

NEWSLETTER



January

2 0 2 6



**While you
ring in the
New Year,
1,200
children
will enter
foster care.**



Holidays are hard even when u have found "new family" because u still feel awkward and ur mom and dad are not there so though it is easier it sill makes u sad because u are reminded of what u don't have."

— FosterClub member Divine, age 21, from Wisconsin, in foster care more than 3 years

Helping Young People in Foster Care *Through the Holidays*

An open letter to youth in foster care: a young alumni's perspective by DANIEL J. KNAPP, FosterClub

I absolutely love the Holiday Season! I start listening to Christmas music a few weeks before young trick-or-treaters scout their neighborhoods, dressed in the Halloween garb, looking for a favorite piece of candy. Some say I am crazy for listening to Christmas music so early, but I just don't think a month is long enough to thoroughly enjoy those great Holiday tunes.

The meaning behind the Holidays is more than stuffing your face with grandma's homemade pecan pie or getting the year's hottest toy or even enjoying the music. What it's all about is coming together as a family and enjoying and treasuring each other's

company.

As a foster kid I used to hate the Holidays because I wasn't with my family. After my father died the Holidays seemed never the same. While in foster care I was able to go home, but only on Thanksgiving day and Christmas day, I found that being with loved ones the whole season is what makes the Holidays so special. Going home on just two days or even for the weekend wasn't enough.

In those days, I often felt like an outsider because I was just a foster kid, especially during the Holidays. I struggled emotionally when my foster family celebrated the Holidays



because I wanted to feel what I thought they were feeling.

Even though I was included in all of the Holiday celebrations I often felt left out because to me I was just "borrowing" their family and ultimately their joy.

The holidays never felt special. Worse than that, for me they were a time of regret and confusion.

Continued on page 06



NEW VISION & MISSION



WFAPA's Board has continued to meet regularly and is developing new initiatives for the organization. We wish to inform you that our brochure has recently been updated. For your convenience, it is available for download and printing on our website, wfapa.org.

We have also updated our business email address to ensure smoother and more reliable communication. Effective immediately, all newsletters, updates, and announcements will be sent from our new email address: info@wfapa.org. To ensure you continue receiving our content, please add this address to your contacts or safe sender list.

Save the Date!

Mark your calendars for October 9-11, 2026, as WFAPA's In-Person and Virtual Conference will take place in Rothschild, Wisconsin. Stay tuned for more details!

Notice of Proposed Amendments to By-Laws

In accordance with the by-laws of the Wisconsin Foster & Adoptive Parent Association, Inc., we are notifying our general membership about the proposed amendments to our by-laws. After thorough consideration and discussions among the board members, we have adopted the following changes following our governing procedures. These amendments aim to better align with our mission, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure compliance with relevant regulations.

A complete copy of our by-laws is available for your review on our website. Please visit www.wfapa.org, navigate to the "About" section, click on "WFAPA Literature," and then select "WFAPA By-laws." We encourage all members to familiarize themselves with these updates, as they outline our shared responsibilities and organizational processes. If you have any questions or need clarification, please reach out to us at info@wfapa.org.

For these bylaws to be adopted, Members are invited to provide their agreement or disagreement with any proposed amendments during this 60-day review period. Please submit your feedback and indicate whether you approve or disapprove by emailing info@wfapa.org. At the conclusion of this period, responses will be reviewed; should the majority be favorable, the bylaws will be adopted accordingly. The outcome will be communicated via the newsletter.

The key amendments are as follows:

