



## Post-Adoption Needs and Services

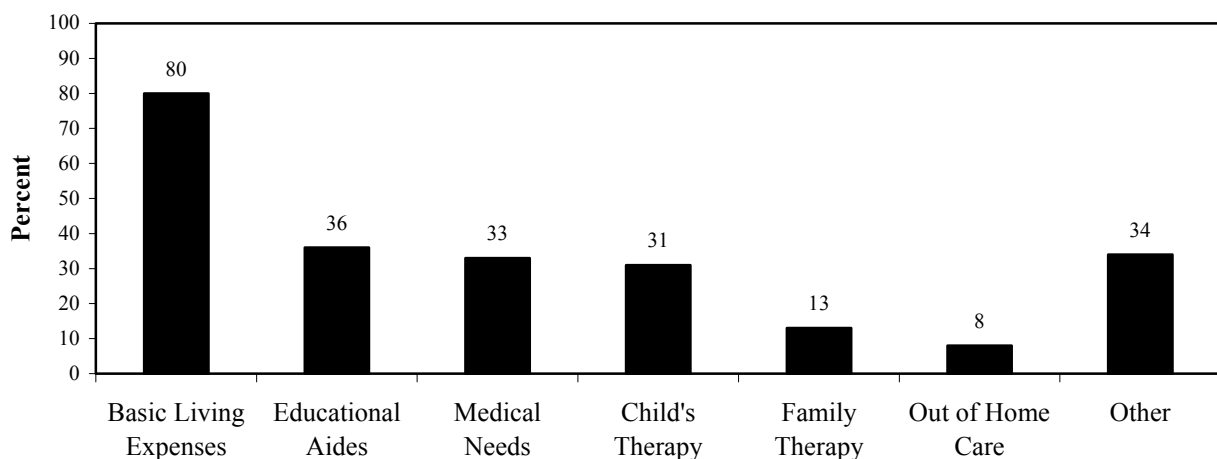
This brief series of publications, Post-Adoption Needs and Services, provides a summary of the service-related data collected by researchers through the California Adoption Study. This Study examined the experiences of families who adopted foster children through the California Department of Social Services. The initial mailed survey gathered information from 1,148 families of adopted children ages 19 and under. All families in the study had adopted special-needs foster children who met the criteria for Adoption Assistance funding (AAP). Participants were asked to identify the post-adoptive services that they had received, the services that were most helpful, and any additional services they felt would benefit their families.

### *What post-adoption services were most helpful to your family?*

In an open-ended survey question, adoptive parents were asked to identify the post-adoption services that they felt were most helpful to their family. An overwhelming number of respondents identified financial assistance through the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) as the most helpful service received. One respondent commented that AAP was essential because “I found the post-adoption services very lacking and fragmented...cash-in-hand AAP has been our only support.” Another participant shared, “Thank goodness for AAP. With all the problems that are coming up with my children and the amount of food and clothing, [we] would have [been] in the poor house without adoption assistance funds!”

When asked to make predefined choices regarding AAP expenditures, participants reported using AAP funds in the following areas:

### Use of Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) Funds<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Respondents could identify more than one service.

In addition to the six pre-determined categories, 34% of participants reported ‘other’ uses for AAP, describing that the funding allowed for:

- **Stay-at-Home Parent:** *“Adoption Assistance was helpful because I needed to stop working when our adopted daughter’s behavior became seriously problematic.”*
- **Non-Public School:** *“His private school, aide and special equipment are very costly. I have been able to provide all that he needs with this help.”*
- **Savings for College or Adult Supervised Care:** *“Since my adopted child will always need full time care I save money for that eventuality.”*
- **Extra-Curricular Activities:** *“Sports, music and other activities she enjoys that are costly, and we couldn’t afford otherwise.”*
- **Child-related Home Maintenance:** *“To repair walls, doors, property damaged by child.”*
- **Respite Care:** *“My daughter cannot be left, she always needs care.”*
- **Travel Expenses:** *“We drive 100 miles to and from the hospital” and “To visit [adopted child] in residential treatment.”*
- **Dental/Orthodontic Services:** specifically to pay for braces.

Second to AAP funds, adoptive parents report that post-adoptive counseling services are essential to family health. These services include both family counseling and individual therapy for the child. One respondent stated, “The counseling has been great because along with health issues, the child has night terrors and is a serious introvert. We also used the counseling service to help us let our children know they’re adopted.” Another respondent simply stated, “The counseling has been a life-saver, extremely helpful. I don’t know how we would have made it without it.” Other families found that counseling services helped their children with issues concerning self-esteem, separation, bonding and transition, and helped the family by strengthening relationships and fostering a greater understanding of specific behaviors.

**Implications:** AAP is a lifeline for many families; without it many parents would significantly struggle with their roles and responsibilities to these children.

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