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Foster Child Adoption Much Less Costly

November 10, 2010 11:52 PM

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LAUDERDALE LAKES, Fla. (CBS4) – Adoption can be an expensive and lengthy process, but few families consider the less costly option of adoption through the foster care system, like the Cosby's of Lauderdale Lakes did.

"There's no difference, no difference at all, cause like I said once we saw Ashlee I just felt like she was my own child, like I birthed her myself, and you can't tell me any different," explained Juanita Cosby, mother to both her biological son Aaron Jr. and her adopted daughter, Ashlee.



Last year her daughter Ashlee met the Cosby's for the first time at the age of 13.

"It feels great to have a mom, a dad, and a little brother," said Ashlee.

Finding families to adopt children in the foster care system is challenging, but the state of Florida has had lots of success in the past few years.

"Across the state we have exceeded all the adoption goals, to the point that the state of Florida was recognized by the federal government," explained Emilio

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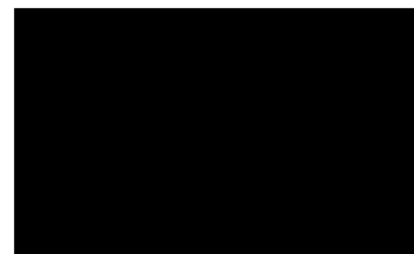
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Benitez, CEO of ChildNet, one of the foster care agencies in Broward County.

According to Benitez, part of the success comes from reversing some of the stereotypes about foster care.

"It's really breaking through the barrier of the thought that children in foster care are troubled children or broken children, they're not – they're children in bad situations," said Benitez.

And there are lots of incentives in place to help families go through adoption in the foster care system.

"The child has complete health care paid up until age 18 and their college paid for through age 23," explained Dr. Oren Wunderman, Executive Director of the Family Resource Center, one of the foster care agencies in Miami-Dade County.

But the real payoff is giving children in foster care a chance to experience a family and a better future.

"These children flourish, they do better in school, they don't have the same truancy issues, they also have a big improvement in self care, they are less prone to abuse drugs, less prone to abuse alcohol, they're less prone to engage in promiscuous relationships, because they feel better about themselves because they have much stronger more secure guidance," explained Wunderman.

It's something Ashlee's new family is happy to provide for her.

"Ashlee needed someone to love her, to guide her and to protect her, and that's what I'm here to do," said Juanita.

And that's the security that Ashlee's been searching for her whole life.

"I have a family that loves me and I'm not in the system no more," said Ashlee.

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