- **Amendment 1:** Page 3 Top statement- BYLAWS FOR WISCONSIN FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATIONS, Inc.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** WISCONSIN FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATIONS (take off the "s"), Inc.
 - **Revised Amendment:** BYLAWS FOR WISCONSIN FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION, Inc.
- **Amendment 2:** Page 4- A. Regular Membership number 2. Benefits of this membership include: the right to caucus with other licensed foster parents or adoptive parents on all matters brought to the members of the Association; cast votes on such matters, at the semi-annual general membership meetings; opportunities for the semi-annual educational and training conferences; receiving quarterly newsletters; and auditing board meetings.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** A. Regular Membership number 2. "at the annual membership meeting" in place of semi-annual..... At the end ADD "attend virtual pre-recorded trainings."
 - **Revised Amendment:** A. A. Regular Membership number 2. Benefits of this membership include: the right to caucus with other licensed foster parents or adoptive parents on all matters brought to the members of the Association; cast votes on such matters, at the annual general membership meeting; opportunities for the annual educational and training conferences and attend virtual pre-recorded trainings; receiving quarterly newsletters; and auditing board meetings.
- **Amendment 3:** Page 6- D. The treasurer shall: number 3. Submit all financial records and all financial reports for state funding to the board of directors annually for an audit, or a group of three members, to be completed by the annual general membership meeting held in the fall. Additionally, an audit is required before a treasurer leaves office for any reason.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** D. The treasurer shall: number 3. Submit all financial records and all financial reports for Federal/State tax purposes and to maintain the 501 (c)(3) status. (remove all the rest of the verbiage)
 - **Revised Amendment:** D. The treasurer shall: number 3. Submit all financial records and all financial reports for Federal/State tax purposes and to maintain the 501 (c)(3) status.
- **Amendment 4:** Page 7- ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, SECTION 1 A nominating committee of not less than two (2) Association members shall be appointed by the president at the regular Spring general membership meeting each year to secure nominations for each executive position due to expire. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the Fall general membership meeting.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, change wording in Section 1 to A nominating person shall be appointed by the president in the Spring to secure nominations for each executive position due to expire. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the time of voting.
 - **Revised Amendment:** ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, SECTION 1 A nominating person shall be appointed by the president in the Spring to secure nominations for each executive position due to expire. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the time of voting.
- **Amendment 5:** Page 7- ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, SECTION 4 The election of officers of the Association shall be by secret ballot or call from the floor "ayes" and "nays" at the Fall general membership meeting. The president shall cast a secret ballot for each office, to be counted only in the event of a tie. If there is no tie, the president's vote will be destroyed, unopened.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, SECTION 4 The election of officers of the Association shall be by "show of hands" or one ballots submitted via the website if no in-person meeting is held that Fall.
 - **Revised Amendment:** ARTICLE V: NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, SECTION 4 The election of officers of the Association shall be by "show of hands" or one ballots submitted via the website if no in-person meeting is held that Fall. The president shall cast a secret ballot for each office, to be counted only in the event of a tie. If there is no tie, the president's vote will be destroyed, unopened.
- **Amendment 6:** Page 8.- ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, Section 2 Each chairperson of a standing committee shall have one vote at board meetings. The following committees shall constitute the standing committees.

A. Bylaw / Legislative	B. Finance	C. Conference	D. Fundraising
H. Membership	I. Newsletter	J. Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect (SAAN)	K. Website Manager
L. FASPP Advisor	M. Partnership		

 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, Section 2 B. Auction/ Raffle/ Ticket sales. Remove the word Finance.
 - **Revised Amendment:** ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, Section 2 Each chairperson of a standing committee shall have one vote at board meetings. The following committees shall constitute the standing committees.

A. Bylaw / Legislative	B. Auction/ Raffle/ Ticket sales	C. Conference	D. Fundraising
G. Hospitality	H. Membership	I. Newsletter	J. Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect (SAAN)
K. Website Manager	L. FASPP Advisor	M. Partnership	

Continued on page- 03

Continued from page- 03 Notice of Proposed Amendments to By-Laws

- **Amendment 7:** Page 8.- ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, Section 2 Each chairperson of a standing committee shall have one vote at board meetings. The following committees shall constitute the standing committees.

A. Bylaw / Legislative	B. Finance	C. Conference	D. Fundraising
E. Grant Writing	F. Outreach	G. Hospitality	H. Membership
I. Newsletter	J. Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect (SAAN)		
L. FASPP Advisor	M. Partnership	K. Website Manager	
- **Summary of Key Amendment:** ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, Section 2 Each chairperson of a standing committee shall have one vote at board meetings. The following committees shall constitute the standing committees. Remove M. Partnership
- **Revised Amendment:** ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, Section 2 Each chairperson of a standing committee shall have one vote at board meetings. The following committees shall constitute the standing committees.

