

# Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

November/December 2020

N F A N P A

## CHRISTMAS, CHAOS, AND CHILDREN IN FOSTERCARE

by Anonymous

As parents, we tend to look forward to Christmas. When I was a teenager, I used to dream of Christmas with my kids. How we would decorate the Christmas tree and drink hot chocolate and sit around together and watch all the holiday classics laughing and singing Christmas songs. I imagined the endless list of toys I would get and the surprise on their faces as they woke up Christmas morning to a tree filled with presents.

Now, as a foster and adoptive mom of seven years, I have to say I have yet to see that vision take place. The reality is more like this:

E, my sensory challenged toddler starts begging to see Christmas lights the second he spots the community around the corner that goes all out every Christmas with a drive-through light show. He doesn't remember it from last year when he was only 2 years old, but he is taking notice now. And it's not even Thanksgiving!

His ADHD and other issues that come with a diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder have him so obsessed with Christmas lights that every time we are in the car he is asking no less than 30 times to see Christmas. "I see Citmas, Mommy? I see Citmas? (which is how he says Christmas)" or "I DON'T SEE IT! I WANNA SEE CITMAS, MOMMY" and he works himself up into either an angry frenzy or a crying meltdown.

Every time we go into a store like Walmart he is both

fascinated and terrified by all the decorations. It's either, "Look, Mommy, Citmas." or, "Mommy, I scared. I scared, look, I don wan Citmas!" And we either have to try to avoid any huge blowup decorations altogether or leave.

At the same time, my 6-year-old has started having memories! This is followed by an exclamation point because that is how I feel! As we drive through town he will suddenly pipe up, "Mom! Mom! That's where I used to live!"

On another note, I once had an older child who would say he was looking forward to Christmas but usually became very quiet and sullen. This child was old enough to remember past Christmases with his family and the time of year no doubt conjured up a lot of loss and pain.

So with this in mind, how do you best prepare for the holiday festivities that cannot be avoided?

**HAVE A PLAN AND GIVE THE KIDS AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE**



This can be tricky because once I realized that I had a child with FASD, who could be triggered into fight or flight by nearly anything that caused him anxiety, I thought it would be best to tell him ahead of time about a particular activity we had planned and explain what it would entail. The day I discovered that this was a bad choice was when I told him a week in advance that we were having a birthday party for him. I thought he was excited and he would ask no less than 50 times a day if we were having his party. I had to tell him over

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Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

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# Attention Foster Parents!

## Earn Your In-Service Hours While Getting the Chance to Win a Great Prize!

Answer these 10 questions correctly and you will not only earn .5 credits toward your in-service hours, but your name will also be put in a drawing for a prize. For this issue we are offering a \$10 Walmart gift card.

There are a variety of ways to do this. You can email the information to [Corinne@nfapa.org](mailto:Corinne@nfapa.org), send the questionnaire to the NFAPA office at 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D, Lincoln, NE 68521 or you can complete the questionnaire online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NovDec2020> We will then enter your name in the drawing! We will also send you a certificate for training credit to turn in when it is time for relicensing. Good Luck!

1. True or False. Changes like social distancing during COVID-19, can trigger traumatic memories or symptoms.
2. True or False. Social distancing do not reawaken feelings of loneliness and isolation that many children in foster care have experienced.
3. Fill in the blank. For children in foster care, continued visitation with family, including parents and siblings, is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Fill in the blanks. Keep in mind that most couples want to adopt a healthy infant. But the reality is the kids who need to be adopted the most \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Fill in the blank. There are over 400,000 kids in foster care in America right now. Out of those 400,000, \_\_\_\_\_ are free for adoption.
6. True or False. Although it may sound odd, it is easier to spend holidays alone. Holidays with other families always make you feel isolated in a group of people.
7. Fill in the blanks. Holiday traditions are hard to establish for a child who is constantly moved from \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Fill in the blanks. The consistency of a caring \_\_\_\_\_ plays an important role in making the holidays memorable for a youth.
9. Fill in the blanks. Nearly half of our nation's children have experienced at least \_\_\_\_\_ or more types of serious childhood trauma.
10. True or False. Each family has that crazy old Aunt Ethel, loud and obnoxious Uncle Fred, and the ever hard of hearing and over whelming Grandma Lucy. Your family is used to these relatives and their personalities, your child in foster care is not.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

(Continued from page 1)

and over, “Not today, honey, but soon.” Ten minutes later he would ask again. This was before I knew the full extent of his diagnosis.

The morning of the party he literally exploded at church. He threw things down the row of chairs, ran and slammed doors and knocked over a bowl full of invitation cards. When I grabbed him he screamed, kicked me, hit me, pulled my sweater, pulled my hair and did everything possible to let me know that his little 3-year-old body was terrified.

So, with that being said, it is best to have a plan but also gage when it would be the best time to let your child know.

## **INVOLVE YOUR CHILD IN THE PLANNING**

If you have a child old enough to understand, maybe you could present her with some options of how she would like to spend Christmas and then have a family vote. When a child feels like they have some control they are often able to better adjust; especially if she feels like she made the choice. It will make her feel important.

## **BE PREPARED TO CHANGE THAT PLAN**

As I discovered with my son’s birthday party, what initially presented itself as excitement was really anxiety in disguise. If that party was not for him and not at our home, I would have just told him we didn’t have to go. However, about 30 people were coming over to our home after church and it was already a done deal. So, try to always keep an open mind to accepting an alternative plan.

## **BE WILLING TO RECONSIDER VISITS WITH SANTA**

The same goes for the elf on the shelf. We do not do the elf on the shelf at all! But I was surprised to learn that my 3-year-old foster son, who is now my adopted son, was terrified of Santa Clause. And I mean TERRIFIED!

I had downloaded this really cool app on my iPhone where you input a bunch of information about the child such as what their favorite color or favorite food to eat is, and then you can call Santa and he will talk to them and tell them how much he knows about them. It’s very generic but kids still believe it is the real Santa they are talking to.

So once I had it all set up for all my kids I thought they would love it. I pulled out my phone and said, “N, let’s call Santa and talk to him.” Well N immediately went into a tearful frenzy begging me, “No, Mommy! No! Don’t call Santa!” and he ran and hid crying in his room.

I had never encountered such a reaction about Santa Clause from any child so I was quite shaken up myself at the anxiety I had caused him. All I could do is speculate about what his abusers may have done or threatened him with surrounding Santa Clause and Christmas. So be prepared for a variety of reactions that you may not expect.

Another thing to take note of is the lesson on boundaries

and strangers that we teach our kids. We are teaching our kids to not talk to strangers and not just sit in anybody’s lap unless they know the person and feel safe. Yet we take them to the mall, sit them on a stranger’s lap and encourage them to tell him their secrets.

For children raised in a typical home, this is not a big deal. But for kids who were just removed from an abusive home where people were allowed to touch them or hurt them and then swear them to secrecy, it just won’t do. We are trying to teach our children to protect themselves and speak up for themselves and this is the opposite of what we want to instill.

