

Wait No More®

.....
Finding Families for
Pennsylvania's Waiting Kids



Next Steps

Today: Please utilize the information on the following pages of this guide and your opportunity to interact directly with those organizations today to select the agency that seems best for your family.

Next Steps:

- Visit the agency booths
- Determine which agency you prefer to work with
- **Fill out and turn in the green initiation form**
- Obtain any relevant paperwork
- Find out their orientation and training schedule

If you are planning to further explore adoption, please fill out the green initiation form and place it in the marked boxes throughout the church or hand it to one of our event volunteers.

It is important to do this even if you are not sure which agency you prefer to work with yet.

In the Future: Each of the adoption agencies and ministries listed in this attendee guide has specifically identified the next step for an interested family to take as you explore your role in meeting the needs of a waiting child.

For more information on any of the orientations, trainings, or other events listed on the pages that follow, please contact the agency hosting the particular event. Thank you again for your willingness to help Pennsylvania's waiting kids!

Next Steps:

- Continue to pray about how God will use you and His specific plan for your family
- Tell someone you trust about how God is leading you and the steps you are taking
- If you have not heard from an agency after three weeks, contact the agency you listed on your initiation form or Focus on the Family
- Be proactive about any paperwork, training or requirements

Tips on How to Choose an Adoption Agency¹

Adoption is a life long process for parents and children, and it is important to choose an agency that can help you assess your readiness to adopt and has the expertise to help you through the process. Child placement agencies must meet the licensing standards for Child Placement Agencies to provide adoption services in Pennsylvania. A personal evaluation prior to selection of an agency will generally lead to positive results for families. The following points may be helpful in choosing an agency:

1. Learn about adoption and the issues involved

- Read books and articles on adoption
- **Attend an adoptive parents' group**
- Talk to other adoptive parents
- Attend agency orientation and information meetings

2. Determine the type of child you are interested in adopting

- Infant or older child
- Domestic or International
- Special needs (emotional problems, mental or physical handicaps) or minimal challenges

3. Contact the agencies and learn about their programs

- Ask about any requirements/restrictions on adoptive parents such as length of marriage, age, etc.
- Ask for brochures on their program
- Attend orientation/information meetings

4. Evaluate the agency's program (some good questions to ask)

- **Ask about the steps in the agency's process such as orientation, application, study, parenting classes and the estimated time frames involved. Make a list of special questions you want answered.**
- Make sure the agency is licensed; ask when the agency was last visited by a representative from the licensing unit.
- Find out if complaints have been filed against the agency and if so, how they were resolved.
- **Find out the staff's education, background and experience in adoption.**
- Ask about the services the agency gives to birth parents and evaluate the completeness and sensitivity of this work.
- Learn the costs involved for the screening, orientation meeting, home study, supervisory visits, court reports, educational groups, services to and expenses in connection with birth parents in designated adoptions, extra work in connection with interstate placement and other possible expenses. Obtain written detailed information on all costs involved including the agency's policy on refunds.
- Ask about any support groups the agency facilitates and any post finalization services they might offer.
- If possible, talk to other adoptive parents about their experience with the agency.

5. After you have chosen the agency

- **Keep in regular contact with the agency but be realistic with the staff's time.**
- If you have a complaint or are dissatisfied, talk honestly to the person with whom you are working and, if this is unsatisfactory, then talk to the director.

¹ Adapted from Colorado Department of Human Services/Division of Child Welfare "Tips for Selecting An Adoption Agency"

Agency Overview



Bair Foundation

Service Area: Statewide; offices in Altoona, Harrisburg, Erie, York, Pittsburgh, New Wilmington and Butler.

The Bair Foundation is a non-profit ministry that has cared for children and teens since 1967. The Bair Foundation provides foster care, adoption, and family services. Our mission is to provide Christ-centered quality care and services dedicated to the treatment, restoration, and empowerment of children, youth, and families.

Although foster care is our primary program, our mission is to restore and strengthen the family through a number of services. Through foster care and kinship care, children and teens are able to live in a safe, loving, and stable home. In addition to our foster care services, The Bair Foundation offers a variety of adoption related services to help children and teens move toward permanency.

Contact Information:

Christy Hajjar—Intake Coordinator

615 Howard Avenue, Suite 102

Altoona, PA 16601

Phone: 814.941.5382

Email: chajjar@bair.org

Website: www.bair.org

Notes: _____

Upcoming Orientation Dates:

Thursday, September 29—5:00pm

Thursday, October 27—5:00pm

Thursday, November 10—5:00pm

Please contact our office for further information about trainings and events.

Agency Overview



Bethanna

Service Area: Lancaster and within a one hour radius, including parts of York, Dauphin, Lebanon, Berks and Chester counties; Philadelphia and surrounding areas including Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware counties.

