



# MAKE READY! WORKBOOK

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PREPARING YOUR HEART AND  
MIND TO FOSTER OR ADOPT

*"Make ready to do every good work!" Titus 3:1*

## BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR NEXT STEP!

We want to help you wisely discern your next step and empower you to make a difference in the life of a child.

Deciding to foster or adopt can be overwhelming and even a bit scary. It is a big step, but there are many who have gone down this path before you, and there is lots of wisdom and support along the way.

That is why we created this e-book! With the help of pastors, adoptive and foster parents, and many experts in the field, we compiled the top 3 most significant factors to consider to help you "Make Ready" for this next big adventure for your family.

- 1 Let's Get Started!
- 2 Introductions
- 3 Motivations and Expectations
- 4 Parenting Kids From Hard Places
- 5 Family and Community Support
- 6 Resources

One of Fostering Hope's recommended steps before fostering or adopting is to have conversations with a variety of people. The Make Ready! workbook is going to help you facilitate these conversations. Your mentor can help too. Get ready to learn, process, and talk through your calling to foster or adopt!

LET'S GET STARTED!

		
<b>MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>PARENTING A CHILD FROM A HARD PLACE</b>	<b>BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT</b>
What is your motivation to foster or adopt? How will your expectations affect your parenting and change throughout a child's lifetime?	Why does a child who has come from a hard place need a different style and strategy of parenting?	How do I build a support team and help my friends and family understand why and how we are called to care for vulnerable children?

You will talk through these three significant factors with your Ministry Advocate, friends, and family. Our goal for these conversations (in addition to a little bit of reading and writing) is to help you discern if fostering or adoption is your calling. We'll help you determine areas to learn more. Being prepared will help increase your success as a foster or adoptive parent.

You've signed up for a very important step in the foster and adoption journey! Titus 3:1 tells us to "make ready for the good works that we are to do". And that is exactly what the Make Ready class will do - it will help you get ready for what to expect when fostering or adopting, identify what you need to learn, and teach you how to prepare a supportive community for your family. In order to do this, we ask that you commit to these expectations:

-  Each class is important. Commit to attending every one.
-  There are short readings and videos to watch. Please watch these **BEFORE** each class you attend.
-  Make a commitment to prayer. We trust that clarity will happen through conversations, time, and when we pray!
-  Everything discussed in class is confidential. Please do not share stories that are not yours to tell.
-  Share the conversation time! Please be aware of how much time you spend talking versus listening to others.
-  Each week, you'll have an assignment to talk with an experienced foster or adoptive parent, friends, and family members about your decision to foster/adopt. This can be a phone conversation or an in-person meeting. If you don't know anyone, please let your mentor know. They can help you connect with someone, or they may make arrangements for that conversation to happen in class. If you are married, it is important that **BOTH** spouses learn from the experiences of others.



At your first meeting, you'll get to know others in your group. Enjoy time connecting!

**NOTES:**

Meeting 2

The motivation needed to enter the world of adoption and foster care can seem obvious to Christians. We are all called to care for the least of these. When we begin to see all the various needs of the foster/adoption community, we should seek out the specific good work that God has prepared for us. Through our meeting time, we want to explore together our motivations and expectations to adopt or foster, and seek out God's will for our role in caring for children.

**READ:**

Read The Process in the Resource section of this e-book.  
Write down any questions you might have about the process.

"Saying Yes to the Unknown" by Jason Johnson  
<http://jasonjohnsonblog.com/blog/saying-yes-to-the-unknown>

**WATCH:**

<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/motivations-can-speak-louder-than-words/>  
<http://empoweredtoconnect.org/taking-a-new-look-at-your-expectations>

**Spend some time writing down your motivations. As you do, consider the following:**

Who have you observed who has fostered or adopted?

