

Adoption is an event that has a life-long effect on everyone involved. Adoption brings unique rewards as well as challenges to families, and sometimes families will need or want professional help as concerns, challenges, or problems arise. Timely intervention by a professional skilled in adoption-related issues often can prevent issues common to adoption from becoming more serious problems that might be more difficult to resolve. Finding the right therapist can seem like a daunting task, especially when parents may be feeling overwhelmed or burdened by the difficulties for which they are seeking help. Below are a few tips and resources to help families navigate this process.

Who can help me locate therapist to help my child and family?

- If your child has health insurance (see [link](#) below for resources for MassHealth enrolled youth), try calling the insurance company and ask them to provide you with the names of providers/ therapists in your area who specialize in working with youth and families. After getting the list of names, don't be afraid to call and request a few minutes of a potential therapist's time on the phone, or preferably 15 minutes in person, to gauge their *expertise in adoption*.
- Contact your local [Adoption Journeys](#) office at **1-800-972-2734**. Adoption Journeys is a post-adoption service operated by Child and Family Services. They have a variety of support services available throughout Massachusetts and may also be aware of therapists in your area who specialize in working with children and families.
- Try talking to other families who have had a good experience with a truly competent adoption therapist to get a recommendation. Looking to connect with other adoptive families? [Adoptive Families Together](#) (AFT) is one local resource. They offer parent support groups throughout the state, a moderated online discussion group and sponsor a variety of workshops. The [Parent/Professional Advocacy League](#) (PPAL) can help make connections with local support groups and can offer guidance in navigating the various child serving systems (i.e. mental health, special education, child welfare, etc.).
- Contact [Project Interface](#) at **1-888-244-6843** a free, confidential therapy referral service in Massachusetts. Callers are matched to licensed mental health providers from an extensive database. Project Interface attempts to match callers based on specialty, insurance, and location.
- If you are specifically worried that your child is suffering from the after-effects of a traumatic event(s) try contacting the [Centralized Referral System](#) (CRS) at the University of Massachusetts Child Trauma Training Center at **1-855-LINK-KID**. The CRS is able to make referrals to evidence-based trauma treatment for children ages 0-18.

What do I ask a therapist that I am considering working with?

Finding a therapist who is a good match for your family and has the right skills in working with children who have been adopted and their families is important. Some questions you might want to ask a potential therapist include:

- Have you had any special training in adoption issues? What about trauma?
- Approximately how many children who have been adopted and their families have you worked with in your career?
- What insurances (if any) do you accept?
- Do you have evening or weekend appointments?
- Do you prefer to work with the entire family or only with the child(ren)?
- What is your experience with domestic adoptions? What about international?
- Are you trained in family therapy?
- Can you tell me about your experience working with grief and loss associated with adoption?

An adoption competent therapist...

- Involves the parents in every phase of treatment. Includes siblings too!
- Does NOT assume that adoption is the root cause of all of the current challenges or concerns but also considers adoption a relevant issue to explore.
- Honors the child's past.
- Focuses on family strengths.
- Values family diversity including single parent, LGBT and multiracial families.
- Understands that adoptive families are unique from biologically-created families.
- Encourages helpful dialogue about adoption among all family members.
- Does NOT blame the parents (birth or adoptive).
- Is knowledgeable about trauma and attachment and the role of these issues in child development.
- Is aware of local adoption resources (i.e. support groups, post-adoption services and supports).

Click on the links below for additional reading and resources:

[Selecting and Working With a Therapist Skilled in Adoption](#)

[Finding and Using Postadoption Services](#)

[\(Video\) Addressing the Behavioral Health Needs of Adopted Children](#)

[Behavioral health resources for MassHealth enrolled youth through age 20](#)