

Between Families

Making YOUR foster HOME THEIR home

When a foster child comes into your home it can be perhaps the most distressing and confusing time for that child. Whether for the first time or a placement move, the situation remains the same: They are joining into another family – one they do not know. For you it is often exciting. You get the opportunity to share yourself, your family and your home with a child in need of these things. You hope the child instantly feels at ease, bonds and connects. However, the perspective most important at that moment is that of the child. So how do you as a caring family set the stage for the child's perspective to be one of a positive experience to come?

Consider the information you have on the child. What have been their most recent experiences before reaching your home? Whether removed from their parents or another home, most times they were not given a choice if they wanted to stay. The house, people and maybe even the customs will be strange to them. Once you have considered the history and situation, you can help by following some common steps.

Smile. It sounds simple, but little can calm a nervous situation more than a genuine smile. Based on what you know of the child

and their age, you can do simple things to make it more impactful. For young kids, try to kneel or get to their level. For older children, you can invite them in by using their name and treating age appropriately.

Connect the youth to your home and family. It is important for the youth to have the opportunity to see and experience the home. This gives them a sense of comfort and allows you to connect, outline house rules and introduce the house to them. As much as possible, allow the youth to meet the other members of the house in a natural, individual setting during the house tour.

Give the child something to do. Most often this will be through offering a snack or something to drink. Whether it is a simple cookie or some juice, by bonding them to the experience with something comforting, you are helping the child feel at ease.

Discuss the family expectations or house rules. This should truly be the family's expectations and not the youth's. By having your children or other foster children talk about these, it becomes a more open conversation. Even when delivered by you, openly outlining

rules with the child right from the beginning and with their worker helps the child feel confident in knowing where to start to fit in. As always with house rules, having a few simple rules of the "you can" and "you cannot" type are best. If you use a system of consequences, outline these also and be sure to ask if the child has questions.

Check in. Much like anything else for us all, what we hear one day may not be as clear the next. As the new foster parent for the child, make sure you are consistently checking in on how they are adjusting. This is not a formal review of the house rules or a structured series of questions. Rather, this is you as a parent finding out how things are going, asking them if you or the family can do things to make it better and modeling your trust in them and their ability to trust in you.



Our Schools-A place of failure and sadness for kids in need

I recently read a blog post by Dr. John DeGarmo titled *“Our Schools-A Place of Failure and Sadness for Kids in Need,”* and must say, I completely agree with his take on the disadvantages foster children face in education.

One of the greatest ways a teacher can help a foster child is with academic understanding. Many teachers expect good grades and school performance to be a priority in the lives of the majority of their students. Yet, for children in foster care, school is not a priority and is not a focus. Instead, the main focus is that of survival: survival from moving from home to home, the abuse and neglect they may have faced in their lives, living apart from their other family members and moving from school to school. Teachers need to be conscious of the fact that foster children are often behind academically and are also struggling to adapt to different expectations associated with coming from outside school districts. There are sure to be gaps in learning and disabilities due to instability and multiple displacements.

Foster children also struggle with many personal and emotional issues while in the foster home, and homework is often not the main objective each evening. Instead,



the emotional issues a child faces may take center stage. Teachers should assign homework with this in mind, being sensitive to their circumstances. School educators should also avoid assigning school tasks and projects that assume a good home life. These might include projects which ask students to write about a mother or father before Mother’s Day or Father’s Day, bringing in pictures from home, tracing a family tree or reporting on a family member that is an inspiration. Teachers should create lesson plans with these students in mind and engage them in daily conversation.

Finally, teachers can be a tremendous help by allowing flexibility on homework deadlines and scheduling quizzes and tests in consideration of previously arranged visitations with birth parents and biological family members. Often, children in care are filled with various anxieties on the day of a visitation, as well as the following day as they try to process the swirling emotions that come from visiting with someone who may have neglected or abused them, or a family member in jail. Furthermore, sometimes these visitations lead to false promises and false hopes of being reunited soon with birth family – thoughts that leave the children incapable of completing homework and studying in an appropriate and focused manner.

If you have a foster child who is struggling in school, don’t be afraid to discuss with them the child’s circumstances. Strive to help teachers understand and take action to help the child succeed.

