



Adoption Assistance

Cornell University reimburses eligible employees for qualified adoption expenses up to \$5,000 per adoption (\$6,000 for a child with special needs) and a maximum of three adoptions per family. The adoption reimbursement amount is not subject to state or federal withholding but is subject to Social Security and Medicare. More information is available at

<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-irbs/irb97-02.pdf>

Eligibility

- Benefits-eligible faculty and staff working at least 50% or more for least 6 months and post-doctorate associates
- Adoption of a child under the age of 18. Child being adopted cannot be the child of an employee's spouse or domestic partner.
- Employees of Cooperative Extension Associations are not eligible.
- Employees must be actively employed or on approved paid or unpaid leave at the time expenses are paid and at the time adoption is finalized.
- If the adoptive parents are both Cornell employees, only one employee is eligible for reimbursement per adoption.
- Children with special needs are those who have a medical condition or a physical, mental, or emotional disability including, but not limited to: Cerebral palsy, cleft lip and palate, deafness/hearing loss, Down syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, HIV/Aids, severe and/or multiple disabilities, spina bifida, visual impairments.

How to Apply

Eligible employees may apply for reimbursement of qualified adoption expenses. Reimbursement is retroactive from January 1, 2005.

Send the completed [adoption assistance form](#) (pdf), with verifying documents and invoices to:

Adoption Assistance Program

Benefit Services

395 Pine Tree Road

Cornell University

Ithaca, NY 14850

Qualified Adoption Expenses

"Qualified adoption expenses" as defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) are reasonable and necessary expenses directly related to, and for the principal purpose of, the legal adoption of an eligible child, including:

- Adoption fees
- Attorney fees
- Court costs
- Travel expenses (including meals and lodging) while away from home

In addition to federally allowed adoption expenses, qualified expenses eligible for reimbursement through the Cornell University adoption assistance program include:

- Public and private adoption agency fees permitted or required under the state law with jurisdiction over the adoption
- Fees for medical and hospital services provided to the child (not otherwise covered by insurance)
- Immigration filing fees, required and recommended immunizations, and dossier translation fees
- Foster care charges incurred by the adoptive family while finalizing the adoption process, provided the adoption results in the placement of the eligible child in the adoptive employee's home.
- Adoptive parents may incur expenses for a potential adoption in which birth parents are unwilling to proceed with the adoption. Some individuals may have had more than one adoption arrangement with a birth parent fall through. Adoptive parents are advised to carefully select a licensed agency to arrange their adoptions. Dissolved and disrupted adoptions are included in the adoption benefit reimbursement cap.

Non-Qualified Expenses

Adoption expenses reimbursed through resources external to Cornell University will not qualify for reimbursement through the Adoption Assistance Program. In addition, expenses claimed for the purposes of benefiting from the adoption tax credit also will not be considered for reimbursement.

According to the IRS, qualified adoption expenses do not include expenses:

- That violate state or federal law
- For carrying out any surrogate parenting arrangement
- For the adoption of your spouse's or partner's child
- Paid using funds received from any federal, state, or local program
- Allowed as a credit or deduction under any other federal income tax rule
- Tax Treatment of Reimbursement
- The Adoption Assistance Program is a formal benefit plan sponsored by the university, which allows you to avoid some of the impact of taxation on the benefit amount. Reimbursed amounts will not be subject to income tax however, will be subject to social security deductions.

In attempt to simplify the taxation process for Cornell employees, the university is implementing the same rules that meet federal tax guidelines, enabling adoptive parents to arrange their documentation to qualify their expenses for both benefits. As tax rules change, so will the profile of the Adoption Assistance Program, from a tax planning point of view. Visit the IRS [<http://www.irs.gov>] for additional information.

Adding Your Child to Existing Benefits

At the time of placement, you may [add your child](#) to your medical, dental, group life and personal accident plans and also establish a 529 New York College Savings Plan. In addition, you may enroll in a flexible spending account. Adding or enrolling the child in these plans may involve deadlines. You will also need to complete an enrollment form and provide a copy of the adoption agreement in order to enroll. Contact the Resource Center at Benefit Services at (607) 255-3936 for more information.