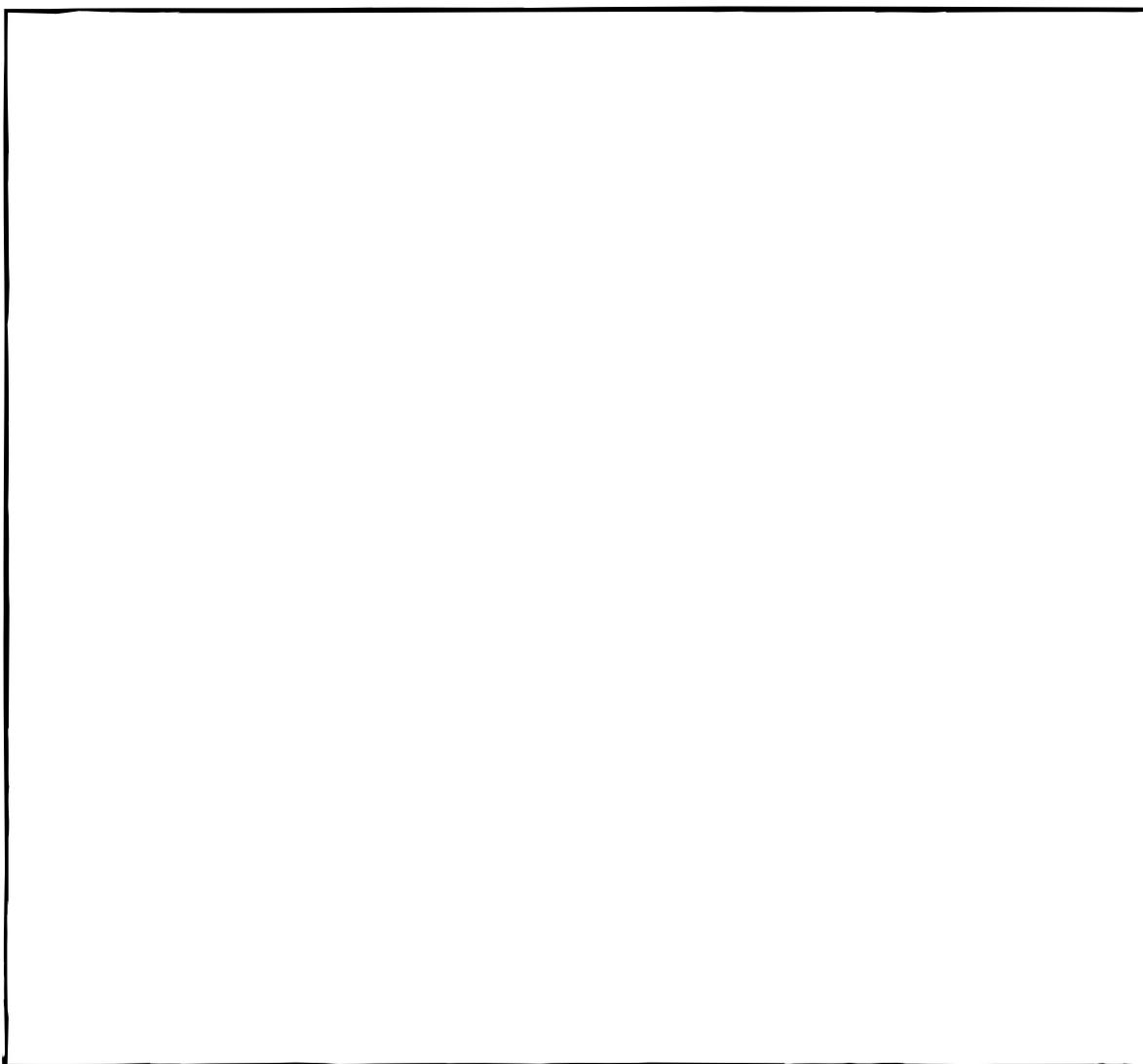
What inspires you about their story?

What have you read or heard about adoption or fostering that has increased your reason to get involved?

What is drawing you into foster/adoption?

