

# Families First

a newsletter for Nebraska Families

November/December 2021

N F A P A

## Celebrating the Holidays with Foster Youth: Do's and Don'ts

By *Alternative Family Services*

Celebrating the holidays with foster youth this year? There's a few things you should keep in mind.

The end-of-year holiday season, which usually stretches from around Thanksgiving in late November to Christmas and New Year's Day, is typically associated with cheer, family, food and joy. And while the holiday season is positive for most of us, that's not always the case for current or former foster youth.

The holidays are commonly associated with family and togetherness, and bring up – and out – a lot of conflicting feelings and emotions for those not being cared for by their biological parents. In one recent informal poll of foster youth, over 80 percent of them said they miss their families during the holiday season, while another 8 percent said that the time of year can be hard when it seems like everyone else has their families around.

“The meaning behind the Holidays is more than stuffing your face with grandma's homemade pecan pie or getting the year's hottest toy or even enjoying the music. What it's all about is coming together as a family and enjoying and treasuring each other's company. As a foster kid I used to hate the Holidays because I wasn't with my family,” Daniel Knapp, a former foster youth, has written.

So what can foster parents (now called Resource Parents) and others do to make foster youth feel more comfortable around the holidays? Consider heeding these do's and don'ts this season.

### **Do: Talk to Foster Youth Before the Holidays Kick Off**

Before anything kicks off, it can be incredibly beneficial to

let them know what is about to happen and who they will meet. As a Resource Parent, while you may be used to the hustle and bustle of a relative's house or the behavior of a loved one, such a situation will all be new and overwhelming for a foster youth. Beforehand, let them precisely what to expect and what will likely happen, so they are not caught off guard.

Similarly, be sure others you're celebrating the holidays with know about the foster youth and are not surprised by their presence. Recruit those you're spending the holidays with to do what they can to welcome and include foster youth as much as possible in the festivities.

### **Don't: Ignore Their Feelings or Mental Health**

As we've already established, the holiday season can be a conflicting and emotionally draining time for some foster youth. It may bring out new feelings or behaviors, or exacerbate existing ones. Understand that foster youth often have a lot to process during the holidays – and year-round. Respect their mental

health, know that their feelings about the holidays can be complex, and provide help is asked for or required.

### **Do: Incorporate Their Traditions and Customs**

No two families celebrate the holidays in the exact same way. While certain traditions are certainly more common than others, everyone has their own unique and satisfying spin to the holidays – and the families foster youth come from are no different.

When possible, incorporate as many of their traditions and customs into your celebrations. Even adding in little things can make foster youth feel more comfortable and accepted in your holidays. Also respect that foster youth may celebrate holidays you don't, and vice versa.



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/NovDec2021> 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. A family is a child's safe place to land--as parents, we need to be that safe place for ALL of their needs, including their racial and cultural needs.
2. Complete the sentence. Children of color who are adopted transracially must reconcile the loss of their families of origin as well as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Which president made 'Adoption Week' a National event?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the 4 things you can do if you are considering adoption during National Adoption Month?
5. True or False. While every child has a unique temperaments and responds differently, there are not common challenges to disrupting birth order.
6. True or False. The issues surrounding adoption, foster, and kinship care are lifelong - for the adoptees, foster kids, and their families.
7. List 7 ways you can cope, during the holidays.
8. True or False. While it may be exciting for some, it can also be a sensitive period of hopeful adoptive families still waiting to adopt.
9. What percentage of foster youth, said they miss their families during the holiday season.
10. List 3 Do's when celebrating the holidays with foster children.

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

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

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

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

### **Don't: Make Them Feel Unequal or Unwelcome**

During the holiday season, many foster youth feel like outsiders or a burden. For example, Daniel Knapp noted that although his foster family was warm and welcoming, he recalls feeling like a burden and dwelling on minute differences – like how other family members received more presents than he did some years.

“We remember what it used to be like and know how it is now. For most kids all they want it to go home and the holidays is a painful reminder that going home is not an option. It's especially hard when everyone else is shopping for their moms, dads and siblings and you can't because you are not allowed to see them,” notes Krista, a former foster youth.

For Resource Parents, try to take steps big and small to ensure foster youth are completely and totally welcome as an equal part of the family, while always being sure to respect their emotions no matter what.

### **Do: Include Their Wider Community**

For many, the holidays don't stop and end at family. Often, a wider community will be on hand in festivities and in making the holiday what it is.

Resource Parents should aim to include this wider community whenever possible within holiday celebrations. In addition, when permissible, allow foster youth to spend time with relatives and close friends.

“There are just some things in life we can't control. I can't control my foster care history and I can't control other people's behavior but I can control how I react to life's circumstances.



During the Holiday Seasons past I missed out on so much because I was so focused on issues that were really out of my control. I had every right to feel those feelings but it caused me to miss out on what the Holidays are really about. I still struggle with some of those feelings today that I felt when I was younger and still in foster care, but I don't let them rob me from enjoying the Holiday Seasons,” Daniel says.

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<https://www.afs4kids.org/blog/celebrating-the-holidays-with-foster-youth-dos-and-donts/>

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## **CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS FOR HOPEFUL ADOPTIVE FAMILIES**

As your neighbors begin to decorate their homes with lights and everyone starts bundling up for the chilly weather, it's easy to see that the holiday season is upon us! This time of year is generally associated with family, meaningful get-togethers, and lots of family photos. While it may be exciting for some, it can also be a sensitive period for hopeful adoptive families still waiting to adopt.

Understandably, hopeful adoptive parents may have conflicting emotions of anticipation, anxiety, loneliness, and more.

