



## Alabama Post-Permanency Profile

Updated: September 2024

### State Population (2023 Census estimate)

4 – 6,999,999 million

### Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Caseload (2022)

- Adoption assistance caseload — 5,075
- Guardianship assistance caseload — 820
- Total — 5,895

### State Administration Type

State administered

### Pre-Service Training

To be approved in Alabama to foster or adopt a child from foster care, or provide kinship guardianship care, all prospective parents must complete the 30-hour Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanency (TIPS). Deciding Together is a foster/adoptive preparation and selection process that can be used with families whose geographic location or circumstances of employment prohibit attendance at TIPS's 10 weeks of group meetings. Families are dually approved so they are approved to foster and/or adopt and do not need additional training to transition from foster care to adoption.

Alabama contracts with private agencies to complete training for families who wish to adopt special needs children. These families must also complete additional training required by the private agency, which is offered both in person and virtually.

Relative caregivers go through the same training if they are to receive adoption subsidy.

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

The Alabama Department of Human Resources contracts with Children's Aid Society to offer Alabama Pre and Post Adoption Services (APAC), a statewide program designed to stabilize adoptive families, prevent disruptions, and enhance the overall well-being of adoptive children. Services include:

- **Pre-permanency supports** — In addition to a three-hour Therapeutic Parenting Training for prospective adoptive parents, APAC offers child background reviews, navigation, and





pre-finalization counseling. Once a particular child has been identified for a family, APAC's adoption navigators can provide placement support and help the family understand more about the child or children they may adopt. APAC staff discuss the child's history with the family to ensure the family is equipped to meet the child's needs. APAC's counselors can work with the family before placement to address their fears and expectations and discuss how they will meet the child's needs. Once the child is placed, counselors can help the family adjust and address any issues that arise.

- **Assessment** — APAC conducts a comprehensive psychosocial assessment with families before they receive counseling services. The same adoption-competent clinician who will be providing counseling meets with the family weekly at least three times. Meetings can be held in the family's home, by telehealth, or in the office. The counselor gathers information to complete a standardized template that examines the reason the family sought support, the child's functioning and history, the family's support system, parenting style, and more. At APAC, parents are viewed as the guiding force behind the assessment so counselors meet with them alone twice before meeting with the family together. After the third meeting, the counselor completes a treatment plan that was developed in collaboration with the family/child that guides the counseling to be provided and identifies other services that may be helpful.
- **Counseling services** — APAC's master's level, certified adoption-competent clinicians provide counseling to support adoptive families, before finalization and after. Counseling is designed to provide guidance, coping strategies, and emotional support as families navigate the intricacies of adoption. Sessions—held in the APAC offices, in the family home, or by telehealth, based on the family's preferences—can be with the parents alone or with the entire family. Much of the focus of counseling is on teaching parents to be a therapeutic resource for the child, with counselors providing information about how parents can stay regulated and be the agents of change. Services typically last three to six months but can be extended or restarted if the family situation requires it.
- **Case management** — APAC counselors often help families navigate or coordinate services as part of counseling services. They review the treatment plan with families every six months.
- **24-hour telephone support** — The APAC team is available Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Counselors working with families often check email or phone after hours and on weekends, and respond quickly.
- **Crisis intervention** — APAC offers crisis intervention sessions for families facing immediate challenges or uncertainties regarding their adoption. Staff guide families to





emergency services and can meet with families more quickly or more often in times of crisis.

- **Support groups** — APAC offers in-person parent groups that meet in each region of the state, providing education and social interaction for adoptive families and prospective families who have an approved home study. Groups are jointly facilitated by adoption navigators (who serve families before placement) and counselors (who serve families before and after finalization). Facilitators plan for a specific topic each month, but allow for flexibility to let the parents drive the direction of the discussion and to provide each other with peer support. APAC also offers children's groups, with discussion topics for older children (such as handling questions about adoption, fairness in the family, or sibling issues) and activities for younger children. APAC also hosts a private, closed Facebook group through which parents can support one another.
- **Educational advocacy** — As part of the counseling service, APAC clinicians help families understand and address educational challenges. Counselors can attend school meetings with families if they request it.
- **Respite care** — APAC staff work with the families they serve to develop their own support network, including through support groups or Facebook groups.
- **Information and referral** — APAC hosts a lending library, and parents can make an online request that items be mailed to them anywhere in the state at no charge. In addition, staff are available to answer questions, make referrals to outside services, and otherwise support families.
- **Training** — APAC offers virtual and in-person training sessions for parents and professionals on a variety of adoption-related topics. The agency hosts an annual statewide conference for Alabama DHR staff and other adoption and foster care professionals. They also host two annual Train-the-Trainer workshops for professionals to help them provide more effective mental health services to the entire adoption community.
- **Events** — APAC special events are informal networking opportunities where adoptive families connect with one another, have fun, and learn about APAC's services. At least one event is held in each region each year. Each year, the program hosts Camp APAC, a four-day camp for adopted children and their siblings ages 9 to 18. Campers have the opportunity to spend time with other children who have similar backgrounds, while parents enjoy a few days of respite.

