A. **ADOPTION APPLICATION FORMS PACKAGE**

Any BC resident 19 years of age or over can apply to adopt a child. This includes married couples, common-law couples, same-sex couples and single adults. For more information about BC’s waiting children refer to the Ministry of Children and Family Development’s website at [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adooption](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adooption) or call 1-877-236-7807.

This package explains the forms you need to apply to register to adopt one of BC’s waiting children. Once these forms are received by a Ministry Social Worker, your application to adopt will be registered and you will be contacted to attend an intake appointment to review the forms. You will then be waitlisted for an Adoption Education Program (AEP), which begin at various times throughout the year.

Participants for each AEP are **not chosen on a first come-first served basis** but rather on the needs that a family is **able to parent** of the children that are available for adoption. After you have completed the AEP and submitted further paperwork then the home study portion of the family assessment may begin. You will only be considered for placement of a child or children when your home study has been completed.

**Required forms:**
- Out of Country-province form (3 pg)
- Application to Adopt (5 pg)
- Adoption Questionnaire (2 pg)
- Criminal Record Information form (2 pg)
- Consent for Disclosure of Information (2 pgs)
- Consent to the Disclosure of Criminal record Information (2 pgs)

**INFORMATION ABOUT THESE FORMS AND HOW TO FILL THEM OUT**

If you have any questions as you fill out these forms, please contact your local adoption recruitment social worker (see last page).

Please return the package of forms to your recruitment worker.

**Application To Adopt (5 pages)**

This form initiates the process to register your interest in adopting with the Ministry of children and Family Development (MCFD). The acceptance of this application by MCFD does not guarantee that a home study will be completed, nor that a child will be placed with you. This form is designed to collect information about the applicant(s). If there are two applicants, both of you must sign this form on the last page.

On your Adoption Application (see page 4) you are asked to provide us with four references.
The people you choose as your referees will be mailed a questionnaire with questions about you and your partner, if applicable. The referee should be someone who knows you very well personally, not a business reference (unless they are also a close friend). One way to look at who to choose is to select people who will be part of your child’s life and your family. It is best if you can choose someone who has seen you around children. If you want to choose a husband/wife or other people in a relationship, they will count as ONE reference.

Couples: You should choose people who know both of you OR add an additional reference (or more) if you want to choose people who know each of you individually.

The references you provide are very important as they will be sent a questionnaire asking for their opinion about you as an individual and as a potential adoptive parent. It is important to select people who know you well and will return their questionnaires in a timely manner. The four people whom you choose as your references must include one from each of the following:

1. An individual who has known you for a minimum of 2 years.
2. An individual who has had an active association with you over the past six months.
3. An involved member of your extended family; and
4. If there are any adult children living outside of the home, a reference from or an interview with at least one of these children. The other children will be interviewed as part of the homestudy process. (if there are no adult children, please include another reference from #2).

You may also be asked to provide additional references in some circumstances.

Here are some sample of questions that will be asked of your references:

- What is your relationship to the applicant(s) and what kind of activities do you share?
- Describe the personality, interests, strengths and limitations of the applicant(s).
- Describe the applicant(s)’ experience with children. Describe how the applicant(s) relate to children.
- List any concerns, ie- depression, criminal behaviour, drug use.
- Rate the couple’s relationship, ability to parent and involvement in the community.

The information provided to the Ministry by your references is confidential and will not be shared with you. We may follow up the questionnaire with an interview with some or all of your references.

Please ensure that you have provided full addresses and phone numbers for each reference as your application won’t be processed until this is received.
Adoption Questionnaire form (2 pages)

This questionnaire asks you to identify background factors and special needs that you are willing to consider in the child you wish to adopt. At the time of intake, you are not expected to have a definitive opinion on all of these needs as they will be discussed in further detail during the intake appointment and throughout the process.

We have a special needs adoption reference guide to help you in deciding which needs to consider. Please ensure that you have reviewed this reference Guide which can be found on our web site www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoption/pdf/adoption_questionnaire_reference_guide.pdf. In addition to your adoption research, this guide can help you understand the various needs and issues that can exist in adoption.

You are strongly encouraged to learn more about special needs and the implications of adopting a child by reading books, watching videos, talking with a doctor or other professionals, and talking to families who are raising children with similar needs. Please keep track of all the research you do, including the titles of books you read, as this will be requested during your written assessment.

Based on the types of conditions and special needs you check off on the questionnaire, you will be matched to children who have some of the characteristics you have selected. For example, if you indicate that you are interested in children under 5 years of age, you will not be considered for children over the age of 5. Please take some time to think about the conditions and special needs and what you feel you are able to parent. The choices that you make are not “set in stone” and can be changed or revised as you move through the adoption journey. You will revisit the questionnaire as you move through the process to allow for changes as you learn and experience more regarding special needs issues and parenting tools.

You are strongly encouraged to contact the Adoptive Families Association of BC (AFABC) at (604) 320-7330 or 1-877-236-7807; www.bcadoption.com and become a member.

AFABC staff can put you in touch with other adoptive parents and give you access to a large lending library of books and videos that can be mailed to your home. In addition, they offer training on various topics of interest to adoptive parents.

Consent for Disclosure of Criminal Record Information (2 pages, 2 copies-one for each applicant AND anyone age 18 or over living in the home).

