

Project Wait No Longer *“Permanency For Foster Youth”*

General Information Packet



Older Child Domestic Adoption

THE
BARKER
ADOPTION
FOUNDATION since 1945

For more information please contact:

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Dear Prospective Adoptive Parents:

Thank you for your interest in learning more about *Project Wait No Longer: Permanency for Foster Youth*, the older child adoption program through The Barker Adoption Foundation. The Barker Adoption Foundation is a non-profit adoption agency licensed in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. It is our mission as an agency to serve *all* participants in the adoption circle—birth parents, adoptive parents, and persons who have been adopted.

Did you know that there are currently over 400,000 youth in the US foster care system? Over 114,000 of these children are estimated to be awaiting a permanent family. It is our belief at Barker that every child deserves a family. This is the reason that we have developed the program Project Wait No Longer.

Project Wait No Longer is a comprehensive program that works with married couples and single individuals to assist them with the adoption of older children primarily between the ages of 10-17, from the US foster care system. We partner with Departments of Social Services across the US to find families for waiting children. We provide 27 hours of training, adoption home study and individualized consultation, referral of children, pre-placement support, and lifelong access to Barker's Department of Family and Post-Adoption Services.

The question can be asked: “When is a person too old to need a parent?” The answer... never. Life is full of events and decisions: how to deal with peer pressure, who to date, getting ready for the prom, high school graduation, what job to apply for and what job to accept, what college to go to, when to save and when to buy. Without adoption, many older children have no family ties. They have no one to whom they can turn for advice or to help celebrate their life accomplishments or support them through life’s disappointments.

20,000 – 25,000 foster children “age out” of the public sector each year with no permanent family connections. Statistics show that such children have a higher rate of substance abuse, early parenting, homelessness, health problems, incarceration, and living on public assistance. Many programs are working on the important task of supporting older youth who have already aged out of care. *Project Wait No Longer*, however, is focused on facilitating a permanent solution to this problem.

In this package you will find more information about our program. After reviewing the information, please feel free to contact us if you have any further questions. Application forms, as well as other key program documents, are available online at www.barkeradoptionfoundation.org.

Sincerely,

Saara McEachnie, LCSW-C/LICSW

Director of Domestic Adoption Programs

The Adoption Process for Older Child Adoption

- 1. Receive the Information Packet**

Following your inquiry about the program, we will send you an information packet specific to older child adoption.
- 2. Submit the Application**

The application is your formal entry into the adoption program. Your application will expire after one year if a home study has not been completed.
- 3. Meet for an Application Interview**

After your application has been submitted and has been approved by the application review committee, you will meet with the PWNL program staff.
- 4. Complete PRIDE Training**

PRIDE training is 27 hours and is specific to the adoption of older children from the foster care system. The curriculum covers trauma, grief and loss, attachment and bonding, development, communication, behavioral and emotional challenges, transracial and transcultural adoption, financial assistance, as well as the legal process. Some people may opt to take PRIDE Training prior to application.
- 5. Submit Home Study Documents**

The Barker Adoption Foundation will provide you with a list of required home study documents. We ask that you complete your paperwork within 45-60 days of intake.
- 6. Conduct the Home Study**

The home study is required of all families who want to adopt a child. A home study is valid for one year and requires annual updates. The home study is a series of meetings with the prospective parent or parents, together as a couple and/or individually, to get to know them and to assist them in preparing to become parents through adoption. The home study will be shared with county social workers and other appropriate professionals during the matching process.
- 7. Create a Family Profile**

The Barker Adoption Foundation will work with you to create a one-page family profile. This profile will be used to introduce you to the adoption community.
- 8. Prepare During the Matching Period**

The matching process begins when your home study is approved. The time frame depends on many factors and generally takes between 8-12 months. Waiting Parents' Meetings are held once every other month in order to support prospective parents who are waiting to be matched with a child/sibling group. This support group has proven helpful to many of our waiting families.
- 9. Pre-placement Period**

When a child has been identified, we will contact you and present you with a profile and information about the child. If you are interested in proceeding, we will contact the child's social worker and other professionals involved to decide how to move forward. The pre-placement period varies according to the needs of the child and family. We will also examine any Interstate Compact (ICPC) requirements.
- 10. Placement of a Child**

During the placement process, we will work together to determine the best time to transition the child from foster care to your care. During this time, any needed services for the child and family will be scheduled.
- 11. Post-Placement Visits**

