



MEDIA TOOLKIT

for Child Welfare Leaders



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR
DILIGENT RECRUITMENT

at AdoptUSKids



MEDIA TOOLKIT FOR CHILD WELFARE LEADERS

Introduction

Media in its many forms — including television, newspapers, radio, websites, and social media platforms — is a powerful and useful tool. AdoptUSKids and our partners at the Ad Council have experienced first-hand the incredible power of partnering with the media as part of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative by working together to distribute, promote, and place public service announcements (PSAs) about adoption from foster care throughout the country. As your agency seeks to raise awareness about adoption and recruit adoptive families for children in foster care, knowing how to best use and work effectively with the media is important to making your communication efforts successful. Whether you are looking for increased exposure of the national PSAs in your local area, or are interested in developing communications strategies to work with the media on your recruitment efforts, this toolkit is a comprehensive media resource.

We know that your agency faces daily demands and constraints as you try to raise awareness about adoption and recruit adoptive parents for children in foster care. Fortunately, we can help you access existing and free resources that you can use to support and supplement your existing recruitment and awareness-raising efforts. The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative, funded by the Children's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is designed to support efforts to raise awareness in local communities about adoption and the need for adoptive families. In the following sections, we provide tips and strategies that you can use to increase the impact and reach of the

National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative in your local area, partner with the media, and to help raise awareness about adoption both during National Adoption Month and throughout the year.

In addition to this toolkit, we also have the following resources available to help build your capacity to work effectively with the media and use communication strategies to further your recruitment efforts:

Materials aimed at helping your agency use media partnerships, including:

- [***Partnering for Permanency: Promoting Adoption through Effective Communication Efforts***](#) (PDF - 498 KB), highlighting the value of increasing the reach and impact of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative as a way to support agencies' efforts to raise awareness about the need for adoptive families for youth in foster care.



- [*Partnering for Permanency: How Public Information Officers Can Partner to Promote Adoption from Foster Care*](#) (PDF - 469 KB), a publication for public information officers or communications directors in child welfare agencies with ideas on how they can help raise awareness about the need for adoptive families.
- A tip sheet entitled [*Partnering for Permanency: Working with Your Public Information Officer*](#) (PDF - 239 KB) to help child welfare program leaders understand the role of public information officers and develop effective strategies for partnering with them to raise awareness about adoption.

A collection of resources on [using social media in recruitment and retention](#), including:

- A tool to help your agency assess which social media platform, if any, to use to recruit and engage with prospective and current families.
- Introductory-level guides to using Facebook and Twitter.
- Guides on strategies and best practices for using Facebook and Twitter to engage with prospective and current foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

Key Considerations and Principles for Working with the Media

Understand the Current Media Environment

As you look for ways to establish connections with various media contacts, it's helpful to understand the media's priorities, goals, constraints, and pressures so that you can find mutually beneficial ways to partner. When working with the media, it's important to keep in mind that:

- The media landscape today is increasingly competitive and ever-changing. There are a multitude of media choices available — that are literally at the audience's fingertips.
- Media outlets receive hundreds of press releases and media advisories each day from groups seeking media attention.



PSAs Can Now Be Localized!

For many years, child welfare leaders have asked for an option to localize the public service announcements (PSAs) from the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative, and now it's possible. Child welfare systems can localize some of the PSAs with your agency's contact information, encouraging people to contact you directly and highlighting that your agency is available as a great local resource.

You can request free PSA materials for localization at adoptuskids.adcouncil.org. The site lets you quickly and easily access the media materials you are interested in receiving for your community. Select TV, radio, print, and outdoor materials are all available for localization and use at the local level. The materials will be available when the campaign launches, which is scheduled for January 2014.

For more information on the localization options available for the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative's PSA materials, visit adoptuskids.adcouncil.org, or contact Melissa Otero at motero@adoptuskids.org.