If this is something you identify with as the holidays approach, it is important to realize that you are not alone. Many people, waiting to adopt or not, experience these “holiday blues,” and there are many ways to cope with these unusual feelings, so that you can make the most out of your holiday. At the end of the day, what's important is to remember that the holiday spirit is all about giving, being thankful, and spending time with your loved ones.

### **Anxiety Among Hopeful Parents is Common**

Feelings of anxiety and depression can be common during this season, among the general population and hopeful adoptive parents alike. For those who are still waiting for the opportunity to raise a child, it can be difficult to see other family members experiencing the joys of parenthood. According to some waiting couples, being surrounded by all the children in the family can seem like a reminder of what they're missing. The holidays also mean that many stories in the media will revolve around family, serving as a constant reminder of what these hopeful families have yet to experience.

### **How to Cope During the Holiday Season**

If your emotional state is being affected by your current

situation as a hopeful parent, you're definitely not alone. While there are many different possible ways to cope with these feelings, it is important to find what works for you as an individual and for those in your family. Actively working to cope with these negative feelings can allow you to stay optimistic and enjoy the holiday festivities. Here are a few of the ways hopeful adoptive parents cope with their situation:

- Distract yourself with school, work, or a project. It can be anything from scrapbooking to real estate. Having a goal or hobby separate from adoption will keep your mind from dwelling on any unwanted emotions.
- Take a vacation. Surrounding yourself in a new environment can help you forget any pressure or stress that accompanies waiting for an adoption.
- Acknowledge your future adopted child. Many families like to perform a little tradition for their future child. For example, perhaps leaving a place setting open, or contemplating future traditions that they plan on having with the potential child.
- Volunteer or participate in charity work. Helping underprivileged children or children that may not have families can be a very rewarding way to spend the holidays. You can hold a drive for children's toys and clothes or sponsor a family by collecting specific items from a child's wish list.
- Seeking support from other hopeful adoptive parents. Finding a group in which you can confide and will understand your situation, can be a great way to manage through the holidays.
- Appreciate time with your loved ones. Whether they're family or friends, they care about you and will try their best to make sure you have fun.
- Practice self-care. Going to the gym, eating right, scheduling a massage, or some retail therapy can help you feel better. It's important to love yourself and realize that you are complete regardless of what happens.

Suggested Reading: How to be Supportive of Hopeful Adoptive Parents

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<https://www.adopthelp.com/celebrating-holidays-adoptive-families/>



## HELPING A CHILD UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ARE FOSTERING WILL HELP THEM LOVE TO BE PART TO THIS JOURNEY

The more love we can give, the better for a child, correct? Often, families become foster/adoptive parents while also having biological children in foster care known as the Bio family. On the other hand, some families enter into fostering or adopting and become pregnant during this journey.

So how do we juggle biological children and children in foster care? How do we make sure that both the biological child and the foster child feel loved and nurtured? Here are some ways to create and continue a positive environment for your family and bonus family members.

Whether you are expanding your family by adopting a sibling for your biological child or your adoptive child is getting a sibling, there needs to be time for preparation and understanding. Be open and honest with your child about why they may be gaining a sibling. It could be because you had several siblings or a large family as a child, or you were an only child (like me) and want to give your child a different experience than you had.

Be open and honest with them about why you are making this amazing journey for a child in need. Depending upon the age and developmental stage, the child may be saying to themselves, "Am I enough?" or "Why do they need another child when they have me?" Children believe that the world revolves around them, so letting them know that this decision was not made because of them can bring ease to their minds.

Be sure to involve your child in the process. Whether it is picking out the colors and decorating the child's room or finding new toys, it is crucial for your child to feel like they played a significant role in this journey.

You could also go a step further and encourage your child to attend meetings with the Department of Social Services social worker or even request a meeting with the foster child before being placed in the home; a child in the foster care system would love the opportunity to see their foster family or adoptive family before they are placed in the foster home in an adoption process these family meetings with the foster to adopt parents is so important.

For older children, it may be best to give them roles such as helping their younger siblings with homework or having them pick them up from practice. This can be the beginning of creating a solid bond between the children. The foster care program you are working with, like Extra Special Parents, will help facilitate the meetings and is essential in a treatment foster care situation.

Suppose you become pregnant during your fostering/adopting journey; it is essential to reassure your adoptive child that they are a permanent member of the family and that the child was not created to replace them. For some parents, their ideal family consists of a biological child, an adoptive child, and a child that they are fostering.

Although we may think that it will be, adoption does not have to create a massive shift in the family, and everyone in

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

**Upcoming  
Virtual In-Service  
Trainings!**

**9:00 am-11:00 am  
(Central Time)**

**November 13, 2021  
Online Safety**

Most parents feel overwhelmed when it comes to setting boundaries around technology with their child and they often don't know where to start. Online safety is packed with must have tips for navigating the digital age with children.

**January 15, 2022  
Male Victims**

Male victims are largely misunderstood, overlooked and underrepresented despite the fact that 1 in 6 men will be a victim of sexual assault in their lifetime. Attend this breakout session to learn more about the unique dynamics male victims of sexual assault face.

**February 12, 2022  
Resilience:  
The Biology of Stress**

Adversity in childhood has lifelong effects on health and behavior. Resilience: the Biology of Stress & the Science of Hope chronicles the use of brain science to disrupt cycles of violence, addiction and disease. Learn more about treatment and prevention of childhood toxic stress.

You must register to attend! We will email you the zoom link to log in.  
Registration closes the day before the training.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/In-Service2022>

Questions?

Phone: 402-476-2273      Toll Free: 8777-257-0176

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the foster care services will support you to be a great foster parent.

There will always be sibling rivalry, disagreements, and even a bit of fighting, but biological siblings do this too? One situation to be mindful of is showing too much special attention to the adoptive child.

