



The Adoption Center
of the MidSouth

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Debunking the Myths: The Facts about Foster Care Adoption

MYTH:

All foster care children have some kind of physical, mental or emotional handicap; that's why they are classified as "special needs."

FACT:

The term "special needs" is somewhat misleading, because it can mean that the child is older, a minority, or requires placement with his/her siblings. While some children are dealing with physical or emotional concerns, just like other children, they need the nurturing and support that a permanent family can provide. Many foster children are in the "system" because their birth parents weren't protective and nurturing caretakers—not because the children did anything wrong.

MYTH:

There's too much red tape and bureaucracy involved in adopting a child from foster care.

FACT:

Congress has streamlined the foster care adoption process through enactment of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. This law ensures that children in foster care, who cannot be reunited with their birth parents, are freed for adoption and placed with permanent families as quickly as possible.

MYTH:

There are not enough loving families available who want to adopt a foster child.

FACT:

Many prospective adoptive parents may initially want to adopt an infant, often because they are unaware that there are older children who also need families. When they learn about an older child available for adoption, they often "fall in love" and realize the enormous impact they can have on that child's life. Older children can share their feelings about joining a new family, helping to make the adoption and transition process successful. Four in 10 American adults have considered adoption, according to a National Adoption Attitudes Survey funded by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. That translates into 81.5 million Americans. If only one out of 500 Americans adopted out of the foster care system, these children would have homes.

MYTH:

Adoptive parents must be a 2004 version of Ozzie and Harriet.

FACT:

Prospective adoptive parents do not have to be rich, married, own a home, or be of a certain race or age to become an adoptive parent. (One-third of adoptions from foster care are by single parents.) Patience, a good sense of humor, a love of children, and the commitment to be a good parent are the most important characteristics.

MYTH:

Adopting a child from foster care is expensive.

FACT:

Many prospective parents do not know that adopting children from foster care is virtually free, while private or international adoptions can cost anywhere from \$4,000 to \$30,000 or more. A growing number of companies and government agencies offer adoption assistance as part of their employee benefit packages, including time off for maternity/paternity leave, financial incentives and other benefits. In addition, Congress has made federal tax credits available for foster care adoptions to help offset required fees, court costs, legal and travel expenses. In June 2001, the President signed a revised adoption tax credit, which took effect in January 2003, to increase the amount of the credit to \$10,000 for all adoptive families. Benefits such as these are enabling more families to adopt foster children into their homes. More information is available in the IRS Publication 968 "Tax Benefits for Adoption," which can be obtained by calling 1-800-829-3676 or visiting www.irs.ustreas.gov.

MYTH:

Families don't receive support after the adoption is finalized.

FACT:

Financial assistance does not end with the child's placement or adoption. The vast majority of children adopted from foster care are eligible for federal or state subsidies that help offset both short- and long-term costs associated with post-adoption adjustments. Such benefits (which vary by state) commonly include monthly cash subsidies, medical assistance and social services. More information about federal and state subsidy programs is available from the National Adoption Assistance Training, Resource, and Information Network helpline at 1-800-470-6665.

MYTH:

Children in foster care have too much "baggage."

FACT:

This is perhaps the biggest myth of all. Foster children—just like any children—have enormous potential to thrive given love, patience, and a stable environment. Just ask U.S. Senator Ben "Nighthorse" Campbell, Minnesota Viking Dante Culpepper, Washington, D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams, or Miss USA 2000 Lynette Cole. They were all once foster children who were adopted by caring adults.

MYTH:

It's too difficult to find information on how to adopt.

FACT:

There are resources available to help potential parents take the first step towards adopting out of foster care. For more information log on to www.nationaladoptionday.com, www.davethomasfoundation.org, www.adoptUSkids.org, or simply call 1-800-TO-ADOPT.