- Media outlets also receive hundreds of requests each month for donated media support. The available time and space for donated media space is shrinking.
- Media companies face tight budgets and fierce competition. Today's reporters are deadline-driven, stressed, curious, intelligent, and thrive on playing a "watch-dog" role.

Be Aware of the Media's Goals

Recognize that your goals in working with the media are very different from the media's goals in working with you. While you may want the media to highlight information about adoption from foster care and the need for adoptive families, the media are often looking for drama or a compelling storyline to keep their readers and audiences interested and engaged.

Media outlets report the news, but they also help create the news by deciding on what to report. They are constantly seeking new and compelling stories. When deciding what to report, the media look for:

- Superlatives (e.g., first, biggest, smallest, etc.)
- Issues and events that affect people and communities
- Stories with conflict or tension — the news media thrive on conflict, drama, and controversy. Conflict attracts viewers, listeners, and readers to the media; the greater the conflict the greater the audience, and large audiences are imperative to the financial success of media outlets
- Stories with connections to celebrities or an entertainment focus

Approach the media from the viewpoint of wanting to **help** them tell the best story possible. For example, emphasize the local impact on communities and people.

Be Clear About Your Goals and Your "Ask"

Just like you, media staff are busy and trying to manage multiple responsibilities and deadlines — they will appreciate a clear, well-defined request. By thinking through precisely what you'd like from the media (e.g., to cover a specific story idea, donated media space for PSAs, promotion of a specific event in the community, etc.), you increase the likelihood of a media partnership opportunity.

Develop Clear Messages

Move beyond thinking about what messages you want to share with the public and develop messages that will resonate with audiences who aren't familiar with foster care or adoption. Whatever form of media you are using — television, radio, newspapers, online platforms, etc. — you'll need to fit your messages into limited space and time.



You don't
have to be
perfect to
be a
perfect parent.

888-200-4005 / AdoptUSKids.org



AdoptUSKids



Advertisement from the 2012 PSA campaign created by AdoptUSKids and the Ad Council.

Using the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative¹ to Support Your Work

Why Should Our Agency Use the Materials from the Campaign?

Many child welfare agencies want to develop high-quality, effective recruitment campaigns but struggle to find the resources they need to create such a campaign. A cost-effective solution to this issue is to leverage the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative materials to raise awareness in your community about the need for adoptive families. The PSAs:

- Are professionally produced by an industry-leading advertising agency in partnership with Children's Bureau, the Ad Council, and AdoptUSKids.
- Are substantiated by a long-standing creative strategy and extensive research.
- Use humor that resonates well with the target audience of prospective parents as well as with media outlets.
- Offer a fresh creative message that can supplement local advertising/promotional efforts.

This [video case study](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the professional, research-based approach used in the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative PSAs and highlights a few key results from the campaign.

For agencies under budget constraints, PSAs are a practical alternative to paid advertising because the advertising time or space is donated by the media. The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response

¹ The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative is a project of the U.S. Children's Bureau, operated by the Adoption Exchange Association, in collaboration with the Ad Council. The initiative's goals for the 2013 – 2017 funding period are:

1. Achieve a measurable change in public perceptions about adopting children from the foster care system
2. Increase the number of potential adoptive families inquiring about adoption
3. Increase the number of children, especially older children, adopted from foster care
4. Strengthen the AdoptUSKids response system that supports States in managing the increased volume of inquiries due to the new media materials and national public service advertising campaign
5. Increase the measurable penetration into the local markets of each State of the multi-media campaign
6. Realize a measurable increase in the utilization of emerging social media strategies in States

Initiative PSA materials are available to agencies and media free of charge. You can access the materials at adoptuskids.adcouncil.org or contact AdoptUSKids at 888-200-4005 to request materials.

What's Available from the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative?

