



CENTENE
Corporation

**DARBY BOINGG
HELPS A FRIEND ON**

A FOSTER CARE JOURNEY



**PROACTIVE
PARENTS/GUARDIANS
GUIDE**



DISCLAIMER. This book provides general information about foster care and related issues. This information does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be used as a solitary reference on the subject matter, for the diagnosis or treatment of a health problem, or as a substitute for consulting a licensed health care professional. Consult with a qualified physician or healthcare practitioner to discuss specific individual issues or health needs, and to professionally address personal, emotional, health, physical, nutritional or medical concerns.

WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

THESE DAYS, THERE'S NO SET DEFINITION FOR WHAT MAKES UP A FAMILY. SOME KIDS LIVE WITH BOTH OF THEIR PARENTS, SOME WITH ONLY ONE. SOME GO BACK AND FORTH TO MOM AND DAD'S PLACE IF THEIR PARENTS ARE DIVORCED. SOME MAY LIVE WITH GRANDPARENTS. AND SOME LIVE WITH A FOSTER FAMILY, A TEMPORARY HOME WITH PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR THEM BUT AREN'T NECESSARILY RELATED TO THEM.

OPERATED BY THE STATE, FOSTER CARE IS A PROGRAM THAT LETS MINOR CHILDREN (THOSE UNDER THE AGE OF 18, IN MOST STATES) BE REMOVED FROM THEIR HOME AND PLACED WITH STAND-IN PARENTS FOR SOME TIME. ABUSE, NEGLECT OR A HOME SETTING THAT'S NOT STABLE CAN CAUSE A CHILD AT RISK OF HARM TO BE REMOVED.

THE MAIN GOAL OF FOSTER CARE:


TO REUNITE CHILDREN WITH THEIR REAL PARENTS. THOSE PARENTS MUST FOLLOW A PLAN FOR FIXING THEIR PROBLEMS TO GET THEIR CHILDREN BACK AGAIN.

FOSTER PARENTS TAKE THE STEPS THEY NEED TO TAKE AND GO THROUGH TRAINING TO BECOME LICENSED TO FOSTER CHILDREN IN NEED.

A TIME OF CHANGE

LIKE TIMOTHY IN OUR STORY, MAKING THE CHANGE FROM HIS BIRTH PARENTS' HOME TO A FOSTER FAMILY'S HOME CAN BE A HARD TIME FOR A CHILD. THEY HAVE MANY QUESTIONS, AND THE FUTURE MAY SEEM UNSURE.

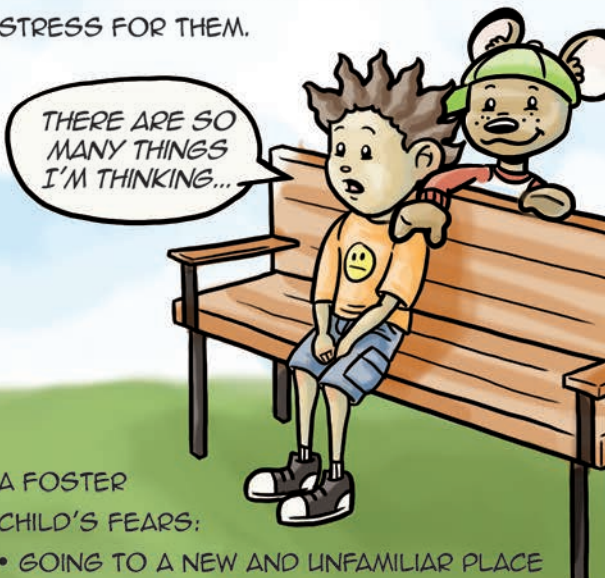
TIMOTHY IS LUCKY THAT HE HAS FRIENDS TO TALK TO ABOUT HIS FEELINGS. LETTING THESE CHILDREN EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS, ASK QUESTIONS AND EXPECT ANSWERS IN RETURN IS KEY.



WELL, I BELIEVE WORDS ARE THE VOICE OF YOUR HEART. EVEN IF YOUR HEART IS SAD, IT IS OKAY TO SAY THESE WORDS OUT LOUD AND TALK ABOUT WHY!

THE FEARS OF A FOSTER CHILD

FOSTER KIDS HAVE TO DEAL WITH MANY FEELINGS. ANGER, ANXIETY, WORRY, FEAR AND DOUBT CAN CAUSE A GREAT DEAL OF STRESS FOR THEM.



THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I'M THINKING...

