Adopting US Kids — Myths and Realities

Are you considering adopting a child who is in foster care? Children of all ages need loving homes, but unfortunately, there are many misconceptions about adopting a child who is in foster care. These “Myths versus Realities” should help dispel those common misconceptions. To learn more about adopting a child who’s waiting for a family right now, please contact WACAP.

Myth: A birth parent can come to take an adopted child back.
Reality: Birth parents cannot get custody back of a child after their parental rights are terminated, and after that happens, very few birth parents ever reappear. Some families choose to adopt a child with ongoing birth relative relationships when the arrangement is considered beneficial and healthy for all involved.

Myth: Children enter foster care because they committed a crime or are bad.
Reality: Children in foster care are regular children who, through no fault of their own, needed to be removed from their families due to abusive or neglectful situations. You can watch this video to hear real children in foster care share their story. (“The Road to Adoption and Foster Care” by Adopt US Kids; 2 hours).

Myth: Foster care adoption may cost less than private infant or international adoption, but it’s still expensive.
Reality: While there may be some costs up front, most families find foster care adoption expenses are fully reimbursed through foster care payments and the adoption tax credit. You’ll find details about costs for families who work with WACAP on our US Kids page.

Myth: All children in foster care have “special needs” with a physical, mental or emotional handicap.
Reality: Many children have only entered the child welfare system because their birth parents were not protective and nurturing caregivers, not because they did anything wrong or because there’s something wrong with them. In the adoption community, the term “special needs” may simply mean the child is older, a minority or part of a sibling group. See this helpful article to understand more about the type of kids in foster care who wait to be adopted.

Myth: You must be married to adopt.
Reality: You don’t need to be married to adopt. Single parents provide loving, stable homes for children, and social workers responsible for selecting adoptive parents for children in foster care do select single parents.

Myth: Non-traditional couples cannot adopt.
Reality: In fact, most states do not allow discrimination in adoption. Most state governments WACAP has worked with in recent years consider and select non-traditional parents for children in foster care.

Nearly 81.5 million Americans have considered adopting a child. If just one in 500 of these adults adopted, every waiting child in foster care would have a permanent family.

References and Resources:
- Adopt US Kids
- Child Welfare Information Gateway
- Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
- Adopt a Child with Special Needs
- Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System: Department of Health & Human Services