

Making Ohio the Most Adoption-Friendly State: A Call to Business Leaders

November marks National Adoption Month, celebrating families who open their hearts to children in need. This year's theme, "Honoring Youth: Strengthening Pathways for Lasting Bonds," highlights the importance of creating a strong support network for youth in foster care—one that meets their emotional, social, and cultural needs.

As we celebrate National Adoption Month, we encourage Ohio businesses and organizations to implement adoption and foster-friendly policies, as [the State of Ohio has done for its employees](#), including paid leave, financial assistance, and flexible work arrangements. These initiatives can ease the transition for adoptive and foster families while fostering a more inclusive work environment, demonstrating a commitment to employee well-being.

Currently, over 14,000 Ohio children are in foster care, with more than 3,000 waiting to be adopted. Half of these children are 13 or older, at risk of aging out of the system without a permanent family. Ohio offers various pathways to adoption, including foster-to-adopt programs and private agency adoptions. Adoption in Ohio is about more than creating families; it's about healing, belonging, and ensuring every child has the love and support they deserve.

Engaging businesses in building these practices is essential for making Ohio the most adoption-friendly state. The [Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption's \(DTFA\) Employer Toolkit](#) offers valuable data to support this initiative. Simple additions to benefit policies can make a huge difference in a family's ability to become a foster family or to adopt from foster care. Often, it's the foster family who eventually adopts a youth who has been in their home. Expanding benefits like paid adoption leave will support bonding and normalize adoption across the state.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management's 2024 Employee Benefits Survey, 33% of employers offer paid adoption leave, and 26% provide paid foster child leave. The 2024 Best Adoption-Friendly Workplace survey indicates that financial reimbursement for adoption costs averages \$16,422, with paid leave averaging 9.6 weeks for adoptive parents and 9.7 weeks for foster parents. These modest investments can significantly impact families and children awaiting permanent homes. A study by The Harris Poll revealed that 64% of Americans believe employer support for adoption expenses affects their decision to adopt, while 68% say paid leave influences their choice to expand their family through adoption.

Ohio's adoption system benefits from numerous programs and policies that streamline the process, provide financial assistance, and focus on post-adoption support. Among the most notable are:

1. The Ohio Adoption Grant Program offers financial support to help families cover adoption-related expenses, making it easier for more families to adopt eligible children from foster care or through private adoptions. Learn more at [Ohio Adoption Grant Program](#).
2. [OhioKAN](#) (Kinship and Adoption Navigator Program) is a statewide program that supports kinship and adoptive families throughout the adoption process and beyond. It offers resources, connections, and personalized assistance to enhance family stability and address unique challenges.



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3. Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) adoption recruiters use an evidence-based, child-focused recruitment model to find the right family for every child. A rigorous, five-year national evaluation revealed that children referred to the program are up to three times more likely to be adopted. Learn more about this program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption here.
4. The Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS) program is a program for post-adoptive families of children with special needs. PASSS provides up to \$10,000 in funding per adopted child with special needs per year, to help cover the costs associated with specialized services, resources, and more. Learn more at <https://ohiokan.ohio.gov/>
5. Adoptive Parent training helps set realistic expectations, identifies parenting strengths, and provides effective parenting strategies.
6. Support groups, respite care, educational support, counselors, and therapists are all services available to adoptive families to help make the journey easier and more successful for parents, siblings, and children who are adopted.

Adoption begins a lifelong journey, and Ohio is committed to supporting families with post-adoption resources like counseling, peer support, and financial aid.

Learn more about how you can help at childrenandyouth.ohio.gov and fosterandadopt.ohio.gov.



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