Sometimes, we do this and do not even recognize it, but your biological child may start exhibiting behaviors. This may also create some tension between your biological child and adoptive or foster child.

Parents tend to ensure that the adopted child feels like part of the family. In contrast, biological children start to feel as if they are only seen and not heard.

Your child may start to demonstrate some old habits such as bedwetting, temper tantrums, or even personality changes. It is vital to stay in touch with the foster/adoption agency to assist when needed, whether referring you and your family to a therapist or encouraging you to attend support groups with like-minded families. We know that it can be challenging to juggle all the changes that come with adding a new family member, and we are here to help!

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<https://www.fosterva.org/fostering-and-adoption-and-your-biological-children>

## ADVICE TO PARENTS ADOPTING A CHILD OF ANOTHER RACE

*By JaeRan Kim*

I was adopted from Korea in 1971 after spending time in an orphanage. At the time, adoption agencies promoted assimilating transnationally adopted children to be more “American,” and so my parents followed the advice of their social workers and adoption agency: they raised me as if I was a white child born to them, just like my siblings.

My parents were supportive and open about my adoption, but my Korean culture and recognition of my Asian American identity were not part of my life growing up.

Like many people of their era, and unfortunately, still some today, my parents thought that being “color-blind” equated to being non-racist. But of course, not seeing color—not seeing race—is impossible. And increasingly, people are realizing that being color-blind does not mean that they don’t see color, it means they don’t acknowledge a child’s race and culture. And taking that approach creates a world of problems for children and parents. This is why instead of using the term color-blind, it is more accurate to talk about the ways in which society is “color-evasive.” Color-evasiveness means not recognizing or acknowledging race and culture— not acknowledging they exist, and not acknowledging oppression and discrimination based on race and culture.

It wasn’t until I was older and I met other adoptees, especially transracial adoptees, that I started thinking about how being adopted transracially and transnationally shaped me. And it wasn’t until later still, in my 40s, that I became a professor of social work and began to study issues related to long-term

outcomes for people who were adopted and developed a framework I call transracial adoption justice.

I share my experience in the classroom, workshops, and articles like this one to urge child welfare professionals and parents who adopt transracially to abandon color-blind and color-evasive attitudes; understand the larger issues surrounding race, culture, and social justice in our society; and honestly engage with their children’s racial and cultural communities.

Because 78 percent of transracial adoptions are white parents with children of color (as found in the 2010 U.S. Census), in this article I am referencing these families.



### What is transracial adoption justice?

At its core, transracial adoption justice is about understanding and acknowledging the history and effects of racism and oppressive practices on people in our society as it relates to adoption. Components of transracial adoption justice are:

- **Understanding that transracial adoptees’ lives are impacted by their race and their adoption and that they are experiencing layers of loss.** Children in foster care have all suffered trauma and loss. Children of color are also impacted by the loss of their culture and by a legacy of historic trauma. Children of color who are adopted transracially must reconcile the loss of their families of origin as well as the loss of having family members who look like them.
- **Acknowledging that adoptees are the experts of their own lives.** To parents, I say: Believe children when they talk about their experiences with discrimination and oppression! Don’t minimize their experiences by saying things like, “Oh, I’m sure they didn’t mean it that way,” when your child shares an instance of racism with you.
- **Understanding the history of race, power, privilege, and oppression in this country.** This means abandoning a

“color-blind” attitude or “color-evasive” attitude. Ignoring a child’s race and culture creates myriad problems for children and parents, including delaying identity development, preventing children from developing the skills needed to cope with racism, and potentially causing children to internalize society’s negative feelings about their own race and culture. I encourage parents to think about the reasons that transracial adoption exists—and why it is mostly white families that are adopting.

- **Caring about your children’s community of origin.** Expressing negative opinions about your child’s community of origin or their racial or cultural community can also damage family relationships in the long term, especially when adoptees grow up and realize their parents have negative feelings about their racial or cultural group. They might also feel that your concern for people of color only extends to adopting children if they do not see you engaged in relationships with people from their communities of origin. As a parent, what are the ways that you can support or advocate for the communities of color?

- **Practicing for the long haul.** We know that there are lifelong challenges that transracial adoptees grapple with. They can include struggles developing racial identities, forming relationships with their communities of origin, and helping their own children form healthy racial identities. I have unfortunately met too many transracial adoptees who have strained relationships with their adoptive parents because they feel their racial and cultural identities are not affirmed. I always tell adoptive parents to think beyond their childhood and adolescence—you want to parent your child for the relationships you will have throughout your whole lifetime together!

#### **What can I do as a parent?**

While these can be uncomfortable issues to grapple with, everybody can do their own work to support their children and help move society forward. We all have things to learn. Nobody is an expert. It is important to also remember that at the core of this is your relationship with your transracially adopted child!

- **Read!** There is no shortage of books on the topic. A few books that I recommend to people getting started are: *You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Olou, *How to Be An AntiRacist* by Ibram X. Kendi, and *What Does it Mean to be White?* by Robin DiAngelo.

- **Get involved in anti-racism work in your area.** “Showing Up for Racial Justice” is one organization that has chapters all over the United States.

- **Look at your own systems.** Look at who is represented in your neighborhood, social groups, clubs, and other settings. If there is not diversity in your existing communities, consider exploring new ones.

- **Examine your relationships with BIPOC (Black, indigenous, people of color).** Think about how reciprocal those relationships are. Hopefully you are learning from members of these communities. But are they getting something out of the relationship too?

- **Assess who you go to for advice and information.** I see so many news articles and resources about transracial adoption where no transracial adoptees or people of color are involved. Ask yourself: are you only talking to other white parents and agencies about race and culture?

- **Reflect on assumptions about what constitutes “good” schools and neighborhoods.** Are they considered “good” because the people are affluent? Would a person of color think they were good places to live and learn?