**Spend time writing down what you might expect out of the process:**

- How do you think you will feel about the home study and paperwork process? There will be a lot of personal questions, and questions asked about your current/past relationships. Can you anticipate how this will make you feel?
- How might you feel about your agency and Child Protective Services? What role do you see them playing in your process and family outcomes?
- How do you expect connection will be with your foster/adoptive child?
- What have you learned about foster/adoptive children that may be challenging, disappointing, or difficult?
- What have you learned or heard about foster/adoptive children that may be hopeful and encouraging?
- If you are fostering, how will you define a successful first placement experience?
- If you are married, how do you anticipate this journey changing your relationship?
- If you are adopting, how do you anticipate connecting with your child will look like over the first year? Throughout the first 5 years? How do you anticipate your child receiving his/her new status as your son or daughter?
- If you are fostering, how do you anticipate feeling when planning for reunification? What fears do you have in meeting the child's family of origin? How will you plan now to overcome any of the fears associated with this? What questions do you have about parent visitations?



**PROCESS:**

With your spouse or a close friend, discuss the motivation and expectation questions.

### **GROW IN COMMUNITY:**

Find 1-2 other families who have fostered or adopted and ask them the questions about motivations and expectations. Take them out for coffee or dinner and have a long chat. If they talk too much about the hard, ask them for a hope-filled story. If they only say great things about it, ask them about a challenging circumstance. Talk with someone who has fostered and supported reunification. Learning from experienced people is a great way to adjust your expectations. If you don't know anyone, ask your mentor for a recommendation.

### **More about Expectations:**

What to expect if you adopt or foster transracially?  
<https://bethebridge.com/transracial-adoption/>

What to expect from an open adoption?  
<https://www.openadopt.org/open-adoption-stories-and-video/>

What to expect when you foster and help reunify a child and family of origin?  
<https://foster.wachildrenandfamilies.org/blog/5-real-life-examples-of-successful-reunification>

Other questions to consider:  
<http://jasonjohnsonblog.com/blog/ten-questions-couples-should-ask>

### **BONUS!**

Want more about the process?

Listen to Travis County Judge, Honorable Aurora Martinez-Jones, explain the process from her view in the courts.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yCpbR17fwIY0wHn37424CGYRwfN-pSDH>

### **PRAY:**

Read Psalm 143:10 and pray through the verse. Ask the Lord to teach you to do His will and lead you to level ground.

Read Proverbs 14:15: "The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps."

Adoption and fostering is life-altering. Pray for the Lord to give you discernment and to be thoughtful in your steps. Pray to be teachable and see areas that you need to grow.

Pray for unity with your spouse. If you are single, pray for a trustworthy friend to speak truth to you through this journey.

If conflict or differing expectations come up between you and your spouse, or you and a close friend, ask the Lord to bring clarity and unity.

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

Meeting 3

Children and teens with traumatic experiences will have difficulty trusting and regulating their bodies and emotions. Parenting children with an understanding of how trauma affects the body, mind, and belief system and how to connect and correct a child will help them overcome these challenges.

**READ:**

5 Things My Adoptive or Foster Child Wants Me to Know in the Resource section of this e-book.

**WATCH:**

- Children from Hard Places: This video will explain trauma and define a very common parenting strategy called Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI ©) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWScSJKjn1A>
- How Long Do I Have To Parent This Way? <https://empoweredtoconnect.org/resources/how-long-do-i-have-to-parent-this-way/>
- 60 Minutes clip: Interview between Oprah and Dr. Bruce Perry <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/oprah-reports-on-childhood-traumas-long-term-effects/> (actual video only 4-5 minutes)

**PROCESS:**

1. What questions arose as you watched these videos and read the articles?
2. What concerns or fears do you have or are working through?
3. What would you like to learn more about?
4. How do you think your parenting will change if you currently have children in the home?
5. What are some ways you were parented that you can anticipate being a “go-to” response for you to have toward your foster/adoptive child? How do you think your child will respond?
6. How can we celebrate independence too early in our children?
7. We know that parenting skills are not learned in one course or workshop. How do you plan to keep learning about parenting your child?
8. We refer to God as Father and we are his children. Can you share examples of how God “parented” the Israelites, disciples, or others in the Bible? What can we learn from this and apply to our own parenting?