You have likely seen the humorous and engaging TV PSAs from the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative featuring the theme, “You don’t have to be perfect to be a perfect parent.” In addition to these high-quality TV ads, the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative has materials available in multiple formats to use for both national and local media opportunities. Media elements include TV, radio, print, outdoor (e.g., billboards), and web banners for websites. With this mix of media materials available, you can explore ways to partner with various media outlets to reach different target audiences. For example, you can work with a TV station in your area to secure donated space for a 30-second TV PSA, while also working with a local newspaper to encourage a donated print placement.

Options for Localizing the Campaign Materials

Now, for the first time, agencies can localize the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative’s PSAs by adding local information (e.g., agency name, logo, phone number, web site address, etc.) saving both the time and expense of creating a separate advertising campaign.

You can request free materials for localization at adoptuskids.adcouncil.org and you can specify the media materials you are interested in receiving for your community. TV, radio, print, and outdoor materials are all available for localization. For more information on the localization options available for the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative, visit adoptuskids.adcouncil.org or contact Melissa Otero at motero@adoptuskids.org.

Specific Strategies for Increasing the Local Impact of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative

The local media play an influential role in every community. When you tap into these media resources effectively, they can serve as powerful vehicles to help recruit families and promote adoption from foster care. By working with the media in your area, you can help increase the reach and impact of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative, which can help your agency’s efforts to recruit adoptive families. Specific strategies include:

- Use multiple media vehicles, including both traditional and social media platforms, to reach identified target audiences at the local level. For sample social media posts for highlighting the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative or other information about adoption, see the [National Adoption Month website](#).
- Engage in local media outreach efforts. Media outlets and leaders have a strong preference for covering local issues that affect people and the communities they live in. (See the following subsection for detailed suggestions on ways to conduct outreach to the media.)

- Localize the issue, explaining to your audience why adoption matters at the local level and why there should be broad interest in adoption from foster care in your community. Put adoption issues in a local context by highlighting local data and stories about local children and families.
- Use your expertise. You are the child welfare expert — use your knowledge to provide local context. You can best articulate how adoption and foster care issues and your services affect the community. Tell the stories the media will be interested in featuring for its audiences.
- Build lasting relationships with local media contacts. Provide the media with a familiar name and face and an expert for them to turn to about adoption from foster care.
- Highlight the availability of media spokesfamilies who can put a personal face on adoption. AdoptUSKids has a diverse pool of [trained media spokesfamilies](#) available across the U.S. who can share their stories about adopting from foster care. For more information on available spokesfamilies in your community, contact AdoptUSKids at info@adoptuskids.org or 888-200-4005. Our [Media Guide](#) (PDF - 1.4 MB) for the AdoptUSKids spokesfamilies provides valuable information that your agency can use to prepare families to speak with the media on behalf of your agency.



Conducting Media Outreach

Conducting media outreach gives you the opportunity to begin a dialogue, build and strengthen relationships, and expand your media presence in the community. By conducting outreach, you can:

- Be seen by media contacts as a trusted, reliable resource for adoption information (e.g., data, research details, family stories, etc.), spokespeople, and ideas.
- Educate the media about adoption from foster care and the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative.
- Persuade community affairs professionals across all forms of media to support the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative.
- Develop partnerships that raise the profile of your agency and of adoption from foster care within your community.
- Extend your media exposure throughout the year.

The following tips will help you increase the effectiveness of your outreach efforts.

Identify and Prioritize Your Best Media Prospects

- Focus on TV and radio stations and local newspapers — or local editions of newsmagazines — with programming and content that appeals to women and families.
- Monitor local media for coverage of related stories (e.g., stories about children, families, or parenting, etc.) and key contacts.
- Visit media websites to learn more about the community groups and issues they support. Media entities often have established partnerships and designated charities or issues they support exclusively; knowing if media outlets already have exclusive commitments or if they have expressed interest in a particular issue area can help you prioritize and target your outreach efforts appropriately.
- Target general managers and community affairs directors at the media outlets you contact.
- Schedule face-to-face meetings when possible. When that isn't possible, contact the media outlets by phone, mail, and e-mail.

