



Webinar Recap | November 2025

Disabled Parents' Adoption Experiences

Panelists



Dr. Kara Ayers is an Associate Professor at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. She is the co-founder of the Disabled Parenting Project and a mom of 3.



Yomi Young works in healthcare and is a disability justice organizer. She is the solo parent to a spirited preschooler nicknamed Jellybean.



Robin Wilson-Beattie is a speaker, writer, and advocate for disability and sexuality. She is the 2024 Carrie Buck Distinguished Fellow at Lurie, and a mom of two.

The Unpredictability of the Adoption Process

Yomi shared that she began as a resource parent, another term for foster parent, providing temporary care when foster children needed support and their primary foster parents were unavailable. In one such situation, she was told she would be receiving a four-month-old, but instead was given a 14-day-old infant, emphasizing the often misinformed nature of emergency placements. What was meant to be a temporary placement eventually became permanent, and Yomi officially adopted her in January. Robin, on the other hand, described her involvement in a multi-year, multi-state process to adopt a teenager she connected with through an adoption exchange. She had to be certified in her home state of California and undergo additional vetting in the child's state, showcasing the extensive bureaucratic hurdles of the process.

Confronting Ableism and Bias in the System

Both speakers described the emotionally draining experience of having "the state in your business," with constant visits and assessments from multiple social workers. Yomi shared that her licensing agency told her they would not place a child under five with her because they did not believe that she, as a wheelchair user, could "chase after them at a park."

Robin similarly faced significant pushback due to her mental health history and her husband's history of depression and addiction recovery, requiring extensive letters from doctors to "prove" her fitness, scrutiny she felt was intensified because of her disability status.

Trauma and Ethical Adoption Practices

Yomi and Robin both emphasized that adoption is inherently rooted in loss and complexity. As Yomi explained, "even if you have the biggest heart and the best intention, you need to know that your love, your nice home, all the toys, a loving family, none of that is going to cure, heal, or erase the initial loss." Echoing this, Robin underscored the importance of ongoing access to therapy, medical care, and educational support for children who have experienced trauma.

Key Takeaways

Different disabilities may impact how you are perceived by the adoption/foster system.



Create pathways to help adopted children stay connected to their family of origin and cultural roots.



Accept that successful parenting often requires substantial support.



Adapting from group home living to a family home can take time, especially as children adjust emotionally, psychologically, and relationally.



Despite the challenges, both stories ultimately center on deep love and fulfillment. "For me, becoming a parent was the best decision of my life," Robin shared. Quoting Zora Neale Hurston, Yomi added, "There are years that ask questions and years that answer," describing her daughter as "the answer," while still acknowledging the hard and sometimes "sucky" parts of parenting.



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