	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES **CHILD WELFARE POLICY**	
	Chapter 10: Guardianship and Adoption **Section 15:** Eligibility Requirements for Adoption Assistance	
	Effective Date: July 1, 2026	**Version:** 5

POLICY OVERVIEW

Adoption Assistance is a valuable support to adoptive families.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will make sure both the child and adoptive parent meet all of the following to qualify for adoption assistance:

1. The child:
   a. Is a ward of DCS when the prospective adoptive parent files for adoption, or
   b. Meets all of the Title IV-E or State Adoption Subsidy (SAS) adoption assistance program (AAP) eligibility requirements;

2. The adoptive child meets the special needs requirements:
   a. The DCS office or judge has decided that the child cannot or should not be returned to their parent,
   b. There is reason to believe that the child cannot be adopted without providing financial help or Title XIX Medicaid, and the child is part of a sibling group of two or more children who must be placed together in the same home;

   Note: At least one child in the sibling group must be two years old or older.

      i. The child has a medical condition or a physical, mental, or emotional disability, as determined by a doctor or the Severe Impairment Determination process.

   c. A reasonable, but unsuccessful effort must be made to place the child in an appropriate adoptive home without providing adoption assistance, unless it is not in the child's best interests because:
      i. Strong emotional bond with the prospective adoptive parent where the child was placed while in foster care; or
      ii. There are other reasons or circumstances documented in the case file and approved by the Indiana Adoption Program Liaison.

3. The child is a US citizen or qualified alien;
4. The prospective adoptive parent must pass a background check and not have felony convictions listed in federal law (42 USC 671(a)(20)(A)) that would disqualify them from receiving adoption assistance payments under 42 USC 673 . See policies 13.07 and 13.08; and

5. A written agreement (Title IV-E or SAS) between DCS and the prospective adoptive parent must be signed on or before the date that the court finalizes the adoption (or as otherwise stated in an administrative review decision). An agreement may not be entered into after the adoption is finalized. **If the adoption is finalized before an agreement is fully executed, the child is not eligible for adoption assistance under the Indiana Adoption Assistance Program.**

If the adoptive parent does not agree with the Final Adoption Program Eligibility Determination, they may submit a Request for Administrative Review Indiana Adoption Program within 30 calendar days of the date on the Final Adoption Program Eligibility Determination.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- IC 31-9-2.1-118: "Hard to place child"; "hard to place children"
- IC 31-19-9-8: Consent to adoption not required; written denial of paternity precludes challenge to adoption
- IC 31-19-26.5-2: "Child with special needs"
- IC 31-19-26.5-3: Payment of adoption subsidies
- 42 USC 671(a)(20): State plan for foster care and adoption assistance
- 42 USC 673: Adoption and guardianship assistance program
- 465 IAC 3: Article 3. Administrative Reviews and Hearings
- 465 IAC 4: Indiana Adoption Assistance and Guardianship Assistance Programs