without continuing financial and/or medical assistance. OCS has an Adoption Assistance Program to provide medical and/or financial assistance in such circumstances.

When should I talk to my case worker about a possible subsidy?

As soon as the permanency plan for the child becomes adoption by your family, start talking with your case worker about adoption support. The negotiation of a subsidy amount is a series of dialogues, not a one-time discussion. OCS is required by Federal regulation to make a reasonable effort to place a child without a subsidy, so please know that your case worker has to ask if you can adopt without a subsidy.

How do I figure out what I should ask for in a subsidy?

Each subsidy is negotiated on a child-by-child, case-by-case basis. Three factors are considered when negotiating a subsidy: *What can the family provide? What can other community services provide? What can OCS provide to address other needs that fall outside of these areas?* Think about the special needs of your child—are there additional therapeutic services or school supports that aren't covered by Medicaid or other supports. Are there cultural considerations? The agreed upon amount should combine with the parents' resources to cover the ordinary and special needs of the child, projected over an extended period of time and should cover anticipated needs.

Can day care expenses be included in an adoption subsidy?

Yes, day care expenses can be negotiated if each parent is employed outside of the home. Subsidies related to child care are time limited but can be renegotiated with State Office if still needed. Before an adoption is finalized, child care that is funded by OCS must be provided by a state licensed home or center. After finalization, adoptive parents make the decision about licensed care.

Can I negotiate for anticipated needs such as a savings account for a college fund?

Financial assistance is meant for the here and now care of a child. For families adopting older teens, there are some Independent Living Funds that may be available to assist with transition expenses and higher education expenses. Check with your Independent Living Specialist for more information if you are adopting an older teen.

How large can the subsidy be? Are there limits on what a subsidy might be?

Unlike the foster care reimbursement, there is no fixed amount for an adoption subsidy. Each subsidy is negotiated individually with each family and will vary because it is based upon the child's special needs and the family circumstances. Caseworkers are required to begin the subsidy negotiation at \$0 plus Medicaid for each child. The subsidy cannot be larger than 90% of the OCS foster care rate for which the child qualifies. This is based on OCS daily rate, not rates established by child placement agencies for therapeutic foster care. Any renegotiation of subsidies cannot exceed this rate. Monthly childcare costs paid by OCS during foster care may be included when calculating the foster care rate but the daycare portion will be time limited.

If the financial needs of my child change in the future and I want to renegotiate the subsidy, who should I contact?

The adoption subsidy needs to be finalized and approved before the finalization of the adoption. After the finalization, all post-adoption negotiation or questions should be directed to the Adoption and Guardianship Unit of State Office of the Office of Children's Services in Juneau. The number is 907-465-3204. The procedure for post adoption subsidy renegotiation is also outlined in the subsidy agreement.

OCS may also consider requests for one-time expenses beyond what is included in the monthly subsidy. This may mean an unexpected expense such as emergency travel for a funeral. Contact the Adoption and Guardianship Unit of OCS in State Office at 907-465-3204 to ask about applying for assistance with these expenses.

Do I have to put a child on my insurance for medical care?

Post adoption support for families usually includes Medicaid as part of the subsidy. You are also encouraged to put your child on your private insurance to help cover additional expenses, but you are not required to do so. It is important that you notify the OCS Adoption and Guardianship Unit if you add your child to your existing insurance coverage, as this needs to be reported to Medicaid.

What if we move to another state? Will Medicaid follow us there?

There are two kinds of funding for adoption and guardianship assistance. Federal funding pays for most subsidies and covers children who are IV-E eligible. These subsidies also include Medicaid in all other states.

If a subsidy is not federally funded, the State of Alaska pays for it and it may or may not include Medicaid. Not all states will provide Medicaid for State funded subsidies. Check www.nacac.org and look at State profiles to check out the requirements of the other state.

As you go through the process, find out if your adoption subsidy is federally funded or state funded. Either way, you should contact the OCS State Office Adoption and Guardianship

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Unit regarding your move. They will request that Medicaid be set up for your child in your new state if possible and make sure your payments are going to the correct location.

What happens to the child's Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD)?

During a child's time in foster care, the PFD is applied for by the State on behalf of the child and is held in an OCS trust fund. When a child in OCS custody is adopted, any PFD money that is held in an OCS trust fund is released to the adoptive parent one year after the adoption is finalized.

When a legal guardian is appointed for a child in OCS custody, the legal guardian's responsibilities include applying for the PFD on behalf of the child after the guardianship becomes finalized. Any PFD money that is held in an OCS trust fund remains in trust until the child reaches the age of 18 at which time the money in the trust fund is released to the child.

When does the subsidy start? When does it end?

The subsidy payment will start retroactively to the first of the month when your subsidy agreement was signed in State Office. For example, if your subsidy agreement was signed in State Office July 15th, the subsidy would be calculated to start July 1, and foster care payment would end as of June 30th. The adoption subsidy, including the Medicaid coverage, ends when the child turns 18 years of age. This is true even when the 18th birthday occurs while the adolescent is still attending high school.

Can the subsidy cover travel funds to help a child return to his village for visits?

If keeping a child connected to his culture, such as a village trip, has been part of the foster family's experience, wording that allows approval for reimbursement of travel funds can be negotiated into the subsidy agreement. The estimated costs must be submitted to Juneau OCS for pre-approval when the travel is occurring. Agreed upon expenses may be reimbursed after travel receipts have been submitted to OCS.

What kind of support is there for legal guardianships?

A guardianship subsidy is available for families based on the special needs of the child. The same procedure and criteria apply for negotiation of a guardianship subsidy. Guardianship subsidies may or may not include Medicaid. If not, the guardian is responsible for applying to Denali Kid Care for Medicaid coverage for the child. When applying for Denali Kid Care Medicaid, the guardian should apply based on the child's income only, and not on the income of the guardian family. You can find out more about the application process by calling 1-888-318-8890 or in Anchorage call 269-6529.

Am I financially responsible for damage that my adopted child might do in the future?

Legislation in the State of Alaska (A.S. 09.65.255), states that if an un-emancipated minor under the age of 18 years destroys property against an organization or belonging to a person, recovery of damages are not authorized from the legal guardian or the adoptive parents of a hard-to-place child if the adoptive parents are receiving, at the time the property is destroyed, financial assistance from the state as a result of the adoption.

What changes do I need to report to the OCS State Office Adoptions Unit?

The subsidy agreement outlines when you are required to notify the OCS Adoption and Guardianship Unit in Juneau. Contact them if any of the following changes occur:

- Change in family's address
- Change in the child's legal guardian
- Date child enters military
- Date child is married
- Date child is no longer in the home
- Date a birth parent of the child moves into the adoptive home
- Date of child's death
- Change in health insurance benefits
- Date adoptive parent(s) are no longer supporting child or are no longer legally responsible to support the child