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**Sent:** Friday, July 19, 2013 8:50 AM  
**To:** scott@afamilyforeverychild.org  
**Subject:** Matching-The Importance of Support and Self-Advocating

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## Matching Assistance News

How to use the tools at your disposal to successfully be matched

### Why Support and Self-Advocating is Important

Every family could do with some support through the adoption process, whether it come from a support group, family and friends, an adoption worker, or the Matching Assistance Program. Without having organizations and individuals to help families, details can get lost in the shuffle and people can fall through the cracks. Relying on just one individual or organization is not going to benefit you, which is why we recommend that you have multiple support outlets and also learn to advocate for yourself. Families who have been through this process before will tell you that they didn't get matched because they waited for people to follow up with them; they were matched with a child because they were diligent in their promotion, submission tracking and follow up, and they had a network of individuals helping them through the process.

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### State Support

Everyone can use a little help now and again, especially when it comes to navigating the foster care system. We all have our complaints about how confusing and downright frustrating the system can be, especially when every state seems to have their own laws and rules. That is why having an advocate who knows the system not only as a whole, but also in your state could be very beneficial! Your adoption worker and/or agency and the Matching Assistance Program are great resources for helping you work through this system, but there are other organizations in your state that might also be able to help. Wendy's Wonderful Kids has adoption recruiters or agencies in all 50 states that work with families to help them get matched with children in their area. These recruiters work with other agencies and caseworkers to find out if they have children on their caseload that might be a good fit for the family. To find a local recruiter or agency in your area, visit the Wendy's Wonderful Kids program sites page, [here](#).

Many thanks to the family who brought this program to my attention!

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### National Support

The Matching Assistance Program is here for all home study approved families who live all across the country, and in some cases out of the country. In addition to providing families access to thousands of children's biographies, a Family Search Specialist, and informative how-to emails, we have an extensive list of resources that every family may need. Check out our [booklist](#) to find adult books, children's books and websites that will provide you with helpful information on parenting a foster child, adopting from foster care, explaining adoption to your newly adopted child, and more. These readings can also count towards the additional training we suggest families do! We also have information on adoption laws and other resources organized by state, which can all be found [here](#). If you live in [Alaska](#), [Idaho](#), [Montana](#), [Oregon](#), or [Washington](#) you can find state resources by clicking on their names. In addition, we have information on financing your adoption. Resources on our [financial assistance](#) site include grants, loans and fundraising resources, adoption tax credits, employee benefits, and military adoption benefits. In addition to our resources page, we send families resources in the form of weekly how-to emails. Take the time to read those emails if you haven't already, because they do provide some valuable information that may answer a lot of your questions. Finally, we give families the opportunity to promote themselves, which is a unique aspect of our program (more on that below).

If you have any other resources that you have found beneficial and that you think other families would find helpful, please email them to me at [nora.sharp@afamilyforeverychild.org](mailto:nora.sharp@afamilyforeverychild.org)

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### Advocating For & Promoting Your Family

What families need to remember is that you are your biggest advocate. Do not sit passively by waiting for things to happen, and for people to contact you. Put yourself out there and get responses. The following are some reminders of ways that you can advocate for yourself and promote your family:

1. Check in with your adoption worker every few weeks to find out if they have received any responses to your home study submissions. If they haven't, ask that they contact the child's caseworker. Your adoption worker is busy too, so they may need you to do a friendly check in with them to make sure that things are being followed up on in the timeline that was given. If your adoption worker needs caseworker contact information, they may email me at [nora.sharp@afamilyforeverychild.org](mailto:nora.sharp@afamilyforeverychild.org).

2. On a similar note, keep track of all your submissions. After you have submitted for what seems like the hundredth child or sibling group, you may have forgotten which children you followed up on and which ones you are still waiting to hear back about. One popular method suggested by a number of families is a spreadsheet. You can easily create one in Excel. The following are some suggestions for columns: **Child Name**, **Bulletin Number**, **Date Submitted For**, **Date Followed Up On**, **Outcome** (active, on hold, placed, etc). That will help keep you more organized, and assure that you are receiving answers to your queries. In addition, you can see **all** of your home study submissions from your Family Home Page. Scroll down to box #4 titled "Non-Public Listings" and click the link that reads "View submissions on Children" (second link). That will show you the names, bulletin numbers, and dates that you submitted for each child or sibling group.