A. Bylaw / Legislative	B. Finance	C. Conference	D. Fundraising
E. Grant Writing	F. Outreach	G. Hospitality	H. Membership
I. Newsletter	J. Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect (SAAN)		
L. FASPP Advisor	M. Partnership	K. Website Manager	
- **Amendment 8:** Page 8.-ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, SECTION 3 The board of directors shall hold regular meetings two (2) times a year immediately following the conference and additionally at the call of the president. A written notice of the time and place of all meetings of the board of directors shall be communicated to each board member no less than ten (10) days prior to the meeting date.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, reword SECTION 3 The Board of Directors shall hold regular meetings two (2) times a year and those additionally at the call of the president. A written notice of the time and place of all meetings of the board of directors shall be communicated to each board member no less than five (5) days prior to the meeting date.
 - **Revised Amendment:** ARTICLE VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, Section 3 The Board of Directors shall hold regular meetings two (2) times a year and those additionally at the call of the president. A written notice of the time and place of all meetings of the board of directors shall be communicated to each board member no less than five (5) days prior to the meeting date.
- **Amendment 9:** Page 9, Section 6- The board of directors without meeting together, may transact business by mail, telephone, electronic mail, or FAX by voting on proposed resolutions communicated to them by the president or by the secretary with the president's approval. If within five (5) business days thereafter a majority of the members vote in favor of such a resolution, that resolution shall be deemed carried. Otherwise it shall fail.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** The board of directors without meeting together may transact business by mail, telephone, electronic mail, TEXT MESSAGING (just add those two words)
 - **Revised Amendment:** The board of directors without meeting together, may transact business by mail, telephone, electronic mail, text messaging or fax by voting on proposed resolutions communicated to them by the president or by the secretary with the president's approval. If within five (5) business days thereafter a majority of the members vote in favor of such a resolution, that resolution shall be deemed carried. Otherwise it shall fail.
- **Amendment 10:** Page 10, ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS, Section 2- Notice of semi-annual general membership meetings and the agenda shall be communicated to the members by the board of directors or the secretary at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Publication of upcoming meetings and agenda in a statewide newspaper or the Association's newsletter will suffice, provided the notification appears not less than fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS, Section 2- Take out the word "semi". Notice of ANNUAL...
 - **Revised Amendment:** ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS, Section 2- Notice of annual general membership meetings and the agenda shall be communicated to the members by the board of directors or the secretary at least 30 days prior to the meeting. Publication of upcoming meetings and agenda in a statewide newspaper or the Association's newsletter will suffice, provided the notification appears not less than fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting.
- **Amendment 11:** Page 10, ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS, Section 6- All meeting shall be conducted in accordance with ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER MODERN EDITION.
 - **Summary of Key Amendment:** ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS, Section 6- All meetings MAY be conducted..... take out the word "shall"
 - **Revised Amendment:** ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS, Section 6- All meeting may be conducted in accordance with ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER MODERN EDITION.

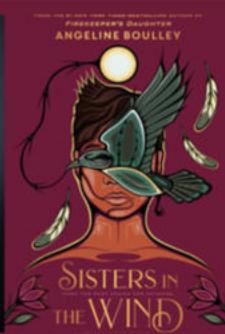
IF YOU NEED RESOURCES, YOU CAN FIND OUR COMPLETE LIST ON WFAPA.ORG.

“ The reason I get sad on holidays is because I have no one to share it with and I have never had anyone to share it with since I was 2 months old, some people may not realize it but its hard to have never have had a family. But what I have to say to all foster kids is we're all SURVIVORS.”

— FosterClub member tahuahua, age 15, from California, in foster care more 15 years

“ Up until this Christmas I had been in the system during holidays and birthdays. And it was harder being at home for holidays rather than being in the system. At least there, people actually celebrate it and show love.”

— Foster Club member beccah07, age 19, from Indiana, in foster care more than 3 years



Native families are like onions," fiction author Angeline Boulley writes in her latest novel about Indigenous families caught up in the child welfare system.

They are "rough-looking on the outside," she goes on. "People want to peel the outer layers and toss them away, as if they have no value. But each layer is protecting the next, down to its innermost core. That green center, where the onion is sweetest, that's the Native child. Surrounded by layers of family and community."

Boulley's third book, "Sisters in the Wind," offers a rare Indigenous-centric glimpse into the failings of the country's child welfare system. The young adult novel, set to publish next month, is meant to show what can happen when a federal law meant to ensure that Indigenous families remain intact is not followed, and how a child's life can be improved when it is, the Michigan author said in a recent interview.

The thriller follows Lucy Smith, an Ojibwe teen who is running for her life, away

'Sisters in the Wind': Indigenous Author Centers Foster Youth in Upcoming Thriller

from traumatic figures she encountered while growing up in foster care. As an adult she navigates a difficult childhood spent in various placements before finding family and healing.

Publisher's Weekly called the book a devastating, gripping tale "that serves as a searing critique of the ways that systems can fail vulnerable youth."

At points in the novel, Boulley's protagonist experiences dehumanizing moments common to foster youth everywhere, including when she is forced to carry her belongings in a trash bag during a move to a new home.

Recently, states including New York and Texas have prohibited child welfare agencies from doling out trash bags, and now require them to provide proper suitcases to children. Such laws, "need to be everywhere," Boulley said, adding that she believes making foster youth use garbage bags sends the clear message, "that they themselves are trash."

As an adult, Smith eventually goes to work as a research intern for a company that trains child welfare professionals on the workings of the Indian Child Welfare Act. The 1978 federal law, known as ICWA, requires state foster care agencies to take extra steps to ensure Indigenous families stay together. The fictional

company in the novel is based on real work Indigenous people are doing to preserve families and tribal communities in Boulley's home state of Michigan, she said.

In the case of the novel's protagonist, ICWA was not followed as she moved through the foster care system. In one bleak scene, a social worker tells Smith that identifying as Indigenous will only muddle her situation. "It complicates everything," Smith is told. "Just say you're Mexican."

Later, Smith comes to believe that the abusive situations she endured in non-Native foster homes never would have happened had she been placed with tribal relatives.

