

Adoption Party “Rules of the Road” for interacting with waiting children



Take a moment and visualize the adoption party experience from a child's point of view...

How would you want families to interact with you?

We know that it can be awkward for families to strike up conversations with waiting children and social workers at these parties, but just remember: an adoption party is simply a chance to mix and mingle with as many waiting children, social workers, and other waiting families as possible. No final decisions about matches are made at an adoption party- there is a lot of follow up that adoption workers do as they decide which family is the best match for a child. It is just a chance to expand your adoption network. We encourage you to relax and have fun – it's called an adoption party for a reason!

If you have a question during the party, find a social worker or MARE staff person.

Please DO:

DO: Get involved in activities! Active participation is the **best** way to interact with children at events

DO: Talk with the children: *Think about how you would interact with a child you don't know at a park or other public space and limit your conversation to things you would talk about with that child. Examples: ask about the activity they are doing, what they are enjoying today, what foods they like, etc.)*

DO: Introduce yourself to adults.

DO: Have fun!

A suggestion...

Adoption parties can be an emotional and overwhelming experience for families. You may want to limit your interactions to social workers and other families for the first adoption event you attend, until you feel more comfortable.

Please DON'T:

DON'T: Monopolize a single child or social worker.

DON'T: Take photos with (or of) a child. Refrain from physical contact.

DON'T: Tell a child that you are interested in adopting him/her, or ask if they want to be adopted.

DON'T: Ask a child about their birth family, their last name, where they live, or their personal history.

How to Respond to Tough Questions:

- If a child asks to go home with you: Thank him/her gently, and let them know that every child will leave with the person who brought them.
- If they ask if you would like to adopt them: You can respond by saying that you have enjoyed meeting them but that the social workers will make the decision about which family would be the best family to adopt them.
- If they ask blunt questions about your family constellation: Answer as simply and politely as possible (within your comfort zone), and guide the conversation in a different direction.

Remember: If a child isn't being talkative, it doesn't mean that they're not enjoying your company. Some children are shy at first. Be sure to let their comfort level guide your interaction with them.