This form is to obtain the information that we need for a criminal record check. This will all be done through MCFD’s internal system and you will not have to attend a local police detachment.
On this form you will be asked to provide identification information, acknowledge liability waivers and the content of what will be provided to MCFD and to state if you have any criminal offences, charges or diversions, including youth offenses. We need to confirm your legal name information and thus need to see or receive a copy of your driver’s license or other government issued photo identification.

Please note that even if you have a criminal record, you will not necessarily be ineligible to adopt in BC. That will depend on the type of charge, length of time since the charge and your current circumstances.

Please ensure that you fill this form out completely and honestly as information that arises later in the process may significantly impact the adoption process and the confidence we have in you as a potential adoptive applicant.

All adult members of the household age 18 and over need to complete the criminal record check. This includes tenants of a basement suite if there is any communal/shared space.

Consent to the Collection of Information form (2 pages, 2 copies. Each applicant completes as well as anyone age 18 and over.)

Information must be exchanged between adoption specific professionals as part of the home assessment process.

We also need this form to request any additional information that may be needed if you lived outside of Canada or the province of British Columbia. This is why we ask that you provide us with any previous addresses you resided in other provinces and/or countries as well as get a criminal record check from those countries.

What Happens Next?

Once your application is received you will be contacted to attend an intake appointment where your application will be reviewed and you can have any specific questions you may have answered. If you meet the criteria for special needs adoption, you will be put onto a waiting list for the Adoption Education Program (AEP). The AEP consists of a classroom-based course or online training, which contains 12 modules. The face to face classroom training could be provided during the evenings or during the day on weekends.
The AEP is legislated under the Adoption Act and requires that all applicants be informed about various issues relating to adoption. These include:

- Separation, Grief and loss issues
- Attachment
- Trauma
- Prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol
- Mental health
- The difference between adoptive and biological parenting;
- The lifelong impact of adoption and how it affects the child’s development;
- The impact of the child’s life experiences prior to an adoption placement.
- When applicable, inter-racial and cross cultural issues (including preserving an Aboriginal child’s unique heritage and cultural identity);

Once the AEP is completed and should you continue, the home study, or the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation-S.A.F.E. Assessment is the next step. The home study will only be started after the AEP is completed and all additional paperwork is received. The home assessment consists of an adoption social worker meeting on a number of occasions with each applicant, both together and separately, and finding out about your lifestyle, your experience with children, your own family history and your understanding of adoption issues. Any children in the home will also be interviewed. Children aged 7 and up need to be interviewed on their own. Typically it takes between 3 and 5 months to complete the written assessment; however many factors can delay the process, including your availability, your geographic location and issues that arise that need to be explored more thoroughly.

After the family interviews, your adoption worker will write up your family assessment and submit it to you for your approval. You will be given a copy for your records. Your homestudy will then be registered on our Adoption Management System (AMS) which is our computerized matching system. We will then search for a waiting child in British Columbia that matches the type of conditions and behaviours you have been formally approved to consider adopting. We will not search for a child for you until your home study is completed and registered. **Even if you are approved as adoptive parents, you are not guaranteed a placement.** This depends on many factors, including the types of special needs you are able and willing to parent and the waiting children we have.

You may wish to look at the ministry’s Adoption Bulletin which is found on our website, [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoptive/index.html](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/adoptive/index.html). This can give you more information about some of the waiting children.

**Additional information to know..........**
Here are some things that will be discussed with you and that you are expected to know as part of your adoption journey.

1. **What is your support system like?** Are your friends, family, co-workers, boss, neighbours aware of your desire to adopt a child that may have special placement needs? *It is crucial to have strong supports and practiced self care skills already in place before proceeding with adoption.*

2. **Can you afford to adopt at this time?** Have you explored how much it costs to feed a child/ren; what school supplies cost, extra circular activities and tutoring; the cost of private schools, if considering; how much day care costs, including before and after school care as well as child care during the summer months?

Things to look into and know as part of your path to parenthood include the **benefits you have through your employer(s) regarding** -
- medical
- dental
- counseling services
- pre and post adoption placement support/coverage
- training/professional development days to complete the mandatory Adoption Education Program (AEP)

**Of particular importance, knowing the benefits you receive around parental leave.** Do you get ‘top up’ pay when on leave? If so, how much? *It is expected a parent will be home for at least the federally allowed thirty-five week parental leave.* Are you in a financial position to take such a leave without experiencing financial hardship? Sometimes extended leaves are necessary, depending on the child/ren adopted..

3. **We will ask you about the resources you have connected with; what courses, research and networking you have already done on adoption issues, and in particular, adopting from MCFD/an older child(ren)/children with special placement needs?** Being knowledgeable and aware of issues around attachment, grief and loss, trauma, brain development and prenatal exposure to alcohol is extremely crucial and expected before, during and after adoption placement.

4. **Do you have enough space to adopt?** How many bedrooms does your home have? In certain circumstances, each child may need their own bedroom.

5. **Do you have pets in your family?** Are they well socialized around children/teens? If not, what are you doing to help ensure pets are
prepared for such a change?

We realize this may feel very overwhelming and daunting! Our children in care deserve well prepared, committed, patient, strong and loving adoptive parents. This part of the process is part of the preparation and check on commitment as well as patience! Adoption is not for the faint of heart. *Thank you for your interest in adoption!!* Parenting a child via adoption can be the most rewarding experience of your life.

Please return your completed application packages to the Adoption Office in your area. Please email the Waiting Child Information Line waitingchild@bcadoption.com or call 1-877-ADOPT-07 for your local office.

You can also call and ask to speak with the adoption recruitment social worker if you need further assistance completing these forms.