

The STAR Newsletter

Child Issue

A newsletter for licensed child foster care providers of Washington County.

Summer 2025

Back to School Bash

Celebrate the start of the school year at this annual event. Foster children can get a free back pack with school supplies and families can enjoy a meal, face painting, games, and therapy llamas at this event.

**Thursday, Aug. 21
5-7 p.m.**

Children's Home Society
& Lutheran Social Services
Eustis building, St. Paul

[View more information.](#)

Child Foster Care Licensing Team's Mission

To enrich the lives of children by promoting safe and quality licensed care.



Community Services
Child Foster Care
Licensing
14949 62nd Street N.
Stillwater, MN 55082
[Child Foster Care
Licensing Website](#)

Twins Event



In June, Washington County in partnership with the Metro Foster Care Licensing Recruitment group sent some of our foster youth to a Twins game. A few joined the team on the field as "Bench Buddies" during warm-ups and received Twins swag and signed baseballs.

Keep an eye on our Community Services Foster Care emails for future event notifications like this.

How to Bond with a Child in Foster Care or Adoption

Whether a child is in care for a short time or whether they need an adoptive family, it is critical for their foster or adoptive parents to be able to form a bond with them. After all, it is hard to provide love and care if there is no bond between the adult(s) and child. However, forming a meaningful relationship with a child who has experienced abuse and neglect can sometimes be challenging. The young person may be untrusting toward adults due to their past experiences. So, how can foster or adoptive parents form a true bond with a child? Here are some professional tips to help you build rapport and a meaningful relationship with youth in your care.

Be Honest

Kids—especially older youth and teenagers—often know when they are being lied to. Fibbing or avoiding the whole truth can sometimes seem convenient or safer in the moment, but remaining truthful and having an honest and age-appropriate conversation will have a greater impact and can support trust in the long-term. It's impossible to truly form a bond without basic trust. This need for trust and honesty is especially key in adoption situations. As you move toward and through the adoption process, many feelings can arise for children. Be honest and open with them, and tell them what is and might be happening—be transparent and as communicative as possible before and after any major steps in the process.

Use High-Interest Events and Activities

For many kids, it can be hard to open up and be themselves in new and unfamiliar situations. As a parent, it's your job to find out what they like doing and provide them

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Foster Parents Needed!

Word of mouth is one of the best forms of recruitment to get new foster parents in Washington County. If anyone has said to you, “I’ve always thought about becoming a foster parent” or you know of someone who is good with kids, wants to help the community, and you think has what it takes to become a foster parent, please send them our way! We need people who can provide care to a variety of youth, such as teens, sibling groups, children with mental health diagnoses, developmental disabilities, and everything in between. We need foster parents in all areas of the county. Whether families can only commit to one or two weekends per month for respite care or be a placement resource, we have a need for both! Please pass the word on so we can keep kids in our local foster homes.

Upcoming Information Meetings: (Thursdays)
Sept. 4 | 1-3 p.m.
Nov. 6 | 6-8 p.m.
 Online with Teams

For more information, call 651-430-8307.

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with the opportunities to explore those interests. Once engaged in an activity or event



they’re interested in, youth may feel relaxed and be more apt to be open and honest with you. It also shows that you care about them and are willing to do things they choose, which again helps to develop trust and understanding. If you’re having a hard time learning their interests, create a list of possible activities (attending a sporting event or concert, participating in sports, taking a class, or even just

getting together with a friend) and make suggestions. If you don’t get an answer, give different things a try and see what gets them excited.

Maintain Connections to Birth Family

Studies have shown that having a connection with birth family members can be an important part of the healing process for youth in foster care. Whenever possible, provide opportunities for the child to stay in contact and maintain meaningful relationships with their birth family members. This way, the child knows that you care about their family and want to keep those bonds alive. Especially for youth that feel as though they have been taken away from the lives and people they have always known, keeping connections open with birth family members is a great way to develop trust with them.

