

# Parents Wanting to Adopt

*Synthesis Paper:* [Promoting Adoption Reform: Congress Can Give Children Another Chance](#)

Although growing numbers of children need adoption, there are more than enough families to meet the demand. The National Council for Adoption estimates that at least one million infertile couples and an additional one million fertile couples would like to adopt.<sup>1)</sup> According to the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, one-third of women (aged 18-44 years) has ever considered adopting a child, and one in seven of those has taken steps to adopt.<sup>2)</sup>

## 1. Adopting Children with Special Needs

Couples who want to adopt are not looking just for healthy, Caucasian infants, despite assumptions to the contrary. The National Down's Syndrome Adoption Exchange reports a waiting list of over 100 couples who would like to adopt a child with Down's syndrome – more than enough to accommodate parents who want Down's children given up for adoption. Nor is it difficult to find families for children with spina bifida and children who are HIV positive. For example, the National Council for Adoption is identifying children who will be orphaned when their parents die of AIDS, so that appropriate plans can be made before the parents' death. The response by individuals and families willing to adopt such children has been overwhelming.

## 2. Adopting Children from Overseas

Americans are also willing to help with children from overseas, especially because of the anti-adoption bias in the United States. When the communist regime in Romania fell, ABC-TV's "20/20" reported that thousands of children were warehoused in government orphanages. Pictures showed many children with health and developmental problems. ABC received over 25,000 self-addressed, stamped envelopes from people who wanted more information, and within six months 2,000 Romanian children were adopted by Americans,<sup>3)</sup> many of whom had not considered adoption until this need became known. This suggests that the pool of parents willing to adopt could be expanded significantly.

In 1993, over 56 percent of the 7,348 children from other countries adopted by American parents were over the age of one. Of these, 9 percent were between the ages of five and nine, and 5 percent were over the age of ten.<sup>4)</sup> In addition, many of these foreign-born children have physical and emotional problems at the time of their adoption.<sup>5)</sup>

## 3. Why More Parents Don't Adopt

Despite the evident readiness and desire to adopt, many families report a lack of support or encouragement from the social services establishment. They report such things as unanswered phone calls, inadequate networking with other agencies which may have children ready for adoption, a disinclination to identify children with needs that correspond to the gifts of the family, and a general lack of support to bring couples successfully through the adoption process.<sup>6)</sup>

1)

National Committee for Adoption, "Unmarried Parents Today," June 25, 1985.

2)

Jo Jone, "Adoption experiences of women and men and demand for children to adopt by women 18-44 years of age in the United States," National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Health Statistics 23 (2008). Available at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_23/sr23\\_027.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_23/sr23_027.pdf).

3) 4)

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service data from National Council for Adoption, 1994.

5)

There is strong evidence in U.S.-foreign adoption patterns that Americans do not seek Caucasian children only. Of all the foreign adoptions in 1987 (total: 10,097) 122 were from Europe; 7,614 were from Asia; 22 were from Africa; and 1,363 were from South America. The rest were from Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Non-white couples in the United States have a pattern of adopting at a higher rate than do white couples. See section on "Black Families and Adoption."

6)

Personal communication from Mary Beth Styles, Vice President for Professional Practice, National Council for Adoption, summing up the complaints of parents to NCFA.

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