

TITLE 10. HUMAN SERVICES

CHAPTER 121.

ADOPTIONS

SUBCHAPTER 1. ADOPTION SUBSIDY

**§ 10:121-1.1 Definitions**

The following words and terms used in this chapter shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Adoption subsidy" means payments for the care and maintenance of a special needs child.

"Board rate" means the rate paid to the resource family for the child at the time of finalization or that which would have been paid for the child if the child was in placement.

"Child" means any person under the age of 18 or approved for continued adoption subsidy up to the maximum age of 21.

"Department" means the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

"DYFS Director" means the Director of the Division of Youth and Family Services in the Department of Children and Families.

"Resource parent" means a person who has received a resource parent license from the State of New Jersey in order to provide foster, adoptive or kinship care.

"Special needs child" means any child who the State of New Jersey has the legal right to place for adoption but who is reasonably expected to be hard to place (due to a difficulty in finding a prospective adoptive home) as specified in N.J.A.C. 10:121-1.2.

**§ 10:121-1.2 Determining that a child is a special needs child**

(a) A Department representative shall determine that a child is a special needs child for any of the following reasons:

1. Any medical or dental condition which will require repeated or frequent hospitalization or treatment;
2. Any physical handicap, by reason of physical defect or deformity, whether congenital or acquired by accident, injury or disease, which makes or may be

expected to make a child totally or partially incapacitated for education or for remunerative occupation;

3. Any substantial disfigurement, such as the loss or deformation of facial features, torso or extremities;

4. A diagnosed emotional, mental health or behavioral problem, psychiatric disorder, serious intellectual incapacity or brain damage which seriously affects the child's ability to relate to his or her peers or authority figures, including, but not limited to, a developmental disability;

5. The child is one of a group of three or more siblings (including half-siblings) and the siblings are placed together, or the child is one of two siblings (including half-siblings) one of whom meets the special needs criteria, and it is considered most appropriate that the children be placed together;

6. The child is 10 years old or older;

7. The child is over two years of age and a member of an ethnic or minority group for whom adoptive homes

are not readily available. Information regarding availability of homes may be obtained from the Department;

8. The child is over five years of age and has been living with a resource parent for at least 12 months and adoption by the resource parent is the most appropriate plan for the child. A child under five may be deemed special needs and qualify for subsidy under this subsection if he or she is a member of an ethnic or minority group for whom adoptive homes are not readily available; or

9. Any other condition of a specific child which may be approved by the DYFS Director or designee.

**§ 10:121-1.3 Payments for the care and maintenance of a special needs child (adoption subsidy)**

(a) The Department shall make payments for the care and maintenance of a special needs child to the person(s) with whom the child has been placed for adoption or by whom the child has been adopted when such payments are applied for prior to adoption according to such forms and procedures as may be established by the Department. The Department shall make adoption subsidy payments only to a person who, at the time the adoption is finalized, is a licensed resource parent in accordance with N.J.A.C. 10:122C or to a person who has been approved as an out-of-State adoptive parent.

(b) The Department shall determine and approve the qualifications for subsidy payments prior to the completion of an adoption proceeding. In order to qualify for subsidy, a child must meet at least one criterion for a special needs child listed in N.J.A.C. 10:121-1.2. The failure of the Department to complete its determination and approval of qualifications prior to the finalization of adoption shall not prevent qualification for

adoption subsidy, if application for such subsidy was made in a timely manner. Eligibility for subsidy shall be subject to an annual review and redetermination as described in N.J.A.C. 10:121-1.4(a).

1. An adoptive family may re-apply for adoption subsidy on behalf of a child who was initially found ineligible for the subsidy benefit. The adoptive family may apply for adoption subsidy at any time after finalization, if the child develops problems traceable to either his or her genetic heritage or pre-adoptive experiences and which may qualify him or her for adoption subsidy.

(c) No payments shall be made for any child who the Department has determined was brought into the State of New Jersey for the sole purpose of qualifying for adoption subsidy.

(d) In addition to meeting the requirements as set forth in (a) through (c) above, payments pursuant to this section shall be made on behalf of a child only in one of the following circumstances:

1. A child is placed for adoption by the Department;
2. A New Jersey child is placed with a New Jersey family by an agency approved to provide adoption services in New Jersey;
3. A New Jersey child who is not Title IV-E eligible or Supplemental Security Income eligible is placed in any state other than New Jersey by an agency approved to provide adoption services in New Jersey;
4. A New Jersey child in placement who appears to be potentially eligible for Supplemental Security Income, but that determination has not yet been made, is placed in any state other than New Jersey by an agency approved to provide adoption services in New Jersey. Subsidy will be terminated if the child is determined to be Supplemental Security Income eligible and the family will be instructed to seek subsidy from its state of residence; or
5. A non-New Jersey child who is Title IV-E or Supplemental Security Income eligible prior to adoption



finalization is placed with a New Jersey family by a private agency located anywhere in the country that is approved to provide adoption services.

(e) Subsidy payments for children in private agency adoptions shall be effective as of the date the Department receives the application for adoption subsidy from the private agency or when the child is placed, whichever occurs later. A determination as to the child's eligibility to receive subsidy may be made by the Department. However, such determination shall be made prior to the child's adoptive placement. The Department is responsible for monitoring the adoption subsidy to the adoptive parent. The Department may approve adoption subsidy payments for a child without legal transfer of care or custody of the child to the Department.

