

The Explore Adoption initiative aims to match brothers and sisters with loving families able to open their homes to a sibling group.

In the past, brothers and sisters separated from their birth parents because of abuse or neglect were often adopted into different homes. This was partially because younger siblings found homes more readily, leaving older siblings in temporary care. Today, adoption recruiters work hard to keep siblings together, finding these children do better if they have a chance to grow up together with their brothers and sisters.

Through statewide and community-based partnerships, a branded initiative and media campaign, and Web-based tools, **Explore Adoption** invites Floridians to find out more about public adoption and explore this method of creating or growing a family.

BENEFITS OF PUBLIC ADOPTION:

SECURE. Before children are made available for adoption, a court has terminated their biological parents' rights, meaning they have no future legal claim to the children. This court-backed measure means public adoptions are secure and final.

AFFORDABLE. Public adoptions are inexpensive, costing a family less than \$500, which can typically be reimbursed by the state. Compared to private adoption, which can cost upward of \$30,000, public adoption is very affordable.

ONGOING SUPPORT. Most children adopted through the public adoption system qualify for ongoing assistance, including:

- Monthly subsidy payments (if funds are available)
- Health care coverage through age 18
- Free tuition to any state college, university or technical school in Florida

A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT. From the initial inquiry until the adoption's completion

and beyond, local community-based care agencies, local partners and existing adoptive families are available to provide practical and emotional advice and support.

THE ROAD TO ADOPTION:

THE EVALUATION PROCESS, including training, home study, and background checks, usually can be completed in about nine months.

AFTER QUALIFYING, each potential adoptive parent has the opportunity to meet and get to know the child who might become part of their family. This interaction allows for families and children to:

- Familiarize themselves with each others' interests and beliefs
- Find similarities in their lives

- Develop a relationship prior to finalizing the adoption

ADOPTIVE PARENTS ARE VERY DIVERSE

A wide variety of people may adopt, including those who are:

- Married or single
- Any age, as long as they are at least 18
- Homeowner or renter
- Of any faith or religion
- An experienced parent or an individual with no children

Find out more about public adoption and the children currently looking for families by visiting www.adoptflorida.org or calling 1-800-96-ADOPT (1-800-962-3678).



meet the pitts family:

Greg and Jan Pitts were successful business owners in their 40s when they decided to complete their family by adopting. An adoption recruiter introduced them to a sibling group of four girls, Tori, Izzie, Sarah and Iva. After several weekend visits, the Pitts knew it was a done deal. They even started shopping for a new vehicle to accommodate their growing family. As Greg puts it, "The next Friday they moved for the last time. They've been with us for more than 6 years."

The Pitts were able to unite the four sisters who had been living apart in two separate foster homes. "For me, it's been a great experience," says Greg. "There have been some rough times, but I wouldn't go back or trade my life with anybody."