

WORKING WITH UNICA ADOPTION SERVICES



ADOPTION THROUGH FOSTER CARE INTRODUCTION

First, let us congratulate you on taking one of the first steps in the exciting and sometimes complicated process of building a family through adoption. Our primary goal is to help children find permanent, loving, and safe homes within families. All services provided by Unica will be focused on empowering adoptive families to explore adoptive parenting issues in a gentle manner that is respectful of the heavy emotional investment. Unica believes that adoption is not a one-time event; instead, it is a lifelong process of growth, commitment and development. To help families deal with adoption as a life experience, Unica provides ongoing professional and peer support.

Unica can support families in their process of pursuing adoption of a child or children in foster care through New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department as well as through interstate foster care adoption. Children freed for adoption through the foster care system are typically 8 years or older, with a history of trauma, abuse, and/or neglect, resulting in emotional or behavioral concerns that require specialized parenting support. Unica provides training and post placement support to assist families in navigating these challenges.

At Unica we strive to be inclusive and are proud to welcome all families. As an agency we are uniquely capable of supporting every family and their individual life experiences. Helping families to grow both in number and emotionally is a passion and we look forward to witnessing your journey.

PRE-PLACEMENT STUDIES

The home study or pre-placement study is a complete family assessment. At a minimum, each family assessment includes three meetings in the family home to include: one joint interview with the entire prospective adoptive family and individual interviews with each family member. In addition, each family must prepare and submit the required documentation prior to the initiation of the interview portion of the assessment. The Criminal Background Check and CYFD Abuse and Neglect check must be initiated, and results received, prior to beginning these meetings. In addition to the home interviews, medical examinations, reference checks, employment and financial verifications, criminal records check, and verification of marriages, births, and divorces are all required. Unica can also request that you be seen by an independent mental health professional and undergo psychological testing as part of your home study requirement. After your assessment is completed, your worker will present the home study to the other members of the Adoption Services Department. At this meeting, your home study will be approved or denied. You will be provided the opportunity to read and review your home study before final signatures are gathered.

APPLICATION CRITERIA

The following minimal criteria must be met before the agency approves a family for an adoptive placement.

- 1) The adopting parents must be at least 18 years old each.
- 2) Family relationships in the home must be stable, with demonstrated emotional stability.
- 3) No one in the adopting household can have a criminal conviction for child abuse, neglect or abandonment. Applicants who have other criminal convictions such as assault or driving while intoxicated will be considered on an individual basis.

- 4) Evidence of financial responsibility must be clearly shown by paying fees for services when billed.

MATCHING SERVICES

Unica is available for consultation and collaboration with child protective services regarding the process of matching your family with a child freed for adoption. Unica will advocate for placement within the best interest of child as well as adoptive family.

POST PLACEMENT SERVICES

Unica's goal is to assist all families in making a successful adjustment to their new family. Supervision after a child is placed in an adoptive home is required by New Mexico law. These services will begin at placement and continue until finalization. Post placement may be completed by Unica Adoption Services Staff or Children Youth and Families Department, which will be determined based on your specific case. In New Mexico, post placement supervision is required for six months after placement. The first visit will be within 72 hours of placement. After that visit, your worker will schedule monthly face-to-face visits in the home until finalization. Additional visits or referrals may be required in certain cases. All required reports will be submitted to court prior to finalization and will remain a permanent part of the case record.

POST FINALIZATION SERVICES

Unica is fully prepared to offer you and your family the needed support post adoption finalization. These services are available for as long as the family requests them. They include: training, resources and referral information, consultation, informal networking and support between adoptive families. If a family is in need of additional services, Unica will make an appropriate referral to a respected resource within the agency or the community.

FIESTA

The NM FIESTA Project is a program managed by Unica Children's Advocacy Center in support of families who have adopted children either through the New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD), or a private adoption agency. FIESTA services and supports are free of charge and include family activities, information, education, support, and training for adoptive families.

POST ADOPTION CLINICAL SERVICES

Unica Adoption Services offers a team of adoption competent staff that are available to provide therapeutic support to caregivers who are parenting through adoption or kinship guardianship. Post adoption and kinship guardianship clinical support services include short-term therapy, therapy groups, and case management, related to the challenges of parenting through adoption.

LEGAL COUNSEL

Attorneys must represent the adopting parents. Child protective services in the child's state of residence may provide reimbursement for legal counsel/attorney fees associated with the adoption process. Unica Adoption Services can provide you with a list of attorneys within New Mexico who are experienced with supporting families adopting through the foster care system. Unica staff cannot provide you with any legal advice.

INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN (ICPC)

This is a federal regulation that governs the transfer of children across state lines. When a child leaves or enters New Mexico, these procedures must be followed. Unica will prepare the necessary documents and written reports to meet all applicable laws in both states. This will take several days to complete. After completion, the packet is sent overnight mail to the ICPC Administrator. After New Mexico's administrator has approved the packet, it is sent overnight to the family's home state for review by that state's administrator. Families may not leave or enter New Mexico until the ICPC Administrator grants verbal approval. Please be patient in the knowledge that Unica staff places a high priority on these cases and will make every effort to help complete the process as soon as possible.

ADOPTION COSTS

Please review this section carefully. When you begin services with Unica, you must sign billing and service agreements that refer to this section.

Application and Orientation Fee	\$500
Domestic Home Study	\$2200
Adoption Preparation Training Fee	\$500
Yearly Home Study Update Fee	\$700
Matching Services	\$100/hour
Annual Background Check Fee	\$59/per adult
Post Placement Services	TBD
- Post placement fees are typically covered by CPS contracts with Unica	
Legal Fees	TBD
Travel Costs	Mileage/Travel Time/Lodging/Per Diem

Explanation of Possible Charges

APPLICATION AND ORIENTATION FEE **\$500**
This non-refundable fee is payable when you submit your completed application. After we receive your completed application and application fee, we will call you to set up the orientation. During orientation, you will be introduced to the services available at Unica, and you will be instructed on the next steps on your adoption journey.

DOMESTIC PREPLACEMENT STUDY **\$2200**
The home study involves: 1) a joint interview with the adopting couple and with all members of the applicants' household, 2) individual interviews with the applicants and with other household members as required, 3) 3 home visits, 4) contacts with personal references, 5) medical examinations for the applicants, 6) FBI criminal records check, local police check and CYFD Abuse and Neglect Check 7) verifications of income, birth, previous adoptions, marriage and divorces, 9) other collateral interviews or verifications as required. Studies are valid for one year. A pre-placement study can be updated for \$700 plus annual background check fees of \$59/adult.

ADOPTION PREPARATION TRAINING **\$500**
Unica requires families to complete 12 hours of adoption preparation training. Unica Adoption staff has worked to develop a comprehensive training plan to help prospective adoptive families learn about the issues surrounding adoption of a child involved in the foster care system who has experienced trauma, abuse, and/or neglect. Trainings topics focus on trauma, attachment focused parenting, culture and diversity, CPR/first aid, and maintaining connections.

****Unica Adoption Staff may provide recommendations for additional or substitute trainings that will support individual family needs in preparation for adoption.**

In addition to the above trainings, Unica families have unlimited access to support groups and agency functions hosted by the NM Fiesta Project.

MATCHING FEE

\$100/hour

Includes home study distribution, coordination with agencies and social workers, review of prospective adoptee background information, best interest placement, full disclosure, transition calendar, and other involvement helping in the placement of a child.

YEARLY HOME STUDY UPDATE FEE

\$700

ANNUAL BACKGROUND CHECK FEE

\$59/ADULT

This is the annual fee for a home study update. Per the state of NM, home studies must be updated yearly. Annually, background checks must be redone at the time that the yearly update is being completed.

LEGAL FEES

TBD

Unica prefers to provide the necessary legal representation for you through our referral list of lawyers. Please discuss adoption issues and experience with your attorney. Legal fees vary widely. The agency is available to discuss with you the standard fees charged in this area for adoption work. Unica will arrange for the attorney to bill you directly for all legal services provided to you.

POST PLACEMENT SERVICES

TBD

After a child is placed in your home, the state requires that routine post placement visits are conducted. These visits result in monthly reports and a final report that is required by the court prior to finalization. Your worker will visit with you and your child once a month until the adoption decree is entered. These visits will take place in your home.

TRAVEL COSTS

Mileage/Travel Time/Lodging/Per

Diem

Unica reimburses its workers for mileage at current state rates. Mileage will be billed to the applicants for travel outside of the Albuquerque area in addition to \$35.00 per hour for worker's time to travel to and from your home. Lodging/Per Diem will also be billed to the applicants as appropriate.

Adoption Costs Related to Out of State Placements

ADOPTION CONSULTANT AND OUT OF STATE AGENCY COLLABORATION FEE

\$550

If you are working with an adoption consultant or out of state agency for matching services, Unica is available for consultation, collaboration, and transmission of required documents. If a child is placed in your home from outside the state of New Mexico, an interstate facilitation fee will be charged. Interstate placements require cooperation between the agencies involved and the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children Administrator in each state's capital city. This process includes a great deal of paperwork and specialized attention.

POST PLACEMENT SERVICES

TBD

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We look forward to working with you!