Ask Thoughtful Questions and Value Answers

When people’s thoughts and feelings are seriously considered and valued, they will likely increase their level of participation and commitment. The same holds true with youth in care. By asking questions in ways that show you care about and value their thoughts, opinions, and contributions, you can help establish trust and increase their participation in the family. In particular, ask open-ended questions and help them draw parallels to other moments in their life. This way, they can begin to more effectively process their current situation and see you as a trusted ally. Along the way, highlight their growth and accomplishments. One effective strategy to engage in deeper conversations with youth who have difficulty engaging is to talk while driving in a car, taking a hike, or cooking together—any activity that is done without demanding eye contact.

Practice Positive Parenting Strategies

Parenting presents challenges at every stage. It’s important to learn proven and effective techniques that will help you address the mental, emotional, and behavioral needs of the kids or teens in your care. Learning and applying parenting techniques by reading books, taking online courses, or participating in workshops in your community will help you have the confidence to create a safe environment, use effective discipline, establish goals and boundaries, and ultimately strengthen your family unit. Positive Parenting Program

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(Triple P) and the Incredible Years are two examples of parent education. Child Information Gateway also provides a comprehensive list of parent education programs, including courses for families involved in the child welfare system.

Provide Structure and be Open-Minded

Youth who have been in foster care often come from unstable environments. Many may feel as though they can't trust adults because those who have been in their lives may have been unpredictable and unreliable.

As a defense mechanism, youth may try to avoid establishing feelings for the new people in their lives because they've come to expect disappointment. By providing kids and teens with an accepting and structured home, you can go a long way toward helping kids feel comfortable and safe, and ultimately help them trust again. Helping with homework, having set evening and bedtime routines, and scheduling a weekly movie night are a few examples of how you can help provide stability in the home.

Tips for Supporting Foster Kids in School

School is an important part of every child's life but can be a challenging part of a foster child's day. Foster children often have experienced instability and trauma in their lives. With thoughtful support, school can be the safe and stable structure they can grow and prosper in. In this article, you will find five helpful tips for foster parents and educators to work together to help your foster child succeed in school.

- **Communication**

Foster parents play a vital role in ensuring and establishing open communication with teachers, counselors, and staff each school year. As foster parents you have valuable information on your foster child's unique needs which help them succeed each day. Having an open line of communication with the school on the child's challenges and successes will play a vital role in helping the child have a successful school year.

Tips for establishing communication with schools

- Schedule a meeting with the teacher before school starts, early in the school year, or upon a new placement to discuss the child's relevant background and any specific challenges they might face at school.
- Provide regular updates with the school, especially if they may lead to challenges at school, changes in their living situation, or emotional well-being.
- If your child has special educational needs, ensure the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan is up-to-date and in place.

- Attend all school meetings of the foster child, and let your voice be heard to advocate for the child's needs.

- **Advocate**

As the child's foster parent, you often see the children in their most successful and stressful moments. Being an advocate for the child's educational needs by addressing areas that are causing high stress and challenges in their schooling can lead to a more successful school year. One common educational stressor you will often see with foster children is the stress caused from having to change schools. Being an advocate for stability and consistency in their educational setting can help alleviate this challenge and build stronger relationships with peers and educational staff.

Tips to Promote Educational Stability

- Whenever possible, keep the foster child in their same school.
 - If a change in schools is needed, work with the new school to ensure a smooth transition by sharing records, setting up meetings, and preparing the child for the change.
- **Provide Emotional Support**
- Foster children may face emotional challenges throughout the school year that could stem from trauma, separation, attachment issues, or other life experiences. These hardships could lead to learning difficulties, so it is important to offer

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support at home and in school to overcome these challenges.

Tips to Offer Emotional Support

- Listen to the child.
- Provide the child with tools to manage their emotions such as journaling or mindfulness activities.
- Encourage positive self-expression.
- Help the child understand it is ok to ask for help.
- Educators can create a safe space in a classroom for the child to take a break when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Academic Engagement

By foster parents and educators promoting a learning environment that encourages curiosity, academic growth can lead to a foster child's desire to stay engaged in schooling.