## **DON’T FORCE YOUR CHILD TO ENGAGE WITH RELATIVES**

This is a big one and can sometimes be overlooked. If you have a big family gathering and your relatives bring a lot of presents for your children, you may feel obligated to force the child to mingle when he really just wants to be alone. Your child needs to be able to set appropriate boundaries that he feels comfortable with. Making him hug Aunt Suzie for the gift she brought, or sit in Uncle Charles’ lap to open a present is not appropriate and could damage the connection you are already trying to build between you and your child. Try to see things from his point of view and then do your best to help him feel safe.

Though we would like to think that Christmas is a time for us to give our foster kids a magical experience, the reality is, they miss their family. Or they may feel like they don’t belong and that they will never fit in.

It’s also possible, as it was with a child who once lived with me, that they have a lot of bad memories of violence and abuse during the holiday season. Your child is holding a lifetime of memories that can take a long time to heal. If you show them that you are concerned about how they feel and try to include them in the planning of festivities they are more likely to feel a sense of control and safety. This, in turn, will help build connection between you and your child.

As always, please share this with your friends on Facebook and Pinterest. And I hope you have an awesome Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas with your family!

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<https://teachingwoundedangelstofly.com/christmas-chaos-and-children-in-fostercare/>

### **No Longer Fostering? We Would Love To Hear From You.**

Foster parenting is HARD! It takes a special person to care for hurting children. Many of you have decided to no longer provide foster care. We are interested to learn about families leaving foster care and the reasons behind their decision. This information can assist us to advocate for future policies to support foster families. If you are a former foster parent, please take a moment to provide feedback on your foster care experience.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nfapaexitsurvey>

# 3 WAYS THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM CAN EMERGE STRONGER AFTER THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

**When COVID-19 recedes, child abuse reports and foster care needs are expected to surge. Online services, training and data can strengthen the system.**

*by Josh Archambault and Naomi Schaefer Riley*  
*Opinion contributors*



There has been a significant drop in reports of child abuse and neglect during the coronavirus pandemic. Many fear that as we emerge, the child welfare system will be flooded as the impacts of family stress become public again. In preparation, state foster care departments must improve their operations to better serve foster parents and assist social workers with complex cases.

First, all states should offer foster parent training online. A number of states including Illinois and Tennessee were moving in this direction. But online training makes even more sense in light of COVID-19 and the adaptations many families already have made to group learning.

Currently, many states have inflexible training schedules for the foster parent classes that happen only on certain evenings and at certain locations. Coordinating schedules of working parents for their own families is challenging, but getting a dozen or more family units in the same place for 20 to 30 hours of training with commuting considerations and other family and work commitments is nearly impossible.

## **Online training draws more families**

Many qualified individuals never become foster parents because they can not overcome the training schedule barrier. The best trauma-informed training content could be viewed

when convenient for parents. Agencies would just need to produce some state-specific information, and add in some social aspects to allow newly trained parents to be connected so they can support each other as they embark on the foster parent journey. One organization in Arkansas decided to offer training online this spring and more than doubled the number of families that signed up during the first month of the lockdown.

Second, social workers should utilize technology to support the most experienced foster parents. Foster parents often joke that the easy part of foster care is welcoming and caring for the kids in their home; it is the full-time job they have with dozens of meetings with numerous social workers, court employees, medical appointments, school personnel, and visits with birth families that is the hard part.

In surveys, foster parents regularly complain about last-minute visits from social workers and schedule changes from therapists, lawyers, and guardians ad litem. Telehealth medical appointments in recent months have given many a glimpse of the convenience that's possible and the headaches that can be avoided with small children. Video calls save enormous amounts of time commuting and sitting in waiting rooms. And they can allow for greater support if more frequent check-ins are needed, instead of the current one-size-fits-all required in-person visits.

Social workers still need to see kids in-person, but for experienced foster parents when there are no questions about the quality of care being provided, these time-intensive visits take away from valuable time workers could be spending on more complex cases. Foster parents should be allowed to request more frequent in-person visits if they feel like they need more support. And social workers should be allowed to bump them back up if they have concerns.

## **Use tech to match parents and kids**

Finally, states should use technology to better match children entering the foster care system with temporary foster parents, and for cases that move to adoption to reduce how many times kids are moved from home to home. It is not uncommon to hear of young kids in foster care who have been moved to 10 or more homes.

States such as Virginia and Florida have partnered with a non-profit called Family-Match that uses information on personalities, expectations, parental experience, resiliency factors and other information to increase placement stability. This kind of data-driven process is quicker, can result in homes that better meet the needs of kids, and also bypasses a very common situation where an open home is available in the next country or town but is not made available by a neighboring office.

When a child enters foster care, if an extended family member is not an option, this process could produce a shortlist of open foster homes that meet specific needs, such as the ability to care for sibling sets, children with disabilities,

or medically complex cases. This way social workers can work from a more informed and targeted list of higher quality placements in a larger geographic area. Currently, thousands of hours are spent trying to place children, and technology could speed things up significantly.

As we emerge from the crises of the past few months, child welfare agencies and other organizations need more tools to meet the higher demands of foster care. These steps could significantly improve care by saving valuable time.

*Josh Archambault is a foster parent in Massachusetts and senior fellow at Pioneer Institute. Naomi Schaefer Riley is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. Follow them on Twitter: @josharchambault and @NaomiSRiley*

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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/06/21/foster-care-after-covid-three-ways-strengthen-system-column/3213156001/>

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## HOMESCHOOLING STRATEGIES FOR KIDS FROM TRAUMA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

*by Anonymous*

As we are entering this unforeseen territory of social distancing due to the Coronavirus, a lot of moms are finding themselves stepping into another role. Teaching.

If you are a foster or adoptive mom, and you are parenting a child with a trauma history, this new order of things can feel like a disaster! It has for me, and as I have perused online support groups to find some kind of help, I have seen many frantic posts from other foster/adoptive parents.

“THIS KID IS ALL OVER THE PLACE AND I JUST WANT TO SCREAM!”

Add to that, multiple children from different homes with various trauma histories, and you may end up as I found myself today. In bed trying to find relief from the stabbing pains shooting up back!

As you know, there are already various things kids with a trauma history struggle with. Adding a new homeschool routine can accentuate already problematic behaviors. Our kids thrive on routine and stability and suddenly their world is turned topsy turvy all over again.

### KIDS FROM TRAUMA NEED ROUTINE

One of the ways to help kids feels safe is consistency. For some time now, my kids have been getting up, going to their prospective schools and doing all their learning outside of the home. When they come home, they expect to go to the skatepark and have some downtime before tackling homework

and eating dinner. They are more relaxed.

As I am working with my middle son, I am seeing how insecure he is navigating this new territory. (And incidentally, so is his mom!)