In state fiscal year 2023, APAC provided 137 families with one-on-one counseling services.





In addition to these services provided by APAC, the state offers:

- **Specialized medical subsidy** — In limited circumstances, typically when parents are adopting a child they have fostered, the state may authorize a payment or payments to cover counseling services when: 1. A child is in therapy with a non-Medicaid provider at the time of a foster parent adoptive placement; 2. There is no Medicaid provider located in close proximity to the child at the time of placement in a non-foster parent adoption; or 3. Payment is made at the Medicaid rate and is secondary to private insurance. These specialized subsidies are typically limited to one year, but the support may be continued with prior approval.
- **Behavioral supports** — DHR's behavioral analysts provide services to pre-adoptive parents from before the child is placed in the home until finalization. The behavioral analysts address behavior issues and seek to smooth transitions and support long-term stability of placements.

For more information, visit [https://www.childrensaid.org/what\\_we\\_do/programs/apac/apac-services.html](https://www.childrensaid.org/what_we_do/programs/apac/apac-services.html).

### Geographic Area Covered

APAC provides services statewide through a network of offices located in Birmingham, Montgomery, Huntsville, and Mobile. Trainings and support groups are offered virtually to ensure access statewide. The lending library mails items to families statewide.

The specialized medical subsidy and the behavioral supports are available statewide.

### 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
- All families who have guardianship of child not through foster care

### Variations in Eligibility for the Post-Permanency Program

DHR adoptive families take priority if there is limited availability of services. In such cases, other families would go on a wait list, but there has not been a need for a wait list.





The specialized medical subsidy is available only to children receiving adoption or guardianship assistance who meet the program's criteria. Support from DHR behavioral analysts is for any child with an open DHR case or foster care case.

## Cultural Responsiveness

Children's Aid Society has a Performance Quality Improvement (PQI) committee focused largely on cultural responsiveness. The committee meets monthly and conducts training for all agency staff, including APAC staff, on how to provide culturally responsive services. All families served through APAC's counseling program are surveyed about the quality of services, including if services were culturally competent and respectful.

DHR and APAC can engage interpreters and translation services for families for whom English is not their primary language.

## Outreach and Engagement

Adoption Placement Specialists make referrals to APAC when working with adoptive families. These referrals can be made at any time during the adoption process, but typically they are made when a family is matched with a child.

APAC staff conduct outreach about available services to adoptive families by attending recruitment events, community events, resource fairs, and other meetings in all regions of the state. When families contact APAC for services, APAC staff ask where the person learned about the services.

All families adopting through APAC are connected with their post-permanency counselor at least twice before finalization. Counselors co-facilitate the APAC Therapeutic Parenting training for prospective adoptive parents and attend the pre-service training Panel Night class to discuss the availability of post-permanency support.

## How the Post-Permanency Program Is Operated

- Through a contract or grant with one private agency
- By other state staff

## Notes About Who Provides Which Service(s)

The state contracts with Children's Aid Society to operate APAC statewide.

Behavior analysts are state staff, serving all 67 counties.



## Adoption/Guardianship Assistance/Subsidy Review and Changes

The state typically reviews adoption or guardianship assistance agreements only when families call with questions or concerns. Parents are required to notify the state about any changes in circumstances that would affect their assistance. If families are receiving a specialized medical subsidy to cover counseling, after one year, families must submit professional documentation that verifies the continuing need and confirms that no Medicaid providers are available locally who could provide the counseling.

Adoptive parents or guardians can make a request for a change in the adoption or guardianship assistance agreement at any time when there is a change in the family's circumstances or the child's needs. Professional documentation supporting the requested change is required, if appropriate. Families can call Adoption Intake or email the Office of Adoptions to make requests for changes.

## Tracking Adoption/Guardianship Discontinuity

The state's data system tracks when adopted children enter foster care and staff can run reports on the data as needed. When an adopted child re-enters care, state staff often review the circumstances and reach out to the family to determine if they need additional supports or services or if something could have been done differently.

## Post-Permanency Program Spending (FY 2023)

\$2 – 4,999,999 million

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

- Title IV-B, Part 1 (Child Welfare Services/CWS)
- Title IV-B, Part 2 (Promoting Safe and Stable Families/PSSF)
- Adoption savings (reported on CB 496 Part 4 – Annual Adoption Savings Report)
- Adoption/Guardianship Incentive Program Payments (AIPP)
- State funds
- County funds

