

A Family For Every Child Matching Assistance



*"We should not be asking who this child belongs to,
but who belongs to this child."*

Teen Adoption

According to the latest AFCARS report, the mean age of a child in foster care is 9-years old. Children 14-17 years-old made up some of the highest percentages of children in foster care. As of September 30, 2013, there were:

4,646 14-year olds waiting to be adopted,
4,818 15-year olds waiting to be adopted,
4,261 16-year olds waiting to be adopted, and
3,273 17-year olds waiting to be adopted.

Of those waiting children, with public agency involvement:

1,198 14-year olds were adopted
921 15-year olds were adopted
869 16-year olds were adopted
690 17-year olds were adopted, and
132 18-year olds were adopted

If you compare those adoption numbers to the ages of other kids who were adopted, it's pretty low. As you look at the numbers, the older the child gets, the less likely they are to be adopted. In 2012 alone, 23,000 children aged out of foster care. The number of children exiting foster care due to aging-out has increased from 7% in 2000, to 10% in 2012 [[Source](#)]. That's really sad. There are so many great teens waiting in foster care who want a forever family. If

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Costs of Aging Out for Society

\$300,000 - the average cost to society for a child who ages out of foster care

\$7.8 billion - total costs for every child aging out of foster care

[Source - [Jim Casey Foundation](#)]

you can, I hope that you consider adopting an older child. I hope this newsletter addresses some of your concerns and answers your questions about teen adoptions.

You can read the full AFCARS report for 2012 [here](#).

Benefits of Adopting a Teen

Many families seem hesitant to consider teenagers. Reasons for not considering teens include they are first time parents and want the "baby" experience; they don't want to disrupt their birth order; they're worried their child will not attach; or they want a child to need them for longer than a few years. While some of these are valid reasons, others are not.

A teenager is just as likely to form an attachment as any other child in foster care. It really depends on their history and background. Teens may have moved through many foster homes in their lives, which doesn't help their attachment issues. However, it can also strengthen their resolve and desire to find a permanent family that will love them, nurture them, and care for them.

Children need love and care from the day they are born, throughout their entire lives. You don't stop caring for your child when they turn 18; it extends through the rest of your days. Children need parents to help navigate their adult years, so you don't just stop being a parent because your child is an adult.

Yondalla shares some benefits of adopting a teenager on her blog [Thoughts from a Foster Family](#). Here are just a few of them:

- **That younger kid you're adopting? He or she is going to turn into a teen anyway.**
- **You know what you are getting.**
- **They may share actual interests you have.**

Articles and Blogs on Teens in Foster Care

The Epoch Times - [From Foster Care to Forever Home](#)

Washington Post - [For teens in foster care, adoption is a lifeline](#)

Seattle Times - [Guest: Extend foster care for those older than 18](#)

Huffington Post - [Aging Out of Foster Care: The Costs of Doing Nothing Affect Us All](#)

SCnow.com - [A place to call home: Advocates for teenage adoption share their experiences](#)

Adoption Information Center of Illinois - [Teens Need Unconditional Commitment](#)

One Thankful Mom blog - [Joining a New Family at 16 \[and realistic expectations\]](#)

[From Foster to Fabulous](#) - One little

- **They do their own self-care.**

You also get to experience a bunch of "firsts" - first dance, first date, first college visit, first day of college, etc.

Parenting a Teen

Parenting a teenager definitely doesn't come without its challenges. Parents of a teenager need to be resourceful, patient, firm and consistent. Above all else, they will need a parent(s) who will commit to them no matter what. This unconditional commitment is so important for any child being adopted out of foster care, but especially teenagers. The older the child is, the more placements they are likely to have had. This results in them believing that their newest situation will also not be permanent, and their behaviors will reflect that belief. While this can be incredibly frustrating and challenging, parents should consider putting themselves in the child's shoes for a minute. How would you feel if you had spent most of your life being shuffled from foster home to foster home with no permanency plan in site? You would probably be weary and skeptical of your latest placement, and would most likely test your new parents to see if they were the "real deal". As such, give your child a chance. Read between the lines and figure out the root of the behaviors. Once you understand where your child is coming from, you may find it a lot easier to take care of their needs and gain their trust and love.

For more information and guidance on parenting a teenager, please refer to Child Welfare Information Gateway's fact sheet [Parenting Your Adopted Teenager](#)

What Happens to Unadopted

girl's journey through abuse, foster care, aging out and life beyond

Resources

Adopt Us Kids - [Going Beyond Recruitment for 14 to 16 Year Olds](#)

Summit Kids - [50 Things You Can Do to Help Someone Get Ready for Life on Their Own](#)

PACT Adopt - [Adolescence and Adoption: Teens and Tweens](#)

-Provides resources to families who have adopted "tweens" and teens through support groups, clubs, blogs, online resources, books and more.

[Parenting Teens Online](#)

-Provides resources for families on a variety of topics including bullying, education, health and wellness, finances, and more.

[By Parents, For Parents](#)

Teens?

Last year, 23,000 children "aged-out" of foster care. But what does this mean? When a child "ages-out" of foster care, it means they have not found a permanent placement, and in a lot of cases are on their own. Many teens end up homeless and on the streets. Many of them don't finish high school, and very rarely go to college. A lot end up back in the government system in some way - in jail, pregnant, on unemployment, in a homeless shelter, etc. The following are some statistics compiled by Children's Rights from various studies done across the country on aging-out statistics:

12-30% of teens who aged out struggled with being **homeless**

40-63% did not finish high school

31-42% were in **arrested**

18-26% ended up in **jail**

After 12-18 months, **40-60%** of the young women who left foster care were **pregnant**

25-55% were **unemployed**

Of those unemployed, many were making wages well below the poverty level. Only 38% of teens who had a job were still employed after a year.

To see more statistics on teens who age out of foster care, please click [here](#).

Can you imagine not having a family to support you at the age of 18? While their friends and peers are filling out college applications, waiting teens in foster care are filling out job applications. While their peers are picking their dorms and talking to their new roommates, waiting teens in foster care are trying to find housing.

-Online resources for parents of teenagers

[Focus Adolescent Services](#)

-Helpful information for parents who are dealing with various teen issues.

Can't Parent a Teen?

If you are unable to parent a teenager, consider one of the following wonderful alternatives:

Become a CASA/Guardian at Litem (GAL) - A CASA or GAL give youth in foster care a voice. They advocate for children in the court systems, talking to a child's foster parents, therapists, teachers and caseworker before compiling a report on their thoughts of the best course of action to ensure a child will succeed. Learn more about becoming a CASA or GAL [here](#).

Teens in foster care are just like any other child - they want a family who will love and care for them. They want a permanent home. They want to have the same experiences as their friends and peers. They want to exceed at life, and have a family who motivates and supports them. Just because a child is older and has been in the system for years doesn't mean they want a family any less than a younger child. Sometimes they want it even more.

Become a mentor - A mentor spends time with youth in foster care, becoming a person a child can spend time with, talk to, and receive support and guidance. [Big Brothers Big Sisters](#) have national mentoring programs you can get involved with, or you can check out the [Mentor Partnership](#). If you are a family in Oregon, check out our mentoring program [here](#).

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