His demeanor while working is quiet, hunched over, and insecure. When he speaks, his voice is so soft that he often needs to repeat the same answer several times before I can understand what he is saying. This was how our day went today, I'm afraid.

So, what did we do? We took a lot of breaks to try to help him relax and feel less pressured and more at ease. He usually likes playing video games, so I allowed him to go do that while I worked with his younger brother.

**BIG MISTAKE!**

I had forgotten that he can sometimes be a perfectionist, and will get stuck in perseverating until the outcome is acceptable to him. With some of his more challenging games, success rarely comes, and this only served to exacerbate the problem. When he returned to the table, he had a big frown on his face, and after gentle coaxing blurted out, “I NEVER am good enough!”

So let this be a note to parents, make sure you pick a task that will indeed cause your child to relax and help him return to his work refreshed and confident again. At our second break, I let both of my younger kids go outside and jump on the trampoline, and when he returned to work, he had a smile on his face!

### WORKING WITH TEENAGERS

With my older son, who is a teenager, I found the task even more challenging, and I'm wondering if other parents are having a similar struggle.

Though my oldest is attending class online through a conferencing app, he is struggling with staying on task. It seems that the home environment makes him feel that work isn't crucial and talking, laying down, and doing various tasks when he should be working is allowed.

He also seems less aware that I am not in the “Mommy” role at that time but that of “Teacher” to his younger brothers. He continually interrupts me in the middle of our lessons as his mind conjures up various topics he decides needs to be shared with me at that moment.

It also seems that he is constantly getting up to do something be it investigate a sound or play with the dog.

**NUMEROUS DISTRACTIONS ARE EVERYWHERE!**

### ENTER THE PRESCHOOLER

With my pre-schooler, the routine is more difficult in the sense that I just cannot seem to get him to do the work that was assigned by his teacher. His typical routine, as with the others, is you work in school and play at home. So as I pull out each sheet his teacher has for him to practice, he is insisting on doing something else. It's a battle getting him to complete a task but it's not as crucial that he do everything assigned. If

he were my only child, I probably would have taken it more seriously.

**SO WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO MAKING HOMESCHOOL WORK EFFECTIVELY AND, AT THE SAME TIME, NOT LOSING MY MIND?**

I searched for what other homeschooling moms are doing to help their kids with a trauma history learn and be successful, and here are some things I have found.

### **IF POSSIBLE, TAKE BREAKS**

As I said before, when I noticed that my middle son was spiraling downward, I let him get up and do something to relax his mind and just have fun. He is not presently streaming his classwork live, so we can be more flexible, depending upon his needs.

This is precisely what he needed, even when at school. Being forced to adhere to such a rigid schedule for six hours is not always best for kids with a trauma history. We may need to adjust things in order to help them do their best and succeed.

### **CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES**

You know your child more than any other person present in his life right now. You have been observing what makes him afraid, what seems to motivate him, or what could make him feel more successful.

Drilling your child over and over about the same problem may not be what he needs at that moment. It's certainly not with mine. A little extra guidance with a specific question may be all he needs to feel more confident and move forward. Or dropping that problem altogether and working on something else may be the solution. Focus more on your relationship with your child and helping him or her feel safe and loved. Then, the other things will follow. It just may not be in the timeframe that you had anticipated.

### **END EACH TASK ON A POSITIVE NOTE**

Everyone does better when they feel confident. It almost clears the mind of all the negative self-talk when you have completed a task successfully. Children are no different. I noticed that when my son was feeling discouraged and defeated, he suddenly could not even do problems that were normally easy for him. He just lost all confidence in his ability to understand and stopped trying. Try to find a way to end the task on something that you know he can do without fail. This will only set him up for success when you tackle the next assignment.

### **KNOW THE OBSTACLES EACH CHILD FACES AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY**

This is a big one for my teenager, and I had to develop a system to help him (and me) get through the next two months with as little chaos and frustration as possible. Given that he cannot seem to get into the school-mode when he is at home, I had to take out a whiteboard and write down the key points he needs to remember and adhere to. Things such as:

I think the hardest thing will be for him to not yell at me every time a thought comes to mind. This truly made for an already stressful day as I was trying to navigate teaching two young children and thus, caused a lot of chaos in the home.

### **BE WILLING TO ADJUST YOUR EXPECTATIONS**

This is a crucial point when working with kids from trauma. Two of my children have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and this affects the way their brains decipher information on a daily basis. What my son is able to wiz through one day, totally confuses him the next. For more on how alcohol affects a child's brain when in the womb, read here. Thus, as a parent and teacher, I need to know when to push for the correct answer and when to let it go and move on.

**AND I NEED FOR THAT TO BE OKAY!**

Acceptance is the key here when teaching my son. If he feels valued and loved even when he does not know the answer, it helps him move on to the next task. But if he senses that I am frustrated because he was able to do the same thing the day before with no problem, everything seems to just get harder for him. Some days you will need to lower your expectations and leave the pushing for another day.

The same thing goes for my older son, who seems to need as much of my attention (and sometimes more) than my toddler. I need to adjust my expectations for him on a daily basis as well. Some days I just need to lower my standards of what I think is appropriate for a child of his age and accept that he just cannot adhere to what I am asking of him at that moment. Nobody can be perfect all the time. It's important for us as parents and teachers to show our children some grace. The same grace that we would want others to extend to us.

Lastly what I believe my family needs to ensure success during this time of social distancing is:

### **PRAY**

Just stopping to pray when things feel so difficult that our kids spiral downward in defeat can give overwhelming emotions a chance to settle and help restore regulation. It is very effective for me as the adult in our home, especially when being the only adult I am unable to take a 'time-out' myself.

Acknowledging to Jesus that we are stuck and just don't know how to move forward seems to take a heavy weight off of my shoulders. It also allows my son to see that, like him, I too don't always know what to do. And when I don't know, I go to a higher authority for help. Praying just seems to restore peace.

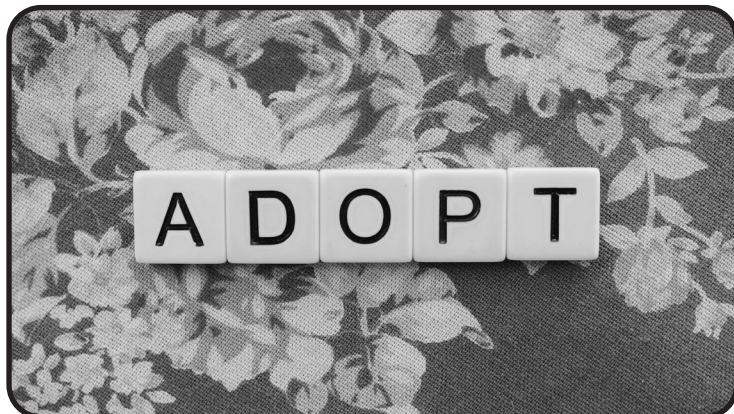
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<https://teachingwoundedangelstuffy.com/homeschooling-strategies-for-kids-from-trauma-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

# HOW HARD IS IT TO ADOPT FROM FOSTER CARE?

by Derek Williams



As human beings, we want things to be easy and quick. Microwaves, smart phones, the IRS's 1040EZ form... Those looking to adopt from foster care may expect that as well. I've adopted from foster care, and let me tell you, it is hard! But it's worth it. Here are some things to expect.