- **Think about what you want your relationship with your child to look like in 10, 25, 30 years**—and with your grandkids, too. Many adult adoptees I’ve worked with say that their parents’ reluctance to talk about race throughout their lives has strained their relationship as adults.

Discussions about race and racism and moving away from color-blind and color-evasive practices might be awkward and uncomfortable at first, but it’s like building muscles. It takes practice and a commitment to being open-minded and willing to learn.

I want to stress again that the reason for my advocacy is to help transracial adoptive families thrive! As a parent myself, I know the day-to-day busyness of life and parenting demands a lot from parents. However, I also know that my children needed parents who would help them develop a positive racial identity. A family is a child’s safe place to land—as parents, we need to be that safe place for ALL of their needs, including their racial and cultural needs.

I hope this article has provided encouragement and some tangible ways for you to start exploring how you can better support your transracially adopted child. Remember, adoption isn’t the end of the journey—it is the just one part of your lifelong relationship together. You have many years to develop strong attachments and build strong, racially and culturally affirmed relationships with your transracially adopted child.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

JaeRan Kim is an assistant professor in the School of Social Work and Criminal Justice at the University of Washington – Tacoma. Her field of study includes the lifelong impact of adoption. She blogs at [harlows-monkey.com](http://harlows-monkey.com).

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<https://blog.adoptuskids.org/advice-to-parents-adopting-a-child-of-another-race/>

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## **PREPARING TO BLEND KIDS BY BIRTH AND ADOPTION OR FOSTER/ KINSHIP CARE**

Blending children into your family by adoption, foster, or kinship care when biological children are already present can create unique challenges. How can parents prepare their families to blend resident kids with kids by adoption, foster, or kinship care?

#### **General Tips for Blending Kids by Birth and Adoption/ Foster/Kinship Care**

When you are blending kids by birth and adoption or foster/ kinship care, there are a few things that you can do to set the tone for your home and changes that are coming. These are general preparations you can do, regardless of the ages of the kids in the house or the kids you are bringing home.

## BE THE LIGHT

Anything you can do to shed light on adoption and foster care is nothing short of incredible. The ramifications are potentially helping a child to find a loving home.

November is Adoption Awareness Month, and there's no better time to get involved.

<https://www.fosterva.org/november-is-adoption-awareness-month-what-should-you-know>

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

The NFAPA Board is looking to fill several volunteer board positions in the Central and Western service areas. Please contact Felicia at the NFAPA office at 402-476-2273 and send a bio of why you would like to be on the board to: [Felicia@nfapa.org](mailto:Felicia@nfapa.org)

## 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

- Virtual Support Group at this time for November & December. Available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday at 6:30 pm (MT). Contact Jolie for Google Meet information

#### Tammy Welker: 402-989-2197

- Virtual Support Group at this time, available for all foster/adoptive parents on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm (CT). Contact Tammy for Zoom information.

#### 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. Meets the 4th Monday of the month (not in December) at Connection Point, 1333 N 33rd Street, Lincoln. Contact Felicia for information or the NFAPA Office.

## Gather background information

Get as much information from the child's background files as you can. Ask your social worker or caseworker about the environments from which the child is coming. Inquire about how that child has interacted with other kids, how the child behaves during high stress, and what the child's needs are.

### Be a lifelong learner.

The issues surrounding adoption, foster, and kinship care are lifelong – for the adoptees, foster kids, and their families. Prepare yourself for the ongoing nature of these topics as you grow together. Your preparations should involve self-examination about your “why,” general expectations, and the pre-conceived notions you hold about being an adoptive/foster/kinship family.

### Start with realistic expectations.

Recognize that it is not, nor will it be necessary or even possible, to treat all the children equally. That's too much emotional weight to bear and way too much mental “record-keeping” for any busy household. Instead, set the expectation that you will parent each of your children according to their individual needs.

### Set yourself up for success.

As soon as you can, line up extra help around the house. Whether it's laundry, grocery shopping, or yard work, think about those in your life who can lighten that load for a while. Inquire about elderly folks, college students, or even local high school kids in your circles who could serve your family during the transition of adding a new child.

### Nix the “shoulds.”

The transition season of settling a new child into your home is a perfect time to pull back on the extras that usually keep you running out of breath all day long. Your new child will need as much of your time and attention as possible, especially the first six months they are home. Streamline your calendar and permit yourself to say “no.”

### Expect growing pains.

Sibling rivalry, even among kids who have always been part of the family, is typical. There will be some shifting and straining of the kids' relationships. It will lighten your mental and emotional load tremendously if you can decide in advance how to handle them and how to respond. The key will be to not over-react. Instead, recognize that your kids need some level of conflict to learn how to navigate relationships. As long as everyone is safe, it's also a chance to learn how to repair relationships.

### Preparations When You Already Have Kids By Birth

#### Consider birth order.

While every child has a unique temperament and responds differently, there are common challenges to disrupting birth order. Educate yourself on the issues and engage in honest introspection about your expectations and abilities. Think about your resident children's temperament. Balance it against the known struggles of the child you are adopting. Do you have the capacity to provide what both kids will need in the transition and for the long haul?

#### Many ages in one body.

You likely already understand your resident child's age and stage developmental abilities. Consider that an adopted, foster, or kinship child could be one chronological age. But if he has a trauma history, he might act significantly younger, especially



in the early stages of being in your family.

### **Recognize the time constraints.**

Even before you receive a placement by adoption or foster kinship care, consider how your time constraints will change. Prepare your resident kids by explaining you need to streamline the family calendar and why. Begin ongoing conversations about the temporary nature of meeting the new sibling's needs. Assure them that they can ask for your time and attention, and you will do your best to support them. Be sure to check in with them frequently leading up to and during the transition time.