3. Speaking of submissions, answer those 3 questions when you submit your home study. I know that they may seem silly or even repetitive to answer, but they give you a fabulous opportunity to really advocate for yourself, directly to the caseworker. It really doesn't get much better than that! They provide you with an opportunity to tell the worker why you are a good match for a child-and I know that you can come up with at least 3 specific reasons. They give you a chance to explain anything in your home study that might not be very clear or a point of contention with a caseworker. And finally, you have the opportunity to include any additional trainings that you have attended since your home study was written (which is something we encourage **all** families to do, even the ones that have parenting or foster experience). These trainings can be actual training sessions you participated in, or they can be webinars you watched, books you read, conferences you attended, etc (see our resources and book list page in the section above for ideas). Think of those 3 questions as your final opportunity to make your case to adopt that child or sibling group.

4. **Write a family biography.** I really cannot stress this enough. Your family biography is one way to get a caseworker to express interest in your family. Caseworkers create log-ins with our organization and search for families in our system. The **first thing** that pops up when they click on your name is your family biography. If there is nothing there, or if there are only pictures or only a few sentences, they are most likely not going to continue looking at your family and they will move on to another one. Caseworkers use your family biography to learn more about your interests, values, home life, community, and your child preferences to determine if they think you might be a good match for a child and if they want to request a copy of your home study. If you don't have a family biography written, you will get passed over. And that is a shame, because you all have something to offer a foster child. For suggestions on what to put in your family biography, view the "How To Write Your Family Biography" email that was sent to you shortly after you signed up for our program (you may have to dig way back into the depths of your inbox), or you may view the suggestions online, [here](#).

5. Create an **accurate** family profile. Your family profile is the **second thing** caseworkers will look at after your family biography, and it is important that all of the information listed in your family profile is accurate. This is **especially** important when it comes to your child preferences and the challenges you feel you can accept/not accept. Make sure that your child preferences listed in your profile are the **exact same** as those that you are approved for in your home study. Remember, your home study is an official document and it is what caseworkers will use to make their final decision on whether or not your family is a good match for a child. Making sure that the child preferences listed in your profile are the same as those in your home study will save everyone a lot of time and confusion. So for example, if you are approved to adopt a child up to the age of 11 in your home study, that is what needs to be listed in your profile under "ages willing to accept". If at any point you decide that you can accept children that are older than your original preferences, **contact your adoption worker**. Don't just make those changes in your profile and expect that it will count, because it won't. You will need to get your adoption worker's approval and an addendum to reflect those changes. You can update your profile anytime from your Family Home Page. It is in box #1, and the link is titled "Update Family Profile".


6. Consider making your biography public. Granting us permission to display your biography on our [Waiting Families](#) page will increase your chances of getting your family noticed. It will also give us permission to display it on our home page for a week, in our general Matching Assistance newsletter, and in our Feature Family Recruitment email-an email that is sent out weekly to over a thousand caseworkers across the country. Included in that Feature Family recruitment email are the biographies of two MAP families with links to their profiles, and a link to our Waiting Families page, so caseworkers can inquire about our other MAP families that weren't featured that week. Our Feature Family emails are very successful, and we get a lot of responses from caseworkers to them. To make your biography public, click "[Optional] Grant Permission for Display on the Internet", found at the bottom of box #2 Biography and Photo, on your Family Home Page.

At the end of the day, it is up to caseworkers to decide if they want to take your family to a selection committee or not. But at the end of that day you should feel confident that you gave it your best, even if you weren't selected. You may not have control over a caseworker's final decision, but you do have control over the information that is presented to them in the form of your family biography, profile, submission email and home study.

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