## The Process

The minimum requirements to adopt through the foster care system are the following: a criminal background check, a Child Protective Services background check, references, and a home study. You may also have to submit a physician's statement and attend a pre-service training called Foster Parent College. You may also need to become certified for adoption. An adoption agency or Foster Care agency can assist you in all these areas. You may hit road blocks during the process in some places. For example, if you have a criminal history, you may have to appeal a conviction. If one of your references comes back negative, you may have to answer some additional questions. If you have a physical condition, you may have to demonstrate that you can still care for kids. Whatever the case, be prepared to look at these not as a road block, but as an obstacle. The process may be infuriating, but it is not impossible to navigate.

## The Wait

Remember AOL, America Online? They were one of the first online companies in the US. They had mass marketing of CDs that promised web surfing, chat rooms and...instant messaging! This was revolutionary. But of course, the down side was that it was only dial-up, which moved at a snail's pace. Foster care adoption is sometimes like that. The time it takes to get licensed and certified may take 6-9 months. And then waiting to be matched with a child could take a bit longer, depending on the type of child you are looking for. Keep in mind that most couples want to adopt a healthy infant. But the reality is the kids who need to be adopted the most are older kids (school-age) and sibling groups. You won't have to wait as long to be matched if you choose one of those kids.

## Hard Kids from Hard Places

Lastly, please keep in mind that that children in foster care are there through no fault of their own due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Therefore, many of these kiddos have special needs and may display behaviors that are not as prevalent in their peers. These kids may be on medication, or in counseling, or have diagnoses that you may be unfamiliar with. Do your homework! Research and request many day visits with a child before making your final decision. Be prepared to meet the child where he or she is.

According to the Dave Thomas Foundation, there are over 400,000 kids in foster care in America right now. Out of those 400,000, 100,000 are free for adoption.

One of those kids may be the right match for you. Is foster care adoption hard? Yes! Will it be worth it? Absolutely!

*Derek Williams is an adoption social worker and has been in the field of child welfare and behavioral health since 2006, where he has assisted families in their adoption journey. He and his wife started their adoption journey in 1993 and have 8 children: 6 of which are adopted. His adoption children are all different ethnicities including East Indian, Jamaican, and Native American. He loves traveling with his family, especially to the East Coast and to the West Coast and is an avid NY Mets fan! Foster care and adoption is a passion and calling for Derek, and he is pleased to share his experiences with others who are like-minded.*

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<https://adoption.org/hard-adoptive-foster-care>

## NFAPA SUPPORT GROUPS

As Nebraska is opening up with changes due to COVID please contact the RFC in your area to see when support groups will be back up and running or continuing with an online support. Registration is required when meeting in person.

**CONTACT A RESOURCE FAMILY CONSULTANT FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**Jolie Camden (Panhandle Area): 308-672-3658**

- Scottsbluff
- Chadron

**Tammy Welker (Columbus Area): 402-989-2197**

- Columbus

**Terry Robinson (Central): 402-460-7296**

- One on one support or if you would like one started in your area, please contact.

**Robbi Blume: 402-853-1091**

- FACES-our online support group. Meets Tuesday night at 9:00 pm (CT)

**NFAPA Office: 877-257-0176**

- Parenting Across Color Lines in Lincoln.



Foster care is a journey, not a destination. We are here to help support our children the entire foster care journey.

We continue to provide up to 5 outfits during each season for as long as the child remains in foster care

We provide a quiet environment that is not open to the public to help accommodate any special needs for our child or for their caregiver

Our foster parents schedule a time to shop so that we can offer all our focus on meeting the needs of the child

We provide additional support resources to families navigating the road of foster care

## LOCATIONS

### **Lincoln**

643 S. 25th Street Suite 8 Lincoln, Nebraska 68510

### **North Platte**

516 North Dewey, North Platte, NE 69101

### **Scottsbluff**

1818 Broadway, Scottsbluff, NE 69361

### **Kearney**

Located inside First Baptist Church  
3610 6th Avenue, Kearney, NE 68845

## APPOINTMENTS

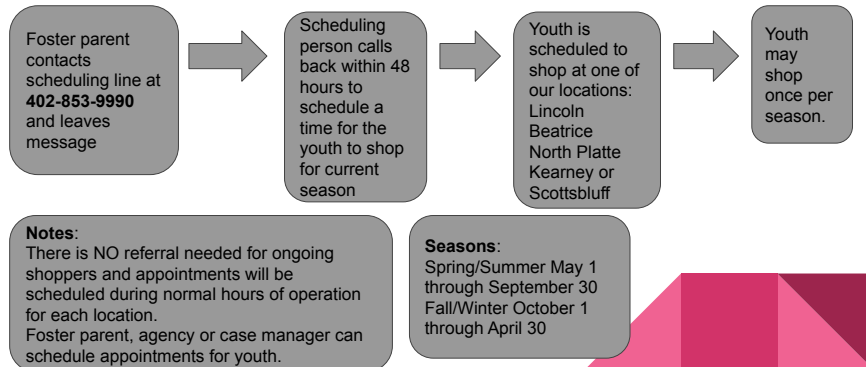
Phone: (402) 853-9990

Email: [fostercarecloset@fostercarecloset.org](mailto:fostercarecloset@fostercarecloset.org)

## DONATIONS

We accept gently used clothing items as donations. With a core value of restoring dignity to foster children, we only accept items that are in top condition.

## Scheduling Ongoing Clothing Appointments



The Lincoln location is open:  
Monday – Thursday: 10AM -7PM  
Friday-Sunday: Closed

For information regarding donating at our other locations, please call us at 402-853-9990.

## Ambassadors of Kindness

**Ambassadors of Kindness, INC.** is taking enrollees in these two Clubs. We believe in the power of reading. There are only a couple things we need to have Foster Parents enroll their Foster Child(ren). Parents only have to sign up once and they will receive the books and material automatically. Parents can inform us if they don't want to be signed up again by contacting us. Email Brian to enroll at [splate24@yahoo.com](mailto:splate24@yahoo.com).

### **Books4Kids Club:**

1. Every month children will receive 3-4 books to read.
2. Currently we provide these books for Age 5-10 girl or boy.
3. When the child is finished with their book(s) they return the books back to Ambassadors of Kindness, INC. to be used for other enrollees.

### **Colors4Kids Club:**

1. Every month children will receive coloring and activity books for their enjoyment.
2. Coloring and activity books are the child's to keep.
3. First shipment of coloring and activity books will include new crayons.
3. Every three (3) months children will receive brand NEW crayons.
4. If crayons are not needed enrollee's can contact us and we will skip a shipment of these.
5. Enrollee's can also request colored pencils for their children and we will ship these with their new shipment of crayons.

