

Resources Especially for Foster or Adoptive Families

Alert! Alert!

Because NICHCY's website will only remain online until September 30, 2014, most of its rich content has moved to a new home, the **Center for Parent Information and Resources** (CPIR), where it can be kept up to date.

The new address of *Resources Especially for Foster or Adoptive Families* at the CPIR is:

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/fosteradoptive/>

Updated November 2012

*My duty is to care for her;
my love explains the manner of my days.*

—Jane Wiley

Giving a child a home is a remarkable gift. This page is written for the families who've adopted children with disabilities (and without!) and those who offer them safe haven through fostering. It's also written for those who work in state agencies or in private organizations who find foster homes and adoptive families for so many children.

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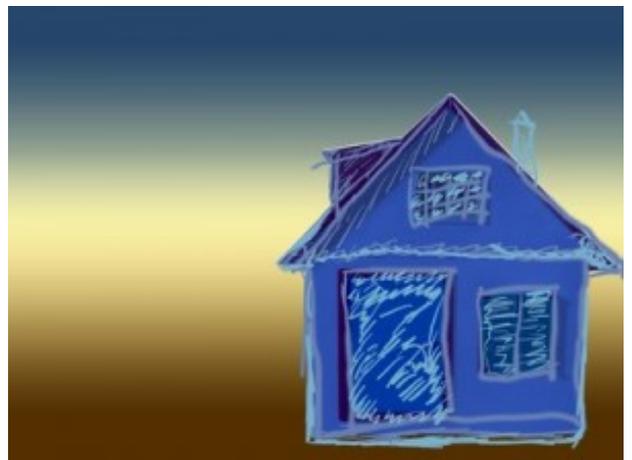
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About Foster Care

Foster care is a program, run by each state, which "allows stand-in parents, referred to as foster parents, to care for minor children who have been removed from their biological home." (1) The U.S. Children's Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, estimates that, in 2010, there were approximately 408,000 children in foster care in the United States and that approximately 53,000 children were adopted with public child welfare agency involvement. (2) Those statistics tell us that there are a lot of remarkable children and families out there touched by foster care and adoption! It's also estimated that at least one-third of the children and youth in foster care today likely have disabilities. (3)

When disability is involved, it's not the least surprising that families will have questions, concerns, and an immediate need for specific information about the disability. Information can help! To that end, NICHCY is honored to offer guidance about disabilities in children and the systems of help that address disability-related needs.



These resources are likely to be helpful to those in the child welfare system as well, as they place children in foster homes and with adoptive families.

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Addressing Disability

This first section tells you where, on NICHCY's website, you can find information about disabilities. We've tried to anticipate what type of information you might be looking for; you'll find this framed as a "lead-in" statement or question matched to a resource on our site that would answer that question. We hope this helps you speed to the info you want. If a "lead-in" doesn't apply to you, go to the next one and see if *that's it, that's what I want to know, bingo!*

I want to know more about a specific disability.

NICHCY offers a [series of fact sheets](#) on the more commonly occurring disabilities.

Are you looking for info on one of *these* disabilities? If so, click on its name and go to that fact sheet.

[AD/HD](#) | [autism spectrum disorder](#) | [blindness/visual impairment](#) | [cerebral palsy](#)

[deafness and hearing loss](#) | [deaf-blindness](#) | [developmental delay](#)

[diabetes](#) | [Down syndrome](#) | [emotional disorders](#) | [epilepsy](#)

[heart conditions](#) | [hemophilia](#) | [intellectual disability](#) | [lead poisoning](#)

[learning disabilities](#) | [leukemia](#) | [nephritis](#) | [rheumatic fever](#)

[severe disability](#) | [sickle cell anemia](#) | [speech/language impairments](#)

[spina bifida](#) | [Tourette Syndrome](#) | [traumatic brain injury](#)

But there's no fact sheet on the disability I'm interested in!

NICHCY has a vast library of materials on many, many other disabilities, including [rare disorders](#). Use the SEARCH box on our site. Enter the name of the disability of interest. The SEARCH should identify organizations specializing in the disability in which you're interested.

I think this baby or toddler in my care may have a disability or a developmental delay (or I know so).

