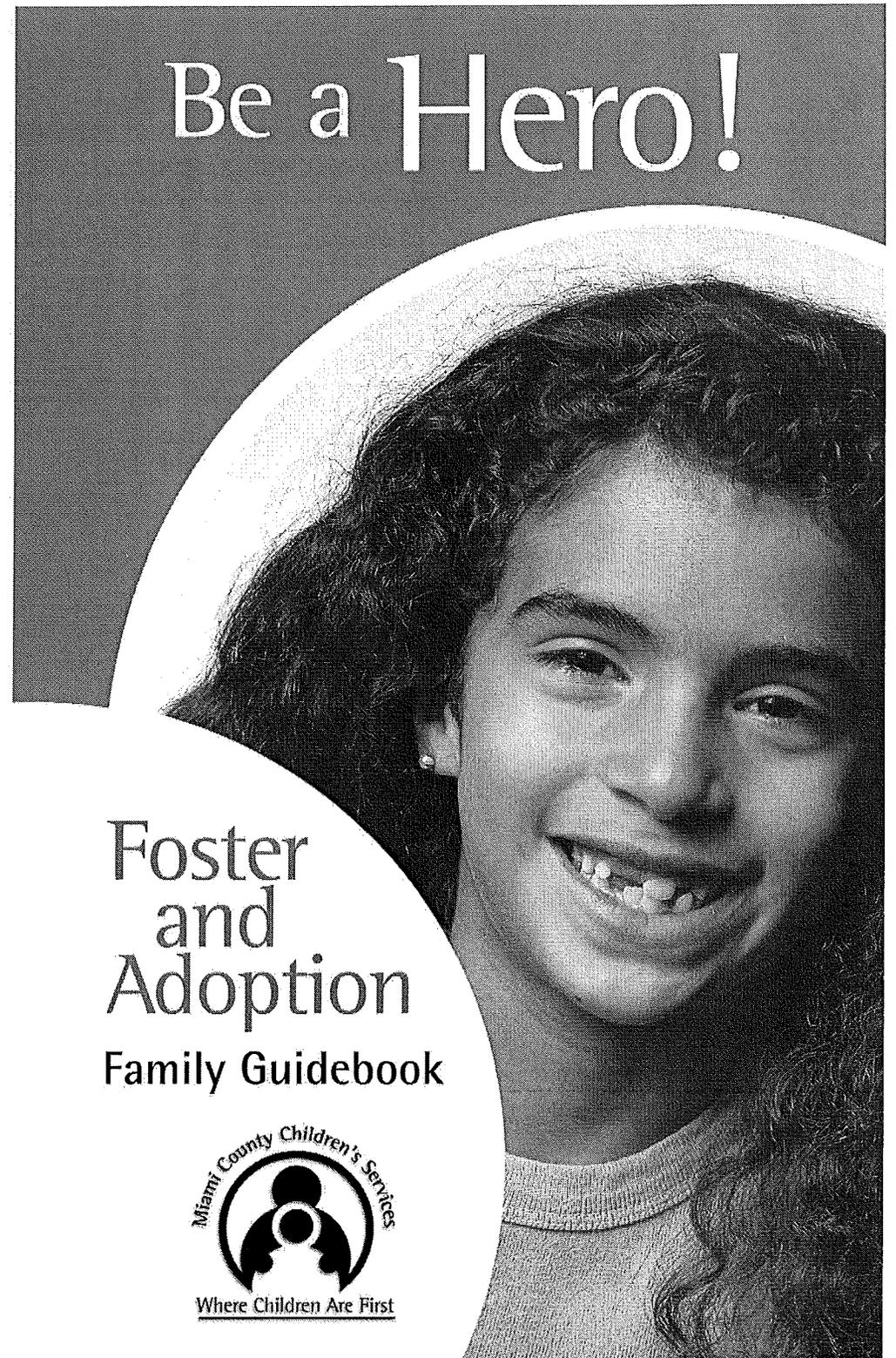


Be a Hero!

Foster and Adoption Family Guidebook



Foster Recruitment/Retention Department
510 W. Water Street, Suite 210
Troy, OH 45373



The Reflections of a Foster Parent: - Your Open Door is Hope -

Over the last eleven years as a foster parent I have found that has been forever changed by the children that have come into and home. As you are considering becoming a foster or adoptive parent, I invite you to weigh the challenges you may face with a surable reward I have both received and hopefully given. The children that have been in my home have been like family to me; and it is possible to put into words the pride that you feel when children experience both small and large successes.



