



# National Adoption Month

## Becoming an Adoptive Parent in Illinois

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

November 2021

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# Adopting with OHU in Illinois

By providing a safe, stable home, as well as unconditional love and support, a foster or adoptive parent can change a young person's life forever.

**It is important to note that in Illinois, parents can only adopt through One Hope United after becoming a licensed foster parent. Furthermore, a foster parent can only adopt if biological parents' rights have been terminated.** One Hope United seeks foster parents who are open and willing to work toward family reunification, if it is in the best interest of the child. However, if it is determined that family reunification is not possible, foster parents may be able to adopt their foster child.

While the foster care and 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 what it looks like to foster and adopt a child with OHU in Illinois.





# Qualifications to Become a Foster Parent

Foster parents are people who are over 21, married or single, and come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Foster parents must also:

- Be in good physical and mental health
- Meet state and local requirements for housing safety, have adequate space, and pass a background check
- Demonstrate a level of acceptance towards the birth parents of children in care.
- Work cooperatively with One Hope United caseworkers
- Be willing to participate in training in order to provide the best care possible
- Be understanding of different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds



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# Foster Licensing Process

1. Complete an application packet.
2. Undergo a criminal background check which includes being fingerprinted.
3. Complete pre-service Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) PRIDE training, supplemental trainings and CPR/First aid.

## About PRIDE Training

Parent's Resource for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE) classes take place over 6-10 weeks. 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 DCFS discipline policies and other guidelines. Finally, participants can share about their own background, and their own expectations around becoming a parent.

# Foster Licensing Process (cont.)

4. Complete licensing forms packet including medical exams, reference letters, financial statement and other safety forms.
5. Participate in home study with agency staff.

## About the Home Study

The home study includes more than simply evaluating your home for safety. At this point in the licensing 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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# Foster Licensing Process (cont.)

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 fostering
- 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 match you with a foster child, or children.

6. Attend ongoing training programs provided by our agency and other agencies.





# Foster Parent Expectations

- Be readily available by phone
- Take children to annual doctor appointments and dentist appointments
- Treat any youth in care as your own child, while understanding that they are not, and they can be moved at any time
- Be part of the child welfare team and attend meetings and court dates
- Give the agency 14-day notice if requesting the removal of a child
- Attend provided agency trainings



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# When a Foster Child May be Adopted

When a child's birth parent's rights are terminated, adoption is added as a goal for that child or sibling group. Foster parents will work with their own attorney, or a DCFS attorney, to legally adopt their foster child.

A One Hope United Adoption Specialist will work with foster parents through every step of the process, and guide parents through any questions or hurdles.

Once the adoption is finalized, a family will receive post-adoption services through DCFS, including ongoing services. One Hope United can also provide referral services to foster parents or adoptive parents, and our adoption specialists are always available to answer questions, even years later.

# Adoption Myths

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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# Myths (cont.)

I can't adopt because...

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

Foster and 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.

While some children may have disabilities or special care needs, parents of these children will receive continuing services through DCFS to provide for your child's needs.







# Myths (cont.)

I can't adopt because...

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

When you adopt through foster care, the rights of your child's biological parents have been terminated. However, adoptive parents do not need to worry about losing their parental rights, as long as they are properly caring for their child. If possible, it can be beneficial to maintain relationships with extended family members, or friends from their previous community, but this choice is up to your discretion as their parent.



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# 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. One Hope United's adoption specialists are extremely specialized and knowledgeable, and will be with you every step of the way when you adopt from foster care.

It is important to note that One Hope United seeks foster parents who are open to family reunification. However, if birth parents cannot provide a safe home for their child, you may be able to adopt your foster child. When you adopt through foster care, 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 becoming a foster parent in Illinois, you can learn more at [onehopeunited.org/foster-care-adoption/](https://onehopeunited.org/foster-care-adoption/).





# Our Foster Care Locations in Illinois

Kenwood Office  
707 E. 47th St.  
Chicago, Illinois 60653  
[312-949-5500](tel:312-949-5500)

Charleston Office  
701 Monroe Ave.  
Charleston, Illinois 61920  
[217-345-6554](tel:217-345-6554)

Joliet Office  
3077 W Jefferson Ste #105  
Joliet, IL 60435  
[815-730-6700](tel:815-730-6700)



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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.