### **Information needed**

1. Foster Parent's Name:
2. Address for material to be mailed:
3. Contact Phone Number:
4. Contact Email (if they have one):
5. Foster Child(ren): A. FIRST NAME ONLY. B. Each child's age and gender.

All books and material will be mailed on the 5th of every month. This includes when new colors are mailed every three (3) months!

Ambassadors of Kindness, INC. is a nonprofit located in Superior, NE. As we are a nonprofit we also accept business sponsorships and individual monetary donations and material donations for these amazing programs, i.e., children books, coloring and activity books, crayons and colored pencils.





# Thanksgiving

## Youth Perspective

Instinctively, the mention of holidays gives me a jilt in the stomach. Holidays were never a joyful time when I was a child. Perhaps, it was because there was such a high standard for everything to be perfect that the threshold for imperfections was very small. Very small occurrences would send one person over the edge, and everyone else would follow or be dragged into the chaos. One burned Christmas cookie could ruin the entire batch, and then very cookie made before, after, and in the process would be thrown in the garbage.

In particular, Thanksgiving weighs the heaviest burden on me. When I was 13, I was put into emergency placement foster care at 5 am Thanksgiving morning after spending the night in the police station. As a teenager, it is hard to be grateful for anything, especially when one feels like the world is constantly handing her perpetual heartache. I didn't know how to make the best of the situation, and instead of helping make food, I wanted to lay in bed and cry all day. Notably, I didn't do that, and I am glad that I wasn't allowed to wallow in that way, but being expected to be a full functioning member of Thanksgiving dinner was too much for me. It was the first Thanksgiving that I didn't spend at my grandmother's, and I never went to my grandmother's in subsequent years.

Although it may sound odd, it is easier to spend holidays alone. Holidays with other families always make you feel isolated in a group of people. They make special accommodations for you and there are always questions. It is great to have this offer, but when this happens you feel how much of a stranger you are. you aren't just another one of the group, where people will poke fun of you if you eat too much or don't save enough gravy for the person on your right.

Spending holidays with my bio family may not be an option, but I feel the need to run from that feeling I get when someone "checks in" regarding my feeling during a guest visit to another family's holiday.

I'd rather spend the day alone contemplating why I am grateful for those things around me.

Sitting, solitary, pondering upon what has allowed me to have another year full of life.

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<https://www.fosterclub.com/blog/youth-perspective/thanksgiving>

# CARING FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE DURING COVID-19

by Douglas Waite, MD, FAAP and Anu Partap, MD, MPH, FAAP

Children and youth in foster care have often survived a lifetime of uncertainty and change, both before entering foster care and during foster care. For these children, changes like social distancing during COVID-19, can trigger traumatic memories or symptoms.

## Specific concerns for children in foster care

During the coronavirus pandemic, caring for children in foster care can be even more challenging than the usual day-to-day care given by parents, foster and kinship caregivers, and child welfare professionals. Many of these children have experienced adversity and trauma, leaving them more vulnerable to the changes that come with school closings, lack of daily contact with friends and mentors, and other forms of social distancing.

## Here are some ways you can help your child through this difficult time.

Stay connected. Social distancing can reawaken feelings of loneliness and isolation that many children in foster care have experienced. They may be afraid of being separated from parents, foster parents, and other family members. Help your child feel connected, even if virtually, through video calls or texts with parents, siblings, other relatives, friends, child welfare workers, and other advocates.

Note: Media time limits are still important, but they may need to increase to allow for social connection through technology. Just do the best you can to media use from replacing time needed for sleep, physical activity, reading, or family connection. Creating a Family Media Plan can help parents set reasonable limits on daily technology use.

**Look for signs of stress.** For some children in foster care, the pandemic may resurface fears and past traumatic experiences. Keep an eye out for the following signs of stress:

- frequent crying
- behavior problems
- difficulty staying still
- nightmares
- social withdrawal
- changes in mood
- changes in appetite
- problems with friends
- toileting problems
- problems falling and staying asleep

Children with intellectual disabilities or mental illness may need extra support and monitoring during the stress of isolation.

**Have routines.** Daily routines help children feel safe and secure. Create a daily schedule that includes:

- regular mealtimes when the family can eat together
- learning time

- limited technology use
- play time
- naps and bedtime

**Reassure them.** Limit what your children see and hear on the news about the pandemic. Talk about the situation in a way that your child can understand. Remind them that staying home or following precautions like wearing a cloth face covering in public is how we keep everyone safe.

**Watch for regression.** If your child starts to regress, or act like a younger child, this may be their way of coping with stress. Help your child feel safe and secure by reassuring them that the pandemic will pass. Help them look forward to the day they can return to their favorite activities.

**Seek extra help if needed.** If your child shows signs of serious emotional or behavioral problems (such as excessive worry or anxiety, increased aggression or disruptive regressive behaviors), professional help may be needed. This is especially important if your child has any self-harming behavior. Many mental health providers are doing virtual visits by phone or video. You can also reach out to your foster care agency for help and support.

**Have a back-up plan.** Have a plan in place for who will take care of your child in the event of illness, quarantine, or isolation. Be sure to also communicate with your foster care agency to make sure the designated back-ups are able to serve in that emergency role. If the back up plan needs to be used, explain what will happen in simple terms your child will understand.

**Ensure safety and security.** An increase in family stress and isolation places children at risk for child abuse and exposure to violence or parental substance use. Stay in touch with supportive friends and family. There are 24-hour hotlines available if you need help or support. You can also reach out to your agency or pediatrician.

**Maintain family connections.** For children in foster care, continued visitation with family, including parents and siblings, is critical. It promotes well-being, secure attachments, and the successful reuniting of families. Whenever possible, in-person visitation is preferable. A combination of in-person and virtual visits can increase how often children, parents and siblings can interact.

**Outdoor visits are best.** The best location for a visit is outside whenever possible. When a visit takes place inside, follow current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and local protocols for physical distancing, hand hygiene and testing. When in-person visits cannot be done safely, ensure that children can have virtual visits that are developmentally appropriate for them.

**When visits aren't an option.** If family visits are not possible during the pandemic, reach out to other foster parents, child welfare advocates or your pediatrician for other ways families can engage. Talk with the child about why visits aren't possible right now. Have photographs available or let children draw pictures of their family. You can also create a memory box or life book to help them through the separation. Talk to your child about why visits are not possible right now. Be the

supportive, caring adult you have always been for your child or the child in your foster home. Your empathy will help your child feel safe, secure, and positive about the present and the future.

**Weigh the risks.** Check the latest guidance from the CDC and your local or state public health authority to assess the risks of COVID-19 transmission before a visit with families. Factors to consider include known exposure, positive test results or symptoms of COVID-19. Everyone (child, caregiver and household members, birth family, and child welfare professionals) should be screened for COVID-19 exposure or symptoms the day before the planned in-person visit. Visits should not be canceled because of inability to wear a mask.

