

## Ways to help if you cannot Foster

### 1.) Become a Mentor

Young people with mentors are:

- 55% less likely than their peers to skip school
- 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs
- 27% less likely to start drinking
- 81% more likely to participate in extracurricular activities or sports
- 130% more likely to hold leadership positions
- Contact Children's Mentoring Connection, [Children's Mentoring Connection, Findlay, OH | Home \(cmchancock.org\)](http://cmchancock.org)

Mentors can provide needed support to teenage youth and help them learn daily living and vocational skills, budgeting, goal setting, time management, problem-solving and organizational skills. Most importantly, mentors give young people in the foster care system a caring adult they can look up to and share their problems with.

### 2.) Become a respite care provider.

Respite care providers bolster the foster care system by:

- Allowing foster parents, a break, helping them to re-energize and avoid burnout
- Increasing likelihood for uninterrupted placements
- Decreasing chances for neglect or abuse
- Helping children build good relationships with other caring adults and families
- Respite care providers only need 12 hours of preservice training, (d) An approved respite care provider, who is not certified as a foster caregiver or specialized foster caregiver, shall receive at least twelve hours of orientation and training relevant to the children served by the specialized foster care program and have a criminal record check conducted as for a foster caregiver pursuant to rule 5101:2-5-09.1 of the Administrative Code prior to providing respite care.

Respite care gives foster parents temporary relief from caregiving, allowing them to recharge and spend time with their families. Providing respite care requires training and licensing.

### 3.) Assemble "welcome backpacks"

Some children enter foster care with few or no belongings, so welcome backpacks can contain a variety of items:

- Cozy blanket
- Pajamas
- Socks
- Underwear
- Personal hygiene items
- Toys or stuffed animals
- Coloring or activity books

Many children in foster care have very few belongings. In addition to our welcome boxes, we gather clothing, personal hygiene items, toys, school supplies, and other items that children and teens might otherwise not have.

One specific donation that can greatly impact a child is the donation of a suitcase, duffel bag or backpack. While many of these kids do not have many belongings to begin with, no child should have to pack up all of their things into a trash bag. As they move to a new home or move to a different location, having a bag of their own gives them a more dignified way to transport anything they own.

### 4.) Sponsor events to help raise awareness

A great way to help a child in foster care is to learn more about the foster care process and to keep informed on challenges vulnerable families are facing in your community. Educating yourself and sharing with those in your circle spreads awareness and helps create a ripple effect of support for everyone affected.

5.) Provide meals to foster parents

Make sure foster families have a steady stream of yummy support coming their way. This is especially important in the first couple of weeks after a new placement arrives. [MealTrain.com](http://MealTrain.com) is just one of the many websites available to make this process efficient and helpful for a family that deserves a little extra love.

6.) Become a primary supporter for a family

Every foster family could benefit from a few people stepping up into their primary support circle and committing to help when it's needed most. Two very big ways primary supporters can help are by:

- Regularly providing transportation – children in the foster care system often have a significant number of additional appointments, so providing rides for visits, after-school activities, and appointments can be a huge blessing.
- Providing respite care — whether it's just during an afternoon full of errands, an overdue date night, or entire weekend, caring for a child is a tremendous gift to both foster parents and children. Ideally, your friends would know you're committed to providing this support even before they get licensed to accept a placement. Laws vary state-to-state, but this may require a background check or special certification from the foster family's licensing agency. Be proactive to find out what you need to do, and then follow through. Try to make this support regular, because your consistent presence could have a powerful stabilizing effect for both the child(ren) and the family.

7.) Check in and listen

This is a big one. Foster parenthood (and parenthood in general), and the busyness and complexity that comes with it, can often leave foster parents feeling isolated or overwhelmed. Regularly and proactively check in with your friends to see how they're doing. Laugh with them. Cry with them. Pray with them. Finally, try not to give unsolicited advice; just be with them and listen.

8.) Help with the everyday stuff

- You can bless a family by simply letting them know you're available to help with day-to-day chores and errands. Most foster families feel awkward asking for specific needs but would gladly accept help with household tasks.
- Say: "I'd like to mow your lawn this week. What day works best?" Then follow through.
- Ask: "Could I help with your grocery shopping this week? Send me your list and I will pick up and deliver what you need." Then follow through.

9.) Invite the whole family over for dinner or a playdate

Foster families — parents, children in temporary care, and biological children — can feel isolated. Invite the whole family over for dinner or a playdate. Warmth and hospitality, and welcoming a child into a bigger community, is a powerful way to show love to both the child and the family.

10.) Gift them a membership or day passes

Foster families and kids in care enjoy the same activities that you do! Gift them a day pass to a nearby water park or activity center. Offer them a membership to the zoo or the city pool. This could be such a fun and unexpected way to brighten up life for a family — and could be a great choice for a family in your church or neighborhood you don't know as well but want to serve.

11.) Pray

There are battles going on that we can't always see. Pray for the child. Pray for their biological families. Pray for their foster parents. Pray for the biological children of the foster parents. (See Jason Johnson's powerful post from 2015: "[Foster Care is Spiritual Warfare](http://FosterCareisSpiritualWarfare.com)".) [Foster Care is Spiritual Warfare — JASON JOHNSON | BLOG \(jasonjohnsonblog.com\)](http://FosterCareisSpiritualWarfare.com)

## 12.) Volunteer

There are various volunteer opportunities when it comes to working with kids in foster care. Whether you choose to work directly with the foster care agency, or as a volunteer at events and fundraisers. You can also tutor foster children, read to them, teach them basic living skills such as how to drive, or simply spend time with them playing and getting to know them. This is a simple way to help a foster child, but it carries a large impact.

## 13.) Become a Driver

Many foster care agencies need drivers to get children to various appointments such as:

- Doctor appoints
- Visits with birth family
- School Functions

Offering a ride can be a huge help. It is important to note that some trips may cover long distances.

## 14.) Become a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)

A CASA working is someone who volunteers with the court and foster homes to ensure that children are always accounted for. It is incredibly easy for children to get lost in the system, and these children are often those who end up living the hardest, most unfortunate lives. As a CASA worker, you will help keep these children visible and heard in the system, ensuring that their needs are met, and they are never forgotten.

## 15.) Provide Honest Work

For some older foster children, nothing could be more helpful than an opportunity for work. If you are in position to offer a foster child an honest job or internship opportunity, doing so may make a major difference in the child's life. Unfortunately, kids in the foster care system often have a hard time finding work due to the stigma attached to their situation. By reaching out to these kids and giving them a chance, you can get them work experience, which can only result in a positive domino effect.

## 16.) Offer to Babysit

Foster parents can get overwhelmed with parenting just like anyone else, and they need a break too. It provides parents with time to reconnect with one another, run errands without having to take the children with them, and take a break from the stress that so often accompanies daily parenting. They can then return to their children refreshed and ready to provide the love and energy their kids need from them. You can even take it a step further and provide the parents with a gift card to use for dinner out or create a date night gift basket for them to enjoy. If you don't know of a foster family personally, contact your local foster agency to find one that might need some extra child care support.

## 17.) Volunteer to tutor a foster child

Foster children are often moved from school to school and may have trouble keeping up with curriculum and concepts during all the change. Providing an extra bit of help to a foster child struggling with school can make a difference for the rest of his or her life

18.) Donate items such as diapers, bottles, wipes, car seats and booster and gift cards to your local agency.

19.) Become a foster grandparent.

20.) Start a foster care ministry at your local church.

21.) Donate a laptop to foster youth who are aging out of the system and transitioning to college.

22.) Help pay for after school activities

23.) Donate bikes.