### **GROW IN COMMUNITY:**

Talk with another person that has already fostered or adopted. Ask them to be honest and share the parenting challenges they have experienced. If they have biological children, how have they parented their foster/adopted children differently? How did they learn, and what resources did they use when they faced new parenting situations along the way?



### **PRAY:**

Pray for the Lord to give you compassion and understanding for anyone who has different challenges. Pray for the Holy Spirit to speak to you about who your child might be (age, siblings, race, challenges, etc). Pray and wait expectantly for an answer and keep your heart open to all the options including “no” or “not yet”.

Read through a short book of the Bible several times over throughout the next few weeks. (James is a good one to start with, but you can choose another one you’d like.) Read it through, and then pray and listen. Meditate on the words. Pray and listen. Learn the Lord’s voice by reading His words! (John 10:27)

### **BONUS!**

Would you like to learn more about trauma-informed parenting?

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/child-trauma.pdf>

Visit [www.iamfosteringhope.org](http://www.iamfosteringhope.org) for many local trainings, videos, and resources.

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris' Ted Talk

[https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine\\_burke\\_harris\\_how\\_childhood\\_trauma\\_affects\\_health\\_across\\_a\\_lifetime](https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime)

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

Meeting 4

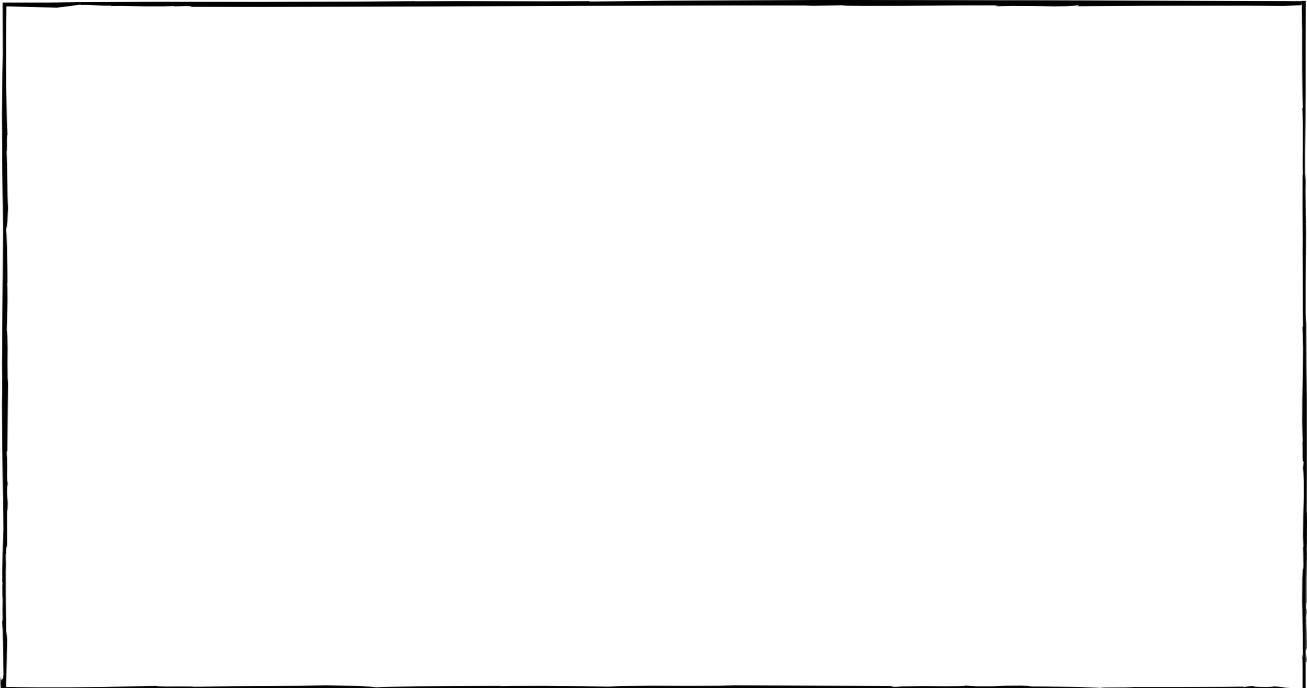
**PROCESS:**

Talk to a friend or family member and tell them that you want to foster or adopt. (Husband and wife both need to find someone to talk to.) Invite them to ask you questions about your decision to do this. Be patient. Some of their questions may be challenging to hear, and we've included some examples of these. Remember that you have processed the idea of adoption and foster care A LOT longer than they have. Here are some sample questions or comments you might hear from friends and family:

- What about your biological kids? How will they feel?
- How will foster/adopted children behave around my kids? (This question may not be said aloud by your friend, but it's likely something they have thought.)
- How will you be able to return the kids if you are fostering? How will you not want to keep the kids?
- Are you worried that the biological parents will know who you are or where you live?
- Why did you decide that country? Or foster care? Or that age of child?
- Why don't you adopt/foster a baby and then not worry about all the issues? OR You are adopting/fostering a baby? Don't you know there are so many older kids needing a home?
- I heard on the news about this foster kid . . . (fill in the blank with any tragic story)
- You are such a saint! Any kid would be lucky to have you as a parent.
- If you get a stipend to foster a child, why will you need additional support or a team?
