

## Medically fragile

They say one of the toughest jobs... is being a parent. But being a parent of a child with a disability comes with additional challenges. According to the Child Welfare Agency of America, an estimated 60% of children in foster care have a chronic medical condition and 25% have three or more chronic health problems.

A medically fragile child is a child that has been medically determined to have a diagnosable, life-threatening condition, such as HIV/AIDS, cerebral palsy, or Down's syndrome, or other health impairment that requires long term, intensive, specialized services on a daily basis.

Medically fragile foster children come from environments that are often as complex and complicated as their medical conditions. They face a difficult road. Unlike healthy, able-bodied children, kids who struggle with medical conditions do not get to experience childhood as carefree as others. Medications, shots, doctor visits, physical therapy, physical limitations and surgery often keep medically fragile children from enjoying the pleasantries of childhood. Even more difficult is the life of a medically fragile child living in foster care, or waiting for adoption.

Some children have correctable problems. Others will "outgrow" their challenges. A few are remarkably resilient and will not develop expected problems. However, adoptive parents must be ready to face and deal with all types of outcomes, from the bleak to the near-miraculous.

Adoptive homes able and willing to care for these children are needed throughout the United States. If you want to adopt a child with special needs, you should be aware that extra care will need to be given to them. Even more than a normal and healthy child will require.