Consider Multiple Approaches for Timing Your Media Outreach

Depending on your goals, the best timing for when you reach out to the media may vary. For example, you might want to reach out to the media:

- Throughout the year, trying to gain media attention for adoption issues at various times of the year.
- Prior to local events or key national dates, such as around the time of the launch of new PSAs and annual National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative materials.
- When new adoption-related research findings or positive results are available (e.g., the public release of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (ACFARS) data, if your State receives an Adoption Incentive payment, when AdoptUSKids features a child or sibling group from your area waiting to be adopted or selects someone from your agency as the [Caseworker of the Month](#), etc.).

Plan Your Questions for the Media in Advance

Prepare the questions you want to ask media contacts in advance, focusing on what information will be helpful for you to know in order to work effectively with each media outlet. Some possible questions include:

- Does your station or newspaper have a specific policy regarding public service advertising?
- Are you focusing on any particular public service or community initiatives (including those related to adoption or foster care)?
- How can we form a partnership? (e.g., Are there any upcoming events that we can work together on? Are there ways that our agency can be helpful to the media outlet? Would you like to receive any of the email newsletters from AdoptUSKids? etc.)
- What format and size of the PSA materials do you need?

Plan the Key Points You Want to Make When Pitching to the Media

Know what the main messages are that you want to share as part of your outreach to the media. Think about how to frame your key points for the media clearly and succinctly and in ways that will help them see the value of working with your agency to raise awareness about adoption. For example, you may want to share with the media:

- Goals and target audience of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative PSAs
- Adoption research and statistics that showcase a local focus
- The relevance of adoption and foster care issues to the broader community (e.g., local stories, results, programs, events, partners, anecdotal information, etc.)
- The importance of raising awareness about adoption all year long, but call attention to key promotional periods (e.g. National Adoption Month, National Foster Care Month, National Child Abuse Prevention Month, etc.).

Make an “Ask”

Ask the media outlet to:

- Run the PSAs in donated time or space.
- Include content and a link to your agency’s website on the media outlet’s website.
- Promote an upcoming event.

As part of your request, be sure to let the media contact know that you are available as a resource. Reiterate the availability of local experts and spokesfamilies for interviews and other information for news stories, features, and special reports.

Provide an Information Packet (Press Kit) if Available

Your press kit or information packet can include items such as:

- Press release
- Fact sheet that includes national, State, and local data (e.g., number of children in foster care waiting to be adopted, number of children adopted last year, details on the demographics of children in foster care, information about the parents who adopt from foster care, etc.)
- Backgrounders (e.g., a brief overview about your agency, a specific event, etc.)
- Bios for spokespeople and experts who are available to talk with the media
- Brochures or other promotional materials
- Human interest story that features a unique or successful story about adoption from foster care (e.g., a local family selected as a Congressional Angel in Adoption, a family being featured by AdoptUSKids, a staff person from your agency selected by AdoptUSKids as [Caseworker of the Month](#), etc.)

Close the Loop

- After talking with a media contact, consider sending a thank-you note, acknowledging the discussion and expressing appreciation for the meeting.
- A separate thank you is also appropriate when you see the results of a partnership (e.g., media outlet running PSAs or the media supported your local event).
- Follow-up to inquire whether the PSA Director or other media contacts need additional information, or has any further questions.

