



CASE FOR SUPPORT

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care

Our Mission...

***In response to God's love in Jesus Christ,
Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries***

will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care

Most parents hope their children will have “good things” later in life - financial freedom, a promising career, the respect of others, etc. They hope their kids will grow to be confident, capable individuals who can stand on their own and enjoy the ability to give and receive love.

On any given day, 1,200 of Pennsylvania's children live without a permanent family. Without a permanent family, the “good things” will never materialize for our kids. It is estimated that 30% of America's homeless are individuals who as children lived in foster homes. The road to “good things” is paved with unconditional love, the kind of love that comes from a supportive, nurturing family. The more nurturing children receive at home, the more likely they are to create better lives for themselves.

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care believes every child deserves the love and stability of a permanent home and the opportunity for a life-long connection. We have strived to serve the most vulnerable children for nearly 140 years. Diakon offers a full range of services for children including special needs, pregnancy services/private infant, and legal-risk (foster-to-adopt) adoptions, and foster care.

The majority of children served by Diakon Adoption & Foster Care are frequently referred to as children with special needs because they are placed in out-of-home care due to child abuse and/or neglect. In addition, one or more factors exist (i.e., emotional, intellectual, social, mental or physical challenges, and/or being a member of a minority group) that makes it reasonable to conclude that the child will require adoption assistance and additional support. Diakon focuses on identifying families for children with special needs because they are at greatest risk of waiting the longest for a family.

Diakon's dedicated adoption and foster care professionals assist families through the entire adoption process – from recruitment through finalization. Given the diverse needs of those we serve, counseling and support services are regularly offered to ensure a successful placement and help promote healing for the children. We also provide post-adoption services beyond finalization that include counseling and support. Social gatherings are another way we bring children and families together to strengthen relationships and for children without a permanent resource to experience love and support in ways they may not have in the past. At Diakon's Christmas gathering, these children often say they never believed there was a Santa Claus, because they never received gifts. Events can provide healing, recruit and support families as a resource, and strengthen relationships.

Many children in our care were abruptly removed from their birth family due to abuse or neglect. Our foster-to-adopt program provides them with a safe and secure foster family home until they can be safely reunited with their birth family. Some children may not be able to return home, thus becoming available for adoption. Diakon adheres to the “first placement – best placement” philosophy, understanding that the best foster home is one in which the family is ultimately willing to adopt. This helps prevent the emotional toll that results from moving children from place to place.

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care Need

The need for resource families has never been greater, as children in foster care may wait as long as five years to be adopted. Often, families interested in adopting are looking for a specific type of child – infants, children without a sibling group, or younger children with minimal special needs. The number of families awaiting an infant far exceeds the number of available infants. The typical child who is waiting for a permanent placement is an older child from a minority group, part of a sibling group and/or experiencing emotional, social, physical, or intellectual challenges.

Raising public awareness and recruiting families willing to work with children who have special needs waiting for a permanent connection requires an incredible effort that crosses all social and economic groups. Staff must saturate targeted areas with information by way of printed materials, advertisements, presentations and awareness events. Diakon invests in these non-reimbursable activities because we believe every child deserves a permanent life-long connection.

While most fees for *special needs* adoption are compensated by governmental agencies, adoptive families are responsible for a variety of direct and indirect costs. Each potential adoptive family must attend training sessions and participate in interviews, home visits, and the preparation of a written family profile. Fees, such as a \$1,500 adoption fee, may also apply.

Financial constraints can be a determining factor for many families who are otherwise willing to adopt a child. Consider Billy, the third child of a mother with a history of drug and alcohol abuse, who found a potential home with a family that had previously adopted four children, including his two brothers. Without hesitation, the family offered to adopt Billy because they believed he should be with his siblings. The cost of this private adoption was \$12,000. Diakon partially subsidizes all adoptions through the generous support of our donors and, on average, pays the full cost of at least two adoptions per year. *The generous support of individuals like yourself can make it possible for a family to adopt and for a child to find a good home.*

Because children may be removed from their home, as the result of abuse or neglect, at any time of day or night, they often come to Diakon Adoption & Foster Care with only the clothing they are wearing. Thus the need for clothing and personal care items is great. It is important that each child in our care immediately be provided with essential items such as pajamas, change of clothing, personal care items and a duffel bag.

Some families welcome young children into their homes without prior notice. They need car seats, cribs, strollers, diapers, formula and clothing. Diakon placed more than 200 children into foster care in 2006. It costs about \$250 to provide just the basic needs for each child, which translates into approximately \$50,000 in costs for the program each year. Add the cost of all the infant care needs, dental care, and other medical needs and it becomes a huge investment.

Diakon Pregnancy Services program provides counseling, free of charge, to women experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. Our counselors explore options with birth parents, provide community referrals and, if adoption is chosen, coordinate the adoption process. Nearly all of Diakon's private infant adoptions are planned through this program. With each session costing \$100, our investment in families exceeds thousands of dollars each year. In addition, we provide infant-related and basic care items to the women who chose to parent their child.

With your support, we can help so many more children find their lifelong permanent connection!

11/12/07

Giving Opportunities

Unrestricted Annual Giving for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care

Unrestricted Annual Giving is used over an estimated 12-month period to provide support to programs, families, and individuals in need. The entirety (100%) of your gift will be used to support Diakon Adoption & Foster Care. A gift to Unrestricted Annual Giving, on behalf of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, will help provide essential services for children in the child welfare system and pregnant women in need of assistance. These unrestricted gifts provide much-needed resources and allow Diakon the greatest flexibility to direct funds to that area where they are most needed.

Benevolent Care Endowment Fund for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care

This fund provides an income stream that perpetually supports Diakon programs, families and individuals in need. An endowment provides reliable, long-term support for programs and services. Your dollars support the growth of this fund, enabling Diakon and your support to match the ever growing need. A gift to the Benevolent Care Endowment Fund, on behalf of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, will help to support this program, in perpetuity.

Restricted Support for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care

Sponsor an infant/private adoption.....	\$12,000
Sponsor the adoption of a child with special needs (conditions where it is not covered).....	\$8,000
Sponsor training & family profile for a family	\$1,500

Diakon Adoption & Foster Care Emergency Fund responds to the children’s emergency needs that arise including:

- Medical expenses, medicine, and dental work for all children served in Adoption & Foster Care in one year (not 100% covered by medical assistance) \$4,000
- Dental work and orthodontic braces for one child (not covered by medical assistance) \$3,000
- Outreach – one activity/event (family recruitment, adoption awareness, family retention/appreciation) \$1,000
- Post-adoption support for one family (referrals, financial assistance, etc.) \$500
- Clothing, personal care items, and emergency needs for one child upon program intake (need 200) \$250
- Lessons, dues, wellness activities, and year-round activities for one child (to attend camp and other programs, Easter baskets, fun events, etc.) \$250
- Lifebook supplies - 5 children (a child’s background information about medical, family history, etc.) \$250

You can create, name and restrict the uses of a permanent endowment fund for Diakon Adoption & Foster Care with a \$250,000 gift, payable over five years.

We are grateful for the generosity of those who share our vision and commitment to Diakon’s mission.