

It's All Relative: Supporting Kinship Connections

The Stamp of Approval: Empowering Caregivers to Support Youth in Care

I got a call from my brother at 6:30 a.m. We had not spoken in a while, and he was upset, saying, “CPS is taking my daughter. Will you take her?” I said, “Of course.” I had no hesitation. My brother did not want to discuss what had occurred. I talked to my husband and apologized for saying yes without talking to him first. He said, “Of course, we will take her.” A CPS worker called and explained the process, background checks, and approval. We told the CPS worker that we wanted my niece, including long term, if needed. Our children are all grown—I have a 32-year-old son, a 31-year-old daughter, and a 27-year-old daughter. At that time, it was just me, my husband, and my mother living in the home, and we had the space.



To get approved, the process took some time, but our social worker walked us through it and told us what was needed. We had to get an exemption for criminal history, so we got letters of recommendation and explained the changes we had made. That process was intimidating, and we worried we would not be approved. We kept our faith and gave the process to God. We were able to visit with our niece while she was in foster care and even went to the home she was placed in. We took her to the movies, bought her a Halloween costume, and drove the hour-and-a-half to see her as much as was possible.

Finally, our niece came to live with us. When she came, she said, “Thank you for bringing me home.” She felt happy to be with her family again. She arrived home with lice and not enough clothing, which was upsetting. We had to treat her lice aggressively and set her up in her own room. Our niece had visited often when she was living with her mom and dad and already had a closet with clothing. She would come over to visit on the weekends and holidays, but the family sometimes distanced themselves.

For us, being foster parents and having the county involved has been a good experience. We appreciate that our social worker comes monthly and checks in often by phone with us and my niece. Our social worker asks how things are going and offers support. We have a good relationship with our county worker, and she has been friendly and keeps us informed with what is happening.

It has been very rewarding to have my niece in our home—knowing she is not with strangers and is living with people who know her and love and care for her and knowing that she's happy. She is doing well in school and is very helpful around the house. The most challenging thing has been that her parents have not yet admitted that they have a problem (addiction) and sometimes do not come for visits. When they do not come or call her, she is sad and withdrawn. We know addiction and have been around addicts because we ran a drug and alcohol counseling program. We can read the signs and know the detrimental effects of addiction. Even though it can be frustrating, we support having visits with her parents in our home because it is more comfortable for my niece. When issues arise, we tell her that her parents love her, it's not her fault, and that they have an addiction.

Right now it looks like we are heading toward permanency, and they told my niece that if we adopt her, she would have two sets of parents. We told her we would never stop her from seeing her mom and dad, but we would need to make sure she would be safe and they would be sober. We love her like we would our own child and make sure she is surrounded by love. We have decided that we would like to open our home to foster children in general and are working toward resource family approval (RFA) in our county. We feel that we have a lot of love and support to offer and can be “real” with people, youth especially. We did not have the best childhoods growing up, but we are compassionate about improving the lives of children and supporting them to be successful.

To learn more about Resource Family Approval in Glenn County, CA, visit <https://www.countyofglenn.net/dept/health-human-services/social-services/resource-family-approval/welcome>.



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