Tips to Promote Academic Engagement

- Celebrate small academic victories like good grades, improvement in reading, improvement in math, completion of a project, etc.
- Work through homework challenges together.
- Set realistic expectations. Foster children may be working through some emotional challenges at that moment in time, so providing praise for effort can go a long way.

- Encourage participating in extracurricular activities which helps foster children develop a sense of belonging and helps them discover their interests and talents.

Use Available Resources

It truly does take a village to raise a child. As foster parents it is ok to use outside support to help you meet the needs of your foster child.

Outside Resource Support Available:

- The foster child's case worker has access to many resources to help the child succeed. Do not hesitate to reach out to their case worker if you need assistance in helping them succeed.
- School counselors can help the child during the school day by supporting them through mental health, stress, or trauma concerns.
- Tutoring programs can help strength a child's academic skills.
- IEP or 504 plans are plans that provide accommodations within the school setting to meet the child's educational needs due to learning disabilities or emotional challenges.
- If a child is receiving therapy, this can be a great resource to help the child work through challenges they are having in school and provide feedback on ways to make school successful for the child.

Tips When Providing Respite Care

- **Be prepared.** Get information about the child. Be prepared with things to make them comfortable.
- **Have a positive perspective.** Respite foster care is not "babysitting." You're caring for a vulnerable child and have the opportunity to help in their healing.
- **Have fun.** Make a plan that considers the child's needs and includes activities and outings.

Remember:

- The number of children you care for cannot exceed the maximum capacity stated on your foster care license.
- If the child in placement is under age six, Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID)/ Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) training must be completed in the last five years.

- If the child is under nine years of age, Basic Education for Safe Travel (B.E.S.T.) training must be completed.
- To get information about the child: Child's schedule, hobbies, likes and dislikes; diet; who the child can be in contact with; behavioral and emotional needs; etc.

Respite Payment

- Submit a billing request.
- Pay is always according to the number of overnight stays.

If you know of a family that would like to be a respite Provider for Washington County's families, please refer them to Licensing.

Child Foster Care Annual Training Requirements

Each year, every child foster care license holder needs to complete 12 hours of training related to child development, taking care of children who have experienced trauma, parenting, and child foster care. Within these 12 hours of training, you must include the following: One hour of Children's Mental Health training, one hour of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) training, and one hour of Mandated Reporter training.

- **If you are caring for children under the age of 8:** You need to complete the B.E.S.T. car seat training every five years.
- **If you are caring for children ages infant through age 5:** You need to complete one hour of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) training every five years.

These training courses can be completed through different formats including but not limited to in-person training, virtual/web-based training, podcasts, and reading books. *All trainings need to be recorded on your training log in Binti.* The best practice is to get a certificate of completion from your trainings to upload to Binti.

A couple great resources for finding trainings:

- [Washington County Training Topics for Licensing site.](#)
- [Foster Adopt Minnesota's Education site.](#)

Each year, Washington County will reimburse up to \$100 a month per license for training related to foster care licensing. *To be reimbursed for training, submit your proof of purchase and training attendance to your licensor.*

Fire Extinguisher Servicing

Did you know your fire extinguisher (size 2A:10BC or larger) needs to be serviced every year? Here are some local fire extinguisher servicing companies:

