



ADOPT-A-FAMILY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Last updated: 9/14/26

Q: What is the Adopt-a-Family program?

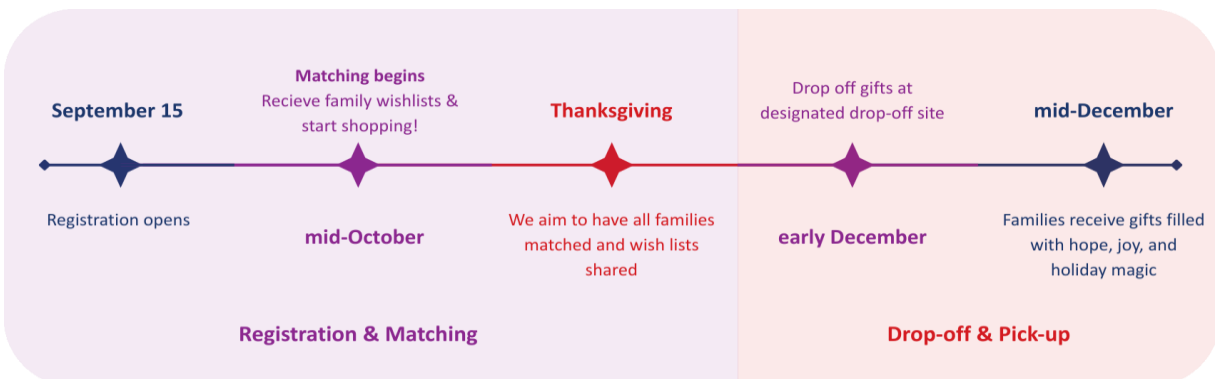
A: Every year, Compass Family Services' Adopt-a-Family (AAF) program pairs individuals or groups from the community with families who lack the resources to buy holiday gifts. For many of these families, these gifts are the only ones they will receive this holiday season.

Q: How does the program work?

A: The Adopt-a-Family program matches individuals or groups with families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Donors provide gifts based on a wish list completed by the family. This year, we are offering two ways for donors to fulfill wish lists:

1. **Traditional Adopt-a-Family:** Fulfill a family wish list of needed and wanted items. Shop, wrap gifts, and drop off gifts at our designated drop-off site in early December to be distributed to your adopted family or families.
2. **Gift Card Adopt-a-Family:** Fulfill wish list requests for gift cards from specific retailers for your adopted family or families and drop them off or mail them to Compass in early December for distribution to your adopted family or families.

Program Timeline



Q: How are families chosen to be adopted? How many families get adopted each year?

A: Families participating in Adopt-a-Family are currently receiving services through one or more of Compass Family Services' programs. Each year, thanks to the generosity of our community, we are able to provide holiday support to more than 500 Compass families through Adopt-a-Family.

Q: How can I participate? Is there a fee?

A: You can register on the Compass Family Services [website](#)! Registration opens annually on September 15th, and there is no fee to participate. However, we strongly encourage donors to make a donation of \$150 per family adopted. Adopt-a-Family contributions help offset the significant cost of running the program and help to ensure that our client families receive the full range of services they need throughout the year, not just during the holidays. All donations to Compass Family Services are tax-deductible.

When supporting a family through Adopt-a-Family, please follow these requirements:

- One grocery gift card for the family of **at least \$25 per family member**.
For example, a gift card for a family of four would be \$100
- For each adult 18 years old and over – at least **one** gift card (\$100 minimum)
- For each child under 18 – at least **three** gifts (items listed on wish list will be from a variety of price ranges)

You are more than welcome to do more for your family if you choose to!

Q: Is there a limit to how many families I can adopt? How much are donors expected to spend on one family?

A: There is no limit to how many families you can adopt, and you are welcome to adopt as few or many families as you would like. We ask that you only adopt as many families as you can confidently fulfill the wish lists of. Donors should expect to spend a **minimum of \$300** on a family of two and usually spend more. When you receive the family wish list, it will include required items as well as additional, optional items that you can choose to provide.