Some of my greatest joys have been watching foster children graduate from high school and go on to college, join the military, get married or go on to other accomplishments. I personally have found that I work the best with teenagers since they are able to think independently and need some extra guidance through critical times of crisis that so often are turning points for the rest of their lives. I recognize that some of the children that have been in my home have not been able to overcome the struggles and pain from their past; yet, I am certain that I tried my best to offer them patience, commitment and a safe home.

I have found great support in my family, co-workers and church members and encourage you to take support from those around you as you foster. If you decide to foster, there will be hard times, but you have to hang in there, keep an open mind and be patient. I can truly say that fostering does make a difference in the life of a child and in your own life. You can make a difference, and I assure you that I am a much stronger and better person because of the foster children that have come into my home. My life has been changed forever and I feel blessed.

Bob

fos-ter: verb, To promote the growth or development of; to care or cherish; to favor forward, advance, nourish, sustain and support.

Dear Prospective Caregiver:

We would like to thank-you for your interest in learning about becoming a Foster and/ or Adoptive parent. We need you, in fact we need many Foster and Adoptive parents just like you to take on the challenge of loving, protecting, nurturing and being committed to children of abuse and neglect.

There are many children, especially sibling groups and older youth, in the temporary and permanent custody of Miami County who need true heroes in their lives, who can provide guidance and stability. Foster/Adoptive parents can help meet the need and become a true hero in a waiting child's life.

We realize that the decision to parent someone else's child or children can be difficult, especially combined with your own family responsibilities, but can you imagine what it must feel like to wait for a permanent family? Children in the custody of Miami County need you in order to stay in their communities, schools, churches and near their friends. Partner with us to help support our children and families, building a stronger community and more promising futures for our children.

If you need more detailed information about our program please call the Recruitment Unit at (937) 335-4103. Remember it takes all of us to protect and provide for our community children.

Sincerely,

Miami County Children's Services Recruitment Unit

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- Mr. Rogers

Welcome to Miami County Children's Services.

We appreciate your interest in the Foster Care and Adoption Programs. The enclosed information will help you to understand the programs, agency, the foster home licensing process and the adoption approval process. If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Agency and ask to speak to someone in the Recruitment Department at (937)335-4103.

Mission Statement

The Mission of Miami County Children's Services Board is to provide services in an effective, efficient and fiscally responsible manner to ensure the right of all children of Miami County to grow up in a safe, nurturing and stable environment.

To support the accomplishment of the Mission of our agency, we have adopted the following:

Four Imperatives:

- 1) Children who cannot be protected within their own home must be removed. Reunification with the birth family is the goal when possible.
- 2) Reduce the number of children that come into custody unnecessarily.
- 3) Children must be placed in the most family-like setting which meets their needs.
- 4) All children must have a time limited permanency plan.

These imperatives will inform our decisions, drive our work, and guide our steps.

THE NEED FOR FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION IN MIAMI COUNTY

A child in need of a temporary or permanent, safe home comes to the attention of our agency by referrals from many sources such as neighbors, friends, family, teachers, doctors, nurses and other community members. Every effort is made to work with the family while the child remains in the home. However, in some cases, a child must be separated from their family for reasons ranging from physical abuse, neglect, sexual victimization and abandonment. When children must leave their homes, many children experience trauma which impacts the process of normal child development and affects their emotional well-being. This will occur even if the child is removed from deprived and unsafe environments. Placement away from home is an interruption in the life of a child.

Because being separated from one's family is difficult and disruptive, our immediate goal is to provide the child with permanency, as soon as possible. Therefore, our initial casework strategies are designed to re-stabilize the child's parents so that the child can be reunified with his/her family. However, foster care is not a permanent plan for our children and they need a life-long attachment to care givers. Consequently, if the child's family is not able to re-stabilize itself, an alternate permanent home must be secured as soon as possible. Examples of legally permanent homes are adoption and legal custody being given to a relative.

