

Tennessee Post-Permanency Profile

Updated: September 2024

State Population (2023 estimate)

7 – 11 million

Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Caseload (2022)

- Adoption assistance caseload — 11,795
- Guardianship assistance caseload — 2,379
- Total — 14,174

State Administration Type

State administered

Pre-Service Training

Prospective foster and adoptive parents are trained using the 25-hour TN Key (Knowledge Empowers You) pre-service curriculum. Relative and kinship caregivers are not required to complete pre-service training to become an approved foster home. Post approval, staff will recommend individualized training based on the family's needs. Training may be required to stabilize placement or address identified safety concerns.

Parents who are transitioning to adoption and guardianship also participate in the eight-hour Adoption and Guardianship Preparation Training.

Services Offered Through the State's Post-Permanency Support Program

Post-permanency services in Tennessee are provided statewide through the Adoption Support and Preservation | Guardianship Support and Preservation (ASAP | GSAP) program, operated by Harmony Family Center. ASAP | GSAP provides evidence-based, trauma-informed, and individualized therapeutic and educational services. Services include:

- **Pre-permanency supports** — Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) families who have made a verbal intent to adopt or intent to obtain permanent guardianship of a child in their home must go through the Adoption and Guardianship Preparation training (AGPT) before adoption or guardianship can be finalized. AGPT training is also made available to contract provider families. Facilitated virtually by master's level clinicians in four two-hour psychoeducational sessions, the training covers the impact of adoption or guardianship on families now and in the future, common





motives, and expectations vs. the realities of adoption and guardianship; transparency, honesty, and disclosure; and normalizing the need to access post-permanency services. AGPT provides families with valuable information, time, and space for guided reflection regarding the continued impact of adoption and an introduction to post-permanency services offered to families in Tennessee.

- **Assessment** — Each family served by the program completes an assessment at the beginning and completion of ASAP | GSAP services to evaluate changes in youth's behaviors, parents' feelings of connectedness to their child/family, and parents' perception and positive feelings toward child. These family-based assessments include Behavior Problem Index (BPI), Parent Feelings Form (perception and positive feelings toward adopted child), Belonging and Emotional Security Tool (BEST), and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics assessment. Other assessments are used as needed. The assessment guides the treatment plan and serves as baseline for evaluation.
- **Counseling services** — ASAP | GSAP provides family-focused therapeutic support in the family's home. Counseling may include evidence-based and promising practice models such as Trust Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®), ARC (Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency), NMT (Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics), SMART (Sensory Motor Arousal Regulation Treatment), Circle of Security, Narrative Therapy, Theraplay, Multi-Modal Attachment Therapy (M-MAT), Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), and other neurodevelopmentally sensitive approaches. Families receiving counseling services can reach assigned therapists after traditional hours. In-home services are also scheduled outside normal business hours.
- **Case management** — The ASAP | GSAP therapists also offer case management services to help families access and work with other providers and schools if needed.
- **Crisis intervention** — Families being served through in-home services have access to crisis intervention to help them stabilize and ensure safety. Families in crisis can reach out to their assigned family therapist (or a designee if the therapist is unavailable). The program provides immediate assessment and time-limited treatment in volatile situations and helps connect families to long-term adoption-sensitive treatment providers.
- **Support groups** — Virtual support groups are offered statewide for adoptive and guardianship families to connect with one another in a safe and supportive space of shared experiences. Groups are facilitated by ASAP | GSAP staff who have foster/adopt parenting experience and include psychoeducational support.





- **Educational advocacy** — The program's educational advocates offer support, education, and assistance. Advocates prepare families for school meetings, attend school meetings with them, inform about educational rights, recommend services, and otherwise help families meet children's educational needs.
- **Respite care** — Staff help families identify natural supports and expand their therapeutic web. The program also provides one-time funding to help families access respite.
- **Information** — The program hosts a resource center with webinars, recommended readings, videos, and other resources on a range of adoption-related issues.
- **Parent coaching** — Coaches provide one-on-one support and connection to resources to help adoptive/guardianship parents meet their parenting goals while gaining insight into therapeutic caregiving techniques.
- **Training** — Training webinars cover trauma-responsive techniques and therapeutic practices for adoptive/guardianship parents on topics such as educational advocacy, therapeutic parenting, attachment and attunement, de-escalation, reflective parenting, adoption disclosure, and more.
- **Events** — ASAP|GSAP hosts social events across the state to provide fellowship, support, and family connection in an accepting environment. Events are staffed by professionals with lived experience as adoptive parents. ASAP|GSAP also offers family camps and day camps for children and teens that include therapeutic and recreational activities.