Q. Why do I need to purchase grocery gift cards for my family?

A. While the holiday season is a period of joy and receiving presents for many, it can also be a time of hardship and uncertainty. Compass wants to ensure that families are food-secure during this time and can comfortably spend time with one another. By providing grocery gift cards along with presents, you meet more of the basic needs of the families you adopt.

Q: What do family wish lists look like?

A. All wish lists include information to help you get to know your family, including their household makeup and personal details such what they like to do for fun as a family and their hopes for the New Year. For each child, you'll receive information such as their grade, preferred activities, and favorite color.

We offer two types of wish lists: **Traditional** and **Gift Card Only**. Traditional wish lists include gift card requests for adults, while children can request specific "most needed" and "most wanted" items, such as clothing, toys, or games. Gift Card Only wish lists include gift card requests for all family members.

Q. How and when will I receive my family's wish list? Do I get to choose which families I adopt?

A: Every year, families begin to meet with their case managers to fill out their wish lists in late September. Starting in October, we begin to send wish lists to donors. Families are matched to donors, and wish lists are sent to donors on a rolling basis. We aim to send all wish lists by Thanksgiving. While we do our best to match you with a family based on the preferences you provided in your registration form, we cannot guarantee a specific family match.

Q. I was expecting a family in need to have basic necessities 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?

A: At Compass, we believe that a child without financial resources, and even an adult, has as much of a right to wish for a gift that is not a basic necessity as children from more privileged backgrounds. When families fill out their wish lists, they are sharing what they need and want most during the holiday season. 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 the family's wishes.

Q. What happens if my adopted family also has another donor?

A: Every year, a small number of donors who register end up not being able to provide for the family they were matched with. To make sure that all our families receive presents, when we don't have clear confirmation that a donor is shopping for their assigned family, we will match the family with a second donor. If multiple donors end up providing for one family, we utilize extra gifts to help fill gaps if other donors aren't able to fulfill and some presents may be redirected to our Holiday Pop-Up Shop, which provides presents to Compass families that are not eligible for Adopt-a-Family.

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

A: Please only include new items in your Adopt-a-Family contributions. However, if you have gently used items that you'd like to donate to Compass Family Services, please contact our In-Kind Donation Manager, Tony Hernandez, at thernandez@compass-sf.org. Tony will be happy to coordinate your donation.

Q: What is the family ID number?

A: Each wish list will have a unique number that identifies the family. We use the family IDs to track deliveries, so it is extremely important to have **every gift clearly marked with this number**. This helps us ensure that the right gifts reach the correct family.

Q. Can I email their gift cards to Compass?

A. We cannot accept any digital gift cards at this time. Please print or buy physical gift cards to include with your gifts.

Q. What if I can't drop gifts off during the designated time? Can I bring gifts at a different time?

A: Please make every effort to drop off your gifts during the allotted dates and times. We will have volunteers and staff helping during drop-off to assist you with unloading. Families will start to receive their gifts not long after drop-off, so it is important to drop off during your designated time. More information will be provided to you regarding specific times and days for gift drop-off as that time approaches. If you have extenuating circumstances, please contact our Adopt-a-Family team at aaf@compass-sf.org.

Q. How does the family receive the gifts?

A. Most families will pick up their gifts at the storage facility location in San Francisco where you will drop the gifts off. Gifts for some programs are dropped off and stored at the program location and then given to the families before the holiday. All gifts will be given to families by January 15th.

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

A. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the families we serve, Compass Family Services does not coordinate or facilitate meetings between families and Adopt-a-Family supporters. 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. Families are grateful for the gifts they receive, and they express their thanks through writing thank-you cards that we share with donors after families pick up their gifts.

Q. Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

A. Please contact our Adopt-a-Family team at aaf@compass-sf.org.

Q. Where can I learn more about Compass Family Services?

A. For more information on Compass Family Services and our work, please check out our [Mission](#) and [Programs](#) pages. To learn more about our impact, our [Annual Report](#) is available on our website.