



June 21, 2022 - Volume 3, Edition 6



William Anaya (R) and Jeffrey Mohler (L) adopted their daughter, Emma, from foster care. The couple says they could not be happier about their decision.

When William Anaya and Jeffrey Mohler met 20 years ago, they both knew that they wanted to be parents one day. In 2016, they began their journey by attending a resource family orientation meeting with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

“At first, we were considering surrogacy. But my husband and I agreed that there are a lot of kids out there who really need a loving home,” said William, a Southern California native. “After the first orientation, we were overwhelmed by everything involved. But we told ourselves that we were going to make the commitment and see it through.”

After completing paperwork, parenting classes, interviews, background checks and home inspections, William and Jeffrey were approved to be adoptive parents in early 2018. Later that year, they attended a matching event at a bowling alley in Little Tokyo, where they first met their daughter, Emma, who was 7 years old at the time.

“It was kind of like a speed dating event,” William recalled. “Prospective adoptive parents had two minutes to interact with a child or set of siblings. And then they rang a buzzer, and you had to jump onto the next lane. I can only imagine what it’s like [for children] to go to all these different events, hoping that a set of parents will connect with them.”

The recruitment of families to help care for youth in foster care remains a challenge for DCFS. “While the department serves about 19,000 children living away from their parents or guardians, there are only about 14,500 resource family homes,” Interim Director Brandon Nichols said. “The department also has about 300 children waiting for adoptive homes.”

Last month, RaiseAChild, a collaborative partner of DCFS, began a three-month public education campaign to recruit more resource and adoptive families. The effort consists of streetlight banners in the Cities of Los Angeles and Long Beach and features celebrity LGBTQ+ families.

“The population of children and youth in foster care is as diverse as all of the various neighborhoods and communities that make Los Angeles County so unique,” RaiseAChild CEO Rich Valenza said. “At RaiseAChild, we strive to welcome and serve every prospective foster and foster-to-adopt parent with respect, because we need a great diversity of safe and loving families to best serve the children and youth in foster care.”



As parents who are part of the LGBTQ+ community, William and Jeffrey feel naturally equipped to provide their daughter with the love and acceptance that she needs.

"I am very blessed that I grew up in a home that had love, but I knew that my parents did not always agree with the fact that I was gay," William said. "As LGBTQ+ parents, we are equipped to teach our kids to be more tolerant, to show more love, and to show more kindness because we didn't always have that growing up."

Emma's adoption was finalized two years ago this month, and she is flourishing. Her parents attribute that to the loving foundation they have established at home, where she has been able to blossom. To those considering fostering or adopting a child from the foster care system, William has a message.

"If you find it in your heart to open your doors to a child, do not be afraid to do it. It is a very involved process, but it's worth it," he said.

To foster or adopt through DCFS, applicants must be at least 18 years old and residents of Los Angeles County. All applicants must complete the Resource Family Approval process. Applicants may also choose to work through a Foster Family Agency or agencies such as RaiseAChild ([raiseachild.org](https://www.raiseachild.org)). For more information, please call DCFS Foster and Adoption Recruitment at 888-811-1121 or visit [dcfs.lacounty.gov](https://dcfs.lacounty.gov).

**Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect to 800-540-4000**

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