

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

To learn about foster care adoption and view photolistings and videos of waiting children, visit our website at www.mare.org.



Interstate adoptions can work

Reasons to pursue it and steps to make it happen



STORY COURTESY **ADOPTUSKIDS**

Placing a child in another state, or sometimes even another county, creates additional layers of paperwork and requires more communication. So why pursue it?

- Because a child has relatives who are qualified to adopt them.
- Because an approved family has inquired about a child after seeing them on a website or in social media.
- Because it's the law! Two federal laws – the Adoption and Safe Families Act and the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act – require states to consider interjurisdictional placements and can penalize agencies that do not comply.
- Because the location of an approved family who is willing and capable to parent a child

should not be the primary consideration when making a placement.

- Because a child who has been waiting could get the love and permanency they deserve.

Adopting a child across state or county lines requires the same steps as any adoption – a family expresses interest in a child, workers identify the family as a good fit, visits are scheduled, a home study and paperwork are completed. If all goes well, an adoptive placement is made and finalized by a judge.

The difference, of course, is that placements across state lines are subject to the procedures outlined in the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).

The Interstate Compact is essentially a contract that all 50

states, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands have agreed to. It establishes procedures for ensuring the safety and stability of placements of children across state lines.

What are the steps involved in facilitating an interstate adoption?

The ICPC requires that families comply with the laws of their own state and of the sending state (where the child lives). To comply, the "sending state," where the child lives, and the "receiving state," where the family lives, must share a great deal of information. States exchange information through ICPC compact administrators, who also review the information for completeness and compliance with their state's laws.

See **Interstate** on page 3

Meet MARE's Match Support team

The Match Support Program is a statewide service offered to families adopting youth who have been featured on the MARE website. For more information, visit For Families at www.mare.org.

Amanda Dunham, Match Support Program supervisor

Background: After college, I worked in mental health then foster care case management and a brief stint in medical social work. When MARE's Match Support Program (MSP) started, I became a support specialist, then was promoted to supervisor.

On joining MSP: While I was a foster care worker, I worked with foster parents and I could see how valuable a program match support would be. I was also impressed by the work that MARE does, so it was a great opportunity for me.

Choosing child welfare: I feel passionate about children having forever families as well as families getting the assistance they need to remain strong and supportive.

Helping families: As supervisor, I assist MSP support specialists so they can provide the resources that families need. I also advocate for changes to improve the way we work with families.

Most satisfying: I love to see children have forever families after all they've gone through, and I enjoy helping families be strongly supported.

Bobbi Hinton, support staff

Background: Before I came to MARE, I was a lifeguard for six years at the YMCA in downtown Flint. I worked with a lot of kids.

On joining MSP: I could appreciate what the program does to have successful matches.

Choosing child welfare: When I started college, I wanted to go into teaching, but I changed my mind. After earning my degree, I still wanted to do something to help kids, so child welfare was a good way for me to still be involved in children's lives.

Most satisfying: Even though I do mainly behind the scenes work, there are real results happening from what I do. When we see adoption finalizations, it's nice being a part of that.



From left are Jessica Franks, Bobbi Hinton, Amanda Dunham, Sheriane Davis and Cortney Riggs.

Cortney Riggs, MSP specialist

Background: After earning my degree in social work and criminal justice, I worked in the court system, then got a job at a residential facility, then worked as a case manager at Methodist Children's Home before coming to MARE.

On joining MSP: When I worked in the residential facility, I saw the need for support, so I thought this program would be a great fit. I can help bridge that gap and help see the adoptions to the end.

Choosing child welfare: I really think that by helping our youth, we can create stronger adults and our communities will be better off.

Helping families: I enjoy providing support to help families through the process.

Most satisfying: I really enjoy seeing the love between children and families and knowing that I've had a part in helping to make them a family.

Jessica Franks, MSP specialist

Background: I earned a human services degree from Western Michigan University then I began in child protective services in South Carolina. I returned to Michigan to work for Families First through Judson Center, then had some other jobs before joining Match Support.

On joining MSP: I thought it sounded interesting. Now that I'm going through the adoption process myself, I see the value of it even more.

Choosing child welfare: Initially I didn't know much about it, but once I got into it, I grew passionate

See [MSP staff](#) on page 4

We appreciate all you do!



Without you, we can't do what's required to help youth awaiting adoption find their forever families.

Whether it's updating a profile or contacting us for help, we appreciate hearing from you and assisting you. We especially enjoy workers who love interacting with awaiting youth such as Danelle Stiffler, a Wendy's Wonderful Kids worker, and Katie Ward of Spaulding For Children, who yukked it up during the 2018 Michigan Heart Gallery Grand Opening in April.

