

## *Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents*

### **National Foster Care Month Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is National Foster Care Month?**

National Foster Care Month is an initiative of the Children's Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, that is celebrated each May. It is a time to acknowledge foster parents, family members, volunteers, mentors, policymakers, child welfare professionals, and other members of the community who help children and youth in foster care find permanent homes and connections. It is also a time to renew our commitment to ensuring a bright future for the more than 437,000<sup>1</sup> children and youth in foster care and celebrate those who make a meaningful difference in their lives.

#### **How does the Children's Bureau support National Foster Care Month?**

The Children's Bureau—together with its information service, Child Welfare Information Gateway, and a host of other Federal, State, and local partners—supports National Foster Care Month through a dedicated website that includes resources, real-life stories, and outreach tools to help you spread awareness at the State and local levels. The Children's Bureau's message on the website highlights the agency's commitment to strengthening the capacity of families to nurture and provide for the well-being of their children, prioritize foster care as a service to families, and promote reunification.

#### **What is the history of the Children's Bureau and foster care?**

Throughout its history, the Children's Bureau has worked to assist parents, children, and youth involved with foster care; engage youth in decisions that affect their lives; and support foster families, kinship caregivers, child welfare professionals, and others who help these children. Learn more about the history of National Foster Care Month and how the Children's Bureau and its partners support the initiative today by visiting the National Foster Care Month website at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/about/history/>.

#### **What resources will be available on the National Foster Care Month website?**

This year, the theme of National Foster Care Month is "Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents." The resources available on the website aim to help child welfare professionals develop strategies for implementing family voice into the permanency-planning process and encouraging collaboration between parents and foster parents, the community, the courts, and related professionals. These resources showcase how the foster care system holistically supports reunification and long-term family stabilization. Access the resources at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/resources/>.

### What are real-life stories?

Each year, the National Foster Care Month website features real-life stories from families, youth, and caseworkers in which they share their experiences with foster care. These inspiring narratives and videos are a powerful way to connect people's experiences with foster care to important practice issues and can be used as a tool for training new child welfare professionals, recruiting and training foster parents, and enhancing State and local media and awareness campaigns for National Foster Care Month. View the stories at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/reallifestories/>.

### How can I spread the word about National Foster Care Month?

There are several tools in the Spread the Word section (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/spread/>) of the National Foster Care Month website you can use to help promote National Foster Care Month in your community, including the following:

- Sample social media posts
- Sample email messages and signatures
- Shareable graphics

Visit the National Foster Care Month website to also view sample National Foster Care Month proclamations issued by various levels of government. You can also link to the events tab on the Child Welfare Information Gateway Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/childwelfare/>) to submit National Foster Care Month events and learn about events going on near your hometown.

### How can I learn about what other States are doing for National Foster Care Month?

The National Foster Care Month Community Engagement page (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/engagement/>) highlights what States and local communities are doing across the country to recognize National Foster Care Month and encourages community members to get involved. The page includes National Foster Care Month proclamations, State-specific contact information for child welfare leaders across the country, and examples of child welfare agencies that are integrating parent and youth voice into their work in order to create a thriving community and positive outcomes for families. Also, visit the events tab on the Child Welfare Information Gateway Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/childwelfare/>) to learn about National Foster Care Month events going on near your hometown!

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2019). The AFCARS report: Preliminary estimates for FY 2017 as of August 22, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/afcars-report-26>.



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Children's Bureau