- Depending upon your race and the child's race you are open to, there will be questions and concerns about this.

If your friend or family member is only encouraging, prompt them with a few of these possible comments. Give them freedom now to explore these questions with you.

How did these conversations go? What went well? What surprised you? There may be people who say some offensive comments or questions. There are also many people who want to learn and walk alongside you! They want to help, and it is good to ask for help! It may surprise you who becomes your support team!



**Remember: Approximately 60% of foster families quit within the first year. The reason they cite is isolation and lack of support. Whether you feel it or not right now, it is very likely that you will want and need some support!**

**WRITE:**

List 5-10 people who may support you, and list the role they can play. Consider more than just physical needs. Read over the Join a Foster Family Team PDF, and think of people who might be able to fill the suggested roles.

**WATCH:**

<https://vimeo.com/125059051>

**GROW IN COMMUNITY:**

Ask friends and family members to be on your support team. Even as an adoptive family you may need support. Pick up a few extra "Join a Foster Family Team" flyers and give them to friends and family members. Talk to them about the roles people can play supporting a foster/adoptive family. Recruit your team!! If you are part of a church who has a Fostering Hope partnership, the ministry advocacy team at your church will be able to help you create this team as well.

**PRAY:**

Pray that friends and family would speak truth to you about fostering and adopting. Pray for your ability to educate and encourage your friends if needed. Pray for a supportive community to wrap-around your family.

**ADDITIONAL NOTES**

**BONUS!**

Fostering Hope provides a training entitled "How to Support a Foster and Adoptive Family". Inquire about it, and invite friends and family!

## THE JOURNEY:

Deciding to foster or adopt is rarely a moment in time when it all becomes clear and the pathway is laid. It is an ongoing journey with twists and turns along the way as you learn more about yourself, the children and their families, and how your friends and family will support you.

We are all called to serve the least of these. By praying for, befriending, or being the parent to a child in need, we are all offered the opportunity to draw closer to the heart of God. Be encouraged that whether you have learned that the Lord wants you to foster or adopt, or if you have learned that He does not, you have drawn near to him in the process and that is always good. No doubt that Scripture calls us all to serve the least of these in some capacity. When we do, we are transformed to be more like Jesus.

If you continue to feel that the Lord's will is for you to foster or adopt, the journey has just begun! Remain teachable, keep your expectations flexible, and choose to lean on friends and family for support. Most importantly, draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. It is a transforming journey for you and all who watch. God is good!

