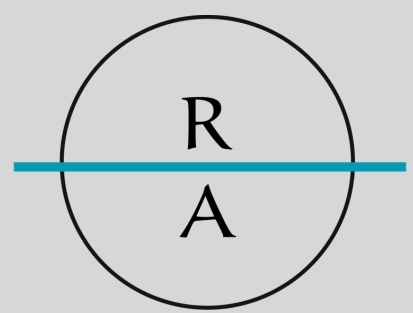


8 Steps To Take Before You Adopt from Foster Care



RAD ADVOCATES

1. Don't rush it.



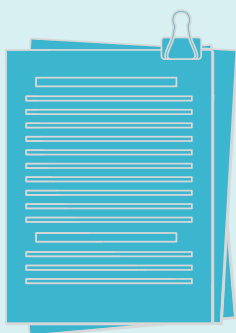
While you may feel excited or anxious to finalize the adoption, we find that waiting as long as possible has valuable benefits. Time allows you to do your homework beforehand which can greatly benefit your family and the child for the future.



2. Document everything.

Get written documents and journal EVERY meeting, phone call, email, etc. pertaining to the child. You will likely need them to obtain proper services and funding and possibly in legal situations.

3. Access records.



Get all of the child's prior records in order to adequately prepare for the child's needs. Frequently, parents are not given full disclosure regarding the child's background, including trauma history, previous diagnoses, etc. Be sure to make copies of all records.



4. Obtain current mental and physical evaluations from qualified clinicians.

Foster care children are at high-risk for reactive attachment disorder (RAD) given the disorder is prevalent in youth who have been in multiple housing placements and experienced early trauma. Ensure that the child receives an appropriate evaluation for RAD.

5. Secure appropriate funding for appropriate treatment.



You have the right to secure the necessary funding to meet the needs of your child *before* finalizing adoption. As an example, a RAD diagnosis merits a specialized program of *your choice* (be sure to research thoroughly).

"County professionals believe a child's behaviors will change with permanency and, thus, will push adoption quickly. Sadly, it's just not that easy. Permanency typically complicates matters with a disordered child. You'll need time to prepare.

~Amy VanTine
RAD Advocates

6. If possible, hire a lawyer.

Consider an attorney to help you with a law-abiding contract as well as to appeal any court decisions, if necessary.



7. Find education and support.

Seek ways to ensure you're realistically prepared and supported for adoption. Understand the struggles rather than solely the positive aspects. For example, join an adoption support group (not just a play group), seek advice from other foster-to-adopt parents, etc. before you finalize the adoption.

8. Seek an advocate.

We support adoption wholeheartedly. It can be a beautiful way to grow your family. But the experience is not always perfect. Find professional support to guide and support you. If you cannot find a local resource, RAD Advocates is here no matter where you are geographically or along your adoption journey.