### **Define the terms.**

It's will be helpful to start with general conversations about what adoption and foster care are versus what they are not. With young children in the home, books are an excellent way to introduce adoption or foster/kinship care topics. When your kids are older, they will benefit from exploring the "why" of adoption, foster, and kinship care. Equipping them with your intentions for adoption will help them process their part in the transition of adding to the family.



### **Involve the kids.**

In age-appropriate ways, make a family project of getting ready for the child you are planning to adopt or foster. Employ their help to clean the kitchen before the home study visit. Ask for their input on new bedding or assistance in painting the new child's room.

### **Engage in "what ifs."**

Sometimes families need to think and talk about scenarios of everyday life that are common to families built by adoption, foster, or kinship care. These conversations can include topics like:

- Transracial adoption and "conspicuous" families
- Birthparents, removing kids from their homes
- Abuse and trauma

Again, children's books are an excellent tool to engage your child's curiosity about the transition process or examine the family's new dynamics. Try making a game of it by role-playing scenarios to help prepare your kids to explain adoption or foster/kinship care to their friends.

### **Privacy is a priority.**

While you are exploring the "what ifs" of being an adoptive or foster family, try to explain to your resident children why kids need adoptive or foster families. As they grasp those concepts, take the general discussion and personalize it to the specific child you adopt or foster.

When creating answers to questions about your family, help your children understand that the story of their new brother or sister belongs to that child. This new sibling deserves the right to keep his story private. Your resident children will be curious, and so will their friends – it's the nature of childhood. Help them create answers while still respecting their new sibling's privacy.

### **Additional Tips for Older Child Adoption**

- Invite the kids to participate in visits with the new child before the adoption.
- Normalize conversations about "life before adoption or foster/kinship care." Don't make it taboo to talk about your life before the adopted child joining your family or the adopted child's life before joining your family.
- Teach your kids about the potential behaviors that a newly adopted child might exhibit. Help them understand why they might see their new sibling clinging, having tantrums, or crying. Talk about food insecurity, struggles to share, and other common behaviors. Again, children's books are helpful conversation starters.
- Slowly transition your new child into the family if possible. If not possible, spend as much time as a family with your new child before bringing her home.

### **Tips for Adopting or Fostering Transracially**

- Talk with your children about the attention from others that your family may receive.
- Incorporate books featuring diverse characters into your child's library.
- Read and act on the suggestions in [CreatingAFamily.org](http://CreatingAFamily.org)'s guide to raising anti-racist kids. (Actually, please do this even if you aren't adopting a child of a different race!)

### **Preparations if You Are Considering a Child by Birth AFTER Adoption or Fostering**

Suppose you are considering adding a child by birth to your family after you've brought adopted, foster, or kinship kids home. In that case, there are some specific conversations you should have. We believe honest self-assessment and preparation are vital to helping you and your children thrive. Indeed, families get pregnant after adoption without planning to do so. They thrive without talking about some of these issues.

However, if you have the opportunity to decide – or not – to add another child by birth, please ask yourselves these questions before the changes happen:

- How will this decision impact your adopted child? Many adopted children already struggle with "where they fit" in their family, so this bears careful examination.
- Why do you want a biological child? How do you (or would you) frame that to the adopted kids you are already raising?
- Are you afraid that you might love a biological child more? Is your adopted/foster child fearful about that? Are they afraid of being relegated to second-best status?
- How will you intentionally carve out time alone with your adopted child to buffer and build continued attachment? Do you share hobbies or interests? Can you develop some along

the way to prioritize time together?

### Preparing Your Family Creates A Culture of Intention

Blending kids by birth and adoption, foster, or kinship care is not impossible. Nor is it dooming your family to a lifetime of worry and self-examination. When you prepare well and commit to continue learning together, it can become second nature to nurture and exercise this culture of openness, empathy, and thoughtfulness among you all.

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<https://creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/preparing-to-blend-kids-by-birth-and-adoption-or-foster-kinship-care/>



## NOVEMBER IS ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH: WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW?

### How Foster impact Children's lives with Adoption

Did you know that less than 1/3 of adoptions occur within the first two years of a child entering the foster care system? And, each year, 23,000 children age out of the foster care system in the US.

There are currently more than 400,000 children in the American foster care system. As this number increases, there becomes an even greater need for loving foster parents to step forward.

November is Adoption Awareness Month, and this is a beautiful time to learn about adoption and adoption services. We also acknowledge all the lives that have been impacted by adoption.

### November Is Adoption Awareness Month

In 1976, the governor of Massachusetts, Mike Dukakis, wanted to raise awareness about the state's growing number of foster children. Hoping to promote more adoptive families, Dukakis proclaimed the first week of November 'Adoption Week'.

Eight years later, President Ronald Reagan made 'Adoption Week' a national event. And, in the year 1995, President Bill Clinton extended the week-long event to one month and proclaimed November as the national adoption month.

You can find many events happening all over the country, including adopting child events, adoption storytelling from birth families, and hearing adoption stories from children

waiting and loving families' success testimonies.

### Why Should I Celebrate Adoption Awareness Month?

This annual event is a fantastic opportunity to shine the spotlight on adoption. Now is the ideal time to spread awareness about adoption and the foster care system, home to an increasing number of foster youth and young people living in foster homes in the United States and our child welfare system and not finding permanency.

It is also a chance to celebrate the families united by adoption and the children who are still waiting to find their forever homes. We also take this opportunity to honor the birth parents and the difficult decision they made.

### How Can I Participate?

We're glad you asked. Everyone is welcome to get involved, and there are countless ways to take part.

Begin by reading more about the incredible adoption process. Consider sharing information among your family and friends. You can attend events in honor of Adoption Awareness Month and volunteer at a local foster care organization.

