

WILSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES ADOPTION PHILOSOPHY

We believe that every child has a right to a permanent home. Every child deserves to be a member of a family, to be loved, nurtured and have their emotional, physical, educational and spiritual needs met. The biological family is the ideal situation and the community should use all available resources to foster and preserve a healthy home and environment for the child. Whenever the biological family is unable to fulfill their parental responsibility, then the community must assume that role for the child's care and protection. The agency believes that adoption is an appropriate alternative by which the community can fulfill its obligation.

We believe that every child is adoptable regardless of his age, race, ethnic origin, or handicapping conditions. We are committed to implement adoption planning for a child that is legally free for adoption by matching him with the most appropriate family. The majority of the children in North Carolina who are freed for adoption are considered special need's children. Special need is defined as children who are physically, mentally or emotionally handicapped; victims of early childhood maltreatment; a member of a sibling group; a child over the age of 5; or a child from a minority group. Priority will be given to those applicants who believe they can accept and meet the needs of these children. The emphasis of the adoption worker's efforts will be the recruitment and study of homes for the placement of these children up to age 18.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ADOPTION IN NORTH CAROLINA

1. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age.
2. Single individuals may apply for adoption.
3. If an applicant is married, the spouse must join in the application.
4. Only applicants who are residents of Wilson County may apply with the agency. Referrals will be made to the appropriate department of social services or other adoption agencies for individuals who do not reside in Wilson County.
5. Fingerprinting and criminal history checks must be completed for prospective adoptive parents of a child who is in the custody or placement responsibility of a county department of social services. Prospective adoptive applicants will be furnished a written notice which outlines the definition and statutory base for the required criminal history check. A consent form to release the fingerprint information must be signed and returned.

AGENCY GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

1. Preference will be given to adoptive applicants who are at least 21 years of age. The maximum age of the applicant depends upon the age of the child and the circumstances of the adoption. The best interest of the child involved will be the primary consideration.
2. We believe marital stability is an important consideration in placing a child in a permanent home. Couples should have been married for at least one (1) year prior to adoption.

3. It is preferred that adoptive applicants have a minimum high school education or G.E.D.

4. One factor in the pre-placement assessment is the current and future income of the adoptive parent having the financial means to adequately support the children. An adoptive applicant is expected to be financially stable. The agency does not set stipulations on specific assets or income that an applicant must have in order to adopt. We reserve the right to examine tax returns or other documents to ascertain whether there is adequate income to meet the basic needs of a child.

5. The applicant must obtain a medical examination as part of the application process to determine general health/fertility. We prefer to place children with parents whose general health is good. If health problems have been evident in the applicant's past, and a physician's report reveals progress and/or prognosis is good, an applicant may not be denied because of past problems.

6. If marital or psychological problems are indicated, we may request an evaluation by a psychologist, psychiatrist, or mental health professional. The home evaluation will not be completed until the evaluation is received.

7. Fingerprinting will be done and criminal records will be checked on each applicant as Mandated by the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

8. Applications will be accepted from prospective applicants without regard to race, creed, national origin or religious affiliation.

9. We will make some "in county" placements. They will be made after careful deliberation and study of all factors and with the utmost discretion, caution, and planning. The decision to place in county would only be made on the basis of the best interest of a particular child.

10. We have the authority, until the Final Order is issued, to recommend that the adoption be dismissed and the child removed from the home.

11. Each applicant generally must complete 30 hours of education/preparation provided or arranged for by Wilson County Department of Social Services.

12. We will maintain an adoptive applicant waiting list. Priority will be given to applicants interested in adopting special needs children.

13. We fully understand the requirements of the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act as amended by the removal of Barriers to Interethnic Adoption Provisions, and will fully comply with its mandates. We provide yearly training on MEPA/IEP to all child welfare staff. Furthermore, we routinely consider MEPA/IEP mandates when making placements for children. We continue to recruit foster and adoptive families who reflect

the ethnic diversity of children in custodial care. This recruitment is achieved through community events and outreach in all ethnic and cultural areas. In response to the increasing Hispanic population, our Department of Social Services has developed recruitment flyers and advertisements in Spanish and has two full time Spanish interpreters on staff. We plan to expand recruitment efforts into Hispanic serving religious and community organizations.

14. The Adoption committee may recommend an exception to guidelines/policies based on the unique circumstances and needs of a particular child. These exceptions must be approved by the Director.

15. Wilson County Department of Social Services employs an agency attorney who is extremely knowledgeable about child welfare laws and is readily available to staff for clarification and guidance on the interpretation of the law.