



Frequently Asked Questions About the MARE Online Matching Program

1. What is the MARE Online Matching Program?

Through the MARE website, families with approved homestudies to adopt children in foster care have the opportunity to describe the kind of child or teen they are interested in adopting and search for children who are registered and active with MARE. Families are asked to create an account with their email address, a password, information about their social worker and agency, and some basic family contact information. Once this is done, families can conduct a search and make inquiries to MARE about particular children. Families also have the option to create a family "Profile," which indicates the characteristics of the child or children they are interested in adopting. From this profile, MARE will send automatic email notifications of the children who meet the description in the profile.

2. Which children and teens can families search for through the program?

All the children and teens who are listed with an Active status in the MARE database are eligible for the Online Matching. Since no pictures are used and no identifying information is given, children who are at legal risk are also included in the program.

3. What happens when a family makes an inquiry on a child or teen?

When a family clicks the "Inquire on Selected Children" button, they are making a formal request to have their contact information sent to the child or teen's social worker. Families are expected to make the first contact to the child or teen's social worker by phone or email to express their interest.

4. What type of information do families receive about the children and teens from the program?

Families receive the child or teen's first name, age, legal status, gender, race, levels of special need, MARE registration number and MARE Photolisting page number (if applicable). If the child has an Online Photolisting page, there is a link to the page in the email the family receives. They also receive the child's recruitment social worker's name, agency, phone number and email address, and families are asked to contact this social worker to express their interest.

5. Are social workers expected to follow-up on all the Confirmation of Inquiries that are sent from MARE?

It is made clear to the families that they are responsible for making an initial contact with a social worker. MARE receives notice of every inquiry that a family makes through this program. This information is logged in the MARE database and the recruitment and adoption social workers are sent a Confirmation of Inquiry letting them know that a family has inquired about one of their children. This letter will list contact information for the family and identify from what source



the family inquired about the child. MARE does not expect social workers to follow-up on every Confirmation of Inquiry they receive. It is MARE's expectation, however, that social workers will return calls or emails from families in a timely manner. Again, MARE makes it clear to families that it is their responsibility to contact the social worker first. Social workers are, however, more than welcome to be proactive and contact families from the Confirmation of Inquiries.

6. Do families who are not yet homestudied have access to the program?

Unfortunately only families who have approved homestudies for adoption have access to the program. Families who are interested in starting the adoption process can still "meet" some of the children through the Online Photolisting section of the website, media campaigns and adoption parties.

7. Do social workers have to consider families who live out of state?

Yes, social workers must consider any family with an approved homestudy who inquires about a child. The "Adoption and Safe Families Act [ASFA], passed by the U.S. Congress in 1997, [seeks] to eliminate barriers that keep children from quickly finding safe, permanent homes. The section of ASFA on crossjurisdictional placements tries to promote this goal by prohibiting states from delaying or denying "the placement of a child for adoption when an approved family is available" (Kroll, J. and Riggs, D., "Cross-Jurisdictional Adoptions Can Be Affordable," Adoptalk, Winter, 2000). Social workers should read the family's homestudy, notify them in a timely manner if they are not a match for the child and have a specific reason why the family cannot meet the needs of the child. Situations where the child has siblings or other contacts in state, is in residential care or is still at legal risk are not valid reasons (according to ASFA) for a child not to be placed out of state. Out of state families can be excellent resources for the waiting children in Massachusetts.

8. What happens if a social worker is overwhelmed with inquiries?

Social workers are always welcome to call MARE and have a child removed from the Online Matching Program if they are overwhelmed with inquiries. MARE tries to keep track of the children who are receiving many inquiries. In these cases, the Child Services Coordinator assigned to the child will contact the recruitment and/or adoption social worker to see if they wish to have the child removed from the program.

9. Can social workers use the Online Matching program?

Social workers can also use the Online Matching Program to search for waiting children and/or waiting families who are registered with MARE. Please visit <http://extranet.mareinc.org/welcome.aspx> to create an account.