

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

Simply Put, Every Child Deserves a Loving Home

Two sisters with high needs came into our care several years ago, a few months apart. The teen siblings, both on the autistic spectrum, struggled with anger, aggression, and other traumas from abuse or neglect in their home that made permanency challenging. After they were fully relinquished to Child and Family Services, it became clear that both would need high care in a loving, family home environment.

Every child deserves permanency, no matter their age, and it takes dedicated child welfare professionals with a willingness to work as a team with that child to ensure their voice is heard and included. This can be hard, especially with young people who find trust difficult. This challenge can be compounded further with older youth who have their own unique needs.



There must be a willingness to put in the work to earn and build that trust, especially when the worker may be one of the few constants in the child's life. In order to ensure each received the level of care they needed; the sisters were placed separately. They both went through several placements and group homes. When their first caseworker was promoted to a new position, she knew this would be hard on them. That worker went the extra mile to do everything she could to plan a supported transition to the new worker, in the hope the siblings would be comfortable and would know their interests would still be heard and valued. It still wasn't an easy change. When I was assigned their case, they missed their old worker, and they missed each other. We continued to work with their separate placements to find creative ways for them to stay in contact and visit. It was several conversations that led to the hard understanding that separating their permanency plans would be the best way to find them the homes they needed.

Both sisters were assigned an amazing Wendy's Wonderful Kids adoption worker. We all worked together to listen to what each sister wanted for themselves in a home. One identified a former Department of Child and Family Services worker from several years earlier. It would mean transferring the case to another region, and another worker seeing it through to the end. The adoption was finalized earlier this year, with the adoptive mother committed to maintaining the sisters' connection to each other. Seeing what is possible has also affected the sister still waiting for permanency. She doesn't push everyone away as hard as she did before, and I think she is more open to the idea of a home.

This work is never simple. What is simple is the understanding that every child deserves a loving home, and a say in what that home will be.



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