## FURTHER READING

### Books to Read:

[The Connected Child](#) (trauma-informed care)  
[Dear Birthmother](#) (open adoption)  
[The Middle Mom](#) (a foster mom's journey)  
[Ready or Not](#) by Pam Parish (foster and adoption preparation)  
[The Body Keeps the Score](#) (trauma-informed care)

### Podcasts:

<http://www.fosterpodcast.com>  
<http://www.theadoptionconnection.com/listen/>

### Additional Support:

Celebrate Recovery: Heal Hurts, Hang-ups and Habits - various churches throughout community

### Websites and Blogs:

- [www.empoweredtoconnect.org](http://www.empoweredtoconnect.org) (short, trauma training videos)
- <http://jasonjohnsonblog.com/posts> (inspiration and information)

### Fostering Hope Resources:

- [www.iamfosteringhope.org](http://www.iamfosteringhope.org) (training, support and information classes)
- How to Help a Foster/Adoptive Family: For friends and family members
- Trauma-Competent Caregiver: Deep-dive, 8 week parenting class
- Parent Coaching: regular offerings of an assortment of topics and time to get your specific questions answered
- A Future and A Hope Conference every Spring
- And many more! Check out our website!

Many people have questions about the process of getting licensed to foster or adopt. This is an important question too, and there are many steps to follow. If international or domestic infant adoption is your interest, this chart shows the similar steps. The classes may vary with international and domestic infant adoption and depend upon the country or state.

### Attend an Agency Orientation

Each agency has their own way of supporting you through the paperwork process, and there are also some set state or federal guidelines. The Agency Orientation will explain this.

### Begin Paperwork Process

There will be a lot of paperwork. Agencies will ask for a lot of information from you including a brief description of how you grew up and why you want to foster/adopt.

### Background Checks

The agency will ask you to be fingerprinted and run a background check on you. You'll want to let them know if you have even small infractions from a past life.

### Preparation for the Homestudy

It's not all about a clean house! This could mean adding outlet plugs, securing medicines and guns, and buying a fire extinguisher.

### Homestudy

This isn't as scary as it sounds! A case worker will come visit you in your home. They will ask you lots of questions and likely the kids living with you, too. They are not looking for perfect people, but people who have resolved any major issues.

### Attend Licensing Classes

People love this part! (Just kidding) There are many hours of classes to attend. Some of them will feel very relevant. Some will not. It's all part of how the State and agency makes sure kids are safe. That is a big responsibility on their part, so we go to the classes!

### Wait for Placement of a Child

This is an exciting time as you wait for the placement of a child, and it can also be frustrating because sometimes it takes a while. There are a lot of variables for the agency to work with, but be patient! You are needed!



## **1. DELIGHT IN ME**

Children are universal in their desire to play, find joy, and seek approval from their caregivers. Find time to play with, enjoy, and delightfully watch your children as they play. This is now known to be crucial for their academic, social, and emotional development. Delight cannot be squeezed into a busy schedule so be prepared to set aside some time with just you and your child without a phone, notepad, or laptop.

## **2. BE PATIENT WITH ME**

It is often said that children are resilient and this is true. But children are not invincible and their resiliency does not come without a price and without patience from their caregivers. Parents often have an unspoken expectation of how long they assume it will take before their adoptive or foster child will fall in line and act like one of the family members. As parents, we must re-evaluate this expectation for our child to understand love and find healing from their past, and realize that healing can look different with each season of their life.

## **3. I KNOW IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT, BUT I REALLY DON'T WANT TO BE THE BOSS.**

Children from hard places have had to meet their own needs much sooner than other children. The desire to be in control of a situation does not stem from strong-will or control, but often it is from fear. For a trusting relationship to grow, fear must be relieved.

Independency in children can be celebrated at too young of an age. In order to have healthy independence, a child needs healthy attachment first.

## **4. I SAY THINGS I DON'T MEAN**

Children whose brains have not developed in a nurturing environment may not have the same processing time as other children. Often when a child shoots off an ugly remark to a question or request, if a second chance is given, they will have had time to think of an appropriate response.