When children are placed in foster care or adoption, care givers are responsible for meeting the child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care and education. However, many of the children who come to need foster care or adoption have experienced physical/sexual abuse, neglect and/or multiple placement moves. These children need extra care and nurturance in order to begin the healing process. Foster and Adoptive homes are not meant to be a place for a child to "stay" but should be loving environments where our children can learn to give and receive love and to develop their full potential. Many of our foster and adoptive children have grown up to be successful citizens, parents, employees, neighbors, friends, and community leaders. Many children have been successful because their foster and adoptive parents have been committed and tapped into his/her potential, not giving up even when it was tough.

Foster Care

What is Foster Care?

Foster care is the full-time, though temporary, care of children until their parent(s) can resume their responsibility or if necessary until a permanent (adoptive) home can be found for them, which may be with their foster care provider.

Who Are the Children Needing Foster Care?

Miami County Children's Services takes legal custody when children, for various reasons, are unable to remain in their homes. Some of the reasons that children are separated from their parents include physical or sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, incarceration of a parent, physical or mental illness of a parent, death of parent(s), or the child's own emotional or behavioral needs. The children are of every age, race, nationality and religion. *Primarily* the children that come into our custody are from ages 6-18. Some have brothers and sisters that need foster care also and we attempt to keep sibling groups together. All of the children need extra attention or specialized care because of physical and/or mental disabilities, language difficulties, emotional and/or behavioral problems, that resulted from the traumas they have experienced.

What Do Foster Parents Do?

The obvious answer to this question is that they love, nurture and care for the children placed in their care. However, there is a great deal more involved with foster care. Sometimes foster parents need to arrange and accompany children to medical, dental or therapy appointments. Foster parents transport children to visitations with birth family members. The agency may rely on the foster parents to play an advocacy role for the child at school or to work with the child to prepare him/her for returning home. Perhaps most importantly, a foster parent provides a positive (non-physical) form of structure and discipline that is fair and appropriate. Foster parents are part of a treatment team that consists of social workers, therapists, juvenile court personnel, CASA workers, and in many instances the birth families.

What Are the Requirements?

Individuals interested in foster care must be 21 year of age and have sufficient income to meet their own basic needs. Prospective foster parents must be in good physical, emotional and mental health. You can be single or part of a couple that have had a stable relationship for at least one year. There are no educational or religious requirements and home ownership is not a requirement.

Is There Help for Foster Parents?

Our agency offers a wide range of supportive and financial services. No salary is given. A daily board rate is paid as a *reimbursement* of expenses and is allocated based on age and need of the child. Medical, dental and therapy expenses are covered. Support groups, ongoing trainings and a Foster Parent Association are provided to offer assistance to foster families. In case of an emergency a staff on-call worker can be notified through 911.

What Is the Next Step Toward Fostering?

Individuals interested in foster care are required to complete the foster care application and to undergo a fingerprinting criminal background check. After the application and fingerprinting has been done a *mandatory* pre-service training will need to be attended. At these training sessions, more detailed information is given about fostering and the needs of children that are placed in foster homes. The pre-service training is offered on Saturday mornings through our agency. If Saturday's do not work for you other training times will be explored. We want to make this process as accessible as possible to you. Prior to licensing CPR and First Aid Training must be completed. Arrangements for this class can be made through Red Cross and will be reimbursed by the agency only after licensure is approved.

Topics covered may include, but are not limited to:

- Overview of Foster Care and Adoption
- Family Systems of Abuse and Neglect
- Impact of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development
- Attachment, Separation and Placement
- Discipline
- Cultural Issues in Placement
- Sexual Abuse
- Effects of Care Giving on the Family
- Permanency Issues for Children and Families

Miami County Board Rates

Purpose: All payments that are made to foster parents are to cover expenses of room and board for a foster child as well as the child's needs while living in the home. The board rates are not to be used to supplement the family income.

Family Foster Home Rates:

AGE OF CHILD	DAILY BOARD RATE	MONTHLY BOARD PAYMENT
0-4	\$13.20	\$396.00
5-9	\$15.00	\$450.00
10 -13	\$18.00	\$540.00
14- 21	\$19.20	\$576.00

Exceptions to Family Foster Home Board Rates:

These placements are made after a foster family has some experience with fostering and additional training which in most cases will be two years. These categories of placement are not made without the willingness of a foster parent to consider and accept these types of placements. The categories are outlined in detail by the state as to what the needs of a child are to constitute each rate of pay.

