



# Adoption in Saskatchewan

## about

Further information on Domestic Adoption is available from:

**Adoption Support  
Centre of Saskatchewan**  
233 4th Avenue S  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1N1

Phone: 306-665-7272  
Toll free: 1-866-869-2727  
Fax: 306-665-7274

[www.adoptionsask.org](http://www.adoptionsask.org)

Visit us on our website  
and follow the links:

[www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca](http://www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca)

ADO-3 06/11



Recycled Paper

### Domestic Adoption

Permanency plans for children who do not have biological families able to provide for their developmental needs can include a variety of options including adoption. It is always preferable for a child to remain with birth parents or extended family, but when this is not possible, adoption is one option to promote permanence and stability. The primary focus of any adoption plan is always the best interests of the child.

In Saskatchewan, the Domestic Adoption Program pertains only to children who are under the permanent, legal guardianship of the Minister of Social Services. These children are referred to as permanent wards. The Minister becomes legal guardian when a birth parent enters into an agreement with Social Services through a voluntary committal process, or when a permanent order is obtained through a court process.

Not all children in permanent care of the Minister become available for adoption. The majority of children who come into care in the province are reunited with family or other individuals who are meaningful to the child. Only a small number of permanent wards become eligible for adoption, and only after options with biological and extended family have been thoroughly explored.

A domestic adoption involves the permanent legal transfer of parental rights and responsibilities from the

Minister to the adoptive parents. In Saskatchewan, adoption processes are governed by *The Adoption Act, 1998* and the *Adoption Regulations (2003)*. This legislation is accessible through the Queen's Printer at <http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca>.

### Needs of Children Available for Adoption

Children who are available for adoption may have a variety of needs. In adoption, a need is defined as any condition that may impact a child's development. Some children may experience good health and well-being, while others may experience challenges that require special consideration and attention. Children who are available for adoption may have a variety of support needs 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.

As well, many children come from backgrounds that may include child welfare involvement including one or more of the following factors:

- neglect;
- emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse; and
- multiple placements

### **Adoptive Families**

Adoptive families can be an invaluable resource for children who need protection and nurturing. The ideal adoptive family is willing to:

- unconditionally bring the child into the family circle;
- help the child maintain cultural and familial ties;
- support the child with respect to lifelong educational, medical, behavioural, emotional and spiritual needs; and
- participate in planning for the child when necessary.

Adoptive families must be able to adapt to the needs of the child. A successful adoption plan is based on commitment by the adoptive family.

Prospective adoptive parents must realistically understand their own skills, abilities and limitations, and what they have to offer a child.

Children 12 years of age or over must provide written consent to an adoption plan. It is preferable for children,

when developmentally able, to fully participate in the planning process.

### **Open Adoption**

Every child has a family of origin into which he or she is born. Adoption affects birth parents, adoptees, adoptive parents and relatives of both the adoptive and birth families. Openness in adoption refers to maintaining communication and/or a relationship with the child's birth family. Birth families value openness because it helps them receive ongoing information about the health and well-being of the child, while adoptive families value the link that is provided to the child's culture and heritage. The degree of openness can range from exchange of non-identifying information to full disclosure including contact with the child. Commitment to openness, where possible, is considered to be in a child's best interests.

### **Adoption Assistance**

The Assisted Adoption Program was introduced in 1987 as a means of providing financial assistance to families who adopt permanent wards. Considerations for approval under the Assisted Adoption Program include: children who may have an identified predisposition to a physical, mental or emotional disability; children whose future health and development is at risk; and children whose plan for permanency requires support.

Children considered for assistance may include those:

- whose adoptive family requires additional support to maintain the child;
- placed as part of a sibling group;
- being adopted by extended family; or
- with a range of special needs.

Children are designated for the Assisted Adoption Program by their Ministry caseworker in consideration of the child's individual needs and overall support plan. The designation requires approval from the Directory of Service Delivery. A child may be designated before or after the order of adoption is obtained in order to ensure flexibility in circumstances where a child's physical, mental and/or emotional problems might not be known until later in life. The extension of benefits between the ages of 18 and 21 years of age is dependent on the individual needs and supporting plan for the youth. This requires further negotiation between the youth, the adoptive family and the Ministry.

The three types of financial assistance are:

1. monthly maintenance payments;
2. special needs assistance based on an approved case plan; and
3. Extended Health Benefits.

The Ministry caseworker reviews the support needs of the child that includes a recommendation by a professional with the adoptive family. All existing options for special needs assistance, such as private insurance or existing community services, must be considered first (monthly maintenance is excluded from this). The Assisted Adoption Plan is only applicable to the Domestic Adoption Program.

### **To Become an Adoptive Parent**

#### **You may be:**

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

#### **You must be:**

- at least 18 years of age;
- able to pass both a criminal record and a child welfare background check;
- willing to participate in Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE) Pre-service Training, which consists of nine modules of instruction totaling 27 hours;
- willing to participate in the completion of a Mutual Family Assessment (home study) with a ministry caseworker;
- able to provide lifelong support to a child;

- willing to become educated on openness options for children as well as on the preservation of a child's culture and history; and
- willing to learn about children with special needs.

