



Adoption Council of Canada  
Conseil d'adoption du Canada

**For Immediate Release**

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**Adoptive Families Need Support Year-Round:  
New Canadian Research Highlights Urgent Need for More Post-Adoption Support**

OTTAWA, ON – (December 18, 2014) – Timely access to resources, post-adoption services and financial support are among the top challenges facing adoptive families of children with special needs, according to results of a new survey the Adoption Council of Canada [released today](#).

The online survey, which builds on University of Ottawa researcher [Alice Home's study](#) of parenting adoptive children with disability-related special needs, involved 167 adoptive parents and professionals in British Columbia and Ontario. Two-thirds highlighted lack of access to existing services and constantly needing to advocate as key challenges, while nearly half pointed to inadequate post-adoption support and services.

“There are not enough adoption preservation services in the community for adoptive families that provide them with support and resources, such as support groups, mentors, adoption-informed mental health professionals, respite,” said one service provider.

Over half of survey respondents reported that caregivers did not have enough support in managing difficult behaviour stemming from hidden disabilities and adverse past histories. Parents had to “educate” professionals and community members who lacked understanding, according to 46 percent.

Living with these challenges 24/7 can have devastating consequences. One family “had to make the decision to disrupt the adoption six months post-placement due to the volume and severity of issues facing the sibling group, not being informed by the agency, and the difficulty in accessing adequate support.”

When supports are available, parents and professionals say they make a difference. The most helpful, according to 75 percent, were financial support/adoption subsidies, involvement of a knowledgeable professional and respite care. As one parent pointed out, “respite funding from post-adoption assistance is a life saver”. However, it is these very supports that are least available. Over 25 percent could not access adoption subsidies and respite care.

For nearly two-thirds of respondents, parent support groups were a critical support; however, they were unavailable to 20 percent of respondents. As one service provider explained, “We link a family with others who then become their support. They ‘understand’ when other family and friends do not always ‘get it’”.

The survey results illustrate the importance of providing post-adoption support year-round to families adopting children who have experienced trauma and neglect in their families of origin as well as the trauma and loss associated with multiple moves in foster and group care, says Laura Eggertson, chair of the Adoption Council of Canada.

“As we leave Adoption Awareness Month (November) behind, it is vital to remember that many of these amazing children continue to need supports year-round, as do their adoptive families, to allow them to realize their potential and to build on their strengths.”

“We have to do a better job of not only finding permanent families for the approximately 30,000 children and youth in care across Canada, but also in ensuring ongoing support for them and their families.”

“This study found the same issues as mine” said Dr. Alice Home. “Parents of these complex children must be able to *count on* appropriate, affordable services when they need them. We can’t expect them to go on fighting for every crumb of help”. Dr. Home goes on to add that “A major US report concluded that making these services accessible to all families needing them is key to assuring permanency. What more do we need to know before acting?”

In response to these findings, the ACC is re-launching its comprehensive Post-Adoption Services Toolkit as a [free downloadable resource](#) for families and professionals. The first part offers support with why, when, where, and how to start an adoptive parent support group. The second provides core content for group discussion, including resources around disability, trauma, attachment, respite care and working with professionals and the education system.

The ACC also reminds families and professionals of the [free downloadable video-monograph series](#) on special needs parenting available on our website. The videos help parents realize they are not alone, while the short booklets provide practical help with disentangling disabilities, advocacy and addressing culture in special needs adoptions.

“We need our families to have access to post-adoption resources and meaningful supports to make sure they stay intact,” says Executive Director Sarah Pedersen. “We hope our post-adoption resources fill one of the gaps that we’ve been routinely hearing about from our Canadian adoption community”.

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**About the Adoption Council of Canada**

**Vision:** A permanent and supported family for every child and youth in Canada.

**Mission:** We are Canada’s voice for adoption, unifying communities’ commitment to permanency for waiting children and youth. We support and encourage people along their adoption journey, connecting them to the families and resources they need.