

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

KINSHIP IN ACTION

Throughout its 25 years of programming, A Second Chance, Inc. (ASCI) has always paid special attention to the needs of older youth, many of whom linger in congregate care settings. In 2012, ASCI established its Stepping Into Families (SIF) program to formalize a process where kinship care caseworkers “step up” their commitment to making sure older youth in care achieve permanency with family since family is critical in preparing youth for adulthood and setting the path toward future success. What makes SIF unique is its intense concentration on adolescent needs and permanency options for older youth and its recognition of the kinship dynamic when working with teens.



It was through SIF that Brayden met ASCI supervisor Lisa, whose commitment led her to go to considerable lengths to reunite him with his younger brother Tyler. She was determined to make a kinship connection. After being in a group home, reconnecting with his brother and moving into a family home filled with acceptance and love has changed Brayden’s life forever.

When Brayden’s now-adoptive mother, Kate, got the initial call about Brayden, she and her husband, Toby, were overwhelmed by the daily struggles of life—after all, they already had five children (three biological and two adoptive). However, with Lisa’s help, the fear of taking on another child faded, and they soon grew into their roles as Brayden’s caregivers.

“A Second Chance employees are facilitators,” Kate says. “They facilitate relationships. They make relationships happen. When you have relationships and people are emotionally invested in each other, then you have success.” Lisa helped make sure the family’s bond with Brayden thrived by making sure his needs were met.

Brayden believes that if he had not met Lisa, he would still be in congregate care. Luckily, Brayden was meant for a brighter fate. He was officially adopted by the family on March 25, 2019.

Brayden’s advice for teens who lack permanency, as he once did, is to not give up and to try harder to succeed in life. Brayden never gave up, and in the end, he was reunited with his brother and gained a family. With the help of a devoted caseworker, his reunion with Tyler, and a loving family, Brayden has found his forever home.

ASCI has been a leading voice on kinship foster care in the country for over 25 years. The agency is recognized as a national kinship model in the delivery of kin services, and its work has been cited by organizations including the Urban Institute, the Children's Defense Fund, Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. To date, ASCI has served over 28,000 children, 30,000 birth parents, and 10,000 kinship caregivers. Currently, the agency works daily with well over 1,800 children and families to ensure their safety, permanency and well-being. Headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA, ASCI is the largest foster care provider to the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and has a large regional office in Philadelphia.

To learn more about ASCI, visit <http://www.asecondchance-kinship.com/>.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