The program served 407 families with in-home counseling services, 893 Adoption/Guardianship Preparation Training completions, and 212 therapeutic camp attendees in fiscal year 2023.

For more information, visit <https://harmonyfamilycenter.org/pre-post-adoption/asap-gsap-services/> or <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/foster-care-and-adoption/adoption/post-adoption-support.html>.

Geographic Area Covered

All services are offered statewide.

Harmony has staff statewide to serve families in all areas. Social events are held across the state and support groups are virtual. Families who travel for day camps are provided with lodging.





Eligible Population for the Overall Post-Permanency Program

- All families who adopted from the state's foster care system
- All families who adopted from foster care in other states, territories, or tribes
- All families who adopted through intercountry adoption
- All families who adopted through private adoption
- All families who have guardianship of a child from foster care

Variations in Eligibility for the Post-Permanency Program

Families who have adopted through private, domestic, or intercountry channels are eligible for services on a sliding scale fee basis.

Cultural Responsiveness

Harmony Family Center ensures that all staff participate in agency-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion training as well as training on serving LGBTQ2S+ children and families. The agency meets any requests from families who need services in other languages, including translation of materials and use of interpreters.

ASAP | GSAP offers specialized services for LGBTQ2S+ children and families, including Rainbow Day camp, Rainbow family camp, and Rainbow connection days where they partner with LGBTQ2S+ community groups to facilitate activities.

Outreach and Engagement

The state shares information about the post-permanency support program through the following outreach:

- Announcements at the required Adoption and Guardianship Preparation Training class
- Sharing of program information at adoption closing
- Inclusion in a newsletter sent twice a year to all families receiving adoption or guardianship assistance
- Social media outreach
- Web advertisements
- Distribution at recruitment events
- Staff outreach to community organizations
- Sharing of program information at child reentry into foster care

Tennessee stays connected with adoptive and guardianship families through a newsletter sent twice a year to families who receive adoption or guardianship assistance and periodic reviews of adoption and guardianship subsidies.





How the Post-Permanency Program Is Operated

Through a contract or grant with one private agency

Notes About Who Provides Which Service(s)

Harmony Family Center provides all post-permanency therapeutic supports and services statewide. Tennessee DCS administers statewide subsidy programs for adoption and guardianship assistance and provides access to sealed adoption records post-permanency.

In accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated, Tennessee DCS registers, seals, and maintains records of all children adopted in the State of Tennessee through both public and private adoptions. Post Adoption records are available to eligible persons as outlined in Tennessee Code Annotated.

Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Reviews and Changes

The state conducts annual child well-being reviews for any child receiving adoption assistance. Effective July 1, 2021, any person receiving adoption assistance from DCS is required to provide DCS with medical/mental health or educational documentation each year.

Adoptive parents and guardians can request a change in the adoption or guardianship assistance agreement any time there is a change in the family's circumstances or the child's needs. To make the request to change or modify the assistance agreement, the parent must contact the subsidy specialist for their region. Parents will need to provide supporting professional documentation to the subsidy specialist. The adoption or guardianship assistance agreement will be revised to reflect any approved changes.

Tracking Adoption/Guardianship Discontinuity

Tennessee Department of Children's Services systematically tracks foster care reentry data for children who attain legal permanence through adoption or guardianship via the public child welfare agency, primarily for evaluating subsidy agreements and determining if the assistance should be modified or remain intact to support child and family reunification. Reentry data is also collected on children who are adopted in another state and subsequently reenter foster care in Tennessee and children adopted via private or intercountry adoption who enter foster care. Demographic information such as race, ethnicity, and date of adoption or guardianship finalization is documented. No formal reporting or analysis is available.





Harmony Family Center collects and reports data to TN DCS regarding whether the families it serves through ASAP|GSAP maintain placement. A short description of circumstances leading to discontinuity is reported to the state.

Post-Permanency Program Spending (FY 2023)

\$5 – 9 million

Funding Sources for the Post-Permanency Program (FY 2023)

1. Title IV-B, Part 2 (Promoting Safe and Stable Families/PSSF)
2. State funds
3. Adoption/Guardianship Incentive Program Payments (AIPP)

