

Is there a difference between adoptive and biological parents?

Yes because adoptive parents are substitutes. All adopted children (whether infants or older children) have special needs based on their past lives (e.g. neglect, broken relationships, physical and psychological deprivation, mistreatment, uprooting).

Adopted children require parents who are sensitive and can best meet their needs, based on their age, their life prior to adoption and how prepared they are for adoption.

Each child's specific difficulties resulting from their life prior to adoption, as well how they resonate with their adoptive parents, is what sets adoptive parenting apart.

- In 2016, among the children adopted from abroad*:
 - 60% were over 3 years old and 41% over 5,
 - 23% were adopted with their sibling(s),
 - 17% had a known health problem prior to arriving.
- Depending on the country of origin, up to one child in two had suffered mistreatment**.
- 37% of children adopted from abroad experienced at least one psychological/educational difficulty following their arrival***.
- In 2013, within France, 17.4% of wards of the State who were set for adoption had specific needs****.
- Every year, there are adoption cases which experience major difficulties and which fail.

* MAI 2016

** EFA, 2015

*** CREAI, 2013

**** ONED 2014

Why prepare to be an adoptive parent?

Because love alone is not enough

- for children, even very young ones, being adopted is not easy,
- all adopted children have specific needs, even babies,
- children don't understand how adoption will change their lives,
- things don't always turn out exactly as we hoped,
- the arrival of a child can be destabilizing,
- the adoption process may have taken a lot out of the future parents,
- to help form an emotional bond with the child and make him/her a full member of the family:
- learn to cope with the unexpected, not focus on negatives, and take appropriate educational action by developing parenting skills,
- be aware of both you and your partner's limits in order to create a realistic adoption plan,
- surround yourself with good support and don't hesitate to ask for help once the child has arrived.

This brochure was issued on the initiative of the MAI (Intercountry Adoption Unit) in association with representatives from the Departmental Councils of the Saône et Loire and Val d'Oise, the French Adoption Agency (AFA), the Lyon branch of the French Adoption Confederation (COFA-Lyon), Doctors of the World, the EFA (*Enfance & Familles d'Adoption*) federation, ALPA-*Le Fil d'or* adoption support, the International Social Service (ISS), the intercountry adoption consultations at Sainte Anne and Versailles hospitals and the DGCS (Directorate-General for Social Cohesion).

For further information:

- www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/
- <http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/>
- Adoption Services of Departmental Councils

January 2017



Preparing to be an adoptive parent?

An essential step on your path to adoption

If...

- you want to request approval to adopt a child who is a ward of the French State or from abroad,
- your approval procedure is underway,
- you have already been approved and are waiting to be matched with a child,
- you have already been matched,
- you will soon meet your child/children.

Is finding information and preparation the same thing?

Finding information on the procedures to follow, the profiles of children put up for international adoption, specific social and cultural considerations, and host country requirements can be done online, by attending information sessions organized by Departmental Councils, the French Adoption Agency (AFA), Accredited Adoption Bodies (AABs), associations for adopted children and adoptive parents, or by meeting a doctor.

Preparation involves personal experiences, with real feelings. It involves awareness of how a child arriving in a family may feel, it is anticipating and understanding his/her reactions about how we live together...

How can the child bond with his/her new parents?
How should parents react to difficulties?

Preparation is discovering potential future experiences with other prospective parents and professionals, and using one's skills to face difficulties.

What do the preparation sessions for adoptive parents entail?

- The sessions take place in small groups of prospective adoptive parents and are interactive.
- They are run by adoption and parenting professionals and sometimes by adoptive parents who have received specific training.
- The group techniques used aim to develop the future adoptive parents' capabilities and help them see their strengths and limitations.
- They can involve simulations and role play, allowing each participant to listen to other points of view and experiences and express their own opinions.
- Different modules can be provided based on the participants' circumstances (child's development and needs, older child, adopting siblings, etc.)
- A financial contribution may be requested.

Is preparing to be an adoptive parent an advantage in the adoption process?

Preparing to be adoptive parents means anticipating and understanding...

- the child's history, deficiencies, past traumas.
- the bonding process.
- meeting the child for the first time.
- the real child and his/her needs.
- issues when adopting siblings or older children.

Both in France and host countries, those responsible for matching children and parents are aware that parents, to whom they are confiding the children, must be prepared for the specific challenges of adoptive parenting.

Some host countries require that prospective parents undergo preparation.

In some recipient countries like Belgium, this preparation is mandatory.