Boulley, a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa, hopes a particular message in her novel will reach child welfare professionals who might read it:

"When ICWA is followed correctly, it works," Boulley said. "The issues that arise primarily come when social services and court personnel don't understand the law. They continue with assumptions and misconceptions, and that ends up complicating children's lives."

Boulley was never in foster care herself. Continued on page 09

SAVE THE DATE!!

Thursday

8

Friday



WFAPA
Conference

Saturday

10

WFAPA
Conference

Mark your calendars! WFAPA's In-Person and Online Foster & Adoptive Training Conference is set to take place in Rothschild, WI, on October 9-11, 2026.

Join us for an engaging training experience, both in-person and online, that you won't want to overlook. Stay tuned for the details!

Showcase WFAPA's Foster Care Quilt



This project is dedicated to all the children who have suffered from abuse and neglect. The last block is left blank to remember those children who have suffered and died; those not protected by the system.

We saw the need to raise awareness of the growing number of children entering the system, as well as some of their backgrounds in how they came into the system and their experiences within foster care. Every county in Wisconsin was asked whether there was a child in foster care who would be interested in creating a drawing and sharing their story about their life in the system.

STORIES OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE

As you read their stories, you'll encounter tales of success, heartbreak, and ongoing

journeys. Yet, every child shares the same hope—to finding a good home, to be loved, and to know that someone genuinely cares for them. Each story reflects the turmoil, uncertainty, and challenges faced by the children, their birth families, and some foster or adoptive families. This is why the "Tumbling Block" was chosen as the quilt block for this project.

As a society and as compassionate human beings, we have a responsibility to care for these children, and we must act sooner rather than later. The statistics regarding success within the system often seem at odds with the personal stories shared here. Please reach out to your State Senator, Representatives, the Governor, and local government officials to advocate for the necessary reforms and guidelines that can pave the way for

genuine success stories. Each day, over half a million children in the United States are in foster care, seeking refuge from abuse. Countless children are longing for a loving and safe family to call their own. Please consider opening your heart and home.

If you or your organization are interested in borrowing the quilt along with its accompanying stories for a display, please reach out to:

WFAPA Public Relations Chair

Melinda Kasch,
8912 Sadler Drive
Wind Lake, WI 53185
Phone: (262) 895-2652
Email: mkasch@wi.rr.com



The quilt will be provided to you at no cost, and return postage will be included.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!



CHILD POVERTY NEARLY TRIPLES TO 13% OVER THREE YEARS

Public Policies and Programs Proven to Halve the Rate

Posted October 20, 2025 By the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Child poverty in the U.S. has surged, nearly tripling from 5% in 2021 to 13% in 2024. This dramatic increase follows the expiration of pandemic-era economic policies and rising prices that have strained family budgets nationwide. However, a new report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, ["Measuring Access to Opportunity in the United States: A 10-Year Update,"](#) underscores the profound impact of public policies and programs, demonstrating their capacity to cut child poverty in half.

This report, which analyzes U.S. Census Bureau figures from the annual Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), reveals that more than 1 in 8 children in this country lived in poverty in 2024. Without the support of government programs and policies, the child poverty rate would nearly double — underscoring how vital these efforts are to helping families make ends meet. Among children living in poverty, 61%, or 5.9 million, lived with at least one employed parent in 2024.

The SPM is a more accurate gauge of families' economic situations than the official poverty measure's income threshold of \$31,812 for a family of four in 2024. The SPM accounts for essential expenses such as housing, medical and child care; adjusts for rising costs and geographic differences in the cost of living; and measures the effectiveness of vital resources like tax credits, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food assistance and housing subsidies.

"Poverty poses a serious threat to children's development and long-term well-being, with far-reaching consequences for our economy," said Leslie Boissiere, vice president of external affairs at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "The data unequivocally show that public programs directly help our nation's children. By investing in children's well-being — through both public policy and employment practices that provide family-sustaining wages — we can enable more children to thrive and contribute as

they become adults."



In 2021, 5% of children in the U.S. lived in poverty, a historic low created by enhanced social supports and the one-time expanded child tax credit to support families during the pandemic. These

combined government policies and programs lifted more than 15 million children out of poverty in 2021. Between 2021 and 2024, after those enhanced resources expired, the rate of children in poverty rose to pre-pandemic levels of 13% under the SPM. That percentage would be 25% without government interventions to alleviate financial hardship, demonstrating the crucial role of public programs and tax policies in the well-being of children in this country. The report also finds that rising costs are outpacing families' earnings.

Policies and programs to stave off poverty are becoming more of a lifeline

Continued on page 16

Continued from front page Helping Young People in Foster Care *Through the Holidays*

At Christmas time I felt so guilty when my foster mom bought me gifts because I knew she didn't have to and sometimes I felt like she bought them because she was obligated to. If she bought gifts for me I felt guilty and if I didn't receive gifts I would have felt unloved. It was really a "no win" situation.