Bethanna's mission as a Christian organization is to provide the highest quality system of care for children and families in order to ensure safety, restore emotional wellness, and build family stability. As a nonprofit agency, we are devoted to meeting the needs of children and their families. Each year, more than 2,000 children are served through our programs.

As an agency, we offer a range of services including kinship care, foster care, adoption, behavioral/mental health and Community Umbrella Agency (Philadelphia only.) Resource parents are needed for children in foster care. Many of the children and families Bethanna serves have experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Families have been disrupted by substance abuse, domestic violence, and other crises. Every child and family needs committed support, love, and compassion.

Contact Information:

Christine Walter—Recruitment Specialist & Permanency Worker

301 N Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
Phone: 800.989.1926; 717.299.1926

Email: cwalter@bethanna.org
Website: www.bethanna.org

Notes: _____

Upcoming Meetings & Trainings:

Lancaster:

- Thursday, October 13—Information Night
- Thursday, November 10—Information Night
- Thursday, December 8—Information Night
- Saturday, October 1 & 22—Pre-service Training (must attend both sessions)

Philadelphia:

To be determined

Agency Overview



Bethany Christian Services of Central PA

Service Area: covers 34 counties in the center of PA; also have branches for Eastern and Western regions

Bethany Christian Services' mission is *to demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of children and families through quality social services.*

God loves children and so do we. Every child deserves a loving family—that's where children thrive best—but so many children don't have this blessing. At Bethany, we believe a loving family is a simple, proven, lasting answer to a child's needs. Bethany is committed to bringing families together and keeping families together through quality social services.

Our services include adoption, foster care, and pregnancy counseling. We also understand that adoption is a lifelong journey and we provide continued support with our post adoption services and counseling. The work we do equips families to be the answer for children in need—as Christ intended. Bethany Christian Services is located in 36 states and works in many countries around the world.

Contact Information:

Melissa Ortiz—Clinical Supervisor

1681 Crown Ave
Lancaster, PA 17601
Phone: 717.399.3213

Email: mortiz@bethany.org
Website: www.bethany.org

Notes: _____

Upcoming Orientation Meetings:

Harrisburg Office:

Thursday, October 6—6:00-9:00pm
Thursday, November 3—6:00-9:00pm

Lancaster Office:

Tuesday, October 4—6:00-9:00pm
Tuesday, November 1—6:00-9:00pm

State College Office:

Wednesday, October 5—6:00-8:00pm
Wednesday, November 2—6:00-8:00pm

Agency Overview



Catholic Charities Adoption Services & Specialized Foster Care

Service Area: Adams, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, Union and York counties

Catholic Charities Adoption Services is a non-profit agency serving the Diocese of Harrisburg, which includes 15 counties in central Pennsylvania. Since 1938, we've assisted birthparents, adoptive families and children with adoptions that meet the needs of all three groups.

Catholic Charities Specialized Foster Care provides temporary, safe, nurturing homes for children who have been separated from their families by the court. If a child cannot be returned home, we develop a plan for permanent placement. For children who cannot live at home or with relatives, our staff helps match available families with children in need.

We believe that every child is entitled to unconditional love and acceptance. We are licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare and accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children.

Contact Information:

Kelly Bolton—Director
939 East Park Drive, Suite 103
Harrisburg, PA 17110
Phone: 717.564.7115

Email: kbolton@cchbg.org
Website: www.cchbg.org

Notes: _____

Please give us a call for upcoming events, training, meetings, etc.

Agency Overview



Centre County Children & Youth Services Foster Care Program

Service Area: Centre County

Many children, ages from birth to 21 years of age, are currently in the custody of Centre County Children and Youth Services (CYS). These children need safe, stable, loving resource homes. CYS explores permanency for our children from beginning of placement. While working on reunification with birth parents, each child also has a formal concurrent goal. This goal is often adoption or legal custodianship.

We are seeking resource families who are willing to aid in the reunification process, and are willing to provide permanency to the children placed in their home if necessary. There are also several children/youth in our custody who are in need of a forever family. In 2015, 92% of the children adopted from Centre County CYS were adopted by Centre County Foster Parents. If you reside in Centre County and have room in your heart and room in your home, please consider becoming a Centre County foster parent. (Please note: We are a foster care agency. Our **foster parents do adopt the children in our custody, but we are "foster care until it's not"**. If our families adopt a child placed in their home we refer and pay for a home study to be completed through the SWAN system.)

Contact Information:

Robin Cain—Foster Home Specialist
Julie Heverly—Foster Home Recruiter
420 Holmes Street
Bellefonte, PA 16823
Phone: 814.355.6755

Email: jheverly@fics1988.com
htressler@fics1988.com
Website: www.centrecountypa.gov

Notes: _____

Upcoming Meetings & Trainings:

Foster Parent training begins September, 2016

Agency Overview



Professional Family Care Services

Service Area: Cambria, Bedford, Blair, Fayette, Indiana, Somerset, and Westmoreland counties

Professional Family Care Services carefully screens foster parent applicants and provides special foster parent training before placing children. We take great care in matching children with an appropriate foster family, and we provide ongoing support to families throughout the entire time children are in their care.

