

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE
TEN TIPS FOR GALS

1. **Note that prospective adoptive parents and/or adoptive children/youth may be eligible for different types of adoption assistance:**
 - financial assistance such as adoption subsidies and/or Medicaid, as well as
 - services such as the Adoption Exchange, Catholic Charities, House Bill 1451 (Collaborative Management Program), and even “case services funds” for counselors who specialize in working with adoptive families.

See C.R.S. 26-7-106(2).
2. Adoption subsidies may seem counterintuitive - foster parents who received a large foster care payment during a D&N case may receive a small adoption subsidy, and/or an unlicensed/non-certified kinship care who did not receive financial assistance during a D&N case may receive hundreds of dollars a month through an adoption subsidy. Remember that this is because **adoption benefits are meant to cover the needs of eligible children/youth whose special needs create a barrier to adoption.** C.R.S. 26-7-105(1). The department assumes that all adoptive parents will provide for the basic needs of all adopted children.
3. **Be aware of what Medicaid/other financial resources will/will not pay for.** As an example, Medicaid will not pay for some special medical equipment such as strollers for children/youth who must lay flat/cannot sit up and/or ramps for homes for children/youth who use wheelchairs. **Also, be aware that what Medicaid will/will not pay for is subject to change over the years.**
4. **Consider whether to request an evaluation of a child/youth post-termination and/or pre-adoption.** Although the department may balk at having to pay for an evaluation, children/youth grow and change throughout D&N cases.
5. Although foster parents must receive notice of their right to involve GALS in the adoption assistance negotiation process (C.R.S. 26-7-104(1)(e)(I)), remember that **GALs cannot give foster parents legal advice.** Foster parents will have tons of questions. Beware of the slippery slope that goes from educating foster parents about the process to giving them advice on what they should/should not do.
6. **Make sure that you have all information demonstrating that the child/youth is an eligible child/youth whose special needs create a barrier to adoption.**
 - Such information includes financial records, the child’s/youth’s mental health records, medical records, therapy records, and IEPs.
 - Potential sources of such information include foster parents, caseworkers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, mental health therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and doctors.

7. **During negotiations, remember the different perspectives/motives at play.**
 - As the GAL, you and the prospective adoptive parents will most want to maximize the assistance for the family and the child.
 - Meanwhile, the department has an obligation to provide limited adoption assistance funds/services to many families.
8. **During negotiations, balance a child's need for permanency against the need for more funds.** "Negotiations" can drag on for a year or more. Helping a prospective adoptive parent become aware of other funding sources can help shorten negotiations, as can confronting the department about the need to obtain permanency for a child/youth.
9. **Adoption subsidy contracts must be reviewed and re-signed every 3 years.** C.R.S. 26-7-107(5). If an adoptive family fails to resign the contract, the subsidy may be stopped.
10. **Adoption subsidies can be reviewed at any time at the adoptive family's request.** C.R.S. 26-7-107(7). The adoptive family must prove changes in the needs of the child/youth or in the circumstances of the family. *Id.*