In my town we have something called "Artic League" that provides a bag of toys for needy kids to make sure they had something to open on Christmas morning. It's a wonderful organization and even though the presents weren't wrapped and came in a clear plastic bag I really enjoyed getting my bag of toys. Since the donor of the toys were anonymous, I felt I didn't owe anybody. Receiving the plastic gift bag was a clear indicator that I was needy, but I'd rather feel needy than obligated to someone.

Holy cow. Holidays are hard. I mean, I spent Christmas bawling in my bed. I've been so used to having all my brothers and sisters to make the holidays for, and I just feel broken. I feel purposeless. I feel alone, and lonely. The holidays are truly hard."

— FosterClub member steenee89, age 17, from California in foster care for 6 months

My foster family was my temporary family and I was just temporarily in their home until my mom could get her life straightened out. My foster family was good to me and I appreciate all that they did, but my birth mom never did get her life straightened out and eventually I was put up for adoption. My foster family became my family when they adopted me a few years later. I was so excited to be in a permanent loving family!

I was adopted right before the holiday season and I couldn't wait until that season arrived. This was going to be the best Thanksgiving and Christmas ever! I couldn't wait to establish myself as permanent member of the family. I desperately wanted to loose the foster kid identity that I had carried for the past 5 years. I thought that the Holiday Season was the perfect time to accomplish this.

To my surprise it didn't happen. I didn't feel established as a permanent member of the family that first year. Sometimes I wonder if it ever happened. I think the Holiday Season made me feel worse because I began to search out in my mind all of the little things that I felt would change now that I was "officially"

I was "officially" part of the family. Those changes I sought after were subtle and I begin to wonder why my cousins got more gifts than me. The amount of gifts never really mattered, I was thankful for every gift, but I just wanted to be equal.

Being equal to meant I was part of the family. Being equal meant I wasn't a foster kid anymore. I began to push away, hoping that someone would care enough to push back. No one ever did and my behavior was misunderstood and contributed to me being considered ungrateful or not wanting to be a part of the family. That was 10 years ago and this is something I still struggle with today. Last year, I decided not to go to Thanksgiving Dinner with family and spent the day alone. I just wanted to avoid those old bad feelings.

I am sure my story is probably different than yours, but I do know what its like to be a foster kid during the Holidays. I do know what its like to miss bio-family and the confusing feelings that go along with the Holiday Season when you experience them with a "temporary" family. These feelings are normal and I am sure a lot of you are experiencing them right now. It is okay to feel awkward observing the Holidays with someone who has different customs and spiritual beliefs than you do. These feelings are normal and instinctively they cause us to push away from those who care for us.

Foster parents are put in a tough position during the Holidays because they have taken another child into their home and provide them with a "safe" home during this season. They do their best and sometimes they don't understand the feelings that their foster kids go through because they have never been in a similar situation themselves.

I know my adoptive mother did her best and I know she would have done better if she had understood the complexity of my feelings. I am grateful for her huge heart and her willingness to open up her home and her heart to me.

I know it is really hard spending the Holiday Season away from the ones you love but I encourage you to not push away from the ones who are caring for you, even though it might be temporary. They might not say the right

things all the time but you need to trust that they do their best.



I still haven't mentioned why I love Christmas so much. For years I allowed life's circumstances rob me of my joy. During my freshman year of high school my grandfather was real sick, close to death, and he ended up loosing a limb to diabetes.

As his life was in the balance he never lost his joy. His faith kept him strong when life was at his worse. This was my grandfather's character. As his health

“ Holidays to this day is very hard! I will sit back and remember they way it used to be when the whole family was together, and I would shed a tear. I have my own family traditions now and I love it, but it's still hard to remember the way it was. It makes me miss my brothers, sisters, and my other family members (miss them more than anything).”

— FosterClub member katiedid, age 21, from Florida, in foster care more than 3 years

deteriorated in his old age his spirit never did.

He never let life's circumstances get him down. He couldn't control what was happening to him but he could control his attitude. He had every right to be miserable and to complain, but he rarely did.

This was a valuable lesson to me because I began to realize that I couldn't control life but I was letting it control me. There are just some things in life we can't control. I can't control my foster care history and I can't control other people's behavior but I can control how I react to life's circumstances. During the Holiday Seasons past I missed out on so much because I was so focused on issues that were really out of my control. I had every right to feel those feelings but it caused me to miss out on what the Holidays are really about. I still struggle with some of those feelings today that I felt when I was younger and still in foster care, but I don't let them rob me from enjoying the Holiday Seasons.

I wish you joy and peace this Holiday Season, Dan



Daniel J. Knapp, age 24, lives in Elmira, New York. He currently serves as Program Director for FosterClub. Dan was 9 years old when placed into the system and was adopted at the age of 14 by his first and only foster mother. He is thankful to his family for their lifelong guidance. Dan is a graduate of SUNY at Buffalo and plans on attending graduate school next year.