- **All Safe Global** | Eric Olson
26542 Fallbrook Lane, Wyoming, MN 55092
866-958-3473 x119 | [Email Eric](#)
 - Annual inspection: \$10.
 - Major maintenance: Price varies but is much higher.
- **Becker Fire & Safety Services** | Bill Becker
1575 Regatta Drive, Woodbury, MN 55125
Office: 651-739-7776 | Cell: 651-373-8820
[Email Bill](#)
 - Mobile service company (they visit residence and service the extinguishers on-site).
 - \$30 payable by cash or check.
- **Forest Lake Ace Hardware** | Sue Olson
814 S. Lake St., Forest Lake, MN 55025
651-464-6262 | [Email Sue](#)
 - Sells fire extinguishers.
 - Servicing: \$10 per extinguisher.
 - Drop-off on-site only.
- **Mississippi Welders Supply Company** | Brian Stevens
1810 Webster St., Suite 3, Hudson, WI 54016
Office: 715-381-6964 | Brian: 507-450-0225
[Email Brian](#)
- Option to bring fire extinguisher to storefront or service call (they come to you).
 - Annual inspection: \$7.
 - Service call: Additional \$50.
- **Nardini Fire Equipment Company / Pye-Barker Fire and Safety** | Nick Rotter
405 West County Road E, Shoreview, MN 55126
651-483-6631 | 888-627-3464 | [Email Nick](#)
 - Walk-in style at Shoreview site.
 - Annual service: \$12 or more.
 - Re-charging: \$30, up to \$70 depending on extent of maintenance needed.
- **St. Croix Fire & Safety, Inc.** | Dave Wyland
4177 Kirkwood Lane N., Lake Elmo, MN 55042
651-248-5069 | [Email Dave](#)
 - Recertification: \$7 per extinguisher | \$55 truck charge.
 - Additional cost to visit site.
- **Weber and Troseth, Inc.** | Roger Wyland
1902 University Ave. W., St. Paul, MN 55104
651-645-1034 | [Email Roger](#)
 - Walk-in and on-site fire extinguisher servicing.
 - Sells fire extinguishers.

Resources

- **Foster One:**

StoreHouse

This is a great resource for our kinship families when the child first moves into your home. You can make a request for essential items for the children such as diapers, wipes, car seats, beds, and more.

[Submit a StoreHouse request using Foster One's StoreHouse web page.](#)

- **Safe Haven Foster Shoppe**

Foster Shoppe is a program that hand delivers bags of essential items to foster children. Bags are gender and size specific and can include brand new items such as clothing, pajamas, blanket, toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, shampoo/conditioner, body wash, book, stuffed animal, socks, underwear/diapers. Many additional items are available, such as coats, shoes, formula, toys, school supplies, and much more!

Please note the Foster Shoppe program is intended for initial placements.

How to request items:

Foster parents have four ways to request items:

- Call or Text: 763-742-7799.
- [Email Save Haven Foster Shoppe.](#)
- [Submit an online request.](#)
 - Submit a separate request for each child.

The following information must be submitted with your request:

- Name.
- Email address.
- Request relationship (*foster provider*).
- Phone number.
- The name of the county or agency that issued you a license.
- Date of placement.
- If you would like the items delivered or if you would like to pick them up.
- Delivery address (*if requested*).

Please have this and any additional information that would be helpful - such as child's gender, age, clothing and shoe sizes - readily available. Also have available the other needs of the child, such as winter coats, school supplies, additional clothing, etc.

Locations:

- Safe Haven Foster Shoppe and Distribution Center
12765 Lake Blvd., Lindstrom, MN 55045
- Safe Haven Foster Shoppe Inc. (*legal, billing, and shipping address*)
1339 Awatukee Trail, Hudson, WI 54016

County Child Foster Care Licensing Staff

- **Jenna Stringer**
Senior Licenser
651-430-6598
[Email Jenna](#)
- **Emily Angstman**
Licenser
651-430-6397
[Email Emily](#)
- **Kelly Bailey**
Licenser
651-430-6365
[Email Kelly](#)
- **Christa LaPean**
Licenser
651-430-6364
[Email Christa](#)
- **Rasmey Xiong**
Licenser
651-430-6366
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651-430-6476
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Team Email:

[Email Child Foster Care Licensing](#)

Team website:

[Child Foster Care Licensing website](#)

New Contact Information

Please keep us informed of any changes to your email address and home/cell phone numbers. You may contact your licenser directly or [email Child Foster Care Licensing](#).