Difficulty of Care:

Add \$ 4.00 per day to appropriate age group category

Double difficulty of Care:

Add \$ 8.00 per day to appropriate age group category

Specialized Rate:

\$40.00 per day total no matter what the age of the child

Independent Living Rate:

\$35.00 Total

It is the responsibility of a foster parent to transport foster children to necessary appointments and mandatory activities. Mileage is paid at \$0.30 per mile for mileage directly related to the foster child. Examples of mileage are for transporting a child to visitations with birth families, medical appointments and therapy for the child. Transporting to and from school is not reimbursed.

For children that use diapers or pull-ups there is a reimbursement from the agency up to \$35.00 with pre-approval. Foster parents will need to save the receipts and attach them to the mileage sheet. School-aged children qualify for the free-lunch program at school.

Clothing inventories are done when a child comes into care to determine what a child still needs. If a child does not come into care with enough clothing, the agency has a clothing room that can be used for clothing for the child. Seasonal and special event items such as coats, jackets, swimming-suits and boots will be provided, or purchased with pre-approval from agency staff.

Services Offered

1. **Foster Care Reimbursement** – A check (board payment/per diem) is issued at the end of each month for services provided the previous month.
2. **Medical, Dental, Counseling and Therapy Needs** – These services are covered by Miami County Childrens Services Board (MCCSB) and/or Medicaid for all children living in foster homes.
3. **The Foster Parent Association** – This support group consists of foster and adoptive parents who have experienced the same things that you are currently going through as new foster/adoptive families. The association has meetings and plans events throughout the year to benefit the children and families.
4. **On-going Visitation** – Monthly visits are made by agency staff to the home to avoid any disruptions by resolving issues, sharing information and discussing concerns.
5. **Foster Parent Manual** – Written and published by MCCSB, this manual contains policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, expectations and rights to assist foster parents to care for children in agency custody. Periodic updates are automatically forwarded to foster parents.
6. **High Quality Training** – Allows foster and adoptive parents to obtain the skill level needed in caring for children in agency custody. Reimbursement incentive payments for training sessions are given on a limited basis. The Department of Job and Family Services mandates that licensed foster parents obtain on-going training hours throughout each year. Trainings are offered at various times and locations to make it more accessible.
7. **Mileage Reimbursement** – Foster parents are reimbursed for mileage when transporting foster children to agency authorized appointments.

Am I Ready To Become A Foster/Adoptive Parent?

1. T / F I have enough room in my home for a foster/adoptive child.

You must have enough bedroom space for a foster/adoptive child. A foster/adoptive child may share a bedroom with another same sex child but the child cannot share a bedroom with anyone over the age of 18. No one can move out of his/her bedroom and sleep on the couch to make room for the child. The child must have his/her own bed.

2. T / F I am ready to have a safety inspection of my home done now.

It is important to live in a safe environment. During the home study process, your social worker will conduct a safety inspection of your home. Your home must be free of danger and garbage. You must have working smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.

3. T / F I am in good physical, emotional and mental health.

Being a parent can be demanding! You must be healthy and emotionally stable to care for foster/adopted children. Everyone in your home must provide a medical statement completed by a physician. Everyone will be interviewed by a social worker.

4. T / F I have never had a case with an agency due to abuse or neglect.

If you have had an open social services case in the past, you may not be able to become a foster/adoptive parent. This includes substantiated cases of abuse or neglect or if your own child was placed in foster care or adopted. When we receive your application, we will review our own records. If you have any questions call (937) 335-4103 and talk with a Licensing Specialist.

5. T / F I have adequate income to meet my current family's needs.

You do not have to be rich to become a foster/adoptive parent, however, you must have enough income to meet your family's needs. During the home study process, you will be asked to provide proof of income and to review family expenses.

6. T / F I have been in my current relationship for more than 18 months.

Foster/adoptive parents can be single, married or divorced. However, you must have been in your current marital status for at least 12 months to ensure stability in your relationship. Any questions, please call the agency and ask for a Licensing Specialist.

7. T / F No adult in my home has ever been convicted of a crime.

If you or any adult residing in your home has been convicted of certain criminal offenses, you cannot become a foster/adoptive parent. Each member in your household over the age of 18 will be fingerprinted. If you have specific questions regarding which crimes are prohibited, please call the agency. If you have not been a resident of Ohio for the past five years, an FBI check is also done.