Donate money to an adoption charity or see where you can donate used clothes and toys for foster parents and children in your local area.

### How Can I Participate if I'm Interested to Adopt?

It's beautiful that you are considering adoption, and there's plenty of things you can do for this National Adoption Month.

- Contact someone you know who has adopted or fostered a child to find out more about their experience
- Be it online or in person, look to join a support group for potential adoptive and foster parents
- Consider starting a blog about your journey towards adoption
- Start an adoption photo album or journal that can one day be shared with your future child
- Seek out books concerning adoption and parenting
- Attend an Adoption Awareness Month event in your area.

Prospective parents may feel a wide range of emotions, such as fear, excitement, and anxiety. If your heart is guiding you, November is an amazing time to dive deeper into the fulfilling world of adoption and foster care.

### Different Types of Adoption

Adoption can happen in many ways, usually depending on what the birth mother feels comfortable with. Every child and situation is unique, but there are two main types of adoption; **Closed and open.**

These terms describe the level of communication between the birth mother and the adoptive parents.

### Closed Adoption

In the past, closed adoption was the norm, but now it is much rarer. In this framework of adoption, there is zero contact between the adoptive family and the birth parents.

Adopted children know nothing about their birth parents and are unable to contact them. This can lead to children struggling with their self-esteem and identity as they grow up.

### Open Adoption

Nowadays, open adoption is far more common. The contact information of the birth mother and the adoptive parents are shared openly.

There are many ways to manage this relationship. The adoption agency can facilitate contact, or the parents can choose to communicate directly. Regardless, the special moments of the child's life can be shared with the adoptive

family and the birth mother. It creates space for a vaster support system for the child.

### What if I'm Unable to Adopt or Foster to Adopt?

Perhaps you're not yet ready to adopt, or you want to take more of a supporting role. Well, your help is invaluable too.

You can mentor a child who is aging out of foster care or reach out to others who need support, such as parents in the process of adopting.

Or, consider making yourself available as a respite caregiver. Respite care involves the short-term care of a child, allowing the regular caregiver to take a break.

If you're unable to get hands-on right now, there is the undeniable power of sharing on social media. Expose friends and family to positive adoption articles or blogs. This can make a big difference and encourage people you love to explore the uplifting world of foster parenting and adoption.

### Be The Light

Anything you can do to shed light on adoption and foster care is nothing short of incredible. The ramifications are potentially helping a child to find a loving home.

November is Adoption Awareness Month, and there's no better time to get involved.

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<https://www.fosterva.org/november-is-adoption-awareness-month-what-should-you-know>

resolve differences of opinion about what is safe? How do we deal with more disappointment and frustration — and help our kids do the same?

We can't tell you what the right (or safe) choices are for your family, but here are some tips to make the best of holidays during the pandemic, whatever your situation. We asked our experts for advice about ways to minimize stress and help everyone in the family feel as good as possible about this unusual holiday season.

### Don't wait to make plans

Discussions about this year's holidays can be painful, but making plans ahead of time will make the days themselves much less stressful. "I think some people are thinking, 'Let's play it by ear. We still have plenty of time before Christmas. Let's see how the COVID numbers look later,'" says Kenya Hameed, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. But, Dr. Hameed advises, it's better to work with the information we have now and plan accordingly. That gives everyone time to make good decisions and get comfortable with them, especially if they represent a big change in family traditions kids look forward to – like a shopping trip with grandma or a holiday party with friends.

"The more predictability we can create in this uncertain time, the better it is for kids," notes Grace Berman, LCSW, a social worker. "By making decisions early, you can really help them be prepared for what's going to happen." She suggests outlining for kids what Thanksgiving or Hanukkah or whatever you celebrate is going to look like this year, and then helping them cope ahead with it — work through feelings they might have and come up with strategies to feel better. If you wait until the last minute to figure out plans, kids won't have time to deal with any confusion or disappointment, which will make the holidays that much more stressful for the whole family.

### Discuss rules in advance

Differences of opinion about how to gather safely may be a huge source of stress this holiday season. Safety measures for any kind of holiday gathering should be discussed clearly and decided in advance, advises Colin de Miranda, ASW, a social worker. "You need clear communication, maybe with everybody getting on a call beforehand and laying out who's comfortable with what," de Miranda says.



## HOLIDAYS DURING THE PANDEMIC

### Tips for reducing stress, helping kids cope, and making new traditions

By Caroline Miller

With the holidays upon us, families everywhere are struggling to make plans appropriate for the pandemic. How do we celebrate when we can't be together as usual? How do we



Will everyone be tested before coming? Where do we stand on hugging? What are our rules about masks? Avoid awkwardness and conflict (and unexpected risk to your family's safety) by making explicit agreements ahead of time

with everyone who's going to be present. By setting those sorts of ground rules, Dr. Hameed adds, anyone who isn't comfortable with the arrangements has a chance to excuse themselves from participating.

Knowing that safety rules have been considered carefully is especially important if you have a child with a lot of anxiety around COVID, notes Berman. Whatever you decide to do, it's comforting for an anxious child to hear from you that the plan is a careful one: "We've thought about it and discussed it with everyone, and this is the decision we've come to. It's okay for you to feel anxious, and here are all the steps that we're taking to make sure that everyone can feel safe."

### Stay the course

And what do you do when a guest who has agreed to a socially distanced visit comes in for the hug anyway? Time to refer to those ground rules. "You can say, 'Remember, we discussed this, and so as much as I want to hug you right now or as much as I want to be able to see your face without that mask on, I have to ask you to stick to the rules we set,'" says Dr. Hameed. It can also be helpful give kids a script to use if someone isn't respecting the rules: "My mom says I'm not allowed to give you a hug this year but we can wave!"