The Barker Adoption Foundation will conduct monthly post-placement visits during this phase until finalization, depending on the needs of the child and the family. Reports summarizing the visits and the transition are required by The Barker Adoption Foundation, the child's social worker and, if involved, ICPC. Reports are also needed by the courts in order for finalization to occur.
- 12. Finalization**

The post-placement period is a minimum of six months before the adoption can be finalized. The Barker Adoption Foundation and the county will assist you through this process.
- 13. Utilize Post-Placement Services**

The Barker Adoption Foundation has served families with post-adoption support for more than sixty years. Following the footsteps of these families, you will have access to Barker's Department of Family and Post-Adoption Services, as well, throughout your child's life. We will provide you with resources and referrals, support groups and workshops for both children and adults, in addition to one-on-one consultations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Project Wait No Longer is a program of The Barker Adoption Foundation, a licensed non-profit adoption agency which for 77 years has served the Washington Metropolitan Area. Well-known for its work in the field of infant adoption, Barker's mission has now been enlarged to include finding homes for older children and youth that are in the public foster care system. *Project Wait No Longer* aims to restore the hope and answer the longing for permanency of children and teenagers who face the daily reality of foster care. They desire the stability and joy of a "forever family" like we all do. The Barker Adoption Foundation partners with public service agencies, combining our resources to make a difference in the lives of waiting children. *Project Wait No Longer* is a unique initiative with the goal of recruiting and training families committed to adopting older children, welcoming them into their home and their hearts forever.

Who Are The Children?

Project Wait No Longer seeks to find homes for children whose circumstances resulted in their being placed in public foster care. Most of these children are between the ages of 10 and 17 years old, have special needs, are of various ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds, and may be part of sibling groups.

Unless there are special circumstances, The Barker Adoption Foundation strongly prefers to maintain children's family ties by placing siblings in the same adoptive home.

Who Is Eligible To Adopt?

Project Wait No Longer is seeking couples and singles of any age who have an unconditional commitment to provide permanency for older youth. The Barker Adoption Foundation welcomes all inquiries.

What Does The Program Offer?

Project Wait No Longer offers parents the opportunity to adopt legally free children from the public foster care system. We can place children in to your home from any state or county across the country, allowing you the freedom to search for children in and out of your local community.

What Does The Program Include?

The adoption process includes the following chronological steps:

1. 27 hours of specialized pre-adoption group training
2. Adoption home study and individualized consultation
3. Matching and referral
4. Pre-placement meeting and visitation with child
5. Placement of child
6. A minimum of 6 months of post-placement services
7. Lifelong access to Barker's comprehensive Department of Family and Post-Adoption Services

What sets The Barker Adoption Foundation and *Project Wait No Longer* apart from other agencies?

The Barker Adoption Foundation upholds a philosophy of excellence and continual care throughout the adoption process. We have a strong history of pre-adoption education and preparation for prospective parents, as well as ongoing support through our Department of Family & Post-Adoption Services. Dedicated adoption professionals are here for you to respond in a timely fashion to your questions and requests. Our partnership with social service departments in meeting the needs of older children is the hallmark of this program.



What Does The Training Involve?

Training consists of 24 hours of specialized training and 3 hours of CPR. Classes are held throughout the year. The training period usually lasts from 4-6 weeks. During the training session you will have the opportunity to:

- Learn about Adoption from the Foster Care System
- Learn the specific issues related to older child adoption
- Ask questions and address any concerns
- Consider or confirm your commitment
- Meet other families who are also considering adopting an older child

The Training sessions are presented by well-respected professionals considered experts in their fields. The topics specifically address the issues relevant to older child adoption, including:

- Attachment and bonding
- The impact of abuse and neglect on childhood development
- Transitioning the child from foster care to an adoptive home
- Educational advocacy
- Grief and loss
- Behavioral challenges
- Transracial and transcultural adoption

What's Involved In The Home Study?

A home study for Foster-Adopt and/or Adoption is required of all prospective adoptive parents. It consists of a series of interviews with a knowledgeable and caring social worker, who will assist you in making well informed decisions related to parenting older children. The home study generally takes 8-12 weeks after the gathering of paperwork.

What Are The Fees Associated With The Program?

The fees associated with Project Wait No Longer are very low and offered on a sliding scale basis. Much of your cost for the program can often be reimbursed by the state. Many of the children we place are eligible for a monthly subsidy which will be paid to their parents until the child turns 18. Health insurance is often available until the child is 18 as well. Please contact us for more detailed information on how the program fees work. An income based sliding scale fee is also available.