**Ensure safety and security.** An increase in family stress and isolation places children at risk for child abuse and exposure to violence or parental substance use. Stay in touch with supportive friends and family. There are 24-hour hotlines available if you need help or support. You can also reach out to your agency or pediatrician.

**Take care of yourself.** It is normal and expected for you to feel stressed. Replace activities you have lost with new ones, and celebrate even small successes each day. Remember, what is good for your well-being will help relieve the stress of your children, who recognize when you feel stress and worry about you. The care you are providing each day will last a lifetime.

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<https://healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Caring-for-Children-in-Foster-Care-COVID-19.aspx>

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## FOSTER TALK WITH HEATHER AND MEGAN #7 FOSTER CARE AND THE HOLIDAYS

**The holidays are special for many families, but Heather and Megan note that there are unique challenges facing foster households this time of year...**

*by Heather & Megan*

### Heather

While the holidays are typically an exciting time for kids, they can be a very difficult time for some foster children, and the result can be problems with behaviors. I have the following words of advice for foster parents as they face the holidays:

1. Remember you are merging two families' holiday traditions, and it is important to find out from the foster children or their biological parents what their holiday traditions are and see if you

- can incorporate them into your traditions.
2. Some kids have never experienced the holidays so have no idea what to expect. Letting them know your traditions can be helpful – especially for kids who struggle with change in routines.
3. Have realistic expectations; most people's holidays are not like a Hallmark Movie!
4. Be ready to change your traditions and to help your family cope with any problematic holiday behaviors.
5. Kids may miss their biological families during the holidays and struggle with having the holidays without their parents.
6. If your holiday experience is much different than theirs with their family, the kids may not understand why you are doing such nice things for them when their own families were unable to do so.

When I adopted my two sons, the holidays were the hardest time for us. The holiday behavior issues would start when the Halloween decorations went up in the stores and not end until New Year's. We had Christmastimes when my oldest would throw the Christmas tree down to the floor multiple times a day. My youngest would have behavioral issues at home, school and daycare. They were never able to tell me their trauma associated with the holidays.

I learned that my family traditions had to be pushed to the side, and I needed to do what they were comfortable with so they could feel safe. So on our holidays the kids (they are 20 and 19) get money in December to purchase what they want, and Christmas Day is treated as any other day that we might all be home.

Once I started "celebrating" in a way they felt comfortable the behaviors decreased dramatically. It was very challenging to put aside my own vision for the holidays and my experiences as a child of a wonderful holiday season that I wanted to share with my children, but I needed to do what was best for them, not what was best for me.

### Megan

The rush of the holidays is here. It's been here, really. Starting as early as September with Halloween candy and decorations already in stores. It's energizing and exciting! It's full of traditions and family memories. It's busy and packed full of things to do, places to be, and food to eat.

As you might imagine, however, holidays in foster care are often times quite the opposite of what you see on TV or in magazine ads. For my family, we have experienced three holiday seasons with children in our care. Since we foster infants and toddlers, we do not necessarily see the trauma that is so common in older children around the holidays. Instead, we see the pain it causes the biological family to not be with their child on such special days. For us, we have walked the difficult line of feeling excited about celebrating our traditional holiday activities and being mindful of how lonely and depressing the holidays are for some people.

During the visits leading up to the holiday of the month (Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas/New Year's), I have made sure to include the biological family in what we have been up to in a variety of ways. I have used a notebook to write down what we've been doing, I have sent pictures of each big

event via text, or I've printed photos to give to the family at the visit. We've allowed visits to be more flexible in order to fit in a visit to the mall so Santa photos could be taken, or arranged to drop off the child on Thanksgiving Day for their overnight to fall on the actual holiday. We've even met an additional day that week to get in gift exchanges closer to Christmas Day. My family has also always given a gift to the biological family from their child on the big gift-giving occasions- nothing big or expensive, but something to show we appreciate them and are still supporting their reunification. Typically it's a framed photo of their child that they can display in their home or a handmade craft if the child is old enough.

I have found that even though the biological family is sad to be missing out on these traditions, they also would rather know what's going on or get something a little extra than nothing at all. The more I have communicated with the biological family, the more relieved they have been to see he/she is happy and safe. I want to assure you, though, that not every communication or "olive branch" I have extended has been received with hugs and words of appreciation. It is exhausting to rearrange your packed calendar for these "extras" – and equally as frustrating when that effort goes unnoticed. But for the child and the biological parent, it really is important.

I always try to put myself in the biological parent's shoes. I try to remember that despite their flaws or past mistakes, they are still a parent. And a parent's love runs deep. The holidays can be a time when they realize just how bad things are or just how much they have messed up, and can make their flaws that much harder to deal with. It is not my job as a foster parent to fix the biological parent or judge their past, but it is my job to support them by being mindful of them and caring for their beautiful children as best as I know how, even if it's just for a short time. So, with that mindset, it is my job to manage the holidays with sensitivity and flexibility.

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<https://fostercare.com/holidays-in-foster-care/>

## THIS THANKSGIVING, CONSIDER THE CHILD IN FOSTER CARE

*by Kayla Gonzalez*

The holidays are a time for gathering with friends, family and loved ones. Many of us happily anticipate taking part in yearly traditions and look forward to reuniting with everyone we care about. Particularly as Thanksgiving arrives, we often take time to reflect on our fortunes, acknowledging what we're grateful for and appreciating being surrounded by a loving and caring community.

Unfortunately for a young person in foster care, the holiday season can remind them of a family or community that they've lost. Many youth in the foster care system can't spend the holidays with their biological family. Holiday traditions

are hard to establish for a child who is constantly moved from home to home, with unfamiliar surroundings and different people. During Thanksgiving, family gatherings in a foster home, while well-intentioned, can make a child feel like an outsider. Often, they may compare their circumstances to others around them, leaving them feeling vulnerable, isolated, or forgotten. If placed in a home with unfamiliar customs, observing the holidays with people who might have different beliefs or traditions can feel awkward.

While experiencing the holidays with a family not their own can be challenging, placement with a foster family, family friend, or additional relative can still provide a safe space for a youth to spend the season. Involving a youth in holiday preparations, explaining who will be there, and what to expect can alleviate some of the anxiety they may feel from the idea of large gatherings. Recognizing that a foster child feels an absence of family during this time and understanding the sadness that follows will ensure that their feelings are not ignored. Hearing that their presence is one to be thankful for and knowing that they have a special place at the table can remind each child that they matter.

The consistency of a caring adult plays an important role in making the holidays memorable for a youth. A CASA volunteer can provide the stability and support that a youth in foster care may not be able to find elsewhere. Special events, such as SFCASA's annual holiday party, are an opportunity for a volunteer and their youth to spend valuable time together and celebrate. A youth can count on their mentor and advocate being there for them, even when no one else can. Having a CASA means a youth has someone special to share the season with so they too can have happy holiday memories.