Children may remain with their foster family for a period of weeks or years. If a child cannot be reunited with their birth family, foster parents sometimes adopt the children placed in their home. We can help with that process.

Our adoption services are designed to help children find a permanent family that they can call their own. We also help families interested in adopting a child gain a clear understanding of the adoption process. Through post-permanency services we can help families locate a support group as well as advocacy and respite services to ensure success as a permanent family.

Contact Information:

Connie Bridges

937 Menoher Blvd
Johnstown, PA 15905
Phone: 814.255.9559, x101

Email: cbridges@pfcs.org
Website: www.pfcs.org

Notes: _____

Upcoming Events:

Saturday, September 17—12:00-3:00pm, **Pumpkin Patch Match, Faranda’s Farm, 1171 Penn Ave, Hollsopple, PA 15935.** (Between Johnstown and Somerset, approximately 15 miles from the Somerset exit 110 on the PA Turnpike)

Admission to the event is free, but families and agencies must register by contacting Allie Kirsch at (814)255-9559 x 106 or akirsch@pfcs.org.

Agency Overview



Salvation Army Children's Services

Service Area: Lehigh Valley and Southeastern PA

Salvation Army Children's Services is a foster and adoption agency providing training for foster and adoptive families, home studies, foster care and caseworker support for foster families, matching adoption services through SWAN and adoption support services.

Contact Information:

Julie Farnsworth—Resource Specialist

425 Allentown Drive
Allentown, PA 18109
Phone: 610.821.7706

Email: julie.farnsworth@use.salvationarmy.org

Website: www.care4kids.net

Notes: _____

Upcoming Meetings & Trainings:

Tuesday, September 20—Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, 6:00-7:30pm

Thursday, September 22—Orientation for prospective foster/adoptive families, 5:30-7:30pm

Saturday, October 15—TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) Connecting Principles, 9:00am-3:00pm

Tuesday, October 25—Impact of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs on Children, 6:00-7:30pm

Ministry & Organization Overview



Centre County Orphan Care Alliance

Service Area: Centre County

Centre County Orphan Care Alliance is made up of representatives from several congregations in Centre County. It is our mission to:

- Ensure that every Christian in Centre County is aware of the plight of the fatherless locally and globally
- Motivate every believer in Centre County to engage in their responsibility to care for the fatherless
- Provide the resources to help create well-equipped Christian homes for every fatherless child in Centre County

Here are a few ways that we are currently living out this mission:

- James 1:27 team that connects hundreds of Christians in Centre County to specific needs of foster and adoptive families
- Coffee Talk Care Group for foster and adoptive moms that meets monthly
- Orphan Sunday event held annually
- Serves as a community resource for those investigating fostering, adopting and mentoring

Our desire is to have a representative from all 175 Centre County Churches. We'd love to have your church join the Alliance!

Contact Information:

Hillary Haris—Director of Outreach

201 Harvest Fields Drive
Boalsburg, PA 16827
Phone: 814.321.3199

Email: orphan.care@ccoca.org

Notes: _____

Upcoming Events:

Saturday, September 24, October 22, November 19—Coffee Talk Care Group, 8:30-10:00am, North Atherton Panera in State College

Please join this sweet group of ladies as we share the joys and struggles of this unique journey!

Sunday, November 13—Orphan Sunday, 6:00pm, State College Assembly of God Church

Join us for this event as we seek to share resources with those who are looking for information on fostering, adopting, and mentoring and to encourage those who are already embracing one of these callings. There will be speakers, panel discussions, and agency and organization resources available.

Ministry & Organization Overview



The Individual & Family CHOICES Program **Service Area:** Central PA

CHOICES is a trauma informed mental health center that attempts to be holistic in nature. As such we employ cutting edge empirically supported treatment strategies developed for individuals experiencing interpersonal, developmental, medical and other types of trauma. We have staff formally trained in Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR), Neurofeedback, Internal Family Systems Psychotherapy, Attachment Focused Family Therapy and Clinical Hypnosis. We also utilize Expressive Therapies as well as CBT and Emotion Focused Strategies.

We see clients in the modalities of individual, family and group psychotherapy on a weekly outpatient basis but we also have a Trauma Intensive Program where an individual or a family comes for the whole day to our center for two weeks.

The CHOICES' Staff have special places in their hearts for children who have been traumatized and removed from their biological families for their own protection and safety. We assist children in these circumstances in resolving early trauma and safely attaching to their new adoptive parents. We do this in sensitive, healing ways that are never coercive and always compassionate and safe.

Contact Information:

Lois A. Ehrmann—PhD, LPC, NCC/Owner/Founder/Executive Director

2214 North Atherton Street, Suite 4

Email: office.choices@gmail.com

State College, PA 16803

Website: www.individualandfamilychoices.com

Phone: 814.237.0567

Notes: _____



Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network (SWAN)

Service Area: All 67 counties

The Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) addresses barriers to permanency for children involving state, county and private agencies coordinating the delivery of permanency-related services for children and post-permanency services to families.

