At The Village Family Services (TVFS), children and families always come first. TVFS’ mission is to protect children from abuse, preserve families and build a stronger, safer community for all. With a complete spectrum of integrated, strengths- and evidence-based, family-focused and culturally competent services, TVFS can accomplish its mission. In 2012 the agency received the Human Rights Campaign’s All Children – All Families seal, showing cultural competency in working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) youth and families. In addition, the agency collaborates with a variety of other federal, state and local organizations.

TVFS’s Adoption program aims to facilitate the Adoption of children who are placed in foster care under the custody of the Los Angeles Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). These children may already be living with one of TVFS’s resource families in the foster care program or from the greater pool of the LA County foster care system’s children eligible for adoption. The agency certifies a pool of resource families and others interested in “fostering to adopt”. TVFS’s philosophy is that every child deserves a family to call his or her own. Our purpose is to find safety and permanency for all children in need.

In 2017, there were over 64,000 children in California’s foster care system; approximately 13,000 of them waiting for a forever family. As a result, TVFS’s Adoption program meets a critical need. Adopting a child from the foster care system has unique aspects that require adoptive applicants with special characteristics and qualities. Most of these children have experienced abuse, neglect, trauma and maltreatment. Due to separation from their birth families they need a family that is stable, safe, and loving.

The agency assesses each child accepted for adoption services. The assessment includes identification of the following aspects of the child:

- Medical, developmental, scholastic, mental, emotional, and behavioral history
- Current status
- Review of contact between child and birth parents and extended family
- If child has been placed in out-of-home care
- Family life history
- Determination of the child’s Adoptions Assistance Program (AAP) eligibility
- Religion
- Assessment of the child’s readiness for adoption and willingness to be adopted
- Analysis of the likelihood that the child will be adopted if parental rights are terminated

Based on the child’s needs TVFS looks for caring and loving Forever Families who are serious and committed to adopting a child. Placement decisions are guided by the child’s best interest and preference, depending on age appropriateness. To be eligible families must go through a significant approval process which includes:

- An application to become a foster & adoptive parent; if applicant has prior history of fostering, TVFS will contact previous agencies via phone and in writing to discuss any pertinent information. Applicants will also be checked for prior licensing history and licensing-related disciplinary actions in the Licensing Information System (LIS) and Legal Administrative Action Records System (LAARS) maintained by the Department of Children and Family Services.
- Health screening and tuberculosis screening or test
- Pre-approval and annual training including, but not limited to, the following topics: qualifications and physical environment requirements, child abuse identification, prevention, and treatment, suspected child abuse and neglect mandated reporting requirements and significant incident reporting requirements, effects of trauma on child development, positive discipline, accessing services, the rights of the child, age appropriate CPR and first aid training, core issues of adoption, and adoption readiness.
Adoption Program Description

- Permanency assessment which includes verification of completed pre-approval training, a psychosocial assessment of the applicant and family, and verification of the completion of any other activities related to an applicant’s ability to achieve permanency with a child or non-minor dependent.
- A minimum of three face to face interviews of each applicant, a minimum of one separate face to face interview of all other persons, including children and non-minor dependents residing in the home of the applicant, and additional interviews as deemed necessary by TVFS. The majority of interviews shall take place in the home of the applicant.
- An initial home environment assessment, including a health and safety assessment of the home and grounds, outdoor activity space, and storage areas of the applicant’s home.
- Completion of a background check assessment including a DMV check on any adult who may frequently transport a child or non-minor dependent, Live Scan background check, checks of Megan’s Law Website at http://meganslaw.ca.gov and a review of an individual’s state and federal criminal record information. Consideration of all substantiated allegations of child abuse and severe neglect contained in the Child Abuse Central Index check. If applicant or any adult residing or regularly present in the home has lived in another state within five years before application, an out-of-state child abuse and neglect registry check will be conducted using form LIC 198B: Out-of-State Child Abuse/Neglect Report Request.

Prior to approval, the applicant’s home must meet approval standards, the applicant must submit all required certification documents, the TVFS must receive all required background clearances on the applicant, and the applicant must be assessed as being suitable for being a resource parent by the TVFS Social Worker and Supervisor via an approved psychosocial assessment. The Administrative Director or his/her designee is responsible for the resource family approval.

Throughout the approval process, we assist resource families in navigating through the steps, and after approval, staff attempts to make a match between prospective adoptive families and a prospective child or children. The match process consists of TVFS working with DCFS to find youth in need of a placement that fit into one of the families available. This includes reviewing background information and meetings between DCFS, TVFS and then the family, as appropriate.

Additional services available to a potential adoptive family are support groups the agency provides as well as the Adoptions Promotion Support Services (APSS), an outside agency for additional support or other referrals dependent on the family’s needs. The APSS offers assistance with the transition of adoption for families and prospective adoptees prior to beginning the adoption process. It consists of case management and specialized therapy. TVFS also provides free ongoing monthly support groups to resource families led by TVFS social workers that assist with referrals, case management and ongoing trainings.

TVFS receives referrals for children to be placed in adoptive homes from the Matching Coordination Unit (MCU) of DCFS and internally from TVFS’ Foster Care Program. Parent Referrals come through outreach events, including Raise-A-Child Events hosted by RAC. There is no fee for families to participate in our Adoptions program. Adoption program is funded through California State Department of Social Services Private Adoption Agency Reimbursement Program (PAARP), philanthropic contributions, and in-kind support. Additional support comes from interest income and special events.

After an adoption is completed, the adopting family is referred to post-Adoption Services with DCFS.

Any families that are in the process of adopting or have adopted are welcome to attend TVFS’s annual Adoptions Celebration Event. Contact the program for additional information on these events.
TVFS began adoptions in 2011 and as of November 2018 we have successfully completed 60 adoptions. Adoption finalization days are happy celebrations for TVFS’s staff and families and we look forward to many more years of creating Forever Families.

Interested parties should request the “Frequently Asked Questions” on Adoptions and contact The Village Family Services at fostercare@thevillagefs.org or 818-755-8786. The agency has staff members available to receive crisis calls and referrals 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.