(f) Payments shall be made only pursuant to a written Adoption Assistance Agreement between the Department and the adoptive parent(s), which shall include:

1. The date on which the agreement is entered and the stipulation that the agreement shall remain in effect

regardless of the state in which the adoptive parent(s) reside at any given time;

2. The first name and birthdate of the child for whom the payment is to be made;

3. The condition(s) of the child which make the child a special needs child;

4. The needs of the child being adopted;

5. The amount of adoption subsidy to be paid;

6. The additional assistance or services to be provided by the State, and how the costs for these items are to be met;

7. Provisions for the protection of the interest of the child in cases where the adoptive parent(s) and child move to another state while the agreement is effective;

8. How the adoptive parent(s) shall notify the Department of changes in the needs of the child or circumstances of the adoptive family that would affect the eligibility for, or amount of, adoption subsidy,

including complying with the annual certification of the adoptive parent's legal responsibility to support the child;

9. How adoptive parent(s) shall be notified of any changes in the amount of adoption subsidy and how they may request changes in the adoption assistance agreement;

10. Payments for non-recurring adoption expenses;

11. Annual verification that each child six years of age or older is enrolled in school or medical verification that the child is medically unable to attend school; and

12. Such other provisions as the Department may require.

(g) A Department representative shall make a reasonable effort to place the child in an adoptive setting without providing a subsidy, unless doing so is against the best interest of the child, including, but not limited to, situations involving adoption by a child's resource parent or where the Department determines that such efforts should not be made because of the

special needs of the child or the special qualifications of the adoptive parents.

**§ 10:121-1.4 Duration and amount of adoption subsidy**

(a) The written agreement covering subsidy payments shall remain in effect regardless of family income until the child's 18th birthday. Subsidy payments will be terminated if the Department determines that the parents are no longer legally responsible for the child or the child is no longer receiving support from those parents.

(b) Payments in subsidization of adoption shall include, but are not limited to, the maintenance costs, medical, and surgical expenses, and other costs incidental to the care, training, and education of the child. Such payments may not exceed the cost

of providing comparable assistance in resource family care and shall be made until the child becomes 21 years of age if the child is enrolled as a verified, full-time student of a secondary school or its equivalent.

(c) In the event of the death of the adoptive parent(s), subsidy payments shall be transferred to the new caregiver when the caregiver demonstrates legal responsibility for the child as a result of being named guardian in the adoptive parent's will or having obtained a custody order through the courts.

(d) An adoptive parent cannot be disqualified from receiving subsidy because of his or her family income.

(e) The amount of monthly payment for care and maintenance will be 100 percent of the applicable foster care board rate.

**§ 10:121-1.5 Other payments**

(a) The medical costs of children determined to be special needs will be covered through Medicaid.

(b) Any child eligible for adoption subsidy is eligible for legal subsidy directly related to the adoption when agreed upon and approved by the Department prior to the adoption.

(c) Expenses resulting from a condition which qualified the child for adoption subsidy and which are not covered by third-party liability or Medicaid may be covered by the Department if specified in the agreement.

**§ 10:121-1.6. Exceptions**

**The requirements and standards prescribed in this subchapter may be subject to exceptions in specific cases where the Department determines that strict compliance would result in undue hardship or jeopardize the health, safety or welfare of the prospective adoptive parent or child except that no exception to these rules may exceed the limitations provided by Federal or State law.**

#### **§ 10:121-1.7 Administrative hearings**

Any person aggrieved by a decision of the Department regarding adoption subsidy payments pursuant to this subchapter, including when the adoption subsidy payments are terminated or suspended without the concurrence of the adoptive parent, shall be entitled to an administrative hearing in

accordance with N.J.A.C. 10:120A, Dispute Resolution, when an application for a hearing is filed with the Department's Administrative Hearings Unit within 20 calendar days of such decision or failure to act by the Department.

SUBCHAPTER 2. ADOPTION COMPLAINT  
INVESTIGATION FEES

**§ 10:121-2.1. Adoption complaint investigation**

**The Division of Youth and Family Services, as an approved adoption agency in New Jersey, is authorized to conduct adoption complaint investigations and required to charge to the plaintiffs in such cases the costs of conducting such investigations pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:3-53. The Division of Youth and Family Services**



**charges fees to conduct adoption complaint investigations, based on a person's or family's ability to pay.**

**§ 10:121-2.2. (Reserved)**

**§ 10:121-2.3. (Reserved)**

**§ 10:121-2.4. (Reserved)**

**§ 10:121-2.5. (Reserved)**

**SUBCHAPTER 3. MEDICAL INFORMATION**

**§ 10:121-3.1 Medical information forms**

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:3-41.1, an approved adoption agency shall provide prospective adoptive parents with all available information relevant to the child's developmental and medical history, personality, and the parent's medical histories, including drugs or medications taken during pregnancy or any conditions believed to be hereditary and any other aspects of the parent's health which may influence the child's present or future health. This information shall be shared with the prospective adoptive parent prior to the actual placement of the child in the home or upon completion of an investigation conducted by an approved agency pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:3-41.1. This information shall be provided to the prospective adoptive parent on a specified form which is designated by the Office of Licensing to be used for each adoption complaint investigation in New Jersey and is available from:

Office of Licensing

PO Box 717

Trenton, NJ 08625-0717

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