Contact Information:

Phone: 800.585.SWAN

Website: www.adoptpakids.org; www.diakon-swan.org

Notes: _____

How Will Adoption and Foster Care Impact my Children?

By Jennifer Isaac

<http://thankfulmoms.com/adoption/adoption-and-foster-care/>

One of the questions many parents ask when they begin to consider adoption for their family is “what impact will it have on our children?”

When a family already has children in the home and then begins the process of adoption or foster care, they tend to get some routine guidelines from social workers:

- **Don't disrupt birth order** – only bring home children younger than those already in the home.
- **Don't “twin” one of your children by fostering a child of the same age.**
- **Don't adopt a child less than a year after giving birth to a child or within a year of a previous child's adoption.**
- Consider carefully how many children you can parent with medical needs.

I used to disagree with those guidelines. That was back when I was operating in a sort of “love is all you need” mentality, and I thought these were arbitrary limits on the children a family could love. Now while I realize that there are many successful stories where these guidelines haven't been followed in individual families' circumstances, I think there is much wisdom in considering these issues. Adoption and foster care do impact your children who are “already home.” There are many positive impacts; but the plain truth is, it can be hard – on parents, on kids, on everyone. Looking back at our adoptions from nine years down the road, I can begin to make out the shape of the ways those first few years impacted our older kids. Three rise to the top of the list...

1 – **We thought we would avoid the stresses of anyone losing their “place” in our family when we kept birth order and adopted kids younger than our biological children.**

What we know now is that our oldest daughter very much lost her place when we brought home our second daughter, even though they were nearly four years apart in age. Not only was there a new daughter in the family, she was also young, adorable, medically fragile, and different. I remember standing at a checkout line in those early months with my two girls while the cashier went on about how cute our new daughter was, and I reflexively put my arms around both girls and said something like “yes – they are both so beautiful!” But my older daughter didn't stand out like the small, African girl with the big brown eyes in the middle of the peach family, and she still carries the displacement of that time. It will always be a part of her story. It doesn't mean that her story took a wrong turn; because if there is one thing I am learning, it is that suffering is important and useful.

2 – **We didn't “twin” our children, but...**

We do have three kids who are all within about two years of age of each other – one biological and two adopted. So, without meaning to, we ended up with some odd version of triplets. There are times when these three are a lovely, well-oiled unit, complementing each others' strengths. And there are other times when they are not. Those times are heightened by the fact that the three of them have drastically different abilities and disabilities, strengths and weaknesses. This was a challenge I didn't anticipate, and I realize that because we kept to the “rule” of not adopting children of the same age, I falsely expected that this dynamic of competitiveness, vying for position, and squabbles over control wouldn't happen in our home. But it does.

3 – When we adopted and fostered children with special needs, our other children developed special needs of their own.

Living with a sibling who has frequent and demanding behaviors stemming from his trauma background; a child who is hospitalized multiple times a year, taking mom away with her; frightening rages and tantrums; children who inevitably require huge amounts of mom's time as we take on the intense level of parenting required for kids from trauma backgrounds – these all trigger trauma and need in our first children. Sometimes the very things that will bring one child forward set another child back. Secondary trauma takes hold in our home at times.

How Will Adoption and Foster Care Impact my Children?

I trust that God is writing our children's stories – each one of them – and I trust that He will redeem the suffering that they have encountered through our family's story. But I don't deny the fact that there is a level of suffering there because we chose adoption and foster care. So I find myself often reflecting on the topic of suffering. James tells us that we should count it joy when we encounter trials. Somehow, I find this easier to think of in regard to myself. I can understand intellectually, and I can see experientially that God uses trials in my life to shape me (so, so slowly) into someone more like Him.

But I admit that I still find this very hard to understand in regard to my children. The bottom line is that my children sometimes suffer because we chose a path of adoption and foster care. Some days, I feel the sadness of knowing that we opened a door to hardship in the lives of our kids. While I am actively trying to accept and welcome suffering in my own life, deep down, I wish I didn't have to welcome it into my children's lives too.

But we do – we open the door to hard things for our family. But we also open the door to beautiful experiences in our children's lives.

My children have regular opportunities to welcome vulnerable people into their home and their lives. This means sharing bedrooms, sharing belongings, sharing parents, sharing time. It means sometimes sacrificing their own needs to meet the needs of someone else. These could be looked at as things that have "taken away" from my kids. But my children have gained something immeasurable and not easily attained. At young ages, they have had daily practice in the virtue of putting others first. While it hasn't always been easy for them, and while we as parents haven't always navigated it all with perfect grace, I can see this take hold and grow in them. As a mother, I can list the ways I believe that the open door of adoption and foster care have benefited my children.

