

# Foster Care and Adoption

## Questions and Answers

Dear editor,

I am a foster mother, currently caring for five children. I enjoy what I do but find it difficult to see the children suffer because they do not have a permanent place to call home. What is the government's role in trying to improve the foster care system?

Frustrated foster parent

Dear Frustrated foster parent,

In 2002, statistics show that over 800,000 children resided in foster care at some point. Most are in foster care because they experienced some type of maltreatment. They often also experience additional emotional problems because of the separation from their birth parent and multiple placements. The government realized the issues foster care children face and created the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA). This legislation is supposed to speed up the process of adoption so children do not spend as much time in foster care. They are either to be reunited with their biological parent(s) or be adopted. This act also allows states to receive an incentive for completing more adoptions than normal in a given period of time.

Kernan, E. and Lansford, J. (2004). Providing For the Best Interests of the Child?: The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. *Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25, 523-539.

Dear editor,

Why are older children in foster care longer?

Just wondering

Dear Just wondering,

The older a child is the less likely he or she is to have adoption as a goal. Various possible reasons exist as to why this is. First, older children may have stronger ties to their birth family. In some people's opinion it is more difficult to find adoptive parents who want adolescents, which could lead to less motivated searches for possible guardians. Older children may be living with relatives and do not feel the need for legalizing the adoption. Age is not the only indicator for long-term foster care. Race, developmental delays, and an incomplete factual history of the child are also predictors.

Schmidt-Tieszen, A. and McDonald, T. (1998). Children Who Wait: Long Term Foster Care or Adoption? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 20, 13-28.

Dear editor,

My husband and I are thinking of adopting older children. We want to make a difference in a child's life. However, we also want to be realistic in the type of children we could be parenting. What are some of the challenges that await us?

Courageous couple

Dear Courageous couple,

Children who have lived in foster care experience more emotional problems, learning difficulties, trouble with social situations, and isolation than children who have not been removed from their birth family. Children react differently to each situation. Some factors that influence a child's well-being include biological make-up, prenatal care, trauma, and the experience during and after foster care. Many of these children do have certain limitations but with the right resources are able to succeed.

Rutter, M. (2000). Children in Substitute Care: Some Conceptual Considerations and Research Implications. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 22, 685-703.

Dear editor,

I was wondering why more foster care children are not placed in permanent homes even though the research proves that that is in the best interest of the child?

## Concerned Citizen

Dear Concerned citizen,

A number of reasons exist why children continue to end up in foster care for long periods of time. One reason deals with the financial aspect. It costs each state a great deal of time and money to complete an adoption. In California it costs about \$19,000 for each adoption in 1997-1998. Although the states receive money from federal funds for completing extra adoptions because of the ASFA 1997, it is not even half of what it costs per adoption. I hope this helps explain part of the reason for the U.S.'s foster care situation.

Allphin, S., Simmons, B., and Barth, R. (2001). Adoption of Foster Children: How Much Does it Cost Public Agencies? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23, 865-891.

Dear editor,

I am a social work student interested in foster care and adoption. I believe that children should have permanent placements when possible. Has any research been done that proves foster care can be damaging?

Making a difference

Dear Making a difference,

Thank-you for your concern for foster children. Although it is hard to specify the reason why, children in foster care do have difficulty later on in life when compared to the general public. They are more likely to experience depression, relationship problems, low self-esteem, unhappiness, and isolation. Social workers, like you, should advocate on foster care children's behalf for permanency planning because of the issue of attachment.

Cook-Fong, S. (2000). The Adult Well-Being of Individuals Reared in Family Foster Care Placements. *Child and Youth Forum*, 29, 7-25.

Dear editor,

I am worried about my foster daughter. She says that she has low self-esteem because of being in foster care. Can this be true? What can I do to help her?

## Concerned foster parent

Dear Concerned foster parent,

This can most definitely be true. Many youth who have been in foster care for a long time feel this way. Many times it is because of the stigma that society puts on foster care and the negative feedback they receive. Don't worry; there are ways that you can help. Helping her realize that she may be stigmatized in the community and teaching her how to deal with it is one way. You can also advocate for elder foster youth. It is also important for you let her know you care about and respect her.

Kools, S.M. (1997). Adolescent Identity Development in Foster Care. *Family Relations*. 47, 263-272.

Dear editor,

I have recently adopted a teenaged boy who was in foster care because his parents were abusive. He often acts out and misbehaves. I am worried that he will not change these behaviors. Is this normal?

Worried adoptive father

Dear Worried adoptive father,

Your sons' behavior is very normal for a boy who spent time in an abusive home and then spent time in foster care. These children often develop coping skills to deal with the abuse. Once the child becomes more comfortable in the home and begins to feel love and support these behaviors should begin to subside.

Henry, D.L. (1999), Resilience in Maltreated Children: Implications for Special Needs Adoption. *Child Welfare*. 78, 519-541.

