



# PROJECT JIGSAW

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is Project Jigsaw? Why should I support its efforts?**

Over the last five years, Arizona's foster care system has experienced a 56% increase in children, totaling an overwhelming 17,000 children in state foster care. Each of these children are being denied the opportunity to belong to a stable, loving family. Additionally, there is a large population of LGBTQ people in Arizona who don't realize they could foster or adopt, nor do they realize there are resources available to help them navigate the system.

Project Jigsaw is dedicated to providing access to these resources; aiding in public education and outreach; and advocating on public policy issues to improve state foster care and adoptive processes for all prospective parents. In doing so, more children in Arizona will have the opportunity to be connected with a loving home.

Whether you are an individual or an organization, if you are passionate about child welfare and/or LGBTQ rights in Arizona, you can connect every child to a forever family.

Source: Arizona Department of Child Safety, "[New Foster Care Advisory Commission Mandate to do More than Make Recommendations](#)," (May 27, 2015)

Read more: [17,000 kids can't play your political games](#) (May 2015)

### **Which policies are preventing LGBTQ couples from fostering/adopting in Arizona?**

Legal, institutional and discriminatory barriers exist that make it harder for members of the LGBTQ community to foster and adopt children in Arizona.

The rights of foster parents in Arizona are enumerated in Title 8, Chapter 4, Section 8-530 of state law; however, there is no language that protects against sexual orientation or

gender equality: "Clause 13. To not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age or physical disability."

Additionally, Chapter 5: Section 6 of the Arizona Department of Child Safety manual states: "If all relevant factors are equal and the choice is between a married man and woman certified to adopt and a single adult certified to adopt, placement preference shall be with a married man and woman." In April, the Arizona Legislature failed to push a bill that would eliminate this preference in adoption cases.

Although Gov. Doug Ducey did order the state Department of Child Safety to open foster licenses and adoption capabilities to married gay couples in 2015, this order does not apply to the juvenile courts that oversee adoption cases.

Be it for political or policy based reasons such as those mentioned above, none of the 17,000 children in Arizona state care should be denied access to a stable, loving home.

Read more: [Arizona stalls gay-marriage adoption](#) (April 2016)

[Ducey: Arizona gay couples can again adopt, foster together](#) (April 2015)

### **How can I impact the 17,000 children in state care?**

Over the last five years, Arizona's foster care system has experienced:

- o A 56% increase in children
- o 9% increase in number of foster families
- o 73% increase in the number of children living in congregate care

Now, there are currently over 17,000 children in Arizona's state care. By becoming a Project Jigsaw Coalition Partner, individuals and organizations can impact the lives of these children by:

1. Pledging Support
2. Raising Awareness
3. Advocating
4. Serving as a Resource
5. Providing Pro-bono Legal Support
6. Volunteering

7. Donating
8. Serving as a Mentor to prospective parents/families

As our diverse community coalition of Arizonans work together to provide access to resources; public education and outreach; and advocate on public policy issues, we will create an environment where all couples, regardless of sexual orientation or gender, are provided the opportunity to build a loving family for amazing children.

Become a [Coalition Partner](#) today

### **Are children raised by same-sex parents negatively impacted?**

In a research summary conducted by the American Psychological Association, they found three major concerns regarding children raised by homosexual parents, including:

1. Children will experience difficulty in discovering their own sexual identity
2. Children will experience drawbacks in personal development
3. Children will experience difficulty in social relationships

Unsurprisingly, there was no scientific basis for any arguments that deem LGBTQ couples unfit for parenthood. In fact, research shows that there is no significant difference between a child's personal development and well-being when the sexual identity of the children's parents was compared. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that LGBTQ parents are unable to provide an equally loving and supportive environment to raise their children.

One of the many studies between homosexual and heterosexual couples observed both the parental and child characteristics of 95 female same-sex parent and 95 different-sex parent households with children 6 to 17 years old. The results confirmed the American Psychological Association's research: sexual identity does not play a pivotal role in child outcomes.

Currently, 415,000 children across the United States are being denied access to a stable, loving home. And knowing that same-sex couples are about six times more likely to raise foster youth and four times more likely to raise adopted youth than heterosexual couples, the LGBTQ community is undoubtedly an exceptional resource for these children in Arizona and across the U.S.

Research Studies:

[Lesbians choosing motherhood: A comparative study of lesbian and heterosexual parents and their children](#) (Jan. 1995)

[Same-Sex and Different-Sex Parent Households and Child Health Outcomes: Findings from the National Survey of Children's Health](#) (April 2016)  
[Sexual Orientation, Parents, & Children](#) (July 2004)

Read more:

[Groups encourage more gay couples to adopt children, be foster parents](#) (Sept. 2016)  
[The Kids Are Alright: 10 Facts About Kids Raised by LGBT Parents](#) (Sept. 2016)

## **How to start the foster/adoption process?**

### Requirements:

- Legal US and Arizona Resident
- At least 21 years of age (18 to adopt)
- Pass a criminal background check
  - Obtain a Level 1 Fingerprint Clearance Card
- Have proof of the ability to care for the child
  - Sound physical, mental and emotional health
  - Financially stable
  - Safe environment

## **Decide which state agency is the best fit for you**

Working with an agency that is willing and capable to meet your needs is essential. Additionally, not every agency offers both foster and adoption services. Once you've determined a few agencies that might be a good fit, contact them to get started with their respective orientation and training processes.

**Read more:**

[How is Adoption Different from Foster Care? Do I have to be a Foster Parent First?](#)  
[Full list of Foster Care Licensing Agencies and Requirements by County](#)