"Clarity and directness upfront will go a really long way in getting people to follow through," adds Berman. "We see that with kids, and we see it with adults as well."

Setting a clear timeline with guests can also boost compliance with rules, especially if guests are going to be drinking alcohol as the gathering does on. Invitations commonly come with a start time but not an end time, notes Dr. Hameed. "So this year, families might want to think about having a time where everyone is expected to leave.



### Start new traditions

If you're not going to be able to celebrate in the way your family is accustomed to, be proactive and find new activities to make the pandemic holidays special.

"If you're not able to share a meal with friends and family, it could be an opportunity to share in other ways, like building photo albums for family members," suggests de Miranda. Maybe you can cook and swap dishes with nearby loved ones or write letters to relatives you're not able to see in person this year.

Helping your kids think about ways to be kind and generous to others can make this year's changes easier to handle, says Berman. For example, try letting your child pick a charity your family can give to. "We know that when we're dealing with difficult emotions ourselves, doing something for someone else can really help us feel better."

### Give kids a voice

When framing this year as special and creating new activities and traditions, says Dr. Hameed, let kids have a role. What would make this feel special to your kids in positive ways, not just in the negative ways that we're all aware of? What would they like to cook? What games do they want to play? Do they want to set aside time for favorite movies or listen to special music? "Being part of that decision-making process helps offset some of those negative feelings," Dr. Hameed explains.

"A lot of times, as parents, we are trying to come up with ideas for things for our kids," adds Berman. "But really, if you just ask your child, they will have ideas, and that voice that you give them is really important and a strong protective factor."

Remember that all the changes this year can also be a chance to make the holidays more kid-friendly. Maybe everyone dresses up in a costume. Maybe the kids get to try out a messy new recipe or help stuff the turkey, now that the stakes for Thanksgiving dinner aren't so high. Maybe it's a big game of hide and seek that everyone — adults included — participates in. "These might just be simple things that you wouldn't normally do," says Dr. Hameed, "but they can still make things more fun for the kids."

### Let kids express disappointment

When children are upset about cancelled trips or not seeing cousins, it's tempting to tell them that it'll be fine, and that they'll have just as much fun at home. But it's important to validate their feelings by hearing them out. "You want to really pause and acknowledge that you're disappointed, too, and let them know that it's okay for them to feel disappointed," says Berman.

It's also helpful to model coping with that disappointment in a positive way. Talk to your kids about what you're doing to feel better (like scheduling calls with far-off friends or making a favorite recipe) and help them find their own ways to do the same.

And if kids are upset or angry about your decisions not to participate in a larger family gathering, it's important to validate those feelings too. Dr. Berman suggests language like: "I understand that you're mad right now. It's okay to feel frustrated. We made this decision because we thought it was the best way to stay safe. But it's okay to feel disappointed and mad."

That validation can go a long way in bringing down those feelings, and it gives you an opening to calmly explaining your reasoning. "Sometimes kids get upset because we're making decisions and not really giving them any information," says Berman. Keeping your kids in the conversation and letting them know that you hear them can help them feel respected even in situations that don't go the way they want.

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<https://childmind.org/article/holiday-during-the-pandemic/#.X7sdgeLXazg.facebook>

# THE HOLIDAYS – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LOVING HEALING

By *MADELEINE KREBS, LCSW-C*

'Tis the season to be jolly...but for many adopted children, the holiday season can be anything but jolly. Especially for children adopted at older ages, from foster care or internationally, feelings of loss and grief related to memories of holidays spent with birth family, previous foster families, or in orphanages, are likely to surface during this time. Advertisements and commercials on various media platforms depicting happy family gatherings can create unrealistic expectations and put undue pressure on everyone, especially vulnerable children. Just as parents may experience holiday-related stress and anxiety, children may be as well, sometimes suffering in silence or exhibiting their distress in challenging behavior. In the busyness of the season, parents will have to take the time to slow things down, pay close attention to what may be happening for their children and talk with them about what they are feeling. It is important to ask the children about their memories and their holiday traditions from the past. Be prepared that children may be feeling uncomfortable with new religious or holiday traditions and practices as they may be missing the ways in which they celebrated with their birth or foster families.

This was the first Christmas for 9-year-old Jamey in his new pre-adopt foster home. Jamey was removed from his birth family at age 6, and this was his second placement. Coming into the therapist's office, the day after Christmas, he appeared to be sad and withdrawn. When his therapist asked him how his Christmas was, with tears in his eyes, he replied, "Blue." Jamey's therapist and his pre-adopt mother exchanged puzzled looks. Requesting clarification, Jamey began to cry. He said, "Blue lights...only blue lights on a tin tree, not even a real green tree that smells like a tree– that's not Christmas to me!! We always had a "real tree" with multicolored lights." Jamey's mother was shocked and upset to learn how something as simple as the tree could evoke such painful emotion. Jamey went on to give a detailed description of what Christmas had been like with his birth family. Having unburdened his sadness around the loss of his birth family, his mother knew what she had to do. That very same day, she bought the right tree with the right decorations! The new tree had its home in Jamey's bedroom for several glorious weeks.

Helping children to express their painful feelings during this "happy" season may feel counterintuitive to many adoptive parents. Many parents want desperately to make up for what their children may never have had by exposing them to the fun and presents. Parents can feel hurt, frustrated and bewildered when their adopted child responds with difficult behavior instead of gratitude. Understanding what's behind the behavior is key. A parent can say, "I notice that you seem out of sorts lately – fighting with your brother, ignoring my requests. You seem so unhappy. I am wondering if all this busyness and excitement is too much. I'm wondering if you are thinking about people you wish you could see." While many children may have difficulties sharing their toys and other possessions, six-year-old Roxanne's refusal to share

was isolating her from her siblings. Adopted from Russia at the age of four, she would not engage in reciprocal play. Never having had her own possessions in the orphanage, she was fearful of losing what she had, or having her possessions hurt or damaged in some way. Roxanne's parents worked patiently with her to help her overcome her fears by helping her to share her new presents, reinforcing that her toys belonged solely to her.

