

Frequently Asked Questions for Prospective Adoptive Families

What is National Adoption Month?

National Adoption Month is a time to advance awareness about the need for adoptive families for children waiting in the U.S. foster care system. In 2013, there were approximately 101,840 children and youth in foster care needing the permanency, stability, and security of a loving family.¹ An initiative of the Children's Bureau, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb>, in partnership with Child Welfare Information Gateway, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>, and AdoptUSKids, <http://adoptuskids.org/>, the National Adoption Month website, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/>, provides tools, tips, and resources for professionals, families, and communities.

This year's initiative, "We Never Outgrow the Need for Family," spotlights older youth in foster care who typically wait the longest to find permanency within a family. Adolescence is a complex and challenging time; and young people need the guidance, support, and love of a family as they face the complicated responsibilities and decisions of their emerging adulthood.

Who can become an adoptive parent?

People from many different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and family structures may meet the qualifications to adopt and be great parents. Welcoming a foster youth into your home can be profoundly rewarding for every family member. Prospective adoptive parents of older youth will benefit from exploring the developmental stages of adolescents, including how trauma, loss, and resiliency may affect a young person, and the important ways that adoptive parents can support a youth's successful transition to adulthood. The National Adoption Month website offers a wide range of materials that will assist you in exploring adoption starting with links to State agencies, photo listings, informational articles, and an overview of opportunities for assistance and support at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam-2015/families-youth/>.

How do I know that adopting an older youth is the right choice for me?

As a prospective adoptive parent, there are many ways to explore the specific needs of older youth and ways to support their transition to adulthood. Understanding laws and policies in your state and accessing quality support services are critical aspects of adoption success. Support groups with other adoptive families of older youth can also be a valuable way to learn from other adoptive parents and gain insight into addressing common struggles. State by state contact information for adoptive parent support groups can be found in the National Foster Care and Adoption Directory, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/nfcad/>. Most states also have Foster Care and Adoption Associations, https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspROL&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=32, that offer information and assistance on adoption.

Visit The Child Welfare Information Gateway's video gallery to read stories of other adoptive families at: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam-2015/video/>.

Can I adopt a youth from a different state?

Yes, families often adopt children and youth from other states. All prospective adoptive parents must obtain a home study and follow their state's adoption laws. The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children must be involved any time a child is moved from one state to another for the purpose of adoption. As state laws vary, you

¹ Children's Bureau. (2014). *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2013 estimates as of July 2014, No. 21*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport21.pdf>.

will want to familiarize yourself with the laws, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/adoption/>, in your State regarding adoption or contact your State's adoption hotline at: https://www.childwelfare.gov/organizations/?CWIGFunctionsaction=rols:main.dspROL&rolType=Custom&RS_ID=12.

What will it cost to adopt?

As a prospective adoptive parent, you may be concerned about the costs of adopting. In a public child welfare agency, adoption fees are often very low or even waived so final costs to parents are minimal. In most cases, youth from foster care are eligible for government subsidy payments (often called adoption assistance), Supplemental Security Income, and/or Medicaid coverage. You may find more information in the articles *Costs of Adopting*, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/s-cost/>, and *Adoption Assistance for Children Adopted From Foster Care*, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-subsid/>.

What support services are available to me before and after I adopt?

Public child welfare adoption agencies typically provide a broad range of services to prospective and adoptive parents. Pre- and postadoption services help parents learn about adoption and the impact it has on children and families. Preadoption orientations and trainings offer participants an opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and learn about children and youth's specific needs, including how adverse childhood experiences can effect family integration. State agencies offer specific information about the availability of adoption assistance and sources of adoption supports and services. The National Adoption Month website provides an overview of the different forms of assistance and supports, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam-2015/families-youth/prospective-families/assistance/>, available to prospective and adoptive families.