The holiday season is a time to celebrate, but also a time to be mindful of others who may not have a family to celebrate with. SFCASA's gift drive and other donation opportunities can help make the holidays special for each youth in foster care. The support of our community makes a difference for the youth that we serve, and impacts our ability to speak up for the rights of our community's foster children.

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<https://www.sfcasa.org/blog/thanksgiving-foster-care>



# GIVING HOPE TO TRAUMA FILLED HOMES DURING THE HOLIDAYS

by Anonymous



The season of giving is upon us once again and many of us are busy preparing for holiday after holiday spent with family, friends, and those that have made an impact on our lives.

For some, this is a time met with feelings of joy and laughter in remembrance and anticipation, but there are so many who are filled with anxiety and trepidation when faced with the upcoming season. The happy thoughts that many of us think should be coming to mind may be very far from reality.

At the Institute for Attachment and Child Development, we encounter memories of abuse, abandonment, ridicule, and tears. Both parents, who have entrusted us to help their family heal, and their traumatized children, who come to us often as a last resort, have said that they spend the holidays avoiding connections, events, and anything that could cause emotional dysregulation – “It’s just easier that way.”

Nearly half of our nation’s children have experienced at least one or more types of serious childhood trauma, according to the National Survey of Children’s Health. For some, the trauma happens during critical developmental stages and is so prevalent that it physically changes their brain structure, inhibits their ability to attach and develop relationships, and stunts their developmental growth past toddlerhood.

The effects of early childhood trauma impact us all as a society. Some traumatized children, when not appropriately treated, are at high-risk for incarceration, psychological impairment, and economic non-productivity into adulthood. “If we want to remedy societal problems—gangs, suicide, and

the like—we need to understand from where these issues stem,” said Robert W. McBride, LCSW. “At their core, such people often suffer from the effects of early trauma and lack of attachment.”

Without effective early intervention, the cycle of childhood trauma will continue to persist for generations. We believe we can help to end the cycle at the Institute for Attachment and Child Development (IACD) with a mission to spread awareness and raise money for solutions ...but we really need your help to give hope to these children and their families.

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<https://www.instituteforattachment.org/giving-hope-to-trauma-filled-homes/>

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## FOSTER CARE & THE HOLIDAYS

by Dr. John N. DeGarmo, Ed.D.

The stockings are hung, by the chimney with care, in hopes that...In hopes of what? For many children who have been placed into the foster care system, they have come from homes where there was no Christmas, there was no hope. They have come from families that did not celebrate a holiday. They have come from environments where there were no presents, no tree. They have come from homes where there was not holiday joy or love.

The Holiday season is upon us. Christmas, Hanukah, New Years, Kwanzaa; these are times that can be extremely difficult for many foster children. During this time of Holiday Cheer, many foster children are faced with the realization that they will not be “home for the holidays,” so to speak, with their biological family members. When they wake up Christmas morning, and are surrounded by people who just may be strangers to them, strangers who are laughing and having fun, it can be a very difficult time for them, indeed. To be sure, it is a day that is a stark reminder to these children that they are not with their own family. It is during the holidays when families are supposed to be together, yet these children in care are not. They are not with their families, and they may not know when they will see them next.

Along with this, foster children also struggle with trying to remain loyal to their birth parents while enjoying the holiday season with their foster family. There are those moments when a child from foster care may feel guilty for experiencing joy and laughter with their foster family, they may feel that they are not only letting their birth mother or father down, they might even be betraying their birth parents and member of their biological family, causing even more grief, guilt, and anxiety within the child during this season of holiday joy. Indeed, this can be a very emotionally stressful time for all involved.

As one who has fostered many children, myself, during the holiday time, I have found that it is important to address these issues beforehand. Before Thanksgiving, before Christmas,

before Hanukah; even before family members and friends come to visit, foster parents need to prepare their foster child ahead of time.

To begin with, foster parents can best help their foster child by spending some time and talking about the holiday. Perhaps the holiday being celebrated in their new home is one that their birth family never celebrated, or is a holiday that is unfamiliar with them. Let the foster child know how your family celebrates the holiday, what traditions your family celebrate, and include the child in it.

Ask your foster child about some of the traditions that his family had, and try to include some of them into your own home during the holiday. This will help him not only feel more comfortable in your own home during this time, but also remind him that he is important, and that his birth family is important, as well. Even if his traditions are ones that you do not celebrate in your own home, try to include some of his into your own holiday celebration, in some way and some fashion.

Far too many children have come to my own home and have never celebrated their birthday, have never sung a Christmas carol, have never opened up a present. Perhaps you have had similar experiences, as well. Sadly, this is not uncommon for children in foster care. It is important to keep in mind that many foster children may come from a home where they did not celebrate a particular season, nor have any traditions in their own home. What might be common in your own home may be completely new and even strange to your foster child. This often includes religious meanings for the holiday you celebrate. Again, take time to discuss the meaning about your beliefs to your foster child beforehand.

More than likely, your foster child will have feelings of sadness and grief, as he is separated from his own family during this time of family celebration.

After all, he is separated from his family during a time that is supposed to be centered AROUND family. However much you provide for him, however much love you give to him, you are still not his family.

Like so many children in foster care, they want to go home, to live with their family members, despite the abuse and trauma they may have suffered from them, and despite all that you can and do offer and provide for him. Therefore, this time of holiday joy is especially difficult.

You can help him by allowing him to talk about his feelings during the holidays. Ask him how he is doing, and recognize that he may not be happy, nor enjoy this special time.

Look for signs of depression, sadness, and other emotions related to these. Allow him space to privately grieve, if he needs to, and be prepared if he reverts back to some behavior difficulties he had when he first arrived into your home. You may find that he becomes upset, rebellious, or complains a lot. Along with this, he may simply act younger than he is during this time. After all, he is trying to cope with not being with his own family during this time when families get together. These feelings and these actions are normal, and should be expected. You can also help your foster child by sending some cards and/or small gifts and presents to their own parents and birth family members. A card or small gift to his family members

can provide hope and healing for both child and parent, and help spread some of the holiday cheer that is supposed to be shared with all.

Each family has that crazy old Aunt Ethel, loud and obnoxious Uncle Fred, and the ever hard of hearing and overwhelming Grandma Lucy.

Your family is used to these relatives and their personalities, your child in foster care is not.

If you have family members visit your home, prepare your foster child for this beforehand. Let him know that the normal routine in your home may become a little “crazy” during this time, that it may become loud, and describe some of the “characters” from your own family that may be coming over to visit. Remind him of the importance of using good behavior and manners throughout this period. Along with this, remind your own family members that your foster child is a member of your family, and should be treated as such.