Other Tips for Working with the Media

- Be familiar with all types of media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, television, radio, social media, news websites, etc.). Consider what types of media are most appropriate for the identified target audiences.
- Be timely. Coordinate your story with news or a timely issue when possible, such as the public release of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (ACFARS) data or announcement of the Adoption Incentive payments to States. Additionally, you could coordinate your media stories when AdoptUSKids features a child or sibling group from your area or selects someone from your agency as the [Caseworker of the Month](#).
- Be alert. Stay on top of breaking news that relates to adoption/foster care.
- Be accessible to the media. Respond to requests promptly.
- Respect deadlines and follow up as necessary.
- Provide accurate and complete information. Be able to cite reputable sources for the facts you provide.
- Provide examples and illustrations of facts and figures when possible (as long as it doesn't muddy your overall messaging) – stories tend to catch a reporter's attention more than numbers, and you never know which story may resonate with them.
- Keep your messaging consistent, succinct, and simple. Focus on three to five key messages and remember that your audience likely doesn't know specific child welfare terms, so keep your messages in simple, clear language. Avoid using jargon or acronyms.
- Respond to all of the media's questions. Responding to questions from the media with "no comment" is not appropriate. Try using these statements instead:
 - "I don't know, but I can find out."
 - "That's an important question/issue/concern, but what I would really like to talk about today is...."
- Respect exclusivity. If you offer an exclusive story to a reporter, follow through with that reporter and don't share the story with other media outlets.
- Use professional imagery and photos when possible.

- Proofread all of your information before passing it along to the media. Make sure that your information is accurate and as up-to-date as possible.
- Use an active (not passive) voice in your writing and messages. By using an active voice you set a more positive, engaging tone.
- Follow up with reporters to offer new information, or an additional story angle, not just to see if they received information.
- Assume you are always on the record when communicating with the media. Avoid using sarcasm as reporters may take you literally.
- Praise good work! If a reporter has written a good, accurate story, send a note of thanks with a copy to their editor.

TEMPLATES AND SAMPLES

The following templates and samples may help you as you explore ways to raise awareness about adoption from foster care, and to work with your agency's public information officer (PIO) and the media. Your agency's PIO will have many additional templates and tools for media materials (e.g., backgrounders, talking points, press released, etc.); we encourage you to work with your PIO as you develop materials for the media.

Sample Press Releases

Customize these sample press releases to promote your agency's National Adoption Month initiatives or to promote the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative in your community anytime throughout the year. We have noted in brackets where your agency should customize the content and fill in details specific to your agency and community.

Sample Press Release – Option 1

Release Date: [FILL IN]

Phone: [FILL IN]

Contact and Title: [FILL IN]

Email: [FILL IN]

Everyone Can Promote National Adoption Month

November is National Adoption Month

CITY, STATE — [Provide a summary of the key information about your story, event, etc. This should be brief and answer who, what, when, where, and why. Some examples of key information could include details of your organization's National Adoption Month kickoff event, the public release of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (ACFARS) data, if your State receives an Adoption Incentive payment, a foster care alumni's personal story about how he or she benefited from local community assistance, when AdoptUSKids features a child or sibling group from your area waiting to be adopted or selects someone from your agency as the [Caseworker of the Month](#), or an upcoming prospective adoptive parent meeting or waiting child match-up event.]

November is National Adoption Month. This month and throughout the year, [insert your agency's name] encourages all families and local organizations to raise awareness of the 102,000 children and youth in the U.S. foster care system who are waiting for permanent families. [Insert any community-based statistics that you have.]

[Insert a quote from your spokesperson or local political figure, encouraging readers to participate in local National Adoption Month activities.]

[Provide a URL for more information, event details, and who to contact.]

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Sample Press Release – Option 2:

Release Date: [FILL IN]

Contact Name and Title: [FILL IN]

Phone: [FILL IN]

Email: [FILL IN]

New PSAs Aim to Increase Adoption of Teens and Pre-Teens from Foster Care

[CITY, STATE, DATE] — To promote the adoption of teenagers from foster care, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), AdoptUSKids, and the Ad Council are unveiling a new series of multimedia public service advertisements (PSAs). Today, more than [XX] teenagers await adoption from the U.S. foster care system and [XX] are waiting here in [City, State].

These new PSAs are part of the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative launched in 2004. Since the AdoptUSKids website was established in October 2002, more than 20,500 photolisted children have been placed for adoption, more than 90% of them since the first PSAs were aired in July 2004.