- They have gained an ability to see into people's circumstances and to practice empathy, compassion, and service.**
- It has given them flexibility. They have certainly learned that the world does not revolve around them.**
- They continually witness and practice real world skills. They are learning how to navigate conflict, how to contribute to calming stressful situations, how to work with professionals and care providers, how to seek resources and assistance, and how to advocate for themselves and for others.**
- They see proof every day they can live missionally – not just on mission trips or weekend service projects – but in the very fabric of their everyday family life.**

As I thought about this topic and what I see growing in my children, I asked each of them to share with me one positive way that they think adoption and foster care have impacted their own life...

"Adoption and foster care have helped me to see people's hardships and understand them more than I would have before." (Mia, 17)

"Adoption and foster care have probably helped me build character traits like patience and compassion." (Noah, 15)

"Foster care gives you a chance to play with somebody new. It has also made me very good at taking care of babies and little children." (Jaso, 13)

"Knowing kids who have had problems gives me a chance to help teach them things that will help them." (Avi, 12)

Hearing their words gave me joy. Aren't these the very things we want to see in our children? I don't know how else I might see understanding, compassion, patience, or caretaking grow in my children if I shielded them from the opportunities to practice them. May I not let my instinct to protect my children from difficulty instead lead me to stand in the way of what God purposed to do in each of them when He called our entire family to serve Him through adoption and foster care!

Eight Steps to Adoption²

Outlined below is general information to help you understand the steps involved in adopting a child(ren).

Agency Selection

Pennsylvania has numerous agencies licensed to provide quality adoption services. You may check the agency list to find agencies in your local area.

Application Process

After selecting an agency, you will be invited to complete an application to begin the adoption process. Most applications will gather information about your family composition and background as well as the characteristics of the child(ren) that you would like to adopt. Adoption agencies may invite you to attend an orientation session before completing your application. The orientation process describes realistic expectations of adopting a child from the foster care system.

Completing the Family Profile

The Family Profile is a document created from a series of meetings between you and an adoption professional. These meetings will give you an opportunity to gain better insight into the challenges of adopting a child from the foster care system and examine how your family may respond. Your family must be approved by an adoption agency before the matching process can begin.

Matching Process

The approved Family Profile is used by the agency to share information about your family with agencies responsible for the waiting children. We recommend that families with an approved Family Profile register on the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE). All families who have family profiles provided by the Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network (SWAN) are registered by the agency that completes the family profile. PAE routinely reviews the characteristics of families and children and notifies their agencies when a suggested match is identified. Agencies also try to match children and families in their local recruitment efforts.

Pre-Placement Visit

When you have been tentatively selected by a county agency to adopt a child, you will get a chance to meet the child and spend time together to determine if the suggested match is a good one for both your family and the child.

Placement

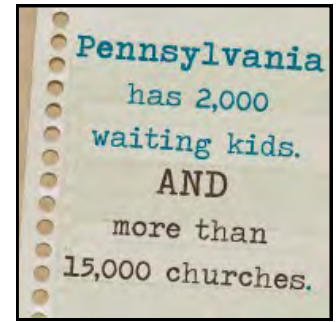
This is the point when the child moves into a pre-adoptive family's home.

Placement Supervision

Agencies normally plan a six month period after placement for the child and family to begin to build a stable relationship before finalizing the adoption. During that time, an adoption worker will visit regularly with the family to offer support and assistance.

Adoption Finalization

When the placement continues to be positive, a request is submitted to the court for a hearing. A number of legal obligations must be addressed such as a verification that the child is legally free for adoption, the agency with custody will consent to the adoption, etc. At the hearing, the judge reviews information about the child and family and may approve the adoption.



Definition of Terms³

Abuse: harm inflicted on a person through physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual means; may cause victim to develop emotional or behavioral problems, some of which may not appear until later in life. Help from an experienced counselor or therapist may be needed to work through abuse issues.

Adoption: a legal process in which parental rights of a child are granted to adoptive parents.

Adoption Certificate/Decree: also known as the Certificate of Adoption, this is the document that is signed by the presiding Judge upon finalization of the adoption. This official document allows for a new birth certificate to be issued for the adopted child by the appropriate authority. **This new birth certificate will reflect the child's new information (name, adoptive parents, etc.)** and will replace the original birth certificate.

Caseworker/Social Worker: individuals that assist adoptive parents with their adoption process. They are responsible for many things throughout the process such as completing home studies and counseling.

Closed/Confidential Adoption: an adoption in which neither the adoptive parents nor the birthparents have any identifying information regarding each other.

Disruption: for whatever reason an adoption has not become final, even though the adoptive parents were identified as the parents to adopt the child and the child may have even been placed in their home for a period of time.

Dissolution: an overturning or termination of an adoption after it has become legal.

Finalization: the stage in the adoption process when the court awards parental rights to the adoptive parents.

