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## More Abandoned Children Finding Families

**T**he rate of child adoption in the country has seen a 35% increase over the past two years since the new law on adoption was approved in 2015 to facilitate the growth and development of abandoned children or orphans in a family environment.

“Around 14,000 children have been adopted by families in the past two years,” said Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Ali Rabiei, addressing a conference on legal support for orphaned children and teenagers in Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi Province.

Revision in the adoption laws and new regulations such as temporary guardianship and the possibility for single women and Iranians living abroad to adopt, has led to the rise in the number of children finding new families, ISNA reported.

Previously, strict laws had discouraged many couples from adoption. Today, however, the moderate laws and revised rules make it easier for an orphaned child or one with negligent or irresponsible parents to be part of a new family.

In Iran, temporary guardianship allows a child with negligent parents or parents sentenced to long or life imprisonment to be adopted while their legal guardianship remains with their biological parents or the State Welfare Organization (SWO). Single women older than 30 and couples with children who are financially able to raise a child are eligible for temporary adoption.

Population studies show that the large number of late marriages which may affect a couple’s fertility, as well as the growing number of single women in Iran, may likely increase the number of applicants for child adoption.

Growing up in a proper family atmosphere helps build a child’s character to become stronger and more resilient in adulthood. Therefore, the new adoption policies have been focused on facilitating the procedures of granting guardianship.

### Three Strategies

Three strategies have been implemented for adoption. The first is to place the guardianship of an orphaned child or one with negligent parents with relatives under the supervision of a social worker from the SWO.

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The second involves providing financial assistance for relatives who cannot afford to raise a child.

In the third strategy, children are put up for adoption with interested families after strict screening of their applications and background.

"We have taken major steps to ensure that children are brought up in a family atmosphere," so they have a good upbringing, said Rabiei.

According to the law, childless couples can adopt if they have been married for a minimum of five years and one of the spouses is at least 30 years old.

Around 22,000 children are living in 600 welfare centers across the country. Previously, only families without children could adopt but the new law allows couples with children to do so.

Under the revised enactment, every couple, even those who already have a child and qualified single women over the age of 30 can apply for adoption. But single women can only adopt children older than 6-7 years. The new regulations have also increased the age of adoption from 12 to 16.

Also, adopters should be able to support the adoptee financially. Additionally, they should bequeath 1/3 share of their property to the adopted child.

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