

EXPERT Q&A WEBINAR:

## Adopting from Foster Care



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and  
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# FOSTER CARE ADOPTION

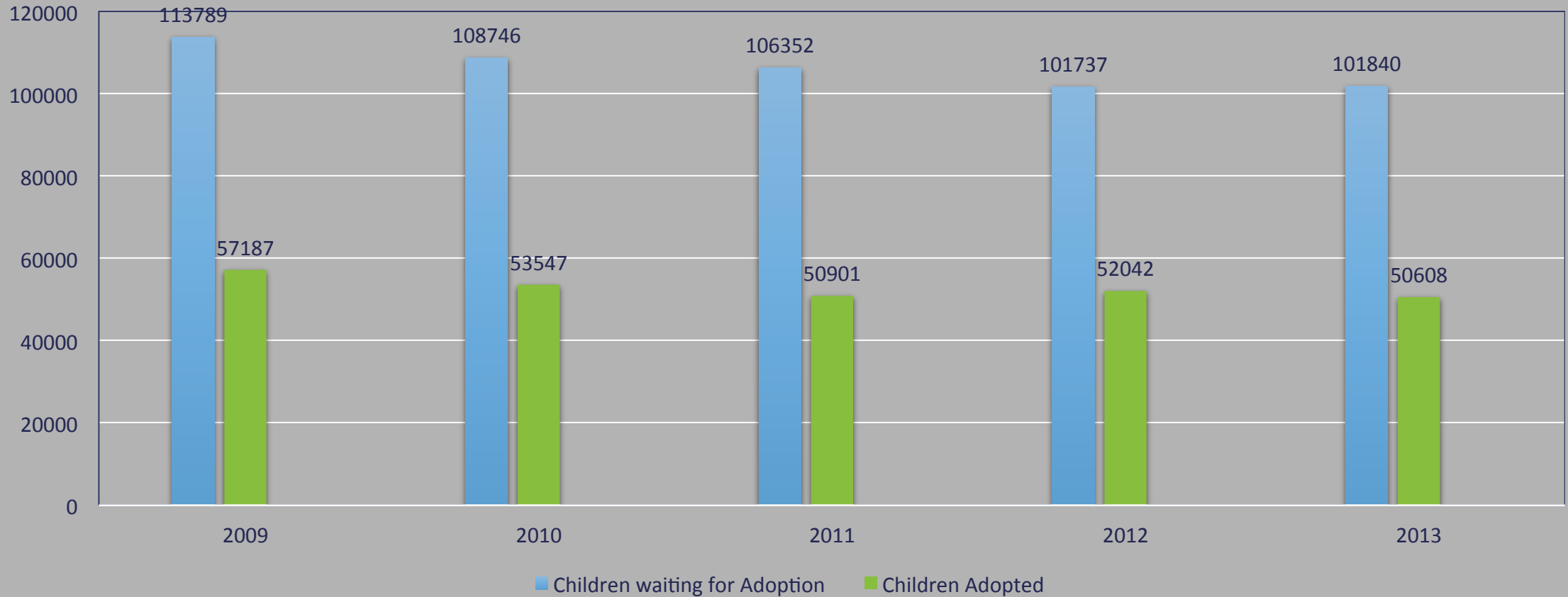
*HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY MANEUVER AN UNCERTAIN SYSTEM*

Presented by:  
Denise M. Bierly, Esquire  
Bobbie L. Rabuck, Esquire

# WHERE TO BEGIN?

- Contact your local office for the welfare of children.
  - Ask about foster care trainings and resources;
    - Offices often have a central person that can conduct in-person consultations to see if foster care is the best fit for you and your family.

# FOSTER ADOPTION STATISTICS



\*According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport21.pdf>.

# Foster Home Requirements

- Foster parents must be 21 years of age or older;
- Reliable source of income (not public assistance);
- Complete and pass a medical appraisal prior to approval;
- Complete Child Abuse and State Police clearances on all Adult members of the household;
- Meet annual training requirements;
- Comply with residence and safety requirements (as outlined by your local agency).

