

PROGRAM STATEMENT

Wolverine Human Services (WHS), a non-profit organization, is committed to serving the needs of children. The adoption program has the ability to facilitate the adoptive needs of children on a statewide basis. The program employs qualified, degreed and competent professionals that are trained to provide adoption services.

Adoption is the process of establishing a legal parent-child relationship between a child and an adult who are not legally bound by that relationship. It is a way of securing a permanent family for a child whose legal parental rights have been previously terminated by the court or voluntarily released to the court.

When children are unable to return to their birth family, they are made permanent wards of the State of Michigan. When this occurs, the WHS adoption worker makes a thorough assessment of the child's needs. While the child's current caregivers are given first consideration for adoption planning, relatives and other interested adults are interviewed. Placement decisions take into consideration the child's needs and the prospective adoptive family's ability to parent the child. WHS facilitates adoptions that involve children who have been abused and/or neglected and are part of the Michigan foster care system. The children are between the ages of newborn and 17. Many of these children are part of a sibling group and may have special needs. A large number of these children are adopted by their foster parents or relatives, although many children will require recruitment of an adoptive family.

Services to children includes maintaining the child's current placement and/or relationships, recruitment activities, placement with siblings, foster care, clothing, counseling, networking, and assessing children for their readiness for adoption. WHS strives to maintain a pool of waiting families for an adequate selection of homes for a child. Services to adoptive families include orientation to adoption, disclosure of general criteria for eligibility, completion of a family assessment once an application has been filed, explanation of legal risk, disclosure of non-identifying information, and facilitation of visits with prospective adopted child, assistance with subsidy and legal process, as well as, post placement services/referrals. A review of background and non-identifying information is provided to adoptees and adoptive parents at the mandatory conference that is held prior to placement of the child. For children that are already placed with the identified adoptive family, the information is provided prior to filing for consent. If it is considered to be in the best interest of the child, continued contact with the child's parents or other member's of the child's family may be encouraged. Within the guidelines of Michigan's Public Act 116, WHS provides information and services to birth parents and adult adoptees seeking information and/or reunion. Referrals are provided for post adoption services.

There are eligibility requirements for persons interested in becoming adoptive parents. Minimal requisites to adopt a child include but are not limited to the following: Age of 18 years or older, sufficient income to assure financial stability, adequate housing, evidence

of good physical and mental health, licensing record free of any criminal or Protective Services history and if married, a stable relationship. There are no restrictions in selecting the adoptive placement of children related to sexual orientation, gender, race, marital status, national origin, ethnicity, age, religion, political belief, geographical location, or disability.

Wolverine Human Services takes multiple factors into consideration when selecting an adoptive home for the children. When selecting an adoptive home WHS strives to maintain significant relationships by placing the child with relatives, current foster parents and placement with siblings, when possible. When a match cannot be secured from the child's relatives, foster parents, and/or kinship network then WHS will recruit families to best meet the child's needs. If an assessment of the child indicates that it is in the best interest of the child, then racial, ethnic, cultural identity, heritage and background will be considered. In addition, the child's special physical, educational, medical and emotional needs, the child's religious preferences and the child's wishes (especially if the child is 14 or older) is considered. If appropriate, the child's biological parents will be consulted regarding the selection of potential adoptive families with whom the child has had significant relationships.

Wolverine Human Service offers services to families after the adoption has been finalized. Assistance is offered to families seeking medical subsidy, to adult adoptees, former siblings, adoptive parents and birth parents requesting information from adoption records. Additionally, the agency will ensure that the adoptive family has the knowledge of other services that may be available including but not limited to counseling, assisted care, temporary out of home placements, and medical related expenses. Post adoption referrals are also made, when requested

According to WHS's contract with the State of Michigan, fees may not be charged of families adopting children who are State Wards/Permanent Court Wards and eligible for Subsidy. The Court filing fee and birth certificate fee are reimbursed by the State for those children who are eligible for Subsidy.