Dear editor,

I have heard that there are many minority children in the foster care system and a lack of minority families to adopt them. Is there anything being done to get minority families involved in the adoption process?

Concerned citizen

Dear Concerned citizen,

Yes! Things are being done to get more minority families involved in the adoption process. Many agencies have devised special techniques to attract potential adoptive minority families. One example is using minority individuals who have adopted or have been adopted as role models when recruiting new families. Another technique has been to use adoption subsidies and medical assistance. These are only a few examples of what is being done to encourage minority families to adopt.

Meyer, A.S. & Rodriguez, P. (1990). Minority Adoptions and Agency Practices. *Social Work*. 35, 528-531.

Dear editor,

I realize that case manager interventions have helped foster families with a variety of problems. I was wondering what some of the services that foster care families need are that require the most case manager effort.

Interested social work student

Dear Interested social work student,

It is very true that case manager interventions help foster families with a variety of problem. Many of these services include a lot of effort by the case manager. One very important service provided to foster families is counseling another is parent education. Unfortunately many of these services are not available due to large caseloads and work turnover. As a social work student is important that you advocate for foster families and relay to others the importance of services provided to them.

Klee, L., Kronstadt, D. & Zlotnick, C. (1999). Essential Case Management Services for Young Children in Foster Care. *Community Mental Health Journal*. 35, 421-429.

Dear editor,

Many foster parents receive support for their foster children. When they choose to adopt the child not all but many of the supports are lost. Would it be desirable to keep these services in place?

Curious social work student

Yes! It is very desirable to keep services to adoptive families in place. Family resource services are very important once a child is in a permanent

home. Offering a variety of both group and individual contacts to support these families is a key component to success. Advocating for these adoptive families is important and helps agencies provide these services to families.

Fein, E. & Staff Ilene. (1995). Stability and Change: Initial Findings in a Study of Treatment Foster Care Placements. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 17,379-389.

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## Informative Web Links

<http://www.arvinpublications.com/>

This website offers support to parents who are involved with foster care and adoption. It contains a message board where individuals can make comments or ask for support. The authors of this website link audiences to different reading material on adoption, including topics like open adoption, creating a life book, and separation and loss.

[http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f\\_fostercare/index.cfm](http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/f_fostercare/index.cfm)

This extensive website was created by the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse. The authors address professionals working in foster care and adoption as well as all members of the triad. It presents answers to common questions about this topic. It also has a variety of resources available including legal issues.

<http://p086.ezboard.com/fgeoparentfrm100>

This website's purpose is for support and feedback more so than for factual information. It allows readers to reply to any message on the message board or create their own. It contains topics of concern, support groups, surveys and more.

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/64.htm>

The authors of this website provide factual information on foster care in the United States. This website consists of the challenges foster parents must deal with including behavioral issues and having children be placed in permanent homes. The foster children struggle with attachment issues, guilt, and feelings of being unwanted.

<http://foster-child.adoption.com/>

This website is very helpful when looking at the transition from foster care to adoption. It helps to look at all the aspects of foster care adoption. The authors give specifics in how foster care and adoption differ, including financially, legally, and permanently. This website enables perspective adoptive parents to feel more comfortable in what they are undertaking because it lists some of the expectations. Those interested in adoption should consult a lawyer, be ready for a home visit, and think about long-term supports.

### **Child Welfare League of America**

[www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org)

The Child Welfare League of America believes in engaging people in promoting the well being of families, children and youth and protecting children from harm. Their website has information about who they are and what they do. There is a great deal of information on child welfare, social justice, advocacy and research available at your fingertips.

### **Foster Club**

[www.fosterclub.com](http://www.fosterclub.com)

This website is the national network for youth in foster care. It is full of information that can be helpful for youth in foster care. It also can be beneficial for adults and includes information about transitioning from foster care to adoption including information to children about the choices they have.

### **North American Council on Adoptable Children**

[www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org)

The NACAC believes that every child has the right to a permanent family. It advocates for the right of children to a permanent, nurturing and culturally sensitive family. This website is very informative and helpful. Transracial parenting, adoption support and preservation and public policy are only a few examples of what the website offers.

### **Adoption Forums**

<http://forums.adoption.com>

Adoption Forums.com is a website that acts as a support network to those that have been or are involved in adoption. The website provides a safe place for individuals to talk about their experiences, worries and concerns.

### **Adoption and Foster Care in Ohio a Place for Me?**

[www.wksu.org/news/features/adoption/intro/index.html](http://www.wksu.org/news/features/adoption/intro/index.html)

This is an informative website about adoption and foster care in Ohio and includes the experiences of people involved in these areas. The site contains transcripts of a news radio discussion on NPR. It also includes links, books, articles and more that are very helpful to people interested in the different topics on the site mentioned in the transcripts.