

Related Articles

 giveinkind.com/articles/help-loved-one-foster-adopt-system

Give InKind is honored to feature Angela Trento Sommella, Home Finding Supervisor, Therapeutic Foster Boarding Program of Astor Services for Children & Families.

The nature of foster care is to provide a temporary safe place for a child to reside. Although a goal of foster care is to return a child to a family of origin, in some cases this is not possible if/when parental rights have been terminated. In circumstances such as these, often, older children need a permanent home. For some children in longer-term foster care, their existing foster parents wish to adopt them.

After being a foster parent for almost a year, I was afforded an opportunity to adopt the child in my care. Having a support network was very important. My co-workers, family, and friends all came together to not only offer their congratulations but also to "shower" my new child *and* my family. Some very thoughtful gifts we received were restaurant and movie theatre gift cards, as well as certificates to family-themed entertainment, such as a water park.

When older foster children are adopted, there is much room for friends and family to show their love and support. Do take care, however, to consider some of the nuances.

One misconception the friends and families many have is that only newborns and toddlers are placed for adoption. Not true. For some foster families with a child living in their home for an extended period, adoption is a natural progression.

It was comforting when extended friends and family made themselves available to me. They listened and helped to ease my anxieties about making a lifetime commitment. One person (also an adoptee) reminded that older foster children need to know that you respect the lives they lived before you. When adopting an older child, you are not replacing that child's parents. Instead, you are providing a long-term substitution and are acting in every way a parent should.

Do not weigh in on what the child calls the adoptive parents. An adopted child may refer to the adopted parents as mom and dad, but s/he may not. Many times (as in my case) the child has already had a long-standing relationship with the birth parents. There are already people in their lives to whom they refer to as mom and dad.

The caring community around the family should also be supportive of an adopted child's right to see their birth siblings. Remember that siblings are not always adopted together. The adoptive parent should enable these continued relationships. Children may not verbalize the importance of maintaining a relationship with their birth siblings but it is a life-time gift you are providing them. Offer to help facilitate these visits.

For the family adopting, know that it is vitally important to include any other children in the decision to adopt. All children should be made to feel on-board and be reassured of their critical role in the family. It is beneficial to enlist the help of older children when the child being adopted is younger. Friends and family can notice the important roles of the older children and praise them. Praise goes a long way towards validation. In addition to praise, little remembrances to celebrate their effort are a great substitute for the newborn sibling gift.

It is important for the family and friends to come together as a team to keep the family unit strong.

Helpful Products

Give InKind does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We have an affiliate relationship with many of the advertisers on our site, and may receive a commission from any products purchased from links in this article. See Terms & Conditions.