#### ***The steps to becoming an adoptive parent include:***

1. consultation with the Adoption Support Centre of Saskatchewan (ASCS) in completing a pre-referral education process;
2. attending an intake with a ministry caseworker and completing the application process; and
3. attending PRIDE Pre-service Training to begin the Mutual Family Assessment process by invitation of the Ministry caseworker.

The length of time it takes to undertake the home study or Mutual Family Assessment (MFA) process varies according to what special needs, or range of acceptance, an applicant is willing to accept in a child. Applicants with a wider range of acceptance tend to undertake the MFA process sooner than those who are limited in what they will accept. First Nations or Métis families interested in adoption are prioritized as there is an ongoing need for Aboriginal resource families.

### **Parent Resources for Information, Development & Education (PRIDE)**

PRIDE is a competency-based model of practice implemented by Social Services to aid the development and support of both foster and adoptive families.

The following five competencies form the foundation of the PRIDE model, and are fundamental to achieving its goals:

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 consists of:

#### ***PRIDE Pre-service (for adoptive families):***

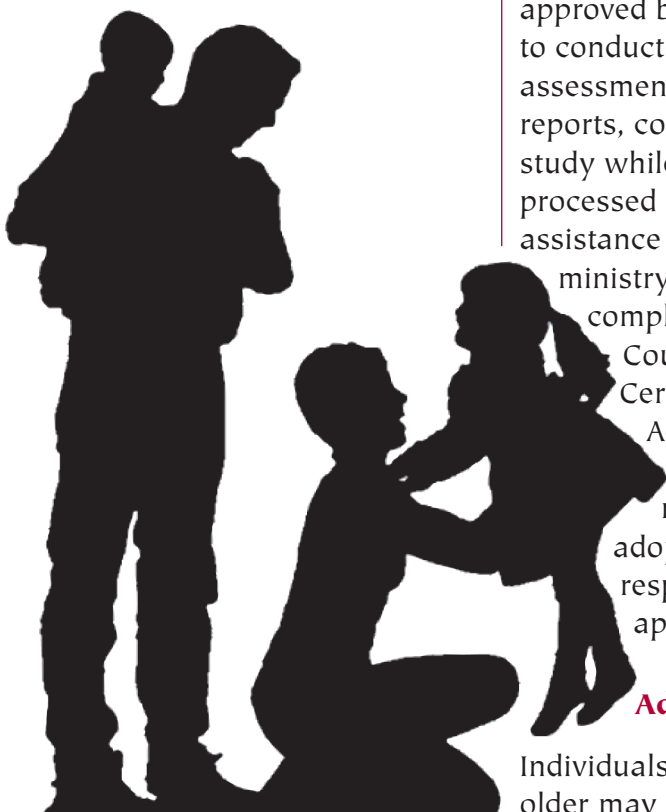
- consists of nine mandatory training sessions totaling 27 hours;
- combines a series of in-home consultation meetings with group training sessions where together the caseworker, trainers and prospective adoptive families determine readiness to adopt;

- addresses the five foundational competencies before a child is placed; and
- includes an additional three-hour Saskatchewan Aboriginal cultural component.

**PRIDE Core (for adoptive families):**

- consists of 12 non-mandatory training modules totaling approximately 100 hours; and
- provides ongoing support and professional development for approved adoptive families;

*PRIDE Advanced assists adoptive families in acquiring advanced competencies, such as learning the ministry's approved methods to manage aggressive behaviours through demonstration.*



**Other Types of Adoption**

**Intercountry Adoption**

Intercountry adoption is the adoption of a child from a country outside Canada. In Saskatchewan, the process to adopt through the Intercountry Adoption Program is separate from the domestic process. For more information, refer to the Intercountry Adoption Program Guide, available on the Ministry of Social Services website at <http://www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/intercountry-adoption.pdf>. 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. An independent practitioner, approved by Social Services to conduct home study assessments and post-placement reports, completes the home study while the adoption itself is processed through court with the assistance of a lawyer. The

ministry becomes involved by completing the Certificate of Counseling 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 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 his or her spouse, apply to the court to adopt a child of that spouse if the child is either living with or being cared for by them. Children who are 12 years of age or older must consent to this type of adoption. Step-parent adoptions are processed with the assistance of a lawyer. All costs related to this type of adoption are the responsibility of the applicants.

**Post Adoption Services**

The Saskatchewan Post Adoption Registry was established in 1982. Since then it has processed thousands of requests for information or contact from those involved in the adoption process. Services are provided free-of-charge and include provision of non-identifying information, search and contact, passive registration, specific documents and special search services. All provincial adoption records are permanently stored with the Registry. For more information contact:

**Post Adoption Registry**

1920 Broad Street  
Regina, SK S4P 3V6

or telephone 306-787-3654  
or 1-800-667-7539