By Jason Cecil

Director of regional recruitment services

Compliance corner

With holidays coming up, we want to remind foster families that each licensee must ensure sufficient sleeping space is provided to accommodate the number of foster family members and each child in foster care. Additional visitors are welcome, but please make sure foster children have adequate privacy during this time. This includes a solid hinged door, a bedroom that is not a routine passage to another bedroom or to the outdoors. Sleeping on a couch in the living room area is not recommended and does not ensure privacy. A temporary bed can be used during short-term respite.

Mattresses must also be of sufficient size to accommodate the size and weight of the child, and it needs to be clean and may require a waterproofing cover. If a bunk bed is used by any child in foster care, the upper bunk should be protected on all sides with rails; foster children must be at least 6 years of age to sleep on the top. Any child in foster care less than 12 months old needs to sleep in a crib and should only sleep in a pack ‘n play or playpen for the purpose of naps. If the foster child is 18 months or older and still sleeping in a crib, a note from the child’s physician is needed.



Outstanding foster care providers

Kansas care providers of the month Amanda Jay & Allison Rogers

Amanda Jay and Allison Rogers have been foster parents with TFI for over two years and are currently caring for six children between foster kids and their own. They treat the foster children who come into their home just like their own, taking care of all the children's needs. This duo has had about 20 children in their home since they began fostering. They openly accept placements and are always willing to do respite or emergency placement when needed. Allison and Amanda take care of the children in their home with minimal assistance from a worker and do a great job keeping TFI and the contractor updated on what is happening with the children. Most of the children they have in their home have been long term placements and do not leave their home unless they are being reunited back with their biological parents or into an adoptive home. This family is always welcoming to whoever comes into their home and willing to work with different types of placements.



Oklahoma care providers of the month Barry & Manuela Chronister

Barry and Manuela Chronister asked to take a break for the summer after the twins in their home, who had been there for nine months, were moved to live with their siblings. During their "break" the Chronisters provided extended respite for a teenage girl who was outside of their preferred age range. A few weeks later, the family provided respite for what was supposed to be short term, but turned into a long term placement when they were told their home was two hours closer to her biological family than her permanent placement. The Chronister family has a special skill of helping the children in their home feel right at home as soon as they walk through the front door. The family is always eager to assist in any way they can.



Recruitment moment

TFI Family Services is planning a large recruitment campaign, and we need your help! We are working to develop and distribute labels to put on Halloween candy. The amount of people we could reach with this campaign is large. Think about friends, family members,

businesses and church members, etc., who would be willing to place TFI labels on candy they hand out. Please contact your foster care worker, and let them know how many labels you need! Happy recruiting!

Pam Richardson, LMSW



Happy anniversary

10 years

Daniel & Laura Reiman

5 years

Deborah Diggs-Jones
Chevella Portley

Derrick Watson & Murdice Sims

1 year

Wright Allen & Brandy Curtis
Robert & Rebecca Chamberlain
Anthony & Shannon Clark
Patricia Flournoy
Gary & Charlene Gray
Daniel Hoyt & Sarah McGreer-Hoyt
Greg & Elizabeth Hurlbutt
Ivory & Dixie Kelly
Lawanda Kennedy
Dena Koehn

Gary & Lisa Leiker
Amy Lovell
Joshua & Nicole Mize
David & Sara Nix
Trey & Erin Patrick
Preston & Heather Shamburg
Dennis & Darla Smith
Dana Snowden
James & Andrea Texter

Oklahoma news

Comprehensive home-based services

Appropriate referrals for comprehensive home-based services (CHBS) are for children in out-of-home placement including, but not limited to, traditional foster care placement. The child welfare specialist can make referrals for children with challenging behaviors to provide support and direction to the caregiver. It can also assist in meeting the needs of the child and stabilizing the placement.

CHBS provides case management, which includes an educational curriculum focusing on the areas of health, home safety, parent-child interaction, managing child behavior, problem solving and budgeting. CHBS also utilizes screening and assessment tools to aide in determining appropriate tools to assist in identifying the needs of the child and family. CHBS does not provide therapeutic services but will assist the family in finding community resources.

If interested in this service please contact your foster care worker for further information.





217 SE 4th St

Topeka, KS 66603

800-279-9914 | tfifamilyservices.org

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

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

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FOSTER
hope
FOSTER
love
FOSTER
care