8. T / F I am ready to begin the home study process now!

You are ready to begin if your life and home are stable. "Stable" means that you are not about to move, having financial, marital or emotional difficulties or making any major life changes in the near future. Also, if you rent you will need your landlord's approval and your home must be in good repair. You have given serious thought to the decision to become a foster/adoptive parent.

IF YOU ANSWER 'TRUE' TO ALL OF THE STATEMENTS, YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A FOSTER / ADOPTIVE PARENT.

IF YOU ANSWER 'FALSE' TO ANY STATEMENT, PLEASE CALL (937) 335-4103 AND TALK WITH A LICENSING SPECIALIST FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Adoption What Is Adoption?

Adoption is the permanent, legal transfer of all parental rights and responsibilities from one family to another family. Adoptive parents have the same rights and responsibilities as parents whose children are born to them. It is the legal step to a life long commitment of sharing your life with a child.

Who Needs an Adoptive Home?

Each year in Miami County, there are many children waiting for adoptive homes. Many of these children are considered "special needs" because of age, medical needs, emotional or intellectual delays, or belonging to a sibling group. Most of the children available for adoption are currently living in foster homes. The important thing to remember is that they are all children and their real "special need" is to have a family.

What Are The Requirements?

Individuals interested in adoption must be at least 18 years of age, have sufficient income to meet their own basic needs, be in good physical, emotional and mental health, and be open to the current philosophies and research regarding adoption. You can be single and still adopt, however, in cases of co-parenting only one applicant can be considered the legal parent. Married couples must be married for at least one year prior to adopting. There are no educational, religious or home ownership requirements.

Is There Help to Adopt?

Assistance may be available for families adopting children with special needs because of age, minority group status, handicaps, intellectual or emotional problems, medical needs or membership in a sibling group. Adoption assistance is discussed in more detail at pre-service training and is regulated by guidelines. Assistance toward nonrecurring costs, such as legal fees, may also be available.

Steps to Family Adoption

1. **Pre – Service Training** – Training consists of 24 hours, divided into 3 hour sessions. **NO CHILDREN ALLOWED DUE TO SENSITIVITY OF CONTENT.** Spouses must attend training in order for the home to be approved in addition to meeting all home study requirements. Individuals co-parenting, only one parent can legally adopt. Everyone living in the home must be a part of the home study process and everyone over age eighteen must be fingerprinted.
2. **The Application** – This process is critical to starting the adoptive process. Applications must be filled out accurately and completely along with any other paperwork that you are given. A preliminary interview will occur when the application is turned in. When your application is turned in you will undergo fingerprinting as part of a mandatory background check. **WE CANNOT BEGIN THE HOME STUDY PROCESS UNLESS AN APPLICATION AND BACKGROUND CHECK ARE COMPLETED AND APPROVED!**
3. **The Home Study** – This process will take place in your home and will generally be 4 to 5 visits and can begin while you are finishing pre-service training. An Adoption Assessor will come to your home and check safety requirements in addition to working with your family in understanding and overseeing requirements while identifying expectations, needs and strengths your family has. There are no fees for the

home study- home studies will be completed only with individuals desiring to adopt a child with “special needs”. CPR and First Aid fees will be reimbursed only after an approved home study.

4. **Approval** – If the home study is successful and complete, your family can be approved to be considered as a potential adoptive family and the search can begin.
5. **Staffing Process** – Matching committee will meet to discuss the current and future needs of the child(ren) needing placement. One or more families will be identified to determine which family would best meet the needs of the child(ren). The family that appears best suited to meet the needs of the child(ren) on a lifelong basis will be selected as the potential match for the child(ren).
6. **Matching** – The potential family selected is brought to the agency to meet with the matching committee to share information and see pictures of the child(ren) being presented to the family. The family is given the opportunity to take the information home and to think about their decision and to discuss it privately with each other and with family members.
7. **Pre – Placement Visits** – Agency staff will coordinate a visit for the child and prospective adoptive family to meet. If the process proceeds, a schedule is prepared for future visits that meet the needs of the child.
8. **Pre-Finalization** – The big day comes when the child(ren) moves into the home of the adoptive family. Social workers can visit weekly to support the move and help with the relationships that are forming and also to offer assistance and services. There is a six month required waiting period before finalization can occur.
9. **Finalization** – The family meets with the Judge, the child(ren), his/her social worker, and the family to discuss the adoption, its meaning for the child(ren) and the family. If all are in agreement, the adoption is finalized.
10. **Post – Finalization** – Even after an adoption is finalized, the adoptive family is encouraged to utilize the agency’s services such as training, support groups and referrals to community agencies.