A FOSTER CHILD'S FEARS:

- GOING TO A NEW AND UNFAMILIAR PLACE
- MEETING NEW PEOPLE
- DEATH, INJURY AND PAIN
- STRANGERS
- SOMEONE TAKING THEM
- ANIMALS
- PAST ABUSE
- EATING OTHER TYPES OF FOOD MADE BY STRANGERS
- BEING RIDICULED AND MADE FUN OF
- BEING ALONE
- THEIR PARENTS NOT LOVING THEM
- FEELINGS OF GIVING UP FAMILY AND PARENTS
- SCARED OF NOT MAKING FRIENDS

BE AWARE OF THE FEARS OF CHILDREN IN CHANGE. LET THEM TELL YOU THEIR FEARS, ASK QUESTIONS AND VOICE THEIR CONCERNS. LISTEN AND LET THEM KNOW IT'S FINE FOR THEM TO TALK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS AND THAT THEY ARE FREE TO DO SO.

- EASE THEIR FEAR. DON'T SHOW THEM SCARY MOVIES OR READ SCARY STORIES TO THEM IF IT MAKES THEM FEEL ON EDGE.

KNOW THAT RANGES OF FEELINGS FOR CHILDREN GOING THROUGH THESE LIFE CHANGES ARE NORMAL AND EXPECTED.



CASE BY CASE

EACH FOSTER CHILD IS GIVEN A **CASEWORKER** WHO...

- HELPS HIM OR HER TO MAKE THE CHANGE
- MAKES A PLAN FOR THE FAMILY SO THEY MAY BE REUNITED
- CHECKS ON THE CHILD'S PROGRESS
- ARRANGES VISITS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

ALONG WITH THE COURTS AND JUDGES, THE CASEWORKER PLAYS A ROLE IN DECIDING WHEN THE SEPARATED FAMILY CAN LIVE TOGETHER AGAIN. A FOSTER KID IS ABLE TO SPEAK FREELY WITH THE CASEWORKER AND ASK QUESTIONS.



HELPING A FOSTER CHILD OVER EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HURDLES

THERE ARE MANY REASONS CHILDREN THRUST INTO FOSTER CARE MAY SUFFER FROM MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES:

- BEING APART FROM THEIR FAMILY
- AN UNSAFE PAST FILLED WITH PROBLEMS
- THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF A FOSTER HOME
- CONTACT WITH DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE, POOR NUTRITION AND PRENATAL CARE
- GROWING UP POOR
- ABUSE OR NEGLECT
- HOMELESSNESS
- FIGHTING AT HOME
- PARENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

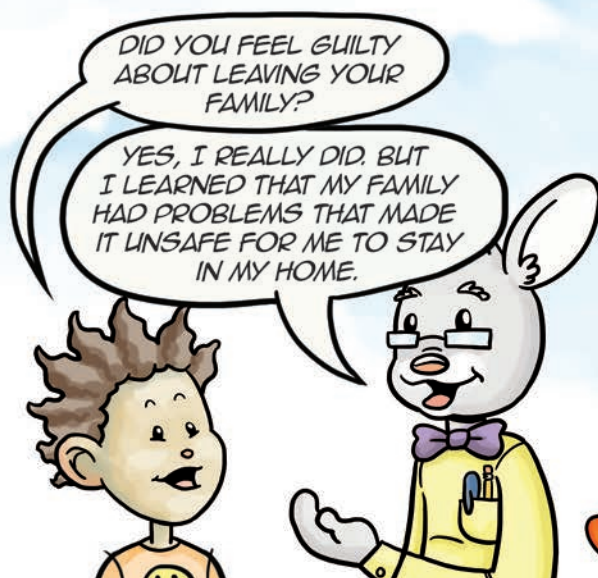
THE EMOTIONAL ISSUES FOSTER CHILDREN DEAL WITH CAN SHOW UP AS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES SUCH AS:

- LEARNING PROBLEMS
- NOT ABLE TO BOND WITH FOSTER FAMILY
- ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER AND HYPERACTIVITY
- AGGRESSION AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOR
- POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
- ANXIETY DISORDERS
- NOT PROPER SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OR HOSTILITY

GUILT AND GRIEF

IT'S NORMAL FOR CHILDREN TAKEN AWAY FROM THEIR FAMILIES TO BLAME THEMSELVES AND FEEL GUILTY. FOSTER KIDS MUST DEAL WITH GUILT, BEING SEPARATED FROM THEIR PARENTS, AND A STAND-IN HOME THAT MAY SEEM STRANGE. THE KIDS OFTEN FEEL A TOTAL LACK OF CONTROL IN THEIR LIVES. THEY BLAME THEMSELVES FOR THE PROBLEMS AND WANT TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES, IN SPITE OF THE DANGER.