Do I attend training even if I'm not ready to make a decision?

Deciding to adopt an older child is a process, requiring patience. The training is specifically designed to educate, and address the joys and challenges particular to older child adoption. While many who attend the training have made the decision to proceed, you need not have made such a commitment in order to take the training. The classes are designed to help you to take the next steps. You will have the opportunity to meet others who are considering adopting an older child and you will have access to professionals in the field to ask questions or discuss your particular concerns.

Can We Adopt Through The International, Domestic Infant & *Project Wait No Longer* At The Same Time?

Prospective applicants often research their options extensively prior to the home study. Applicants can apply to multiple programs simultaneously, but will only be approved for the Domestic track or the International country track. Applicants may pursue the Dual Waiting Program which includes PWNL and Infant programs. However, once an adoption is completed, parents sometimes desire to utilize another program of The Barker Adoption Foundation as they build their family. The various adoption programs have different issues, challenges and rewards, and are best addressed one at a time.



Is Project Wait No Longer Right for You?

The goal of this assessment is to help you (and your spouse/partner) identify, clarify and discuss your feelings and goals about adoption of an older child. If you have a spouse or partner, complete the assessment separately, then compare and discuss your answers (*this document is for your own use & is designed to get you talking and thinking about some important aspects of older child adoption - you do not need to turn it back in to us*).

1. Why do you want to adopt an older child?
2. What does "older child" mean to you?
3. Who introduced the idea of adopting an older child?
4. Do you and your spouse feel the same level of desire towards adoption of an older child?
5. Are you open to potentially adopting (Select all that apply):
 - Transracially
 - A child who has been sexually abused
 - A child who has a mental health diagnosis
 - A child with attachment issues
6. Are you open to being placed with a child from out of state?
7. Are you open to parenting a sibling group?
8. Do you have flexibility at work to take up to 6 weeks (combined) off during/after the adoption?
9. Has the decision to adopt caused conflict in your relationship? Please explain.
10. Have you shared your plans to adopt an older child with family and/or friends? If so, how have they responded to your decision?
11. What do you feel you could contribute to an older child?
12. What aspects of childrearing are so important to you that you would find it difficult to compromise (such as discipline, religion, schooling, stay-at-home parenting, etc.)? Please explain.
13. Deep down do you feel like you are being forced to adopt if you want to have children, adoption as a means to build a family is "second best," or that adoption is your "last resort" if you want to be able to have children?
14. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, how committed are you to the adoption process?

Post-Adoption Services Offered for PWNL

Parent Support Group: This support group is held over 6 sessions to aid parents in managing challenging behaviors that their child/children might be exhibiting. Parents will walk away with an individualized parenting plan specific to their child's needs. Consists of families who are interested in PWNL, families in the paperwork process, families in our waiting pool, and families who have children placed in their home. Gain oversight and receive support from people in your shoes.

Barker's Annual Conference: held annually, Barker's conference covers various topics pertinent to the adoption world. Come listen to adoption professionals, adoptive parents, and adoptees about current issues surrounding adoption.

On-Going Trainings: Barker provides ongoing trainings regarding issues parents might face when parenting children from foster care. Prior trainings have included sexual abuse and attachment disorders.

Personal Consultation: Available for finding resources particular to your specific needs.

Clinical Interventions: PWNL Families will have access to clinical interventions and meetings with our Director of Family and Post Adoption Services as well as access to adoption camps and events for kids.

Anyone who utilizes The Barker Adoption Foundation for their adoption is entitled to lifetime access of our Post-Adoption and Family Services. Some services do require a fee; however, many are free of charge.



Older Child Adoption Suggested Reading List

Keck, Gregory C. and Kupecky, Regina M. (2002).
Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow.
Colorado Spring, Colorado: Pinon Press.

Maskew, Trish (1999).
Our Own: Adopting and Parenting the Older Child.
Longmont, CO: Snowcap Press.

McCreight, Brenda (2002).
Parenting Your Adopted Older Child: How to Overcome the Unique Challenges and Raise a Happy and Healthy Child.
New Harbinger Publications.

Orlans, Michael and Terry M. Levy (2006).
Healing Parents: Helping Wounded Children Learn to Trust & Love.
Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

Schooler, Jayne E. & Keefer, Betsy.
Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child.

