



## Debunking the Myths: The Facts about Foster Care Adoption

**MYTH:** There are not enough loving families available who want to adopt children from foster care.

**FACT:** A national survey commissioned by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and conducted by Harris Interactive in 2007 reveals that 48 million Americans have considered adoption from foster care – more so than any other form of adoption, including private adoption of an infant or international adoption.

The research indicates that there are many families that are interested in foster care adoption but that more needs to be done to find ways to connect these families with waiting children. Through National Adoption Day, the Coalition puts a national spotlight on the 129,000 waiting children in foster care in the hope that more people will take steps to adopt.

**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 stipulates 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:** Adopting a child from foster care is expensive.

**FACT:** Actually, adopting children from foster care can be virtually free. Many agencies do not charge for the services they provide to families who are adopting a child from foster care. In addition, 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. Congress has also made federal tax credits available for foster care adoptions to help offset required fees, court costs, legal and travel expenses. In 2007, the maximum federal tax credit for qualifying expenses was \$11,390. Benefits such as these are enabling more families to adopt children from foster care into their homes.

**MYTH:** Adoptive parents must be a modern 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 (Nearly one-third of adoptions from foster care are by single parents). In fact, families are as diverse as the children who are available for adoption. Patience, a good sense of humor, a love of children and the commitment to be a good parent are the most important characteristics.

**MYTH:** All children in foster care 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, they need the nurturing support only a permanent family can provide. Many children



in foster care are in the “system” because their birth parents weren’t protective and nurturing caretakers—not because the children did anything wrong or because there is something wrong with them.

**MYTH:** State agencies may withhold information about a child’s past in order to get that child placed with a family.

**FACT:** State agencies are legally required to provide full, factual information about a child to any potential adoptive parents. Agencies have an invested interest in ensuring that parents have a positive experience with foster care adoption so they will continue to adopt and recommend others do the same. For children who have physical, emotional or behavioral problems, agencies seek to provide the most comprehensive post-adoptive services available to help the children transition into their new homes.

**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. Children in foster care—just like all children—have enormous potential to thrive given love, patience and a stable environment. Just ask former U.S. Senator Ben “Nighthorse” Campbell or Minnesota Viking Dante Culpepper. They were both 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.org](http://www.NationalAdoptionDay.org) or simply call 1-800-ASK-DTFA.