

Finding the Child that is Right for You

Every family has unique interests and needs. Some families love camping and outdoor life, while others would prefer a vacation in the city. While one family may find they solve life's challenges one way, other families might have completely different ways of dealing with issues. These same qualities that make a family special can be applied to children in the foster care system.

We often garner tiny pieces of information about children as we scan over photolisting after photolisting. Most often, we receive a paragraph or two about the child along with a photograph. Sometimes we might learn about their interests, favorites, and even their medical diagnosis. While this information is useful to families, these things are hardly representative of the whole of a child's young life. Many of the children in foster care have had experiences beyond the knowledge of the families looking at their picture.

As we search for children in the foster care system to match our family's needs, we must be aware of the limitations of information we can get. Sometimes we are unable to get more than a few blurbs about a kid. We can place these children in certain demographics and categories such as age, race, or disability level, but we are still limited in our knowledge of the child's personality, beliefs, and needs. It is possible that a child younger than your preferences is wise beyond his or her years, a child from an ethnic background may be more open to other cultures, or a child with a disability may have already mastered the necessary skills to manage his or her issues.

Frequently, more information becomes available after a family submits their homestudy. Families who are open to submitting on a variety of children are more likely to find the kids that are right for them. Opening up your search preferences opens you up to the possibility that some kids might surprise you. Sometimes we find what we are looking for in the most unexpected places.

Some families have concerns about submitting on many children, especially ones that don't fit their frame of preferences. Only you and your family can ultimately decide what is right for you. You know your strengths and weaknesses better than anyone else. If a caseworker considers you for a child, you have an opportunity to gain more information about the child or children you have submitted on. You may find that a child you would have normally passed over based on your demographic preferences is exactly what you are looking for. At this point in the process, before things progress to far, you can always choose to walk away from a child that does not meet your family's needs.

If you submit your homestudy often for a variety of children, it may happen that you are considered for more than one child at a time. In these cases, it is important to be aware of your options as well as the child's needs. Carefully weight your options and make sure you have as much information as possible as you move forward. Know that while you may choose to proceed with one child or sibling group, it may ultimately not work out. At the same time, it is unfair to another child and their team to let them believe you are interested when your heart belongs to someone else.

Openness in the searching and submission process will help your family gain a better understanding about available children. At a Family for Every Child, we strive to support you through your adoption journey. We are always available to answer questions about the foster care adoption process. If you have any questions or need to discuss the challenges you are facing, our door is always open.