THE GRIEF FOSTER KIDS GO THROUGH CAN BE A HUGE BURDEN ON ANY YOUNGSTER. THEY MISS THEIR FAMILIES AND WONDER IF THEY'LL EVER BE REUNITED, BLAMING THEMSELVES FOR THE SITUATION.



FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION BY THE NUMBERS

500,000+

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN
THE U.S. LIVING IN FOSTER CARE RIGHT NOW

123,000

CHILDREN READY FOR ADOPTION IN
U.S. FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS IN 2009

120,000

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF CHILDREN
ADOPTED IN THE U.S. EACH YEAR

41

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER
CARE WHO ARE AFRICAN-AMERICAN

40

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN
FOSTER CARE WHO ARE WHITE

15

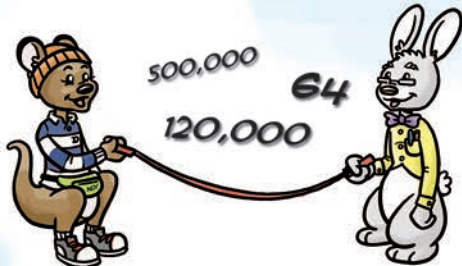
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN
FOSTER CARE WHO ARE HISPANIC

50+

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE
WITH SOME TYPE OF MENTAL HEALTH
DISORDER, ACCORDING TO CHILD WELFARE
LEAGUE OF AMERICA

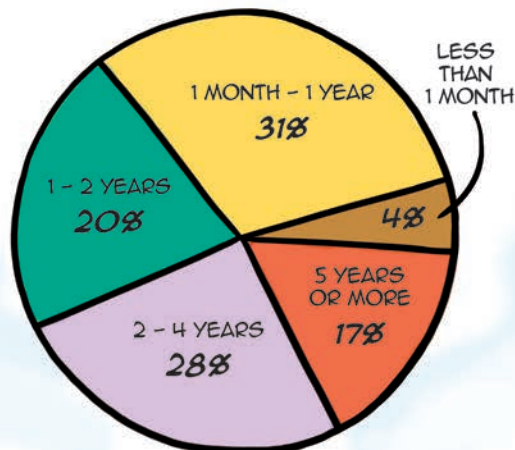
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PERCENTAGE OF FOSTER CHILDREN WHO
ARE ADOPTED BY FORMER FOSTER PARENTS,
AS STATED BY THE NATIONAL ADOPTION
INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE



AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN FOSTER CARE

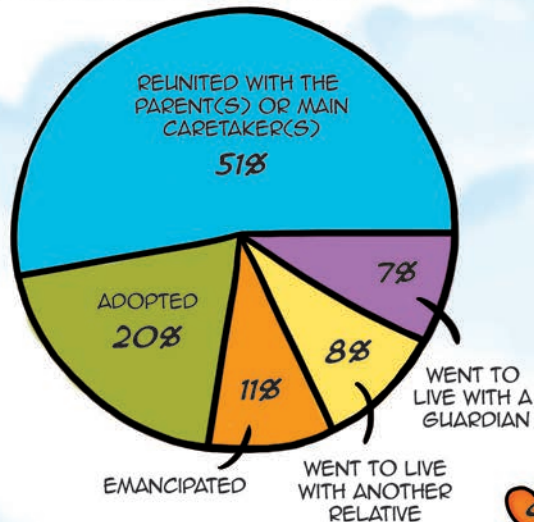
ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE ANALYSIS
AND REPORTING SYSTEM, 2000



EXITS

OF THE ESTIMATED 276,266 CHILDREN
WHO EXITED FOSTER CARE DURING 2009:

CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION GATEWAY
WWW.CHILDWELFARE.GOV/PUBS/FACTSHEETS/FOSTER.CFM



FOR THE FOSTER PARENT

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF FOSTER PARENTING WILL BE CLEAR WITH EACH CHILD YOU HOUSE. A GOOD FOSTER PARENT MUST HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF CARE AND UNDERSTANDING, AS WELL AS A THICK SKIN. THESE SPECIAL PARENTS KNOW THAT THEY ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN DO TO GIVE A LOVING HOME FOR A CHILD IN NEED, IF ONLY FOR A SHORT TIME.



FOLLOW THESE HELPFUL TIPS FOR ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER PARENTS.

1. KNOW YOUR OWN FAMILY. STUDY AND BUILD ON YOUR INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY STRENGTHS AND NEEDS. KNOW HOW YOUR FAMILY FEELS ABOUT FOSTERING AND TAKE IN THEIR VIEWS.