It's really important to follow through and see if the young child does have a disability or delay. If so, he or she would benefit greatly from early intervention services, which are designed to address very young children's developmental and disability-related needs. To find out more about what to do, we'd suggest you take a look at these NICHCY pages first:

Developmental Milestones

<http://nichcy.org/disability/milestones/>

What's a developmental delay?

<http://nichcy.org/disability/specific/dd/>

Overview of Early Intervention

<http://nichcy.org/babies/overview/>

I'm caring for a preschool-aged child who has a disability or delay (or I think so). What should I do?

It's important to find out if the child does indeed have a disability or developmental delay. If you're right and there is a disability involved, the child will most likely be eligible for special education and related services, which can really help children. Schools are responsible for evaluating children suspected of having a disability, even preschoolers (ages 3-5). The evaluation is provided free of charge. To learn more about the steps you might take, you may wish to read:

Special Education Services for Preschoolers with Disabilities

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/preschoolers/>

Evaluating Children for Disability

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/evaluation/>

I'm concerned that a foster/adoptive child who's doing so poorly in school because of a disability. What should I do?

If you are concerned that the child's school performance is being affected by a disability, you'll first need to find out if he or she really *does* have a disability. If you're right and there is a disability involved, the child will most likely be eligible for special education and related services, which can really help children struggling in school. Schools are responsible for evaluating children suspected of having a disability. The evaluation is provided free of charge to families. Start the process by asking the school (preferably in writing) to evaluate your foster/adoptive child under IDEA to see if there's a disability involved. To understand more about the steps to take, we'd recommend you read these two webpages:

The 10 Basic Steps in Special Education

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/steps/>

Evaluating Children for Disability

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/evaluation/>

Behavior is a real problem for my foster/adoptive child, in school and at home both. Help!

You may want to visit NICHCY's [Behavior Suite](#), a series of five resource webpages that all address behavior challenges.

My foster/adoptive child with a disability is in high school now. Shouldn't we be planning ahead to life after high school?

Yes, indeed. In fact, under IDEA, transition planning is required no later than when a youth with a disability turns 16. To learn more about transition planning, visit these NICHCY resource pages:

Transition in the IEP.

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/iepcontents/transition/>

Transition Suite.

A series of 9 resource pages on all topics "transition."

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/transitionadult/>

What's available in my state to help me address the disability needs of my foster/adoptive child?

Great question! In fact, there's a huge amount of help in every state for children with disabilities. It is made available through state agencies, disability-specific organizations, and organizations especially for parents (including foster and adoptive parents). We highly recommend you get your hands on a NICHCY *State Resource Sheet*. These are available online at our [State Resources](#) page. Use the drop-down menu to name your state, and the resource list will automatically appear. There, you'll find the many state agencies involved in disability issues (including the State Department of Special Education), disability organizations specializing in specific disabilities (e.g., Down syndrome, learning disabilities), and organizations that help parents (for example, the Parent Training and Information Center, known as the state's PTI).

<http://nichcy.org/state-organization-search-by-state>

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Organizations Focused on Adoption and Foster Parenting

There are several organizations that foster and adoptive parents may be especially interested in, because of their focus on foster care and adoptive parenting. We've listed these below.

National Council on Adoption

The Council is an adoption advocacy nonprofit that promotes a culture of adoption through education, research, and legislative action. Its areas of focus are infant adoption, adoption out of foster care, and intercountry adoption. The Council offers publications for adoption professionals, for families, for birthparents, and others.

<https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/>

Adoption.com

This organization hosts multiple websites on adoption and is a popular adoption information destination because of the richness and depth of its information for families (both birth and adoptive) and for adoption professionals. Adoption.com also publishes the AdoptionWeek e-Magazine, which is sent to more than 120,000 email recipients each week. Adoption of special needs children is an area of particular emphasis, as you can see at the link below:

<http://library.adoption.com/articles/special-needs.html>

National Adoption Clearinghouse

The National Adoption Clearinghouse provides information to families who have adopted a child. Their contact information is:

<http://www.adoption.org/adopt/national-adoption-clearinghouse.php>

Child Welfare Information Gateway

The Child Welfare Information Gateway connects child welfare and related professionals to comprehensive information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families. The Gateway features the latest on topics from prevention to permanency, including child abuse and neglect, foster care, and adoption. Toll free: 1.800.394.3366.

www.childwelfare.gov

Adoptive Families Magazine

Adoptive Families is an award-winning national adoption magazine and a leading adoption information source for families before, during, and after adoption.

www.adoptivefamilies.com

Comeunity

This website on adoption and special needs treats the two subjects separately, but offers a wealth of information and links on both.

