

ADOPT-A-FAMILY

A project of Compass Family Services

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Adopt-a-Family project?

Compass' Adopt-a-Family project pairs individuals or groups from the community with needy families who lack the resources to buy holiday gifts. For many of these families, these gifts are the only ones they will receive this holiday season.

How does the program work?

The Adopt-a-Family project matches individuals or group donors with a family/families who is/are homeless or extremely low-income. Donors provide gifts from a wish list compiled by the family. Sometimes children (and some parents) get carried away and ask for expensive items that may seem excessive. Please do not be offended by this. Donors are NOT obligated to buy everything on the list. Once the families receive their gifts, they write thank you cards to their donors. These are forwarded to the donors by Compass staff.

How are families chosen to be adopted?

Families in the Adopt-a-Family project are families already accessing services within Compass Family Services' six programs (Compass Family Shelter, Compass Connecting Point, Compass Clara House, Compass Children's Center, Compass SF HOME and/or Compass Family Resource Center).

How many families get adopted each year?

Last year, more than 430 families were adopted. Tough financial times, however, have resulted in an increase in the number of families seeking our services, and we anticipate that we will serve even more families this year.

How much are donors expected to spend on one family?

We encourage each donor to purchase the specific item requested, rather than substituting another gift. If it is too difficult to find the requested gift, please review the sample gift giving guide on our website or blog which provides a list of gifts at appropriate prices. This year, we are asking participants to purchase:

- For each adult 18 years old and over – at least one gift card (\$75 minimum total)
- For each child under 18 – three gifts (items listed on wish list should be under \$50 each)
- One grocery gift card for the family (suggested estimate on price - \$25 per family member. Example, a family of four would be \$100)

You are more than welcome to do more for your family if you choose to. You do not have to buy everything on the family's wish list. In addition to the gifts you purchase, you may also include stockings for each family member to make the holiday feel more festive.

How and when will I receive my family's wish list?

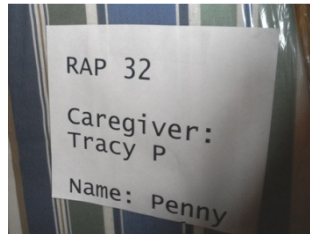
Families will begin to fill out their wish lists in September. Wish lists will continue to come in through December. We will begin to send wish lists to donors during the first and second week in October. As soon as we receive a wish list that meets your specifications, we will email it to you.

What is the family ID number?

Each wish list will have a unique number that identifies the family. It is extremely important to have **EVERY GIFT CLEARLY MARKED WITH THIS NUMBER**. It will help ensure that the right gifts get to the right family.

How should I package and label the gifts?

Please wrap and label all gifts. To ensure the gift cards for adults do not get lost, please put those in envelopes so they are not loose. When you drop the gifts off, they will be placed in boxes and the gift cards will go directly in there with the children's gifts so nothing is lost and it's all together. To make certain the right boxes get to the right families, it is extremely important to label each gift. **The gift should be labelled with: 1) the family ID#, 2) the primary caregiver's name and 3) the name of the gift recipient.** All of this information is provided on the wish list. Here is an example of how a gift should be labelled:



Once all of your gifts are wrapped and labeled, place them in boxes if you have access to those. If you do not have boxes, please place the gifts in large plastic bag (s). Please label the boxes or bags with the family ID number and list how many boxes or bags you have for the family. For example, label *1 of 2* or *1 of 4* or *2 of 2*, etc. If you have more than one family, please use separate boxes or bags for each family. **All gifts without a label will be set aside and given to another family in need.**

What if I can't drop my gifts off during the designated time?

Please make every effort to drop off your gifts during the allotted times that are given to you when you receive your wish list. We will have volunteers and staff helping as much as we can but we appreciate your patience. Families will start to receive their gifts the following week so it is very important to drop off by Saturday, December 17th. This will be the only weekend drop off day and the last day to drop off. More information will be provided to you on specific times and days depending on which program your adopted family is in when you receive a wish list.

I was expecting a family in need to have necessities like socks and underwear on their wish lists. But the children in the family I'm adopting have asked for electronic games and brand-name shoes. What should I make of this?

Families living in poverty constantly do without, yet they live in a society that flaunts material wealth, brand names and luxury items at every turn. At Compass, we believe that a poor child, and even a poor adult, has as much of a right to wish for a gift that is not a basic necessities as does their middle class counterpart. At the same time, we work with each family to create a wish list that is realistic. Please remember that, as a donor, you do not have to fulfill all of a family's wishes.

I want to do something special for the family that I'm adopting. What do you suggest?

Movie tickets and gift certificates for local restaurants are very much appreciated as many of our families do not have the means to do these special activities. Diapers are a welcome surprise for families with babies.

Can I also donate gently used items to my adopted family?

While our families are very appreciative of donated items, the Adopt-a-Family program has doubled in size over the last few years and we just do not have enough space to store everything all at once. If you feel that the family you adopted could greatly benefit from a gently used item, please contact Kristin Mansfield at kmansfield@compass-sf.org as this will be on a case-by-case basis.

Can I arrange for special services, like tutoring or dental work, for the family that I'm adopting?

Absolutely! In recent years, donors have successfully provided karate and ballet classes, dental work and airline tickets for families. We'll be glad to help you coordinate.

Should I include a gift receipt?

Please do include gift receipts for items such as clothing and shoes! Many donors include a separate envelope with all of the gift receipts, however, please be sure to label the envelope with the family ID number and place it in with the gifts.

How does the family receive the gifts?

Most families will pick up their gifts at the storage facility location. In some circumstances, Compass' case managers will deliver the gifts to a family if the family is unable to get to us. All gifts will be given to families during the week of Christmas (December 19th – 22nd).

I would like to meet the family I am adopting and take my children with me to drop off the gifts at their home. Is this possible?

Compass Family Services ensures the confidentiality of each family receiving services. We absolutely do not make meeting a donor a pre-condition for participating in AAF. For many families, facing circumstances where they are reliant on the kindness of strangers to provide holiday gifts for their children can elicit feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. On the other hand, there are some families that are happy to meet their donor, and are appreciative of the opportunity to convey their appreciation personally. If meeting the family you are adopting is important to you, please be sure to indicate this in your donor information form. We will do all we can to match you with a family that is open to a meeting.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Please contact Kristin Mansfield at kmansfield@compass-sf.org or by phone at (415) 644-0504 x1108.

Is there anything else I should know?

If your group or organization has raised more funds than are needed to meet the family's gift wishes, consider other items the family might need. Some examples include socks, underwear, hats, mittens, gift cards (Target, for example), or other practical items such as shampoo, toothpaste, personal care products, etc. You may also choose to donate to Compass Family Services to help us provide critical services to families in need year-round.