# How To ENTER FOSTER CARE

- Foster care is not perfect, and it is important to simply be open to whatever may come your way. To be successful at foster parenting, you must begin the process with a(n):
  - Open Heart;
  - Patience;
  - Ability to nurture a child;
  - Ability to love a child;
  - Flexibility; and,
  - Stability.

# RESOURCES AVAILABLE DURING FOSTER CARE

- Financial stipends;
- Resources available through your local child welfare service;
- Short-term respite care;
- Mental health services;
- Medical health services;
- Transportation costs;
- Clothing stipends; and
- Support networks.

# AGENCY GOALS OF FOSTER CARE

When a child enters placement, the Agency generally establishes two goals, which are done concurrently, as follows:

1. Provide reunification services to create a safe environment to enable the children to return home; and

2. Focus on a permanent plan for the children, such as adoption, if reunification services are not successful.



# TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Termination of Parental Rights can only take place if the following conditions have been met:

1. Grounds for termination of parental rights have been proven; and
2. The Court has determined termination of parental rights is in the best interest of the child?

After reunification services have ended unsuccessfully and the Court has terminated the parental rights, the child will be eligible for adoption and adoption proceedings can begin.

# RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOLLOWING ADOPTION

Post adoption services, or post-permanency services, are available through DPW through the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN)



[www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org)

- Support Groups;
- Respite Care;
- Educational Programs;
- Therapy.

# WHY ADOPT FROM FOSTER CARE?

## PROS

- Adoptive parents do not need to be wealthy;
- Most agencies provide services for adoption with no fees and little cost;
- Subsidy available following adoption.

## CONS

- Emotional scars;
- Baggage from past experiences;
- Fearful of trust.

COMMON  
MISCONCEPTION

***ALL FOSTER CHILDREN  
ARE “SPECIAL NEEDS.”***

“Special needs” is misleading as it can simply mean that the child is a minority, an older child, or requires sibling placement.

COMMON  
MISCONCEPTION

**ALL FOSTER CHILDREN  
CARRY “BAGGAGE”**

All children need love,  
nurturing, patience and  
stability. When children are  
given the opportunity to  
thrive, they will.

# ORIGIN OF ADOPTION ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 provided the first Federal subsidies to encourage the adoption of children from the nation's foster care system. These subsidies, known as adoption assistance, serve to minimize the financial obstacles to adoption.

Created by Congress because there was a disincentive for foster parents to adopt the children in their care.



## IV-E FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY-CHILD MUST MEET ANY ONE OF FOUR ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. AFDC eligible during the month in which the court proceedings were initiated or was eligible within six months prior to that time; or
2. Child was eligible for the SSI program under the Social Security Act before adoption; or
3. The child's parent was in foster care and receiving Title IV-E funds that covered both the parent and child when the adoption was initiated; or
4. The child previously received adoption assistance, and his/her adoptive parent died or the adoption was dissolved.

# BENEFITS AVAILABLE

1. Medical Assistance;
2. One time nonrecurring Adoption Assistance;
  - Federal cap is \$2,000
  - Examples: Attorneys fees and travel for Adoptive Parents, court filing fees, cost of amended birth certificate.
3. Recurring Adoption Assistance
  - Direct Assistance in the form of monthly payments until the child attains the age of 18 (in some cases 21);
  - Maximum payment in the amount of the foster care payment for this particular child;
  - Payments continue even if family moves out of state.

# **ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

*Helpful Websites:*

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-assistance/>

[http://www.nacac.org/adoptionssubsidy/factsheets/title IV.html](http://www.nacac.org/adoptionssubsidy/factsheets/title_IV.html)

<http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607.html>

<http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/822>



**Questions?**



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**Thank  
you!**

# Questions?

Please enter your questions for Denise M. Bierly, Esq., and Bobbie L. Rabuck, Esq., in the box to your right.



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