



Support. Education. Local Events.
for Adoptive Families



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Please direct questions and comments to
parcnewsletter@bethany.org

Bethany Christian Services is a nonprofit,
private social services agency with more
than 115 offices located in 36 states. In
addition, Bethany offers social services to
children and families in 15 countries.



www.bethany.org

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Creating a family is exciting! Exhilarating, even. But it can also be stressful, even in the best of times. Sometimes as a family we trip over things and need additional support to move forward. That support can be even more critical when we are growing our family through adoption.

As adoptive parents, it's natural to focus on the needs of the newest member of your family, especially if the child has experienced significant loss or challenges. Adoption transition can be tough for the child, but it also takes a toll on the entire family. It can be difficult for parents to find time to meet everyone's needs—our other children's, our spouse's, our own—because of the child we adopted.

When raising adopted children and biological children in the same family, it can also get tricky to tailor our parenting to our children's individual needs. Each child is an individual with their own unique gifts and needs. A child with a trauma history (even if we think they were too young to remember) may experience delayed emotional or cognitive development. This will impact how we communicate with our children and the parenting styles we use. Keep in mind that what works for one child may not work for others.

This issue will tackle a few difficulties for biological children and marriage relationships during the adoption transition. The more we prepare ourselves with knowledge and healthy strategies, the more we can empower our entire family!

Donna Smith, MA, LPC, NCC, Post-Adoption Specialist, PARC Region 2

*"Some old-fashioned things like fresh air
and sunshine are hard to beat."*

—Laura Ingalls Wilder

When growing your family through adoption, always prepare your biological or previously adopted children for a new sibling.



Assure your children that you have enough love and attention to go around and that they are loved! Involve them in the preparation for the new child, whether picking out toys, getting the child's room ready, or drawing pictures to welcome the child.

Consider birth order. Children naturally develop roles in the family. A sudden change in birth order can impact both an oldest child's sense of identity and how they see themselves within the family.

Explain your child's needs. Whether a child is newly entering the family or has been part of the family for a while, other children in the family will need to develop understanding and empathy for what their sibling is experiencing. If you are adopting an infant or young child, explain the extra care infants require, and invite siblings to help in some way. If you are adopting an older child with a trauma history, prepare siblings for the possibility of difficult behaviors and what they communicate. Help them understand that the new child might need extra help adjusting to life in your family.

Reassure your other children. Let them know that even if they don't get the same amount of one-on-one time, you'll always be there for them. Give them an open door to come to you whenever they need to, no matter how "busy" you seem. Carve out individual time with them. It can be as simple as 10 minutes before bedtime one night a week, or going for a walk, reading together, or watching a favorite movie. Intentional time is the key.

Avoid favoritism at all cost. Divide chores fairly based on the children's ability and give positive feedback equally. Discipline can get tricky. While typical discipline for biological children include time-outs or taking away a privilege, these tools can trigger negative behaviors for children with neglect or abuse in their past. For a struggling child, try connecting tools, such as a "time-in." Sitting quietly near you gives the child a "cool down" period so they can better regulate. Giving them choices, within the scope of what you want them to do, may be beneficial.

Children from trauma struggle with feeling like they have no control over what happens to them, and they may sense that they don't belong. Try to find ways to connect with your child, even during challenging encounters, to strengthen attachment between you and your child.

Affirm physical and cultural differences. Encourage curiosity, and teach your children to celebrate the differences that make up your family culture. This helps to incorporate fun traditions into your children's lives and makes everyone feel like part of the family.

Expect sibling rivalry. As your newly adopted child begins to develop deeper bonds, some sibling rivalry may creep up. Allow your children to develop their own relationships with each other, and teach them skills to resolve their own conflicts.

Whether biological or adopted, children will always do better in a home with parents who get along. When your marriage relationship is low on energy, there are many ways to recharge.

Keep the romance alive. This needs to be intentional. "Date nights" are popular because they work. You don't have to choose a fancy or expensive activity. It can be just the two of you together without talking about the kids, the car, work, or chores. Keep this time light and fun!

Avoid disagreeing with each other in front of the children. Take a "time in" for yourselves, if needed, to discuss things behind closed doors. A white noise machine while talking can help keep little ears from prying.

Give one another an occasional break. This helps to give your spouse time for self-care and to cultivate interests outside of parenting. It also shows support and respect for each other as individuals, not just as parents.

Communicate your feelings, and regard one another's feelings. It's common for new adoptive parents to feel depressed and overwhelmed. Pay attention to each other's emotions and offer empathy and support.

Seek help and support together. Reaching out to other adoptive parents can provide fresh ideas and help you know you're not alone. But some issues require skilled intervention. Don't wait until things become unmanageable to seek professional help. Your local PARC office can help you find an adoption-competent counselor or therapist. This can be helpful for those times when you and your spouse don't agree on how to handle what is happening or you need an objective opinion.

What matters most is that all members of your family feel safe and have a place to belong in your home environment.

"Always remember that this child may not have grown under your heart, but in it."

—Author Unknown

FUN DATE NIGHT IDEAS WITH YOUR SPOUSE/CHILDREN

- See a movie
- Take a walk
- Make a meal together; try a new recipe
- Go out to eat
- Play games
- Bake a favorite sweet treat
- Make a coffee or dessert date



DON'T FORGET!

Medical Subsidy Funds are Available for Summer Camp

Summer is right around the corner, and medical subsidy funds are available for specialized treatment summer camp! If your child struggles in a traditional camp setting or requires extra structure, consider one of many local, specialized summer camp options. The medical subsidy program may cover up to \$500 in camp registration per calendar year for children who have a related physical, mental, or emotional condition (as certified by the Adoption and Guardianship Assistance Office). Contact your local Post Adoption Resource center to learn more.



“No matter how chaotic it is, wildflowers will still spring up in the middle of nowhere.”

—Sheryl Crow

Local Events, Training & Family Activities

All three Post Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned for spring, as well as support groups and trainings. Check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page, or website, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.



REGION 2:

Northern Michigan

231-421-6500

parctc@bethany.org

[www.facebook.com/
PostAdoptionResourceCenter
OfNorthernMI](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

REGION 3:

Central Michigan

231-924-3390

parcfr@bethany.org

[www.facebook.com/
PostAdoptionResource
CenterCentralMichigan](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

REGION 4:

Western Michigan

616-224-7565

parcgr@bethany.org

[www.facebook.com/
PARCRegion4](http://www.facebook.com/PARCRegion4)



Region 2 adoptive families enjoyed a beautiful day in Gaylord picking pumpkins at Fleming Farms.



Region 3 enjoyed some fall fun with adoptive families at Klackle Orchards in Greenville.



Region 4 celebrated National Adoption Day with new adoptees and their families at Cass County Family Court.



Bethany Christian Services is committed to supporting adoptive families through the lifelong, rewarding journey of adoption.

REGION 2

Bethany Christian Services
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2
Traverse City, MI 49686
231-995-0870

www.bethany.org/traversecity

Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services
6995 West 48th St
Fremont, MI 49412
231-924-3390

www.bethany.org/fremont

Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

REGION 4

Bethany Christian Services
901 Eastern Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-224-7565

www.bethany.org/grandrapids

Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



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