At C.A.S.E., we have seen children with very low expectations for the holidays. Some are afraid to ask for anything because, sadly, their experiences with the holidays have left them feeling that they should not expect much. Moved around from home to home, they have often lost what little they had. Some children are encouraged to make a holiday wish list – to think of at least three items they really want. Parents can tell them that they may not get everything on their list, but they will get some things. Children often need support and reassurance that they are worthy of receiving the joyful feelings, experiences and material goods that the holidays can bring. Especially during the holidays, it is very important that parents understand the complex feelings around the many losses that adopted children have experienced.



In addition to significant adults, losses may include birth and foster siblings, birth relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, and houses of worship that are dearly missed. Reaching out in some way, if possible, to those people validates the significance of those relationships to the child. Just as adults may think about the people who are not at the holiday dinner table this year, the children are also likely thinking about who is missing for them as well. Reminiscing together; and sharing feelings and memories about the people who are not present brings everyone closer. And that is no small gift. Past family traditions can be foremost in the children's minds. Something as simple as incorporating former favorite holiday foods into their present holiday experience can be a significant way to bridge their past with their present and future. One family I worked with made a paper chain containing all the names of both birth and adoptive family members and hung it in their doorway for all visitors to see. Other families light special candles in memory of ALL loved ones not present, say special prayers, or make drawings of special memories.

These actions and activities serve to deepen the bonds

between the child and their adoptive family. For families who have contact with birth and former foster families, parents may want to take advantage of holiday time to help their children connect with people who matter to their children. Children can write letters, send emails, make phone calls, SKYPE/Facetime, draw pictures, select presents to send, and when possible, help plan how to have a holiday celebration during a visit. Parents may worry that such contact will stir up feelings of loss and grief. If you are in doubt about whether contact will be helpful or harmful in helping your child process and cope with feelings of loss and grief during the holidays, I advise you to seek professional assistance. I remember the teen who had never had a Christmas tree and did not know what to do when invited to help trim it...and another child whose birth family was often homeless and had no money to buy food or gifts, who felt guilty and overwhelmed by what she received from her new family. If you can embrace the fact that your child may have very different ideas about holiday traditions, and may have strong reactions to what is changing for them in their new families, you will be much better equipped to help them to enjoy this holiday season.

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<https://adoptionsupport.org/general/holidays-opportunity-loving-healing/>

## 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 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.drjohndegarmofostercare.com/>

## INFORMATION ON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SYSTEM AND THEIR ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

Do you work with foster children that have a Children's Hospital and Medical Center medical provider? Foster parents can now access Children's Hospital & Medical Center's health portal (Children's Connect) which allows them access to pertinent medical information for their foster children (communication with the child's health care team, request medication refills, etc.)

- If foster parents have questions about this access, please have them reach out to the child's medical provider.
- If you have any questions, please reach out to Karen Moran at [Karen.moran@nebraska.gov](mailto:Karen.moran@nebraska.gov).

# GUARDIAN TOOL — STATEWIDE SURVEY LAUNCH

On April 1, 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) rolled out a pilot survey through Guardian Tool for foster parents and relative/kinship caregivers that are caring for child(ren) in the state's care. This survey will be different from previous surveys which you may have completed with DHHS as this survey will be on-going and the questions remain relatively the same. Our goal is to measure the quality and effectiveness of the visits that you receive from Department of Health and Human Services, CFS Staff, or our contracted provider, Saint Francis Ministries. Based on the overwhelming success of the pilot, we are implementing Guardian Tool statewide through a yearlong contract which will launch on November 1, 2021.

We are asking that you complete this survey EACH TIME a caseworker conducts a visit. I encourage you to save this survey link in your phone, tablet or computer for easy access in the future; QR code is also provided below. You will also receive reminder text messages through the survey platform with the survey link.

When you go to the survey, you will need to provide the name of the worker that made the visit. The survey will have all the workers listed and as you type their name the list will identify the worker for your convenience.

It is extremely important that you fill out the survey if the visit goes great as well as if the visit didn't go so great. We cannot make changes and improvements in the quality of service we deliver unless we know the areas where we need to improve. The more specific you can be in your comments, the better the outcomes will be for all Nebraskans.

You do not need to be concerned about any backlash from any comments which you make in the survey. These responses are reviewed by management, and if follow-up is needed, then we will ensure follow-up is completed in a timely and efficient manner.

Our hope is that the Guardian Tool will continue to assist us in building stronger relationships with you while improving our operations. Thank you in advance for participating in the survey—your feedback will help us measure foster parent and relative/kinship caregiver satisfaction as well as child safety and well-being.

If you have any trouble with the survey please reach out to my office or our Licensing and Placement team at DHHS. [FosterCareRD@nebraska.gov](mailto:FosterCareRD@nebraska.gov) and we will be glad to assist you.

The survey link is:

[https://cprs.visibilitygrid.com/ne37/guardian/survey\\_view.php?survey\\_key=600](https://cprs.visibilitygrid.com/ne37/guardian/survey_view.php?survey_key=600)

As always, thank you for your continued service to Nebraska's children.



**Dr. Alger M. Studstill, Jr.**  
Deputy Director of Protection & Safety  
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

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3601 N. 25th Street, Suite D  
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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.

- Gold Donation, \$1,000       Silver Donation, \$750
- Platinum Donation, \$500       Bronze Donation, \$250
- Other, \$ \_\_\_\_\_