



Frequently Asked Questions about Adoption and Unaccompanied Children

How did a foster family gain custody of an unaccompanied child through Bethany?

The foster family did not gain full-custody of the child and with Bethany's support the child was reunified with her biological family. Bethany does not have the authority to grant wardship of a child. We believe that children belong with their families and do everything in our power to ensure this happens. Our goal through transitional foster care for unaccompanied children is to provide a safe, temporary loving home for children who would otherwise have no option. Our goal is always to reunify children with their parents or a family member when possible.

Does Bethany plan to put unaccompanied minor children up for adoption?

These children have families, and we will continue to pursue reunification with their families. Our top priority is reunifying refugee children with their families of origin. Of the 108 separated children Bethany had in our care, 102 children have been reunified with family, 3 teens have been referred to longer term foster care at the parent(s) request because of the danger these teen would be in if returned to their country of origin and we believe the remaining 3 children in Transitional Foster Care will be reunited with their parent(s) this month. As always, Bethany will continue to work with the parents to determine the best course of action for children in specific cases.

Weren't nine unaccompanied children adopted through Bethany?

No.

Children have never been adopted from the unaccompanied children program. These children have families, and we will continue to pursue reunification with their families. Furthermore, they are not eligible for adoption.

Nine children have been adopted from the *unaccompanied refugee minor program* over the past 30 years. All of these children had legal status in the United States and were in state custody. Each adoption only occurred after the result of an extensive process to determine what was in the best interest of each child, a process that included the child, their legal counsel, and state child welfare authorities.

Does Bethany want foster parents to adopt unaccompanied children?

No.

Unaccompanied children in transitional foster care have parent(s) or close family members who can provide care. Bethany openly communicates this to all foster families during training and throughout the foster care process and that they are not to seek custody of children in their care. Additionally, Bethany requires that foster parents sign documentation stating that they will not seek to gain custody of unaccompanied children. We are strong advocates for reunification in any applicable circumstance. We actively continue to support safeguards that protect children in foster care.

Does Bethany have experience caring for refugees?

Yes.

Bethany has been caring for refugees for more than 40 years. While recent events have put this issue into an international spotlight, Bethany has been working with refugees since 1975. Since 2013, Bethany has helped reunify over 5000 refugee children and families.

What happens to children who come to the U.S. unaccompanied or are separated from their families?

Unaccompanied children are minors who have crossed the border without their parents. It's important to note that this was happening before the "zero tolerance" policy. Unaccompanied children are detained by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Within 72 hours, children are placed in a child-friendly setting. HHS refers children to organizations like Bethany, where children 12 and under are placed in licensed foster homes.

Children are assigned a treatment team that includes a clinician, case manager, teacher, and their foster family (when available). The treatment team assesses the needs of the child, and evaluates identified family members.

The treatment team recommends placement of that child to HHS and when approved, we proceed with reunification.

Does Bethany support reunification?

Yes.

As an organization determined to keep families together, we believe children belong with their families.

We raised our voices to bring attention to the plight of the separated children through the media and in Washington, D.C. You can read more about our efforts [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). We are working with the government to help develop rapid reunification plans for all separated

children, not just those in Bethany's care, and to provide alternatives to jail for refugee children and families.

Is Bethany preventing reunification?

No.

We believe that children belong with their families. Since 1980 our case workers have worked diligently to ensure a plan for an unaccompanied child is set in place immediately. Our team contacts the children's families to ensure the proper course of action is taken based on their wishes and develop a joint care plan if possible.

Is Bethany evangelizing to the children?

No. Children may participate in any religious activity they choose. Our faith drives us to care for children and families in need.

Who owns Bethany Christian Services?

Bethany Christian Services is a nonprofit organization that brings and keeps families together. Bethany is run by a national board of directors who help serve children and families faithfully through leadership, governance, and approving policies. The list of board members can be found [here](#).

What is Betsy DeVos' relationship with Bethany?

Betsy DeVos and the DeVos Family Foundation have been generous supporters of Bethany Christian Services long before Betsy became the Secretary of Education and we are forever grateful for their continued support. While we are extremely grateful to our thousands of donors and supporters from across the country, the idea that any single individual or organization could cause us to change practices is simply false and diminishes the incredible work of all those firmly focused on the well-being of displaced children.