<http://www.comeunity.com/>

National Resource Center for Adoption

Visit the NRCA to find information to aid with special needs adoption programs as well as web links to other helpful organizations and publications with a particular emphasis on working with special needs adoption.

<http://www.nrcadoption.org/>

National Association of State Adoption Programs

NASAP provides a forum in which State Adoption Program Managers can pool their expertise and promotes networking activities as an association with other direct child welfare entities and individual professionals so that each state can develop and maintain an efficient, state-of-the-art adoption program.

<http://www.nrcadoption.org/programs/nasap/>

Adopt America Network

AAN is dedicated to helping place children with special circumstances, whether they are physical, emotional or something else (for instance, older children and/or siblings). If you're looking to adopt, this would be one connection worth pursuing.

<http://adoptamericanetwork.org/>

National Foster Parent Association

The mission of the NFPA is to support foster parents in achieving safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth in their care. NFPA's website features state-level information (both state foster parent associations and foster parent regulations for the state), information for foster parents, and an extensive list of "foster parent links." A toll-free number is available at: 1.800.557.5238.

www.nfpainc.org

Foster Care and Adoptive Community

FCAC Online Training offers 135 courses (5 interactive) with new topics added continuously. English and Spanish training modules are offered, so that you can “complete mandated training hours from the comfort of your home.” Lots of other information is available, including state-level contacts.

<http://www.fosterparents.com/>

Adoption Clubhouse

This website is specifically for adopted children ages 8 – 13, their parents, and others interested in knowing what’s on the minds of young adoptees.

<http://www.adoptionclubhouse.org>

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Finding Support Groups

Parents often find that joining a support group of other parents, even online, can be a rich source of help and connection. You may find this as well. Other parents of children with disabilities can share their insights, suggestions, and observations about how they address *their* child’s disability needs, what agencies or organizations they’ve found helpful, and where to go for particular types of information or assistance.

There are several types of parent groups in the U.S., including:

- Support groups (such as [Parent-to-Parent](#)) for families of children with disabilities, which can match you with another parent whose child has the same disability as yours or whose circumstances are similar;
- [Parent training and information \(PTI\) centers and community parent resource centers](#) (CPRC) in every state (funded by the federal government), which are dedicated to helping parents understand their rights, work with the school system as an advocate for their child with a disability, and much more; and
- Groups concerned with a specific disability, such as United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc. (UCPA) or the Arc (formerly the Association for Retarded Citizens).

The contact information for all these types of groups is listed in the NICHCY [State Organizations Search](#) for your state.

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Selected Websites of More Information

Adoption Professionals

This is the title of a multi-layered series of webpages of resources and information for adoption professionals, include continuing education opportunities, regulations, and materials to increase effectiveness.

<http://www.adopting.org/adoptions/resources-for-adoption-professionals.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://www.aap.org/>

First Signs, Inc.

www.firstsigns.org

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC)

www.nectac.org

ZERO TO THREE: National Center For Infants, Toddlers and Families

<http://www.zerotothree.org/>

Adopting Children with Developmental Disabilities

<http://www.adoptuskids.org/resourceCenter/developDisabilities.aspx>

Adoption Language

The way we talk about adoption has evolved over time as we become more aware of the complexities of our relationships and the way children and adults react to words, nuances, and connotations. Resources for present and future parents, families, teachers.

<http://www.adopting.org/adoptions/adoption-language-accurate-positive-language-for-adults-and-children.html>

Can I Adopt A Child with Disabilities?

<http://library.adoption.com/articles/can-i-adopt-a-child-with-disabilities.html>

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References

1 -*Foster parenting*. (2010). Online at: <http://www.fosterparenting.com/>

2-Child's Bureau. (2011). *Trends in foster care and adoption—FY 2002-FY 2010*. Online at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/trends_june2011.pdf

3- Baker, J. (n.d.). *Forgotten children — UCP report on foster care* . Online at: <http://www.abilitymagazine.com/past/Marleem/forgot.html>

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