



Adoption Perceptions (and mis-conceptions)



US Adoption Attitude Survey 2017 Re-cap of Dave Thomas 2017 Study

Foster Parenting vs Adoption from Foster Care

2017 survey found large percentage of people unaware of how foster parenting works

At first glance, [foster care](#) and adoption seem very similar — both involve bringing a child into your home to care for and nurture. In fact, many prospective parents confuse the two when they attend foster or adoptive parent training classes.

But there are two fundamental differences: **permanency and parental rights**.

Permanency

State agencies don't want children to remain in foster care indefinitely, so foster care is temporary.

The agency wants to repair the problems that existed in the child's home or with his parents that resulted in him being removed from them. The goal is that he will someday return home, but if that proves impossible, he would be placed for adoption.

Adoption is permanent. It's a legally binding relationship, bestowing on the adopted child all the rights and privileges that a biological child would enjoy. Adoptive parents are the child's parents forever, just as if they had given birth to him themselves.

Parental Rights

In most cases, a child's birth parents retain their parental rights even while their child is in foster care. Some of those rights might be supervised by the state, but they're not terminated unless and until the child is placed for adoption. Until then, his birth parents have the final say on decisions regarding the child's care, with or without input from the state. *Foster parents cannot make medical decisions for the child.*

They can't decide where he will attend school or what religious services he should attend, at least not without the birth parents' consent. In some states, foster children can't even get haircuts without their birth parents' permission.

If it's determined that a foster child cannot return to his biological parents, the state will move to terminate the parents' rights and will assume those rights until the child is adopted. He would continue living in the foster home, however, until he is legally adopted either by his foster parents or by another parent or couple.

In adoptive situations, the adoptive parents are responsible for all decision-making for their child, just as if he had been born to them. Adoptive parents are responsible for the child's medical care, financial obligations, and his educational and spiritual development.

Perceived Barriers to Adoption from Foster Care

Don't know anything about foster care adoption - Most families get their information from friends and other family members who may have had an experience with adoption or foster care.

Not Ready - Preparing for adoption is a process that involves classes and a home study; as well as emotional and financial readiness.

Finances - The cost of adoption from foster care is much less than a private or international adoption but many do not realize this. Subsidies and tax deductions are also available to mitigate costs for foster care adoption.

Spouse says "no" - Both partners need to be prepared; extended family support should also be considered

Age - There is a misconception that adopting parents need to be young. Older parents are experienced parents.

Think child have issues they cannot handle - Children adopted from foster care are often referred to as "special needs" children due to the disruptions they have been challenged with at such a young age. All medical and behavioral issues are disclosed when a family is identified as a potential adoptive placement; and this is a point when a family can decide to proceed or not in the process.

Want a newborn - Newborns are rare in the foster care system as many are placed immediately with relatives.

Both foster care and adoption involve taking care of a child or children who are not biologically yours. A foster child may have special needs due to abuse, neglect or whatever issue led to him being removed from his parents' home. Older children placed for adoption may have the same issues. Those who are interested in becoming foster parents or adopting a child from foster care typically take the same training classes so they're prepared to meet these challenges.

Sources of Adoption Information

(descending order of %'s Numbers are the same for all families – looking into adoption or not)

Majority get information from Family and Friends

- TV
 - Local adoption agencies
 - Internet searches
 - Child Welfare offices
 - Newspapers
 - Internet News sites
 - Social media
 - Community groups
 - Churches
 - Radio
- Surprisingly 25% responded they have no source of adoption information

Perceptions of Why Children are in Foster Care

- Victims of pain and suffering
- Neglect and abuse
- Parents Drug/Alcohol problems
- Abandonment
- Incarcerated parents
- Mentally abused by parents
- Death of care giver
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Parents Illness/poor health
- Children are delinquents
- Deportation of parents

60% believe all children are adoptable

Perceived Factors Impacting "Adoptability" (Positive to Negative factors)

- Under age 3
- Caucasian
- Hispanic
- African American
- Part of a sibling group
- In foster care for more than one year

Self identified as LGBTQ

- Over age 12
- Physical Disability
- Drug exposure in utero
- Has a Mental Disability
- Diagnosed with behavioral issues

Perceived Barriers

(Opinion shared by those considering adoption and those who are not)

- Trust and bonding issues 45%
- Problems with behavior and self control 40%
- Problems with learning or school 33%
- Health and physical problems 22%

60% of American feel “society” should be doing more to encourage foster care adoption

WE ARE THAT SOCIETY!



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