[“INSERT QUOTE FROM KEY SPOKESPERSON (STATE LEADERSHIP, EXPERT, SPOKESFAMILY.”]

The new television, radio, print, outdoor, and digital PSAs end with the tagline: “You don’t have to be perfect to be a perfect parent.” The goal is to reassure prospective parents that even if they are not “perfect,” they have the potential to make a positive impact on a child’s life. This year, a special emphasis is placed on recruiting families for 11 to 17 year olds.

[INSERT ADDITIONAL LOCAL INFORMATION, EVENTS, ETC.]

For more information about foster care and the adoption process in [CITY, STATE] Contact [INSERT AGENCY NAME, PHONE, EMAIL].

[INSERT BOILERPLATE LANGUAGE: Standard language to describe your organization at the bottom of every press release after the end notation.]

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Sample Talking Points for Talking with the Media

National Adoption Month:

- Since 1990 the nation officially has proclaimed November as National Adoption Month.
- National Adoption Month is celebrated every November throughout the United States by government agencies, courts, child advocacy organizations and families across the nation. Its purpose is to provide national awareness, celebrate children and families, and call the nation to action to find families for children waiting in foster care.
- [INSERT DETAILS ON WHAT YOUR AGENCY/JURISDICTION DOES TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH]

Campaign Talking Points:

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, AdoptUSKids, and the Ad Council launched a new series of national public service advertisements (PSAs) designed to encourage prospective parents to consider the adoption of teens and pre-teens (11 to 17 year olds) from foster care.
- These new PSAs illustrate to potential parents that children in foster care don't need perfection; they need the commitment and love an adoptive family can provide.
- The new PSAs end with the tagline, "You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent," reassuring prospective parents that even if they are not "perfect," they have the ability to provide the stability and security that teens in foster care need and deserve.
- Older children wait longer to be adopted, are overrepresented in the foster care population and have lower overall adoption rates.
- For those families who adopt teens, they are giving these children the support and stability of a family and home during a critical period of normal adolescent concerns and additional self-identity issues.
- The PSAs direct audiences to visit www.adoptuskids.org for both English and Spanish information, or to call 888-200-4005 for English-speaking staff or 877-236-7831 for Spanish-speaking staff, to receive current, accurate information about the foster care system and the adoption process.

Key Statistics:

- Each year, more than 250,000 children in the U.S. enter foster care, and there are currently approximately 400,000 children in care.
- Of these children in U.S. foster care, 102,000 are waiting right now for an adoptive family.

- There are currently 102,000 children waiting for adoption from the U.S. foster care system; approximately 30 percent are between the ages of 11 and 17, according to the Administration for Children and Families Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Report System (AFCARS 2012).

Other Information:

- Most of the children in foster care are older than 8 years of age, part of a sibling group, or children of color.
- Generally, there are few to no fees or costs when adopting a child from foster care.
- There are many misperceptions about adoption from foster care including:
 - **Adoption is expensive.** Families who work directly with a public agency typically incur no costs. Families who use a private agency, which will, in turn, work with the public agency in their State or County, may have some out-of-pocket expenses. Families can typically recoup most or all of these expenses after finalization through the federal adoption tax credit or from other State or federal sources.
 - **You have to be married.** You do not have to be married to adopt in most States. Many children have been successfully adopted by single parents. Single-parent families accounted for 30 percent of all adoptions from foster care in 2012 (AFCARS).
 - **You have to have a college degree.** Having a high school diploma or college education is not required. What is important is that you have the stability, compassion, and commitment to raise a child, as well as being flexible and having a good sense of humor.
 - **You have to own a home.** You can rent your home or live in an apartment or a mobile home so long as your living situation is a stable one.
- For more information about adoption from foster care contact [AGENCY NAME, AGENCY NUMBER, AGENCY WEBSITE] or visit www.adoptuskids.org.