2. COMMUNICATE WELL. USE AND BUILD COMMUNICATION SKILLS NEEDED TO FOSTER OR ADOPT. TO BUILD A GOOD SELF-IMAGE, GIVE CLEAR MESSAGES, LISTEN WELL AND USE A CLEAR TONE OF VOICE. THIS SHOWS THE CHILD AN IMPORTANT SKILL WHICH MAY HELP HIM FIT IN WITH OTHERS.

3. KNOW THE CHILDREN. POINT OUT THE STRENGTHS AND NEEDS OF YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED, NEGLECTED, LEFT BEHIND, AND/OR TREATED BADLY EMOTIONALLY. THEIR HISTORY WILL HELP IN YOUR QUEST TO BUILD ON THEIR STRENGTHS. KNOW WHEN THEY NEED MORE HELP THAN YOU CAN GIVE.

4. BUILD STRENGTHS AND MEET NEEDS. DON'T DWELL ON NEGATIVES. LET THEM KNOW WHAT YOU FIND AS THEIR STRENGTHS AND TELL THEM OFTEN.

5. WORK TOGETHER. WORK WITH CHILDREN, BIRTH FAMILIES, THE AGENCY AND THE COMMUNITY TO COME UP WITH AND CARRY OUT PLANS FOR A LASTING SOLUTION.

6. BE LOSS AND ATTACHMENT EXPERTS. HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH CREATE SKILLS TO HANDLE LOSS AND ATTACHMENT. REMEMBER, CHILDREN REMOVED FROM BIRTH PARENTS HAVE A HARD TIME TRUSTING ADULTS.

7. HANDLE BEHAVIORS. HELP CHILDREN HANDLE BEHAVIORS. USE DISCIPLINE METHODS THAT BIRTH PARENTS CAN LEARN TO USE, ONES THAT DON'T PUT CHILDREN AT RISK FOR MORE ABUSE IF THEY RETURN HOME.

8. BUILD CONNECTION TIES. HELP CHILDREN KEEP UP AND GROW RELATIONSHIPS THAT KEEP THEM TIED TO THEIR PASTS. HELP THE CHILD STAY IN CONTACT WITH FAMILY MEMBERS.

9. BUILD SELF-ESTEEM. HELP CHILDREN BUILD ON GOOD SELF-IMAGE AND FAMILY, CULTURAL AND RACIAL IDENTITY. KNOW EACH CHILD'S STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSSES AT BEING PART OF YOUR FAMILY.

10. MAKE SURE THEY ARE HEALTHY AND SAFE. GIVE THEM A HEALTHY AND SAFE LIVING SPACE AND KEEP CHILDREN FREE FROM HARM. MAKE YOUR HOME A SAFE HAVEN WHERE CHILDREN FEEL SECURE, NOT THREATENED.

11. REVIEW THE IMPACT. REVIEW THE WAYS FOSTERING OR ADOPTING WILL CHANGE YOUR FAMILY. TALK TO EACH FAMILY MEMBER ALONE TO MAKE SURE YOU KNOW THEIR FEELINGS.

12. MAKE A SMART DECISION. INCLUDE THE WHOLE FAMILY, EXTENDED FAMILY TOO, WHEN DECIDING TO BECOME FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENTS.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

- **AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY:**
WWW.AACAP.ORG/CS/ROOT/FACTS_FOR_FAMILIES/FOSTER_CARE
- **THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES:**
WWW.HHS.GOV
- **CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION GATEWAY:**
WWW.CHILDWELFARE.GOV
- **NATIONAL FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION DIRECTORY SEARCH:**
WWW.CHILDWELFARE.GOV/NFCAD
- **AMERICAN FOSTER CARE RESOURCES, INC.:**
WWW.AFCR.COM
- **NATIONAL FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION (NFPA):**
WWW.NFPA.ORG
- **FRIENDS OF YOUTH: FOSTER PARENT RESOURCES:**
WWW.FRIENDSOFYOUTH.ORG/FOSTERCARERESOURCES.ASPX

OTHER HELPFUL WEBSITES

WWW.FOSTERPARENTING.COM
WWW.ADOPTION.COM
WWW.FOSTERCAREMONTH.ORG

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THE WORLD OF FOSTER CARE IS FILLED WITH MANY QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS AND THOSE INVOLVED OR INTERESTED IN FOSTERING CHILDREN.

- CHANGES
- CASEWORKERS
- FOSTER PARENTING
- RESOURCES
- FEARS
- MENTAL HEALTH
- STATS
- MORE



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ISBN 978-0-9850897-8-8



MADE IN THE USA



KEEP THE PLANET HEALTHY!
THIS BOOK WAS PRINTED
ON RECYCLED PAPER!