Remind them that he is to be treated as a member of the family, and not to judge him or his biological family members, or fire questions at him. This also includes gift giving. If your own children should be receiving gifts from some of your family members, your foster child should, as well. Otherwise, your foster child is going to feel left out, and his sadness and grief will only increase.

Be prepared, though, for some in your family not to have presents and gifts for him. Have some extra ones already wrapped, and hidden away somewhere, ready to be brought out, just in case.

With a little preparation beforehand from you, this season of joy can be a wonderful time for your foster child, one that may last in his memory for a life time, as well as in your memory, too. After all, the gift of love is one that can be shared, not only during the holidays, but all year long.

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<https://www.fosterfocusmag.com/articles/foster-care-holidays>

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## FOSTER CARE ADOPTIONS REACH RECORD HIGH

by *Teresa Wiltz*

A man gives his newly adopted daughter a kiss on the cheek as his youngest biological daughter looks on. Adoptive parents are most interested in babies and toddlers, data shows.

A record number of children in foster care are being adopted, partially a reflection of the continuing toll of the opioid crisis but also of efforts in many states to promote adoptions.

In fiscal 2018, the latest year for which data is available, more than 63,000 kids were adopted from foster care, up nearly a



quarter from fiscal 2014. That number was an all-time high, according to the U.S. Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

At the same time, the share of children leaving foster care for adoption increased, from 21% in fiscal 2014 to more than 25% in 2018.

Adoptive parents are most interested in babies and toddlers, and 50% of the foster care children who were adopted in fiscal 2018 were under age 5.

On the one hand, the increase in adoptions is good news, child welfare experts say. Children do best when they remain in a stable household, instead of being bounced from one foster family to another or placed in a group home. When it's not safe for them to be with their biological parents, the next best option is a home with adoptive parents.

On the other hand, the spike in adoptions is another sign of the chaos wrought by the opioid crisis. In the past decade, thousands of kids whose parents are struggling with addiction to opioids or other drugs — or whose parents have died from overdoses — have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care, which has increased the adoption numbers.

"If I could wave a magic wand and get rid of substance abuse, there wouldn't be enough work," said David Gooding, a judge overseeing child welfare cases in the 4th Circuit Court of Florida.

"Parents come in using everything from methadone to heroin to methadone and heroin at the same time, to cocaine and marijuana."

For the first time since fiscal 2012, the number of children in foster care in the United States declined slightly in 2018, to 437,000. That's a 6% increase from the number of children in foster care in fiscal 2010, before the opioid crisis escalated.

But the increase over the past decade has been much more dramatic in the states hit hardest by the opioid epidemic. In Ohio, for example, the number of children in foster care increased by nearly 32% between fiscal 2010 and 2018, to nearly 16,000, according to AFCARS data. During that same time, adoptions from foster care increased by 9%, to nearly 1,600.

Meanwhile, fewer children are being reunited with their parents and primary caretakers when they leave foster care. In fiscal 2011, 52% of children leaving foster care (126,000) were reunited with their parents or primary caretakers, according to AFCARS data. With the opioid epidemic, that percentage has declined to 49% in fiscal 2018.

"Parents disappear, and we can't find them," Gooding said. "Or sometimes a parent chooses a better future for their child by surrendering their parental rights."

## Flooded With Cases

In West Virginia, another state hit hard by opioid addiction, the number of children in foster care increased to more than 7,100 in fiscal 2018, up nearly 74% from 2010, according to AFCARS data. During that same time, adoptions from foster care more than doubled, up 111% to 1,400.

But that increase has little to do with state efforts to promote adoption, said Marissa Sanders, director of the West Virginia Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents Network.

Rather, Sanders said, the skyrocketing foster care adoption numbers have everything to do with the state's catastrophic opioid epidemic. "It's affected the whole system," Sanders said. "We're flooded with these cases. Everyone is struggling."

In Louisiana, which also has been hit hard by the opioid epidemic, the number of children in foster care increased slightly, up 2% between fiscal 2010 and 2018, to nearly 4,600, according to AFCARS data. But adoptions from foster care were up 41% since fiscal 2010 to more than 900 in 2018.

One bright spot has been an uptick in the number of adoptions of kids such as sibling groups and teens, who are harder to place.

Louisiana officials now assign a recruiter to find a home for each child, often by canvassing extended family and friends. Adoptions among those kids jumped more than 30% in the past year, according to the state.

For the past two decades, the federal government has been paying states incentives for increasing the number of foster children and youth who find permanent homes through adoption. In 2014, the program was expanded to include incentives for permanent guardianship.

"There is a federal fiscal incentive for states to get these kids permanency," said Ana Beltran, special adviser for Generations United, a Washington, D.C.-based family research and advocacy group.

## Failed Adoptions

Whether they're former foster parents or extended family members, adoptive parents need family preservation services, too, said Mary Boo, executive director of the North American Council on Adoptable Children, a St. Paul, Minnesota-based advocacy group.

Roughly 1% to 5% of adoptions fail, with kids ending up back in foster care, according to a 2012 report from the U.S. Children's Bureau.

Kids in foster care typically have experienced serious abuse, neglect and trauma, which affect both brain development and their ability to have relationships with their new family, Boo said. And that often means different parenting techniques are needed — and adoptive parents need training to meet those needs, according to Boo.

For example, for children who were abandoned by their biological parents, a timeout can be traumatic, because they fear they're being abandoned again, Boo said. Adoptive and foster parents need ongoing training to help them navigate the intricacies of parenting traumatized children, along with the help of peer support groups and mental health services to deal with the trauma, she said.

"We want to make sure that states are thinking about family preservation also for adoptive families," Boo said. "We know it's best for kids to be in families — but in families that have the resources and knowledge to help them grow and thrive."

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<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/01/07/foster-care-adoptions-reach-record-high>

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## JOIN NFAPA ....your support will enable NFAPA to continue supporting foster parents state-wide!

### Benefits

- Ongoing trainings/conferences at local and state level
- Networking opportunities with other foster families, adoptive families, and relative caregivers
- Opportunity for all foster families, adoptive families and relative caregivers to be actively involved in an association by serving on committees and/or on the Executive Board
- Working to instigate changes by alertness to legislation affecting the child welfare system
- An advocate on your behalf at local, state and national levels
- 25% of membership dues goes toward an NFAPA Scholarship

### Thank you for your support!

Please mail membership form to:  
NFAPA, 3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D  
Lincoln, NE 68521.

**Questions? Please call us at 877-257-0176.**

NFAPA is a 501c3 non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors and Mentors.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. I have fostered for \_\_\_\_\_ years.  
(circle one)

I am with \_\_\_\_\_ agency.

I wish to join the effort:

- Single Family Membership** (a single foster or adoptive parent), \$25
- Family Membership** (married foster or adoptive parents), \$35
- Supporting Membership** (individuals wishing to support our efforts), \$75
- Organization Membership** (organizations wishing to support our efforts), \$150
- Friends of NFAPA**, \$5 billed Monthly

My donation will be acknowledged through Families First newsletters.

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