Definitions

1. **Adoption** – Is the permanent, legal transfer of all parental rights and responsibilities from one family or agency to another family.
2. **Adoption Approval** – Is the gathering of all information collected during the adoptive home study process.
3. **Adoption Assessors** – Social Workers who assess families who wish to adopt, by visiting the home and talking to family members to complete the home study.
4. **Adoptive Family** – Permanent placement with a family that has the same rights and responsibilities as the birth family.
5. **Adoption Worker** – A social worker who visits and is responsible for the needs and well being of the children in our permanent custody unit.
6. **Adoption Subsidy** – Financial assistance for families who adopt children with special needs or circumstances.
7. **CASA** – Court Appointed Special Advocates/Guardian Ad Litem to abused and neglected children for whom placement is being determined by Juvenile Court. Volunteers advocate for the best interests of the children in the court proceedings.
8. **Case Plan** – A goal – oriented, time – limited, individual program of action for a child and the family which identifies problems to be resolved with the aid of supportive services.
9. **Custody** – When Juvenile Court removes a child from his/her legal guardian and gives certain rights and responsibilities to an individual or an agency.
10. **Emergency Custody** – When the agency is granted custody until further action can be taken.
11. **Family Assessment** – Is the social review, study and preparation of a family who wishes to become adoptive/foster parents.
12. **Fingerprints** – Are required for the purpose of a criminal records check.
13. **Foster Care** – Is the placement of a child away from their biological family for a temporary period of time while their family is in the process of resolving their problems.
14. **Foster Care License** – At the successful conclusion of your foster care home study, your family is licensed by the State of Ohio as a substitute care provider.
15. **Interested Individual** – Placement of a child with a non-related person.
16. **Legal Risk** – Adoptive family who cares for a child on a foster care basis before permanent custody is granted.
17. **Legal Custody** – Court awarded custody to an individual, however this is not the same as Permanent Custody.
18. **On – going Training** – Twenty hours to be completed each year to keep a family foster home certified. Home is recertified every two (2) years. Twenty (20) hours of training are required annually.
19. **Out – Of – Home Care** – Detention / Shelter Facilities or Foster Homes.
20. **Permanent Custody** – Permanently terminated rights of birth parents.
21. **Reimbursement** – Adoptive parents can be reimbursed for nonrecurring expenses such as court and legal fees and doctor's appointments. Foster parents are reimbursed for their care through monthly board payments.
22. **Semi – Annual Reviews (SAR)** – Meeting of all parties involved with custody children.
23. **Special or Specific Needs** – Are physical, emotional, medical, educational or psychological needs or any characteristics that require special services.
24. **Subsidized Adoption** – Is a program of financial assistance for families who adopt children whose special needs or circumstances make it harder to find placements.
25. **Temporary Custody** – Court awarded custody to Miami County Childrens Services Board. The child's parents still retain some rights and responsibilities.
26. **Title IV-E** – Is the Federal program designed for children who are eligible for federal assistance before they came into care or disabled and eligible for SSI. Program provides cash payments and a medical card.

Important Numbers

<u>Miami County Children's Services</u>	<u>335-4103</u>
<u>Emergency Afterhours (on-call worker notified)</u>	<u>911</u>
<u>Miami County Mental Health Center</u>	<u>335-7166</u>
<u>Miami County WIC</u>	<u>335-8530 (Troy)</u> <u>773-0184 (Piqua)</u> <u>667-6819 (Tipp City)</u>
<u>Miami County Well Child Clinic</u>	<u>335-8549</u>
<u>Miami County Health Department</u>	<u>440-8105 (Troy)</u> <u>778-2060 (Piqua)</u>
<u>CASA</u>	<u>335-0209</u>
<u>Childcare Choices</u>	<u>667-1799</u> <u>773-9944</u>
<u>Miami County Department of Job and Family Services</u>	<u>440-3471</u>