

Between Families

the ongoing journey of a foster child ...

Once a child or sibling group is placed in your home, a new journey begins that can last anywhere from overnight to several months. After the immediate safety of the child has been addressed, the next priority is reunifying the child with their birth family. Slightly more than half of all children who go into foster care return to their birth families.



Most children placed in your home will have regular, court-ordered visits with their biological parents, other adults from whose care they were removed and their siblings if they weren't placed together. It's important for you to work with their caseworker to decide the location and time of the visits. The court decides whether the visits will be supervised.

Except in cases of extreme abuse, nearly all children who enter foster care have a primary case plan of returning home. The foster parent plays an important role to help achieve reunification. During the reunification process, the birth parents are provided help so they can have their children return safely home with them. **Child Welfare Information Gateway** has compiled a great list of resources on foster parent and birth parent relationships.

After a period of time, if reunification is no longer found to be a viable option, the state will file for legal termination of parental

rights or the parents may elect to surrender legal rights to their child in lieu of going through a lengthy termination trial. Either way, a child is not freed for adoption until the rights of all legal and biological parents have been legally severed. For children who are freed for adoption, relatives or non-relative foster parents adopt the vast majority of them. The best interest of the child is always taken into account, including attachment and continuity of care. When a child's relatives or foster parents are unable to adopt a child, the state tries to find other adoptive parents, often through local, state, regional and national adoption exchanges including **Adopt US Kids**.

For an awesome experience and to view this from a child's eyes, go to YouTube and watch "**ReMoved**" and "**Remember My Story - ReMoved Part 2**"

Jason Cecil, director of regional recruitment services

How to connect as a family at the dinner table

This article is courtesy of wikiHow and can viewed in it's original form at www.wikihow.com/Connect-As-a-Family-at-the-Dinner-Table.

Today's busy schedules coupled with school activities beginning is causing many families to eat separately. However, dinner time is a perfect time to spend reconnecting with your family members. Here are a few ideas to help you and your family get to know one another better.

- 1. Try to set a time to eat dinner when all family members will be home.** If this is not possible due to scheduling, then choose a time when most members can be there and make that your regular dinner time.
- 2. Give each member a task.** When a family works together preparing the meals, everyone is more willing to sit down and enjoy it together. Even small children can help; give them a task that will not involve sharp objects, glass or anything hot. They can help set the table by placing the napkins at each setting or they can take items to the table like the

bread or rolls, ketchup or salad dressing (plastic bottles). Have older children set the table or help with peeling vegetables, stirring, mixing or getting the beverages.

- 3. Once dinner is ready and everyone has taken their seat at the table (a good time to say a prayer if you prefer), the conversation can begin.** This is a great time to ask how everyone's day was. Discuss world affairs or at least your local news. Never force anyone to participate in the conversation; when they see how everyone is sharing their day they will eventually join in.
- 4. After dinner, have everyone pitch in and help.** Even if they just empty their own plates the cleanup will be easier for all. If you really want to push the envelope, you can spring a little dessert on them at the same table. You can even offer them a healthy dessert like a bowl of fresh berries and yogurt. Another option is to suggest a movie after cleanup and start popping the popcorn.

Compliance corner

Here's a friendly reminder about a few licensing guidelines.

All bedrooms used for foster care, including the foster parents' bedroom, must have a smoke detector installed inside the bedroom. All bedrooms must have a carbon monoxide detector adjacent to those rooms as well. It is good to check the batteries monthly, and a good time to do that is when you do your monthly fire and tornado drills. Remember to document when your family practices monthly drills as your foster care worker will look for this when completing your yearly renewal.

Also remember to keep all of your medication in a locked container inaccessible to children.

Tracey Noel, performance improvement specialist



Outstanding foster care providers

Kansas care providers of the month James & Leslie Wright

James and Leslie Wright have been licensed with TFI since May 2014, opening their home to children who need respite. They are always willing to help others and see that other foster parents' needs are met by offering their help. James and Leslie demonstrate partnership, teamwork and advocacy for the children in their home and the children's parents.