PSA Campaign Info:

- In 2003, the Ad Council partnered with the Children's Bureau and AdoptUSKids on a national adoption recruitment campaign to encourage the adoption of children from foster care. Public Service Advertisements (PSAs) have been developed with a specific annual focus, including preteens, Spanish language, African-Americans, sibling groups, and children 8 and older.
- The PSAs illustrate to potential parents that teens in foster care don't need perfection; they need the commitment and love an adoptive family can provide.
- The PSAs portray humorous scenarios that reaffirm the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative's notion that being an imperfect parent is "perfectly normal."

Using Op-Eds

Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed) pages of newspapers usually include articles written by experts in certain fields. These articles usually offer a viewpoint on current events. As experts in adoption and child welfare, your agency leaders could submit an Op-Ed to a local newspaper to help raise awareness about adoption. Write your own Op-Ed, using the sample below as a guide. Then send it to the editors of the local newspaper. You can locate the newspaper editor's name at the top of the Op-Ed page in that particular newspaper.

Sample Op-Ed

Celebrate Your Imperfections, Become a Parent!

Rarely in today's society are imperfections embraced or celebrated. We are constantly bombarded with ways to alter our imperfections, even hide them. However, in the more than 35 years I've worked in the child welfare system, I've found there is a safe place where imperfections lead to humor, bonding and love — the relationship between a parent and child.

According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) 2012 data, there are approximately 400,000 children in the foster care system in the United States; 102,000 of these children are waiting for adoption right now.

The number of adoptions from foster care has risen slightly in recent years, but there are many more adults who consider this route without taking action, due to skepticism about the process and fear their imperfections might get in the way.

The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign and Response Initiative emphasizes to prospective parents that they "don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent." All parents make mistakes and being a good adoptive parent for teens does not require perfection. Rather, it requires the very traits that many potential parents may not even know they already possess: time, stability, maturity, commitment, flexibility, compassion, a sense of humor, patience, a team player attitude, and an overall love of children.

This November, during National Adoption Month, we are calling on perfectly imperfect parents to consider adopting 11 to 17 year-old youth from foster care.

There are 102,000 children waiting for adoption from the U.S. foster care system. Data shows the older a child gets, the more difficult it is for them to find a forever family.

Teens and pre-teens are often overlooked in the foster care system, because potential parents may not think they have what it takes to care for an older child, a child who might recognize a parent's imperfections.

Please visit [INSERT AGENCY URL] and consider becoming the perfect, imperfect parent to one of the many children in foster care who are looking for the security and stability a forever family can provide. Trust me when I say, they will embrace you just as you are — imperfections and all.

[INSERT SIGNATURE, TITLE OF AUTHOR]

Sample Blog Post

Teens and Pre-Teens Need “Forever Families” Too

Approximately 102,000 children in the U.S. foster care system are waiting for permanent homes where they permanently belong in a family photo, around the kitchen table, and in their parent’s heart. Could you be the perfect parent to one of them?

During National Adoption Month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families and the Ad Council, are launching a new public service advertisement (PSA) campaign featuring teens and pre-teens (ages 11-17). Children over the age of 10 are often overlooked in the foster care system, because potential parents may not think they have what it takes to care for an older child, a child who might recognize a parent’s imperfections.

The PSAs highlight that even if you are not “perfect,” you have the ability to provide the stability and security that children in foster care need and deserve. All parents make mistakes and being a good adoptive parent for teens doesn’t require perfection. Rather, it requires the very traits that many potential parents may not even know they already possess: time, stability, maturity, commitment, flexibility, compassion, a sense of humor, patience, a team player attitude, and the overall love of children.

This month, when you see these light-hearted and poignant PSAs, think about the more than 30,000 teens and pre-teens presently waiting for adoption from foster care. Families who adopt teens and pre-teens are giving them the opportunity to thrive, reach their full potential, and grow through the loving and stable foundation of a forever family.

To learn more about the process of adoption from foster care contact [INSERT AGENCY NAME, PHONE, EMAIL].



More free resources at:
.....
www.nrcdr.org

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