

Adoption in Saskatchewan

In Saskatchewan, there are several types of adoption, including Domestic Adoption, Intercountry Adoption, Independent Adoption, Adult Adoption and Stepparent Adoption.

All adoption processes are governed by *The Adoption Act, 1998*, *The Adoption Regulations (2003)*, *The Child and Family Services Act*, and *The Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Implementation Act*. This legislation is accessible through the Queen's Printer at www.qp.gov.sk.ca.

Domestic Adoption

The Domestic Adoption Program, which is offered through the Ministry of Social Services, involves the adoption of children under the permanent, legal guardianship of the Minister. The Minister becomes legal guardian when a birth parent enters into an agreement with the Ministry of Social Services through a Voluntary Committal process, or when a Permanent Order is obtained through a court process.

The majority of children who come into care of the Minister are reunited with their parents or placed with extended family or trusted family connections. A small number become permanently in care of the Minister and are eligible for adoption after exploring all placement options with biological and extended family to establish family, community and cultural connections.

Needs of Children Available for Adoption

Some children whose permanency plan includes adoption may experience good health and well being, while others may have a variety of needs or conditions that impact their development. Support needs may be associated with, but not limited to:

- limited birth parent or family history;
- traumatic experiences;
- diagnosed/undiagnosed emotional or behavioural problems;
- unknown predisposition to certain genetic factors;

- developmental or cognitive delay;
- physical disability;
- prenatal exposure to substances; and,
- medical/health problems.

Children may also have backgrounds of child welfare involvement that include one or more of following:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Domestic violence
- Multiple placements

Adoptive Families

Adoptive families provide a home and family for a child who requires permanence. Adoptive families need to:

- adapt and commit to meeting the daily needs of the child;
- help the child maintain family and cultural ties; and,
- support the child's life-long educational, medical, behavioural, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs.

Cultural Openness in Adoption

A child's positive cultural identity and connection to culture are primary needs and crucial to understanding who they are, who they are connected to, where they come from and how they relate to others. When families, children and youth are supported to learn about cultural heritage and given opportunities to participate in their own cultural community of others, they will develop a healthy identity. Adoptive parent(s) can provide support to encourage their child to strengthen their unique identity. Among other benefits, openness allows:

- children to remain connected to their birth families and community to support their health and well-being;
- adoptive families to maintain a link to the child's culture and heritage; and,
- adoptees to strengthen their identity as a child and later as an adult.

Openness is supported and encouraged between important people in the child/youth's life where the type and frequency of contact may vary.

Adoption Assistance

The ministry may provide financial assistance and support through the Assisted Adoption Program, which applies to children who were formerly in permanent care of the Minister.

Supports are provided for children to connect with their culture, family and community and for children who may have a physical, emotional, cognitive or mental delay or disability, or predisposition to a condition that may impact future growth or development.

Financial assistance through the Assisted Adoption Program may include:

1. Monthly maintenance;
2. Special needs benefits based on an approved case plan;
3. Supplementary Health Program benefits; and,
4. Cultural Support Benefit.

Support needs are reviewed with the adoptive family at the time of the adoption, as well as through annual reviews.

To Become an Adoptive Parent

You may be:

- single, married or living common-law;
- of any race or ethnicity; or,
- with or without children of your own.

You must be:

- at least 18 years of age;
- willing to participate in Parent Resources for Information, Development & Education (PRIDE) Pre-service Training and Saskatchewan Aboriginal Culture Component training; and,
- willing to participate in the completion of a Mutual Family Assessment with a ministry Adoption Worker, which includes a Criminal Record and Child Welfare Background Check.

The steps to becoming an adoptive parent include:

1. Consultation with The Evermore Centre referral education process;
2. Attending an intake with a ministry caseworker and completing the application process; and,
3. Attending PRIDE Pre-service Training.

The length of time it takes to adopt a child varies. Applicants willing to adopt older children, sibling groups or children with complex needs tend to complete the steps required to adopt much sooner. Indigenous families interested in adoption are prioritized as there is an ongoing need for Indigenous source families.

Parent Resources for Information, Development & Education (PRIDE) Pre-service Training and the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Culture Component

PRIDE is a competency-based model of practice implemented by the Ministry of Social Services to support the development of foster and adoptive families. The following five competencies form the foundation of the PRIDE model, and are fundamental to achieving the goals of the program:

1. Protecting and nurturing children;
2. Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delay;
3. Supporting relationships between children and their families;
4. Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and,
5. Working as a member of a professional team.

PRIDE Online Pre-service Training consists of nine sessions that total 27 hours, and is combined with a series of in-home consultation meetings. Through this, the five competency categories are assessed by the prospective adoptive applicants, the PRIDE trainers and the Adoption Worker.

The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Culture Component consists of three hours of instruction that highlights the importance of maintaining ties to family and culture.

Intercountry Adoption

Intercountry Adoption refers to the adoption of a child who resides outside Canada. Applicants work with a ministry-approved Independent Practitioner to complete their home study, and may be required to work with an out-of-province agency through the child matching and adoption phase. The ministry agrees to the placement of the child, and

ensures all legal requirements for an Intercountry Adoption are met.

For information, refer to the Intercountry Adoption Program Guide on the Publications Saskatchewan website at publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/73767. All costs related to this type of adoption are the responsibility of the applicants.

Independent Adoption

Birth parents may make arrangements with someone they know to adopt their child. A ministry-approved Independent Practitioner completes the home study, while a lawyer retained by the adoptive family assists with processing the adoption through

court. The ministry becomes involved by completing the Certificate of Counselling and Certificate of Independent Advice with the birth parents. All costs related to this type of adoption are the responsibility of the applicants.

Adult Adoption

Individuals 18 years of age or older may be adopted if they consent and the court considers the reason for the adoption acceptable. Adult adoptions do not require a home

study, and are processed with the assistance of a lawyer. All costs related to this type of adoption are the responsibility of the applicants.

Step-parent Adoption

An individual may, with the consent of their spouse or partner, apply to the court to adopt a child of that spouse or partner. Children who are 12 years of age or older must consent to this type of adoption. Step-parent adoptions

do not require a home study unless ordered by the court, and are processed with the assistance of a lawyer. All costs related to this type of adoption are the responsibility of the applicants.

Further Information

For questions about adoption services in the province, contact The Evermore Centre. Visit their website at www.evermorecentre.ca or call toll-free at 1-866-869-2727.