



KEITH HORTON
COMMISSIONER

IMPORTANT KEY INFORMATION:

See a photo and profile of
our children who are
available for adoption at:
www.itsmyturnnowga.com

DFCS LEADERSHIP:

Dr. Sharon Hill
Division Director

Kathy Herren
Deputy Director

David Kelley
Field Operations Director

ADOPTION SERVICES IN GEORGIA

Finding Permanent and Loving Homes for the children in the permanent custody of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

At any given time, there are hundreds of children in the permanent custody of the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS)/DFCS due to unresolved family crises. Most of the children come from difficult situations and live in foster homes. If the child is available for adoption, the parents may have volunteered to give up their parental rights, but usually these rights were terminated by the court system due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. Many of the children are in the adoptive category of "Special Needs."

In collaboration with the State Permanency Unit, local DFCS offices and DFCS case managers prepare home studies, document cases, approve adoptive homes and prepare children and parents for adoption.

IF I'M INTERESTED IN ADOPTING, WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION? **Call 1-877-210-KIDS**

Additionally, the DHS/DFCS website, www.adoptions.dhr.state.ga.us provides information on the adoption process and also features children in the custody of the state who are in need of an adoptive home. Additional information can also be found at www.wednesdayschildga.com and www.itsmyturnnowga.com sites. The sites provide answers to frequently asked questions concerning adoption, links to related sites, and highlight upcoming events for the adoption and foster/adopt communities.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET APPROVED?

From inquiry to approval, the process can take from three to 10 months due to the certifications and evaluations required as well as the documentation needed to approve an adoptive home. A case manager from the local DFCS office will work with interested families to explain the process and inform them of what is needed.

IS DFCS THE ONLY AGENCY THAT CAN APPROVE ME TO BE AN ADOPTIVE PARENT?

No. DFCS partners with licensed private agencies in developing adoptive families for children who are in the custody of the state. They partner with DFCS to complete child life histories, manage the Adoption Reunion Registry and assist with recruitment of foster and adoptive families. Currently, DFCS has contracts with licensed non-profit and for profit agencies. These agencies provide services such the recruitment of foster to adopt and adoptive homes, conducting home studies, preparing families to adopt, and supervising adoption placements. Families will be referred to either DFCS or a private partner agency after making the initial inquiry at 1-877-210-KIDS.

WHAT DOES "SPECIAL NEEDS" MEAN?

There are many children in the custody of the DHS awaiting adoption who meet the definition of special needs for the purpose of adoption.

Children who meet the definition of special needs for the purpose of adoption include any child who:

- at the time of adoptive placement has been in the care of a public or private agency or individual other than the legal or biological parent for more than 24 consecutive months

- a child with a physical, mental, or emotional disability as validated by a licensed physician or psychologist
- a child who is a member of sibling group of two or more placed in the same home

WHAT HAPPENS IF ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED AFTER THE ADOPTION IS FINALIZED?

Children who are adopted from DFCS permanent custody are eligible for post adoption services which include but are not limited to: crisis intervention, support groups for teens, training and support services for parents. In order to access the services, the family needs to contact the local DFCS office and talk with the Adoption Assistance case manager.

STATISTICS:

The majority of the children adopted through the state were adopted by foster parents, foster/adoptive parents or relatives. Last year (SFY 2010), approximately 1,245 adoptions were finalized. At any given time, there are approximately 250 children in Georgia who are in need of adoptive families. Various child specific recruitment events, sponsored through the Permanency Unit, regularly feature this group of waiting children. These events include Adoption Gatherings, Wednesday's Child programs, and matching meetings.