

PREGNANCY SUPPORT & ADOPTION SERVICES PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Catholic Charities views adoption and the prospective adoptive parents as an invaluable resource to women coping with an unplanned pregnancy. We consider our “high-quality” adoptive parents to be the backbone of our program. Consequently, we seek couples not only capable of being excellent parents, but also willing to enter into a respectful and life-long relationship with the birth family. The success of such a relationship is contingent on the honesty, trust, and respect built by each of the parties. All the adoption triad members benefit from such a relationship, but most importantly the child, who not only has the love and devotion of adoptive parents, but important contact with his/her biological family. Although the birth family may not be in a position to raise him/her, they care about his/her welfare.

Because it is the birth parent(s) who choose the adoptive couple that they feel will be the best parents for their unborn child; an attempt will be made to have as much diversity as possible in our pool of families. However, because Catholic Charities’ primary responsibility and dedication is to the child’s well being, the following eligibility criteria will be followed.

1. **Residency:** Anyone living in the State of Oregon at the time of application for the home study may apply. Families should intend to remain in the area through the completion of the adoption study. If they plan to move out of state, this must be revealed to the birth parents from the start.
2. **Ethnicity:** Permanency for the child is our primary consideration. Transracial and transcultural placements are allowed if an assessment determines that a prospective adoptive family will support and honor the child’s racial, ethnic, and cultural background.
3. **Religion:** Applicants shall have a faith commitment (i.e. attend a church or a synagogue) and a plan for the spiritual development and education of their children. They must provide traditional medical care as appropriate for their children.
4. **Infertility:** If the applicants have received outside medical interventions and/or treatments for infertility, they will halt all such interventions prior to submitting their application and working with Catholic Charities. In addition, they will have substantially resolved any related psychological issues around the grief and loss represented by their infertility. If the couple finds themselves unexpectedly pregnant while awaiting an adopted child, Catholic Charities will be notified immediately. The prospective adoptive couple will be asked to concentrate on their expected unborn child and withdraw from consideration from birth parents during the pregnancy and for at least one year after the birth of their biological child (see #11 below for additional information regarding this requirement). Fertility status may be shared with birth parents.
5. **Housing:** Applicants shall reside in a clean, safe environment with sufficient space for an additional child. The home shall meet the standards set by the State of Oregon and specified in the DHS Safety Assessment.
6. **Income:** There is no set income requirement but all applicants shall be able to demonstrate financial security. They should be able to demonstrate responsible financial habits and the ability to provide for the material needs of children.

7. **Marriage:** Couples must be married at least two years at the time of application.
8. **Age:** There is no age limit, but the couple should be young enough to raise a child to adulthood. Couples over the age of 45 are less likely to be chosen by a birth family. Oregon requires that couples be at least 21 years old at the time of application.
9. **Health:** Applicants must have a normal life expectancy and be able to reliably attend to the needs of the children. They must have a complete physical and mental health history, and proof of a physical examination performed within one year of date of the request for a home study. They must also demonstrate emotional stability.
 - a. Due to the documented harmful effects of secondary smoke for children, prospective parents must explain how they will provide a smoke free environment for their child/children
 - b. Where one or both partners suffer from chronic physical, medical, or emotional condition, adoptive placement may not be considered. Since Catholic Charities depends on adoptive parents to have a long, healthy, and happy life, we are also concerned about any addictions (i.e. drugs, alcohol, food, etc.). We are willing to talk to parents about this. Before making a decision about one's eligibility, Catholic Charities is willing to consult with one's physician or therapist if a release of information is signed.
10. **Child Care:** We require that one parent stay home with a newborn infant for at least three months and strongly recommend at least six months. This may be the mother, father, or a combination of both. Significant relatives, such as grandparents, are also acceptable caregivers.
11. **Family Size:** The State of Oregon limits families to eight (8) children if they plan to adopt. This includes biological children, stepchildren, foster children, and adopted children. Birth mothers seldom pick families with more than three (3) children. In addition, Catholic Charities requests that the last child adopted or born be with the family at least twelve (12) months before applying for another child.
12. Applicants must also comply with the minimum standards set by the State of Oregon (see section 4 of the procedure manual).
13. If a family has guns in their home, the ammunition and guns must be stored in separate locations and be in secure lock boxes.

In addition to these standards, the adoptive couple must demonstrate a willingness to be informed/educated regarding the unique issues that an adopted child may face.

Some of the less tangible qualities that we value in adoptive parents include genuine respect for birth families; integrity; flexibility; unpossessive attitudes towards children; a demonstrated ability to cope with disappointment and emotional pain and; inner strength or faith.