The Wrights share in the care of the children. James is willing to step up and care for the infant who is placed in their home and he rarely asks Leslie for assistance. James and Leslie have firm boundaries on the placements in their home, yet have shown an ability to be flexible and to think outside the box. The couple is eager to try suggestions when working with a difficult matter involving the children. They believe a child's voice is very important when discussing what is in their best interest.

James and Leslie have driven children to Wichita for parent/child visits to make sure the children have support if and when difficult situations arise. They understand children act out for a reason and refuse to give up without a fight to let the child know they love and care about them. Recently, James planned a getaway trip to Iowa for two siblings in their home. The children's parental rights were terminated and this has affected the youngest child's ability to cope. James stated, "Maybe this trip will help him forget at the moment what has happened and allow him to relax and enjoy the weekend."

The Wrights moved to another home to allow the children to have more space. Leslie stated, "When I am away from the children, I'm really eager to return home to be with them." This foster home is an asset to southeast Kansas and to TFI Family Services.

Oklahoma care providers of the month David & Lacy Cruz

David and Lacy Cruz had a full house. But on the same day a 1-month-old was discharged from the hospital after suffering from severe injuries, the Cruz family also had an opening. God knew this little baby needed the Cruz family. Within hours of their opening, Mrs. Cruz, who is also a nurse, was on her way to the hospital to pick up the baby. The Cruz family has taken the child to numerous appointments with various physicians and specialists. Mrs. Cruz also does daily physical therapy with the baby.

Mr. and Mrs. Cruz had their home up for sale for several months and planned on moving. But with all of the medical needs of the child, they decided to remain in their home so they can be near the hospital and specialists the child needs. It is unlikely the child will ever function normally, but the Cruz family continues to give their all to help this little one.



Recruitment moment

It is easy to get caught up in our day-to-day lives and think we are too busy to recruit. Who has time to add another item on their to-do list these days? Instead of adding to our list with recruitment tasks, how about incorporating those tasks into what you're already doing?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American spends 43 minutes per day socializing. Casual social events may include visiting with friends or attending or hosting neighborhood activities. These are relaxed settings where people often find it easier to share their foster care experiences.

Social events such as church groups, book clubs or PTA meetings will most likely require more of a formal presentation. Dedicating just one of those nights to talking about the need for foster care can make a huge difference in the number of people who may want to become foster parents.

Unfortunately, for many people the idea of speaking in front of a group creates anxiety. Don't let that dreaded public speaking fear prevent you from reaching out to others. By simply inviting TFI to your events, we can work together, or if you prefer TFI will take care of the entire presentation. All you have to do is call 913-661-0923 ext. 4616 and tell us how we can help.

Oklahoma news

Great news!

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services announced that foster parents will receive raises! Effective August 1, the following monthly rate will go into effect for Oklahoma kinship and foster families:

0-5 years: \$506.40

6-12 years: \$583.50

13+ years: \$646.20

Thank you to all who turned out for the foster parent retreat on July 18. We are also so thankful for our team of volunteers and staff who took care of our kids. We hope you found the time spent to be well worth it!

Happy anniversary

15 years

Leon & Carol Epp

10 years

Ed & Suzette Rakestraw

Larry & Natha Lillard

5 years

David & DeLaine Burch

1 year

Benjamin Stauble & Shelley Louthan
Timothy Rankin
Nicholas & KayLeigh Bowers
James & Alison Boese
Bart & Cheri Gardner
Mary Jackson
Joseph & Rebecca Layton
Charles & Lori Mattke

Pamela Davis
Bridgett Shorter
Andrew & Darla Campbell
Philip & Teresa Watson
JP & Tana Redelsperger
Ronnie & Jaudon Mitchell
Eric & Alejandra Rojas





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Foster Parent Retreat **2015!**

Wichita, Kansas, Aug. 14-15

Overland Park, Kansas, Aug. 28-29

For the most current calendar for Kansas Children Alliance Training, go to childally.org/training.html

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After hour emergencies, please call 877-921-4114.

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