Call us anytime at 800-589-6273.

Interstate, continued from page 1

The steps involved in an interstate adoption are:

1. The child's agency initiates the process by requesting a home study and creating a packet that includes a form (ICPC 100-A) and information about the child's needs.
2. The agency sends the packet to the ICPC compact administrator in the child's state. They review it and forward it to the compact administrator in the family's

state.

3. The receiving state's compact administrator reviews the information and forwards it to the family's agency.
4. The family's agency conducts a home study and makes a recommendation about the suitability of the placement. The administrators in both states review the home study and recommendation.
5. If the child is placed, the role of supervising the child's

placement and ensuring that their needs are met and services are received transfers to the family's agency. They provide periodic reports to the child's agency through the compact administrators.

6. The sending state retains legal and financial responsibility for the child until they are legally adopted, reach the age of majority, or become self-supporting.

Workers can't ignore out-of-state inquiries

Youth photolisted on www.mare.org also get photolisted on adoptuskids.org, and MARE receives many inquiries from out-of-state families.

Those inquiries are passed on to you, the child's adoption worker. Sometimes, MARE receives emails from workers saying they don't want to pursue a family who lives in another state.

However, the policy is strict about not delaying permanency for a child just because a family lives outside of the jurisdiction where the child resides. If the family is willing to maintain relationships and necessary visits in Michigan then they could be a match, so we encourage you to ask the family's worker if the family is willing to do what's required after they are

matched with a youth.

You can rule them out if they can't meet the child's documented needs. We don't want you to feel pressured to select this out-of-state family, but we also want to ensure you are not delaying permanency for a child by not considering families who reside out of state.

Make sure registered youth attend Meet & Greets

MARE's Meet & Greets have been generating quite a few mutual matches lately between adoptive parents and youth awaiting adoption.

One recent Meet & Greet in Adrian produced six mutual matches, meaning youth and parents who attended were interested in getting to know each other more, which is the good news. The bad news is that 19 youth registered for the event and 12 showed up, which left seven spots open for the 30 waitlisted youth who would've loved to attend.

Because this happens from time-to-time, MARE Youth Recruitment Specialist Jessica Thompson encourages workers to take steps to ensure that registered youth show up for Meet & Greets.

"I know things happen sometimes on the mornings of these events, but it's a shame that spots go unfilled when other youth really want to attend," she says.

Thompson adds that she would like workers to call



The Adrian Meet & Greet included craft activities for youth and parents.

the MARE contact person's cell phone number – which is listed on the event flyer – if their youth is not going to show up. "It would be too late to get another youth in that spot," says Thompson, "but at least we would know the youth isn't coming and why that youth didn't show up."

Match Support, continued from page 2

about it. Helping adoptive families stay together has been rewarding.

Helping families: The number one thing I hear most from families is just having a support person there, someone who they can lean on, somebody who they can talk to.

Most satisfying: I love helping families to adoption finalization. I enjoy just watching families during the journey and process and seeing them be successful.

Julie Miller, MSP specialist

Background: I earned a master's degree in social work from Rutgers University. After a stint in business, I returned to social work first with the Post Adoption Resource Centers (PARC), then later as a specialist with the Match Support Program.

On joining MSP: I liked the opportunity to work hands on

with families and helping them prepare for youth to come into their homes.

Choosing child welfare: I really built a connection with the kids while working with the PARC youth group, and I became interested in finding new ways to support them.

Helping families: I like having the ability to partner with a family. I'm the person they can call for any highs or lows and everything in between.

Most satisfying: I enjoy helping with that journey to help strengthen them so they feel empowered to become adoptive parents, adoptive families.

Sheriane Davis, MSP specialist

Background: I'm working on a master's degree in social work. Prior to that, I worked in pastoral care where we did a lot of counseling with families and children. I've also worked in a

residential facility.

On joining MSP: It seemed like a great way to make sure that families get whatever support and resources they need to have a successful outcome.

Choosing child welfare: I had an aunt who did foster care, so our family always had foster care children at family events, and we tried to make them feel a part of the family. That's what drew me in earlier, and then I noticed that there was a gap to fill to make sure that foster children get what they need to become productive adults.

Helping families: When we contact families, we give them educational material and talk to them about experiences other families have had. They discover they're not alone and that helps them see a brighter future.

Most satisfying: When a match works and there's an adoption, that is so rewarding.