Foster Parents: state-licensed adults who provide a temporary home for children in state custody whose birth parents are unable to care for them.

Home Study: the in-depth review prospective adoptive parents must go through to be able to legally adopt. **A home study typically includes evaluations of the adoptive parents' relationship,** inspections of their residence, parenting ideals, medical history, employment verification, financial status, and criminal background checks.

Legally Free: a child whose birth parents' rights have been legally terminated or relinquished so that the child is free to be adopted by another family.

Legal-risk Adoption: Is the placement of a child in an adoptive home, when birth parents' rights have not yet been voluntarily or involuntarily terminated.

Matching: the process of combining the best interest of the child with qualified adoptive parents.

Open Adoption: birthparents and adoptive parents in the process of an adoption are given information that could be used to identify them.

³ All information adapted from <http://www.adoptachild.org/common-adoption-terms>

Definition of Terms³

Parental Rights: all legal rights and corresponding legal obligations that come with being the legal parent of a child.

Placement: describes the point in time when the child goes to live with his/her legal adoptive parents.

Post-Placement Supervision: upon placement, a caseworker will be assigned to complete post-placement supervision of the adoptive family. The caseworker will visit the home several times during a set period of time (according to state requirements) to determine if adoption of the child was in the "best interests of the child."

Private agency: An agency licensed by the government in whose jurisdiction the agency operates. Private agencies generally operate on a fee for service basis.

Public Agency: An agency funded by the government in whose jurisdiction they operate. Most services provided by public agencies are provided with no cost, but for some services there may be charges.

Relinquishment: when a birthparent voluntarily forfeits his or her parental rights to a child. The parental rights are typically transferred to an agency, rather than directly to the new adoptive parents.

Respite Care: childcare and other services designed to give parents temporary relief from their responsibilities as care givers.

Special Needs Adoption: an adoption where it is known or suspected that the child may have a disability of some sort; may also be used when the child/children are hard to place (i.e.: sibling set, older kids, etc.).

Termination of Parental Rights: when birthparents sign a consent form to terminate parental rights to their child. This ends all legal rights and responsibilities of the birthparents for that child; can also be mandated by the court system in the case of children and youth in foster care.

Therapeutic Foster Home: a foster home where the parent or parents have received special training in dealing with a wide variety of children with special needs. Parents in therapeutic homes are also supervised and assisted more than parents in regular foster homes.

Waiting Children: children in the care of the public child welfare system (children and youth in foster care) who cannot return to their birth homes and need permanent, loving families to help them grow up safe and secure.

³ All information adapted from <http://www.adoptachild.org/common-adoption-terms>

Common Myths About Adoption⁴

Myth: There are no orphans in the United States.

Reality: There are more than 100,000 children in U.S. foster care who are legally free and currently waiting for an adoptive home.

Myth: It's easier and faster to adopt internationally than from U.S. foster care.

Reality: New regulations governing international adoptions have made adoption from other countries more challenging for U.S. citizens. In most cases, it takes roughly a year to adopt a child from the U.S. foster care system. The average time it took to complete an international adoption in 2011 ranged from 79 days to almost two years.

In addition, most adoptions from U.S. foster care are free and any minimal costs associated with them are often reimbursable. For international adoptions in 2010, service providers charged anywhere between \$0 to \$64,357, with half charging less than \$26,559.

Myth: You have to have a lot of money and own a house to adopt from foster care.

Reality: You don't need to own your own home, be wealthy, have children already, or be a stay-at-home parent to adopt. Most adoptions from U.S. foster care are free and any minimal costs associated with them are often reimbursable. In addition, there are many different types of post-adoption resources, such as medical assistance and financial adoption assistance, based on the special needs of a child to help support and sustain adoptions from the U.S. foster care system.

Myth: All children in foster care have special needs and require special education.

Reality: Many children in foster care are regular children who unfortunately had to be removed from their families due to abuse or neglect. The term "special needs" simply refers to children who qualify for adoption assistance due to specific factors or conditions such as:

- Being an older child
- Having a particular racial or ethnic background
- Being part of a sibling group needing to be placed together as one unit
- Medical conditions
- Physical, mental or emotional handicaps

Myth: You're not allowed to adopt children you foster.

Reality: While slightly more than half of all children who enter foster care return to their birth families, there are still thousands of children who cannot return home. Of the 51,000 children in foster care adopted last year, 54 percent were adopted by their foster parents.

Myth: Only married couples with a stay-at-home parent can adopt children from foster care.

Reality: In most instances, a person's marital status, age or income do not automatically disqualify them from eligibility to adopt. You don't need to own your own home, have children already, be young, wealthy or a stay-at-home parent.

Myth: Each child has to have a room of their own.

Reality: Each child needs a bed of their own, not a room of their own. In addition, children of the opposite sex may share a room if they are under an age specified by the State (usually around 6 years old). In some instances, there may be child-to-square-foot requirements or behavioral concerns that will prevent children from being able to share a room.

