

## FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION

# Myths and Misconceptions

**T**he Department of Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for the welfare and protection of all of Connecticut's children. Thousands of caseworkers, who oversee the needs of foster and adoptive families, are frequently asked to address myths and misconceptions surrounding this service. Here are the most common of these myths and the answers to them:

1

**MYTH** It's really hard to become a foster or adoptive parent.

**FACT** It's not as hard as you think!

While there are guidelines for approval, DCF will help you through them.

2

**MYTH** You must be married to be a foster or adoptive parent.

**FACT** Everyone is welcome!

You do not have to be married to be a foster or adoptive parent. People who cohabit, or are divorced or single, may be foster or adoptive parents.

3

**MYTH** People with criminal records or past involvement with DCF cannot be foster or adoptive parents.

**FACT** DCF evaluates each family on a case-by-case basis.

Each person's situation is unique and can be discussed with a DCF agency representative for further assessment and consideration.

4

**MYTH** You must own your own home to be a foster or adoptive parent.

**FACT** Not at all.

If you rent a home or apartment and the landlord provides permission for the child to live with you in his or her dwelling, you need not own a home to be a foster or adoptive parent.

5

**MYTH** You cannot be a foster or adoptive parent if you are gay/lesbian.

**FACT** DCF welcomes gay and lesbian parents as caregivers for Connecticut's children!

DCF does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Many gay and lesbian people have come forward to be a family for a child.

6

**MYTH** Only people who have children or whose children are grown can be foster or adoptive parents.

**FACT** Parenting experience is not a factor.

Those who have never been a parent can still be foster or adoptive parents. You will receive training and support to help foster a child from the DCF team!

# 7

**MYTH** People who work full time cannot be foster or adoptive parents.  
**FACT** Many licensed foster parents and adoptive parents work full time.

Adults who work full time outside of the home can still be foster parents. A preschooler would need to be enrolled in a full-time licensed daycare facility. DCF helps with daycare costs. Adults who are working full time are also eligible to adopt.

# 8

**MYTH** Only younger adults can be foster or adoptive parents.  
**FACT** On the contrary – adults of all ages have a wealth of experience to share!

DCF does not discriminate on the basis of age. Anyone 21 years or older may apply to become a foster or adoptive parent.

# 9

**MYTH** I can't have the neighborhood teenager babysit for my foster or adoptive child when I go out socially.  
**FACT** Foster parenting and having a social life are not mutually exclusive.

If you know a local teen who you feel is appropriately trained to supervise children, he or she will be allowed to babysit a foster child in the foster family's home. Adoptive parents also have the right to select an appropriate babysitter for their child.

# 10

**MYTH** Biological parents are "bad" people who should never get their kids back.  
**FACT** That's rarely true.

Biological parents love their children but they are having difficulties maintaining their safety and well-being. DCF ensures the safety of children, while helping parents access the resources and services they need to help overcome their current circumstances. The department works with biological parents, caregivers and community providers to assist with reunification when appropriate. However, when reunification is not possible, the department looks to place a child into an adoptive home.

# 11

**MYTH** A foster or adoptive child must have his or her own bedroom.  
**FACT** Sharing a bedroom is permitted.

DCF will assist foster parents in determining bedroom arrangements during the home study process. Adoptive parents can determine the most appropriate sleeping arrangements for their children.

# 12

**MYTH** Foster or pre-adoptive kids can't go on family vacations with their caregivers.  
**FACT** DCF believes that vacations are good for the whole family – including foster and pre-adoptive children!

With adequate notice, discussion with the biological parents, and authorization of DCF, foster families are actually encouraged to take foster and pre-adoptive children on family vacations. After adoption, parents are free to take their children on vacation.

# 13

**MYTH** Foster and adoptive kids can't participate in play dates or sleepovers at a friend's home.

**FACT** **Actually, both are permitted.**

DCF believes foster and adoptive children should have a normal social life. Of course, as with all parenting decisions, we ask that foster and adoptive parents use good judgment when making these decisions.

# 14

**MYTH** Biological parents will come to a foster or adoptive home to visit with their child.

**FACT** **DCF staff members work with biological and foster families to determine the best arrangement for them and the child(ren).**

In most cases, DCF encourages foster parents to have some connection with the child's family via letters, phone calls, emails or face-to-face contact. Visitation requirements are set by the court, but foster families are not required to hold visits in their homes. Contact after adoption finalization is determined by an open adoption agreement, if one was agreed to in court.

# 15

**MYTH** You need to have medical and dental insurance in order to care for a foster or adoptive child.

**FACT** **DCF assumes all medical and dental insurance for its foster and adoptive children.**

In most cases, the foster and adoptive families can choose their medical and dental providers, as long as these providers accept the insurance coverage offered by DCF.

# 16

**MYTH** Only wealthy families can be foster or adoptive parents.

**FACT** **Foster and adoptive parents don't have to be rich – just financially stable.**

Foster and adoptive parents need only demonstrate that they are able to pay bills and support their individual and family needs. DCF provides monthly reimbursement checks to help defray costs of food, clothing, extracurricular activities and other necessities that are incurred by a foster child or a child placed for adoption, prior to finalization. In certain circumstances, adoptive parents will receive an ongoing financial subsidy according to the child's special needs.

# 17

**MYTH** Foster and adoptive parents are required to pay college tuition for these children.

**FACT** **Not usually.**

DCF pays the tuition costs for foster children to attend college. While the foster child may attend the college of his/her choice, tuition is allocated on the basis of whatever Central Connecticut State University is charging for tuition each year. Any child adopted after Jan. 1, 2005 is eligible for the DCF college tuition assistance program.

# 18

**MYTH** Foster and adoptive parents must be able to speak English.

**FACT** **DCF does not discriminate on the basis of language.**

People whose first language is Spanish – or another language – are equally eligible to become foster or adoptive parents.