

Adoption Benefits for State Employees and Other Eligible Applicants

What Law Authorizes the Adoption Benefit?

Section 409.1664, Florida Statutes, authorizes monetary benefits to certain employees who adopt a child from the Florida child welfare system.

Who Administers the Adoption Benefit?

The Department of Children and Families, Office of Child Welfare, administers the program. The Adoption Unit of the Office of Child Welfare is responsible for accepting applications, determining the benefit award for each eligible applicant and transferring the budget to each agency or school district that has an eligible employee.

Who is an Eligible Applicant?

A full-time or part-time employee of the State (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches, including the Department of Lottery), the State Universities, Community Colleges, School Districts, Water Management Districts and instructional personnel employed by the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind at the time the adoption was finalized provided the employee is paid from regular salary appropriations (not OPS or otherwise "temporary" or casual labor). Effective July 1, 2017 a qualifying adoptive employee of a charter school or the Florida Virtual School may retroactively apply for the adoption benefit if he or she was employed by a charter school or the Florida Virtual School at the time the adoption was finalized.

What Types of Adoptions are Eligible for the Adoption Benefit?

If, prior to the adoption, the child was in the permanent custody of the Florida Department of Children and Families and the final order of adoption was granted on or after July 1, 2015 (inception date of program), the child may be eligible. Children adopted internationally, through interventions, or privately do not qualify.

If I Qualify, What Types of Benefit May I Receive?

- **Adoption of a Special Needs Child:** A monetary benefit in the amount of \$10,000 per child. (Pro-rated for part-time employees)
- **Adoption of a Non-Special Needs Child:** A monetary benefit in the amount of \$5,000 per child. (Pro-rated for part-time employee)

Who is Considered a Special Needs Child?

A child whose permanent custody has been awarded to the Florida Department of Children and Families or to a Florida licensed child-placing agency and who meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Has established significant emotional ties with his or her foster parents
- Is eight years of age or older;
- Has a developmental disability;
- Has a physical or emotional handicap;
- Is of a black or racially mixed heritage; or
- Is a member of a sibling group of any age, provided that two or more members of a sibling group remain together for purposes of adoption.

When Are Applications Accepted for Adoption Benefits?

The Office of Child Welfare will accept applications during the annual open enrollment period, beginning the first business day of March and concluding on the last business day of April. To be considered for benefits, applicants must submit a completed Application for Adoption Benefits. Employees who apply and are determined to be qualified but are not awarded a benefit must re-apply the next year.

What Else Should I Know About These Monetary Benefits?

The funding of the program varies each year and the amount of the annual appropriation affects how many applicants will receive a monetary benefit. By law, payments must be made in a lump sum and are considered supplemental wages and applicable payroll taxes must be deducted.

Where Can I Locate the Application?

The application is located on the DCF website, your local Human Resource office and the Adoption Information Center at 1-800-96-ADOPT (**Applications from the prior program are not valid**)