4 All information adapted from <http://www.adoptuskids.org/for-families/how-to-adopt/common-myths-about-adoption>

Common Myths About Adoption⁴

Myth: You can't adopt if you're in the military.

Reality: Military families stationed overseas and within the U.S. are eligible to adopt children from the U.S. foster care system.

Myth: You have to be of child-bearing age to adopt.

Reality: Experienced parents and empty-nesters are encouraged to adopt. In most instances, you're eligible to adopt regardless of age, income or marital status.

Myth: Adopting or fostering a child who's been removed from the care of their birth parents is dangerous.

Reality: Children in foster care are regular children who, through no fault of their own, had to be removed from their families due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. As for a child in foster care having continued contact with their birth family, it will vary depending on the specifics of the case and the placement being considered for the child.

For adoptive placements, very few birth parents reappear after their parental rights have been legally terminated. In the instance where children have continued relationships with birth relatives, it's because the arrangement will be beneficial, safe and healthy for all involved.

For foster care placements, most children placed in your home will have regular, court-ordered visits with their birth parents. This is an important part of the reunification process and you play an important role by working with the child's caseworker to decide the location and time of the visits. The court decides whether the visits will be supervised.

Myth: Sibling relationships don't matter.

Reality: Placing siblings together is almost always the best thing for them after being separated from their birth parents. It helps provide continuity and protects them from suffering additional loss.

Myth: You can't adopt a child or sibling group from another state.

Reality: There are more than 100,000 children in U.S. foster care awaiting adoption. Families adopt children from outside their state every single month. Sometimes these adoptions can take a little longer because of the process involved with moving a child from one state to another. However, the wait is worth it in the end.

Myth: You have to be perfect to adopt a child from foster care.

Reality: You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent. There are thousands of children in foster care who would be happy to be part of your family. To a child in foster care, waiting to be adopted can feel like waiting for a miracle. You could be that miracle.

Myth: A birth parent or another relative can take an adopted child back.

Reality: Adoptions of children from U.S. foster care are legally binding agreements that do not occur until the rights of all parents have been legally terminated by a court of law. It's very rare that an adoption is challenged in court by a child's birth relative. More than 98 percent of legally completed adoptions remain intact.

⁴ All information adapted from <http://www.adoptuskids.org/for-families/how-to-adopt/common-myths-about-adoption>

Ten Questions for Parents Preparing to Adopt or Foster⁵

We believe it is critically important that parents who are preparing to adopt or foster a child must be honest and realistic about the journey and the challenges that lie ahead. Just as Jesus in Luke 14 challenged those who would follow him to “count the cost,” so too parents who respond to God’s call to adopt or foster must be willing to count the cost of the adoption journey and prepare to “lay down their lives” to love their child and help him or her become all that God intends.



The following questions are designed to help parents (and parents-to-be) begin to honestly assess the journey ahead...and what it will require. We encourage you to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider these questions. They are not meant to scare you or in any way discourage you from continuing on this amazing path. Instead, our desire is simply that these questions will point you toward the hope and help that you need to form a strong and lasting connection with your child as you faithfully follow God’s call in your life.

- 1. Are you willing to acknowledge and fully embrace your child’s history, including that which you know and that which you will likely never know?**
2. Are you willing to accept that your child has been affected by his/her history, possibly in profound ways, and as a result that you will need to parent your child in a way that exhibits true compassion and promotes connection and healing?
3. Are you willing to parent differently than how you were parented, how you have parented in the past, or how your friends parent their children? Are you willing to “un-learn” certain parenting strategies and approaches that may not be effective with your child, even if you have used these strategies and approaches successfully with your other children in the past?
4. Are you willing to educate yourself, your parents, family and friends on an ongoing basis in order to promote understanding of your child’s needs and how best to meet those needs?
5. Are you willing to be misunderstood, criticized and even judged by others who do not understand your child’s history, the impacts of that history and how you have been called to love and connect with your child in order to help him/her heal and become all that God intends?
- 6. Are you prepared to advocate for your child’s needs, including at school, church, in extracurricular settings and otherwise, in order to create predictability and promote environments that enable your child to feel safe and allow him/her to succeed?**
7. Are you willing to sacrifice your own convenience, expectations and desires in order to connect with your child and help him/her heal, even if that process is measured in years, not months?
- 8. Are you willing to fully embrace your child’s holistic needs, including his/her physical, emotional, relational and spiritual needs?**

⁵ All information taken from <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/ten-questions-for-parents-preparing-to-adopt-or-foster/>.

Ten Questions for Parents Preparing to Adopt or Foster⁵

9. Are you willing to seek ongoing support and maintain long-term connections with others who understand your journey and the challenges that you face? Are you willing to intentionally seek and accept help when you encounter challenges with your child that you are not equipped to adequately deal with?