When a child does not have fully accessible executive brain function, they respond with their primitive and emotional parts of their brain. It is not uncommon for kids from hard places to need extra time and coaching for their reasonable executive brain to come on-line.

## **5. I CAN FEEL VERY SCARED EVEN THOUGH I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT IS SCARING ME.**

A dark room or a loud barking dog are experiences we can understand why a child is frightened, but there are many other triggers for a child that cannot be explained easily. Children from hard places have often not learned how to handle their anxious thoughts, and sometimes feelings of fear can be stirred without an obvious cause. Parents must go the extra mile to make their children feel safe.



If you accepted three new children into your home tomorrow, what would change? What support would you need?

**It would be hard to manage alone.**

Foster families need a community of support as they do the hard work of caring for children in need.

**Will you be part of a  
foster family's team?**

# Foster Team Lineup



## Babysitting & Transportation

Become a certified foster care babysitter, and you can watch the kids on a Friday night, drive them to therapy or even parent visitations.

*"Don't take off work! I'll take them to their visitation."*

## Home Help

Offer to help around the house by bringing a meal twice a month, mowing the lawn, or folding the laundry. You can also be a huge help to your foster care family by offering to help with homework once a week.

*"Rest this Saturday, I'll mow your lawn."*



## Encouragement

Fostering is hard, and everyone needs a little encouragement now and then! A few times a month, send a text or email of encouragement, or drop off a coffee for mom and a treat for the kids.

*"Latte or Mocha?"*

## Material Support

Support your foster family by giving them material assistance. You can donate school supplies, diapers or help purchase gifts for birthdays.

*"Can I bring over a box of diapers?"*



# What Role Will You Play?

## 5 Areas of Need in Foster Care and Adoption



### Family Preservation

- Over 70% of children in care will return to their biological families
- After ensuring safety, the State's top priority is to return children to their families
- Biological families need more support than State requirements to break cycles of abuse, poverty, addiction, etc
- Most children in foster care have parents who were also in foster care



### Foster Care

- 1400 kids in foster care in Travis, Williamson, Hays Counties
- Foster homes are most needed for children age 6 and over
- Children in care can move on average 6 times not due to the system, but because the foster family is not prepared to care for the child
- Moving and inconsistent care can cause more trauma in a child than the original abusive environment



### Adoption

- Minority ethnic group children over 2 years old have a greater risk of aging out of the system than being adopted
- An estimated 250 children are available for adoption— many are sibling groups or teens
- Adoption from the foster care system costs little to nothing
- All children will have trauma, but they can reach dramatic levels of healing with trauma-informed parenting



### Supporting Roles

- There are many opportunities to serve foster and adoptive families including CASA, meals, mentoring, prayer, babysitting certification, financial support for camps or sports, backpack drives, compassion for foster/adoption families, etc
- Isolation is often a family's first and most problematic response when they are in crisis with a child



### Aged-out Teens

- Teens are given the choice at 18 to extend their time in foster care until 21 or they can leave
- 40% of those who age-out are homeless in the first year
- 66% are in incarcerated in the first year
- 70% are pregnant by their 21st birthday
- Long-term relationships are required to change the future of aged-out teens



## THANK YOU!

You did It! Great job preparing for your journey to foster or adopt. We've covered a lot with motivations, expectations, parenting children from a hard place, and building a community of support. You should feel confident in your preparation.

*But now what?*

If you feel that fostering or adoption is right for you, then it's time to find a child placing agency! Your ministry advocate has a list of agencies that Fostering Hope recommends. They also have a list of questions for you to ask an agency so you can feel good about the agency you choose.

Once you choose an agency, they will get you set up with licensing classes and filling out the necessary paperwork. Child placing agencies are a great resource and support.

Fostering Hope is here for you, too! We get the joys and challenges of fostering and adoption on a personal level, and we also understand what it takes to build your community of support. Stay in touch with us through your church or reach out to us through our online or in-person classes.

**You are not alone on this journey!**



Together, we build stronger foster and adoptive families.  
[www.iamfosteringhope.org](http://www.iamfosteringhope.org)