Christian Bale's \$22M Foster Kids Village in California Aims to Transform Lives by 2025



Christian Bale is spearheading a \$22 million project to establish a unique village for foster children in Palmdale, California, with plans to complete it by 2025. The initiative seeks to provide stable housing and a nurturing environment for foster kids, addressing critical gaps in the current foster care system through what Bale describes as a transformative model.

Christian Bale, renowned for his roles in "Empire of the Sun" and the "Batman" series, is also a passionate advocate for foster children.

A Vision to Support Foster Children in California

Inspired by his father's compassionate example, Bale has committed substantial resources to construct a foster village that will include 12 dedicated homes, two studio apartments designed for independent living, and a 7,000-square-foot community center. This plan aims to help siblings remain together within a supportive community, counteracting the trauma often caused by separation in

foster care.

To bring this vision to life, Bale co-founded the Together California initiative, which will oversee the project's development and ongoing management. The village will be located near McAdam Park in Palmdale, providing a welcoming environment specifically tailored for vulnerable youth in the foster care system.

Leadership and Collaboration Behind the Project

Christian Bale's partner in this endeavor is Dr. Eric Esrailian, a physician affiliated with the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, who also has a long-standing friendship with Bale. Tim McCormick, known for decades of experience managing foster homes in Chicago, serves as the initiative's director, bringing valuable insight into the challenges faced by foster children and the foster care network.

Christian Bale on the Importance of the Foster Kids Village

Reflecting on the project's purpose, Bale described the village as "something absolutely new, totally transformative

and something completely needed."

He highlighted the emotional turmoil experienced by children forced apart from their families, stressing the need for a central place of support. "Imagine the absolute pain and the trauma of losing your parents or being torn from your parents, and then losing your brothers and sisters on top of that, that's no way to treat kids. And so, we will be the hub for that."

He expressed hope that this village will serve as a model for additional communities dedicated to fostering care, urging Californians, particularly residents of Los Angeles, to recognize the urgent needs of these children and join the cause.

"I hope that this village will be the first of many, and I hope that people, Californians and Angelenos, know to come join us in opening our eyes to what's happening right under our noses. These are our children, and we must help our children."

Continued on page- 09



FASPP SAAN



Foster & Adoptive Support & Preservation Program Surviving Allegations of Abuse & Neglect



FASPP's Objective: Supporting Foster and Adoptive Parents Statewide

FASPP's primary aim is to assist foster and adoptive parents throughout the state with a peer-driven network of support and information. Our goal is to maintain foster and adoptive families by providing the necessary resources. If you're feeling disoriented, in need of information, or under an investigation, our highly trained FASPP and SAAN volunteers can help. They can guide you through a range of challenges and provide you with the relevant information or resources you need. FASPP and SAAN comprises of fellow foster or adoptive parents, making it easier for you to connect and share your experiences.

Introducing SAAN, a Peer-Driven Support Network for Foster and Adoptive Families

SAAN is a support network created by peers, with the aim of reducing the trauma experienced by foster and adoptive families during an allegation, without compromising the integrity of the investigation.

Foster parents open their homes to children, aware that they also bring with them their histories and issues.

Foster and adoptive parents face a higher risk of being accused of wrongdoing. Being investigated is a stressful and unsettling experience for anyone, but SAAN is here to help you navigate the process by providing information and support.

If you have any questions in the following areas, please reach out to the designated individuals via email or phone:

- **Norma, Chairperson (Advice on general & allegations)**
Phone: (920) 922-9627
- **Melissa (Focuses on fostering younger children)**
Phone: (608) 333-6650
Email: lovedalemelissa@gmail.com
- **Lauri (Advice on general/adoption)**
Phone: (715) 816-4152
Email: lthorssen@gmail.com

REDUCING STUDENT REFERRAL TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

In many jurisdictions, schools are a significant source of juvenile justice referrals. Verbal and physical altercations can lead to school-based arrests, court referrals and pushout. A new resource from the Baltimore Algebra Project helps students resolve conflicts that can lead to being encouraged — or even forced — to exit school and pushed into the juvenile justice system. The Student Conflict Resolution Toolkit, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provides practical methods for de-escalating disputes, increasing self-awareness and restoring relationships in schools and beyond.

"Unlike most toolkits created by adults, this one is designed by students, for students, centering their experiences and leadership," said Ismanuela Denis, a program associate with the Foundation's Juvenile Justice Strategy Group. "The guide helps strengthen school climate through restorative practices and encourages students to foster resilience and develop lifelong skills in problem-solving, interpersonal communication, healthy relationships and a sense of belonging."