10. Are you willing to acknowledge that you as a parent bring a great deal to the equation when it comes to how your child will attach and connect? Are you willing to honestly examine (on an ongoing basis) your motivations and expectations relating to your adoption journey? Are you willing to look at your own past (including your past losses and trauma, both big and small) and consider how your past may impact your interactions with your child? Are you willing to consistently examine your role as parent as you experience challenges and difficulties along the journey?

As you read through the above questions, you may have concluded that some of the questions **didn't apply to you and your situation. That may be the case to some extent, as every adoption and foster care experience is unique.** However, we encourage you to spend some time reading and talking with other experienced adoptive and foster parents about what you should realistically expect as you travel this journey. We find that parents sometimes start with less than accurate assumptions about how the adoption or foster care journey will unfold, and as a result they are more likely to form unrealistic expectations. We believe that these questions are helpful and instructive for all parents considering or pursuing adoption and foster care, and we hope that as you work through them they will lead you toward greater insight and understanding.

⁵ All information taken from <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/ten-questions-for-parents-preparing-to-adopt-or-foster/>.

Focus on the Family Support Resources

Wait No More

Kelly and John Rosati never expected to adopt four children from the U.S. foster care system. But God's plan for them turned out to be even more extraordinary than they could have planned. Follow Kelly and John in their amazing journey through the child welfare system. You'll be inspired by the story of how God brought their family together, and challenged by their honest and revealing look at the desperate need of children still waiting for families.



Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family

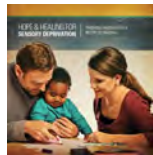
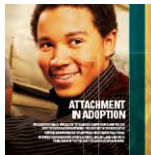
Adoption is a high calling from God, and the Christian home is primary soil for planting seeds of faith. But how will post-adoption challenges affect this growth? Packed with practical advice, ideas and resources, this distinctively Christian book is an important parenting resource that provides comprehensive, topical, Bible-based solutions for the inevitable challenges after adoption.

Wrapping Around Adoptive Families

There are many different ways to minister to God's orphan children and to the adoptive families that have welcomed these children home. This booklet makes it clear that struggling adoptive families need their church families to support them during times of trial



Additional Booklets: "Attachment in Adoption," "Hope and Healing for Sensory Deprivation," "Love and Loss in Foster Care," "Preparing for a Transracial Adoption," and "Hope and Healing Through Animal-Assisted Therapy."



The Drop Box

tells the story of South Korean Pastor Lee Jong-rak and his heroic efforts to embrace and protect the most vulnerable members of society. But *The Drop Box* is also a story of hope—a reminder that every human life is sacred and worthy of love. To order your copy of the DVD or to bring this film to your church, visit TheDropBoxFilm.com.



Free Resources: The Focus on the Family Broadcast is a half-hour daily dose of encouragement and advice for the family with Jim Daly and John Fuller. For free downloads of adoption-related shows

Counseling for Families in Need

Our staff is trained to help answer your specific questions, provide resources and pray with adoptive families. Families seeking someone to talk with can call 1-800-A-Family (232-6459) or contact our counseling help line directly for a consultation at 1-855-771-HELP.

as well as other valuable resources, visit www.iCareAboutOrphans.org/FreeResources

Special Thanks to...







ALL CHILDREN DESERVE THE LOVE AND SUPPORT OF A **FOREVER FAMILY.**


Focus on the Family's Adoption and Orphan Care Initiative™ exists to raise awareness and recruit families to adopt from foster care and to encourage churches to support those who do.

As a result of the collaborative efforts of Wait No More®, thousands of families have initiated the process of adoption.

LEARN HOW YOU CAN **MAKE AN IMPACT.**

 iCareAboutOrphans

 iCareAboutOrphans.org

 #WaitNoMore

Model used for illustrative purposes only.

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Wait No More[®] Initiation Form

Your Passport to Initiating the Process of Adopting from Foster Care*

| | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| Date | First Name(s) | Last Name |
| Contact Information | | |
| Address: | | City & State: |
| Zip: | County: | |
| Home Phone: | Cell Phone: | |
| Email address: | | |
| Best way and time of day to reach you: | | |
| Are you interested in a particular child? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | | |
| If yes, give the child's name: | | |
| If no, what type of child would be of interest to you? | | |
| Are you open to a sibling group? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | | |
| Number of children desired: | | |
| Age range you are interested in: | | |
| Race/ethnicity: | | |
| Gender Preferred: <input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Either | | |
| Please list the agency you prefer to work with: | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Preference | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can we contact you or your agency in a year to follow-up with your progress? | Signature: | |

In order for us to best serve you, please **do one of the following:**

- Drop this form into one of the receptacles before you leave today
- Fax it to 719-548-5947
- Mail it to Focus on the Family Attn: Erin Eberspacher Colorado Springs 80920

*Submitting this form will be followed by several steps including, but not limited to, attending an orientation and submitting an official application. Please see the agency of your choice for additional information and thank you for initiating the process of adoption from foster care.