Adopt a Family℠ | 2026 Frequently Asked Questions

What is Adopt a Family℠?

Adopt a Family℠ (AAF) is a seasonal event administered by Helping Hands Hawai'i that links individuals and families in need with generous donors in the community. Donors choose a family they would like to assist during the holidays and purchase new items from the family's Wish List.

How does AAF work?

If you are interested in being an Adopt a Family℠ donor, complete the AAF Donor Registration Form. The matching process begins in October, and donor registration is open through November 16, 2026, unless all families have been adopted earlier.

We will send you a selection of families to review, and you have three (3) calendar days to notify us of the family you wish to adopt. If you are not able to select your family within three calendar days, we will assign a family for you. The other families will return to the pool of participants to give other donors a chance to adopt them. You may begin buying gifts for your family once we have confirmed your selection.

Is there a deadline to sign up as a donor?

Yes. Due to the time needed to assemble and distribute donated items to families for the holidays, the donor registration form will close on Monday, November 16, 2026, or when all families have been adopted (whichever comes first). No donor registration forms will be accepted after the deadline. If you submitted your form before the deadline and have not yet been matched with a family, please contact Adopt a Family℠ staff at (808) 536-7234 ext. 820 or AAF@helpinghandshawaii.org.

Why do I only have three (3) calendar days to pick a family?

When we send you the selection of families to review, they are put on hold and cannot be distributed to other donors until you make your selection. The longer they are on hold, the more difficult it will be to match them with a donor. We kindly ask that you select your family within three (3) calendar days to give unselected families an opportunity to be matched with another donor.

If Adopt a Family℠ staff does not receive your selection within three (3) calendar days, we will select a family for you, and the unselected families will return to the pool of applicants waiting to be matched. Our goal is to ensure that all families are adopted during the holidays.

Do I have to buy everything on the family's Wish List?

No. The Wish List is a guide to inform donors of the types of items the family needs or would like this holiday season. Donors may purchase items on the list or other items they would like for the family. All gifts are at the donor's discretion. You must submit an itemized list of all gifts donated to the family when you drop them off.

What is the deadline to drop off gifts?

The gift drop-off deadline is Saturday, December 5, 2026. This allows enough time to get your gifts to the families you adopted before Christmas. You must schedule an appointment to drop off your gifts.

Will late drop-off of gift items be accepted?

Late gift drop-offs may be accepted ONLY on a case-by-case basis for a valid reason and if pre-arranged and approved by Adopt a Family℠ staff.

If I drop off my gifts late, will they still be able to get to my selected family?

No. Adopt a Family℠ cannot guarantee that your gifts will reach your selected family if you miss the drop-off deadline without making alternative arrangements ahead of time. With your permission, Adopt a Family℠ may still accept the donation and use the gifts to fulfill requests from other participating families.

Where do I drop off the gifts?

Gifts are collected at our Community Clearinghouse, 2100 N. Nimitz Hwy., by appointment only. Although regular Community Clearinghouse donation pickups and drop-offs are paused from November 1 through December 31, 2026, new donations specifically for Adopt a Family℠ are still accepted.

Do the gifts have to be new?

Yes. All items given through Adopt a Family℠ must be new. You may wrap the gifts if they are properly labeled with the Family Code (a unique identifying code assigned to each family).

Please note: Regular Community Clearinghouse donations of used clothing, furniture, and household items are not accepted during the November 1–December 31 donation pause. Regular donation services resume in January.

Can I make a monetary donation to the family?

Yes, but only in the form of gift cards. Adopt a Family℠ is not a financial assistance program, so we cannot give families cash donations directly. Families can benefit from gift cards to stores such as Walmart and Target, or grocery stores such as Foodland, Times, and Safeway.

What families participate in Adopt a Family℠?

Most Adopt a Family℠ participants are individuals and families experiencing houselessness or living on extremely low incomes. They are screened for eligibility through an application process.

How do the gifts get to my family?

As soon as we receive your gifts, we contact your family and coordinate delivery or pickup.

Can I meet the family and deliver the gifts myself?

Yes, in-person distribution depends on the family's consent to meet with their donor. Families are not required to meet donors, and we cannot guarantee that families will agree to meet in person.

Instead of adopting a family, can I just make a donation?

Yes. You can donate online or mail a check to:
Adopt a Family

c/o Helping Hands Hawai‘i
MSC 61572
PO Box 1300
Honolulu, HI 96807-1300

Indicate “Adopt a Family” in the memo to direct your gift. You may also arrange to drop off gift cards and new, unwrapped gifts for Adopt a Family℠ at the Community Clearinghouse. These donations can help fulfill Wish Lists for families who are not selected by donors. Many families request basic necessities such as clothing, household items, toys for young children, and food. You can also participate through a Wishing Tree location.

What are Wishing Trees and how are they related to Adopt a Family℠?

During the holiday season, Helping Hands Hawai‘i works with community partners to host Wishing Trees. The trees have tags representing individual wishes from Adopt a Family℠ participants. To participate, choose a wish tag, purchase the requested item, and return the gift to the same location by its collection deadline.

2026 Wishing Tree locations and dates:
• MOKU Kitchen, Kaka‘ako: November 1–December 18
• StretchLab Hawai‘i (Honolulu, Kahala, Waikele, Kailua): November 2–December 7
• UFC Gym Mililani: November 23–December 11
• Monkeypod Kitchen Waikīkī: November 25–December 10
• Koko Marina Shopping Center: Dates to be confirmed

Can I Adopt a Family℠ from a neighbor island?

Yes. Adopt a Family℠ is accepting neighbor island family applications.

More Information About Adopt a Family℠

Email AAF@helpinghandshawaii.org or call (808) 536-7234 ext. 820.