Building a Response to Conflict

The Baltimore Algebra Project is a youth-led math literacy organization that works to improve the lives of young people in Baltimore City. It conducted more than two dozen focus groups to document young people's views about conflict and ways of resolving it. The findings from these conversations, combined with student research on conflict resolution, were the basis for a first draft of the toolkit.

Students who participated in the focus groups reviewed the draft to see if it accurately reflected their views. The toolkit acknowledges that conflict is an inevitable consequence of being human. You may not be able to avoid conflict, but you can choose how you respond to it.

"If young people have the tools to reflect on conflict and not have it reach a fever pitch so frequently," said Jamal Jones, co-director of the Baltimore Algebra Project, "We'll likely reduce the number of student referrals and the number of young people going into the carceral system."

TEACHING FINANCIAL CAPACITY AND SAVING

The Opportunity Passport's three main components provide young people with financial knowledge and skills and the opportunity to practice what they learn:

- **Financial literacy** — Courses in financial literacy lay the foundation for Opportunity Passport, providing young people with knowledge about fundamentals of banking, credit and savings. Participants use the curriculum Keys to Your Financial Future, which was developed by the Jim Casey Initiative specifically for young people who have experienced foster care. The curriculum keeps pace with changes in personal finance and the different ways in which young people learn and access information. In 2021, a virtual curriculum was offered due to the pandemic and to reach more young people in rural areas.
- **Banking** — After completing the course, participants open a youth-friendly savings account at a local financial institution. Young people who complete the course receive a \$100 stipend to open the account. Opening a bank or credit union account establishes a relationship that can help the young people with future needs, such as loans and investments.
- **Matched savings** — With guidance from a financial coach or other adult supporter, participants set personal and financial goals for their future and consider needed expenses for transitioning to adulthood from foster care. Each participant develops a customized goal and begins saving toward an approved asset. Savings can be matched for eight types of developmentally appropriate assets: vehicles, housing, education and training, investments, small business or entrepreneurship, health, credit building or repair and, on a case-by-case basis, "participant-specific expenditures" not in these categories. A housing hardship or vehicle maintenance issue may qualify as a participant specific expense. The Jim Casey Initiative

partner organization will make a dollar-for-dollar match (or more, when partners are able to raise support) for a youth's savings spent on an approved purchase.

Tools, Principles and Practices for Resolving Conflict

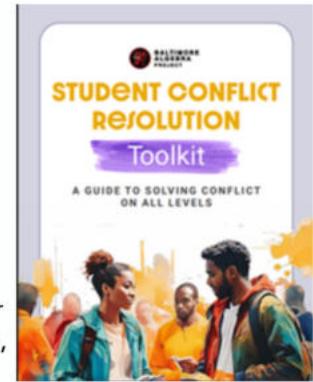
The Student Conflict Resolution Toolkit elevates practices and policies that prevent youth from entering the justice system and make schools safe learning environments for all. The toolkit features a selection of support resources:

- a glossary of key words to promote a shared understanding among students and teachers of conflicts and their resolution;
- a list of books, videos and podcasts that provide additional information about conflict resolution; and
- a series of questions aimed at considering the perspective of others and allowing students to see all sides of a conflict.

A compact checklist summarizes nine principles of conflict resolution, which include:

- **Principle 1: Gotta Communicate, Dat's Law** — How we communicate largely dictates whether any form of conflict intensifies or de-escalates.
- **Principle 2: Natures of Conflict** — To resolve conflict, we must focus on its root causes — emotions, context, and environment — not just the triggering events.
- **Principle 3: Know the Beast** — Contain and cool conflict before it grows out of control.
- **Principle 4: Dial Down Flames** — Avoid reacting from emotion or trying to "win." The goal is to contain and cool conflict before it grows out of control.
- **Principle 5: Pressure Busts Pipes & Makes Diamonds** — Manage pressure with tools to prevent explosive reactions and encourage positive transformation.

Continued on page- 10



Continued from page- 04 'Sisters in the Wind': Indigenous Author Centers Foster Youth in Upcoming Thriller

But she and her siblings grew up spending summers visiting the Sault Ste. Marie reservation in Michigan where she knew several young relatives being raised by kin outside of the foster care system.

"Growing up, I didn't think it was anything unusual to have cousins that were raised by my grandma," Boulley said. "That was just normal."

Her work on "Sisters in the Wind" began

years ago, but she felt an urgency to complete it following recent legal challenges to ICWA. In a United States Supreme Court case two years ago, multiple states and three foster families argued that the federal statute was unconstitutional and interfered with a non-Indigenous couple's right to adopt a Native child.

A Supreme Court ruling upheld the law in June 2023. But, Boulley said, "We know it's not the final assault on tribal sovereignty."

