



# National Adoption Month

## Becoming an Adoptive Parent in Florida

What You Need to Know, Pre- and Post-Adoption

November 2021

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# Adopting with OHU in Florida

If you can provide a safe, stable home for a child, and most importantly, if you are willing and able to provide unconditional love to that child, adoption may be the way you grow your family. By providing that unconditional support, you will change a young person's life forever.

While the adoption process may seem daunting at first, you can take the first step by finding out more about what you can expect. In this toolkit, you'll find an overview of the adoption process in Florida, and the steps required to adopt a child or teenager through One Hope United.



# Adoption Myth #1

I can't adopt a child because...

- I'm not married.
- I'm too young or too old.

Individuals and couples who adopt through One Hope United come from all walks of life. They may be in their early 20's, or their late 50's, single or partnered. None of these life circumstances will prevent you from being able to adopt through One Hope United. What's most important is that you can provide a safe home for a child, and that you're willing and able to provide the love and support they need from you as their parent.



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## Myth #2

I can't adopt because...

- I'm not wealthy, or I can't afford to adopt.

Adopting through OHU in Florida doesn't cost anything for an adoptive parent or parents! Adoptive parents must complete a home study prior to adopting, but the purpose of the home study is to verify that parents are able to provide a safe and stable home for their child – there is no income requirement to adopt through One Hope United.

Children with disabilities or special needs often qualify for adoption assistance to help pay for their care needs. And, in Florida, children adopted through foster care are eligible for free tuition at any Florida state university, community college, or vocational school until 28 years of age. They are also eligible for FASFA and PELL grants.



# Myth #3

I can't adopt because...

- The birth parents may be able to take their child back someday.

In some situations, it is possible, and beneficial, for a child to maintain a relationship with a biological parent or former foster parent. However, adoptive parents do not need to worry about losing their parental rights, as long as they are properly caring for their child.



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# How Does the Adoption Process Work?

One Hope United's adoption process includes seven fundamental steps.

## 1. PRIDE Training

After prospective adoptive parents are identified, One Hope United refers them to our PRIDE training classes, which stands for Parent's Resource for Information, Development and Education. PRIDE classes take place over 6-10 weeks, and participants may include prospective adoptive parents, prospective foster parents, and relatives or non-relatives who are interested in caring for a child in their life.

Throughout PRIDE training, participants receive parent resources, and information on a child's development and needs. They also address common stigmas or myths around what experiences a youth in foster care may have had, or is currently experiencing, and how to address trauma. Participants learn about the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) discipline policies and other guidelines. Finally, participants have the opportunity to share about their own background, and their own expectations around what becoming a parent will mean and look like, so One Hope United and its partner agencies have the information they need to match them with a child or sibling group.

# How Does the Adoption Process Work? (cont.)

## 2. Adoption home study

After PRIDE training has been completed, adoptive candidates must complete a home study. The home study includes more than simply evaluating your home for safety. At this point in the adoption process, your caseworker will also interview you and your partner; complete a background screening; verify your income; obtain health information from you and your partner; and reach out to your references. They will also take your fingerprints, and check to make sure you have not been convicted of child abuse in your state of residence, or any other state.

When conducting a home study, caseworkers are looking to verify that your home is a safe environment, and that all utilities are properly functioning. Your caseworker will also verify your home lease or ownership.



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# How Does the Adoption Process Work? (cont.)

## Adoption Home Study:

At this point, your caseworker will also get to know you and your partner. They may ask about any of the following things:

- Your childhood
- Family history
- What strengths you feel you and your partner will have as parents, as well as any potential weaknesses
- The age range of children you are interested in adopting
- Any behaviors or conditions you are willing or unwilling to care for
- Your parenting style, including your approach to discipline.

Your caseworker will use this information to identify any child who is available for adoption. If a match is identified, you will then have a full disclosure meeting with your caseworker.



# How Does the Adoption Process Work?

## 3. Full disclosure meeting

Throughout the process of matching a child with a family, many parents speak extensively with their adoption caseworker about what the type of parent they expect they'll be, and what the right family match may look like. Caseworkers also create a file about the adoptive parent or parents, and if a child is available for adoption, they will proactively work to determine if a parent who has completed PRIDE training and the home study may be the right match.

Once a potential match has been identified, caseworkers will have a full disclosure meeting with the prospective adoptive parents, or parent. In this meeting, they will share many aspects of the child's background, which may include, but is not limited to, the child's family history, any medical needs, academic history, any history of trauma or other special needs, the child's personality, and their interests. If the parent, or parents, feel they may be a match, their caseworker will set up an activity or outing where prospective parents can meet the child.



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# How Does the Adoption Process Work?

## 4. First meeting

A prospective adoptive parent's first visit with a child will depend on the needs and circumstances of the child. The child may be aware or unaware that the person or couple they are meeting is interested in adopting them. Some caseworkers may “bump into friends” while taking the child out to dinner, to ease any anxiety or stress the child may feel about meeting a potential parent.

Some children may not feel sure that they want to be adopted, so families and caseworkers will move much slower in these cases, placing the child or youth's mental and emotional needs as the top priority. In certain cases, children may even write a letter to prospective parents before meeting, and have the opportunity to see photos of their home, other children, or pets. With any first visit, our caseworkers and prospective parents set up a fun experience, like a trip to a theme park, or the beach.

# How Does the Adoption Process Work?

## 5. Additional meetings

If the first visit goes well, and the child and parent(s) are interested in moving forward, supervised visits will be scheduled. Each adoption progresses at the right pace for the child or youth, and the top priority is building trust. As the process moves forward, unsupervised visits will be scheduled. During these visits, the child will meet future family members and family friends, and have time to become more comfortable in the home.

## 6. The adoption is finalized

After all requirements have been met, adoptive parents will be awarded permanent legal custody of their child. An adoption is officially finalized in court after a judge has reviewed the entire adoption to ensure it was completed in accordance with state laws.



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# How Does the Adoption Process Work?

## 7. Post-adoption: referral services and ongoing support

One Hope United partners with community agencies which connect adoptive families with support groups, case management, ongoing training, therapy, and respite care.

If your child has experienced trauma in their life, ongoing family therapy is recommended. We recommend adoptive parents take an active role in their child's therapy, and be open to working with therapy providers.





# Final Thoughts

Adoption is a service unlike any other, and OHU's case managers affirm that adopting a child will positively impact the life of a parent as much, if not more, than it impacts the life of a child. When you adopt through One Hope United, you provide a forever home for a youth who needs and deserves one. As long as you have room in your home and your heart, you can change a child's life.

If you are interested in adopting through One Hope United, you can get started at [onehopeunited.org/adoption/](https://onehopeunited.org/adoption/).



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# Our Adoption Locations in Florida

Orlando Office  
5749 Westgate Drive, Suite 202  
Orlando, Florida 32835  
321-441-1567  
407-681-2424

Sebring Office  
4343 Sun N Lake Blvd.  
Sebring, Florida 33872  
863-385-1009  
863-385-0096

Wauchula Office  
225 East Main Street, Suite 106  
Wauchula, Florida 33873  
863-385-1009



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# About One Hope United

Founded in 1895, One Hope United is a multistate nonprofit that helps children and families build the skills to live life without limits. We serve over 10,000 children and families each year through education centers, child and family services, counseling, and residential programs. With our evidence-based and trauma-informed practices, we empower children and families to see and create a future where, regardless of their past, they can reach their full potential.

[Contact us](#) for more information.