Article written by Nancy Marie Spears and filed 8/21/2025 with The Imprint Youth and Family News from website,



imprintnews.org/top-stories/indigenous-author-centers-foster-youth-in-upcoming-thriller/265041. Nancy Marie Spears works nationally covering Indigenous children and families with a focus on the Indian Child Welfare Act. She is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

“It's hard on me because my siblings are adopted out and I float around every year to different people's homes. Yes, I still feel like an outsider. I don't get gifts and only give to people I know or have become acquainted with since I moved here 1 1/2 yrs ago. It's hard on me. I miss my father who raised me and gave us everything we wanted for Christmas when he was alive. I know how it is around the holidays when everyone else is happy yet I am remembering old times and I'm not making any good new ones because I don't know how by myself yet..."

— FosterClub member dreamcatcher, age 20, from Georgia, in foster care more than 3 years

“

What is a
winter
ghost
called?



Casp-brrrrrrrr

“I have never had a real family to spend the holidays with, ever since I went into foster care I have been in a different home every Christmas. This one factor ruins Christmas for me every year."

— FosterClub member babycakes01, age 17, from Washington, in foster care 16 years

“

Continued from page- 07 Christian Bale's \$22M Foster Kids Village in California Aims to Transform Lives by 2025

Challenges and Inspirations Shaping the Project

Bale candidly shared that one of the biggest obstacles in advancing the initiative was aligning with the right partners and understanding the complexities involved, which took **several** years to accomplish.

He admitted to initially holding an idealistic vision of the project's timeline and atmosphere.

"Also, I had the very unrealistic idea that within one year I'd have created a miniature Sound of Music with kids singing on hills in an endlessly joyful environment."

Despite these early misconceptions, Bale noted the perseverance and dedication required to make the village a reality: "an awful long time and really well-motivated people."

The project officially broke ground in February 2024 after 16 years of commitment.

His motivation partly stems from his upbringing, recalling his father David Bale's consistent altruism and willingness to house homeless individuals. David Bale's humanitarian spirit left a lasting impression on Christian, who continues to honor his father's legacy. Interestingly, David Bale was briefly married to

prominent feminist Gloria Steinem before his passing.

"I grew up with a dad who was always very active and altruistic. We were always having other people coming and living in our house who didn't have homes, etcetera. That's just the guy that he was."

Christian Bale's Broader Commitment to Philanthropy

Beyond his efforts for foster children, Bale is known for his activism in animal rights, supporting organizations such as Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Doris Day Animal League, the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International, and Redwings Horse Sanctuary. He also financially supports many of these groups, reflecting a broad commitment to humanitarian causes.

His wife, Sandra "Sibi" Blažić, who is of Serbian descent, also participates in various charitable activities, reinforcing the couple's shared dedication to philanthropy.

With an estimated net worth of \$120 million, including earnings of \$54 million from his portrayal of Batman in Christopher Nolan's Dark Knight trilogy, Bale has invested both personal funds and passion into advancing the foster village project and other charitable endeavors.

The Emerging Impact of Christian Bale's Foster Kids Housing Initiative

Christian Bale's \$22 million foster kids housing project aims to revolutionize care for vulnerable youth in California by providing a stable, family-like environment where siblings can stay together and thrive. Scheduled for completion in 2025, this village seeks to be a beacon of hope and a practical solution for many young people affected by the foster care system's challenges.



By combining Bale's vision, expert leadership, and community engagement, the Together California initiative could inspire replication across the United States, potentially reshaping foster care housing nationwide. As awareness grows, residents of California and beyond are encouraged to support this urgent cause to safeguard the futures of foster children.

Article written by Roland Hannah, was published on July 18, 2025 in The Cinema China, Your Hollywood Reporter. Roland is a journalist at TheCinemaChina.com, covering Hollywood actors. With two years of experience, he reports on film releases, actor interviews, and industry news. <https://www.thecinemachina.com/2025/07/18/christian-bale-foster-kids-housing/>

Continued from page- 08 REDUCING STUDENT REFERRAL TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- **Principle 6: It Takes Time** — Conflict resolution isn't instant; taking breaks, resolving issues in small steps and respecting others' timing can prevent escalation.
- **Principle 7: Mo' Money, Mo' Platforms, Mo' People** — Containing the people or platforms involved conflict prevents it from growing bigger.
- **Principle 8: Know What You're Looking For** — Conflict prevention begins with understanding context, emotions and your own limits.
- **Principle 9: Consult the Confidants** — A trusted confidant can help de-escalate conflict by offering perspective and guidance.

The student authors suggest various methods to "dial down the flames" in any combustible situation, such as:

- resisting emotional replies to insults or criticism until you reflect on your feelings;
- identifying and assessing your reasons for being involved in the conflict;

- prioritizing mutual understanding over establishing who is right or wrong;
- and finding ways of repairing relationships during conflict-- for example, putting pride aside and apologizing.

Diversion and Prevention

Young people don't transition into adulthood in isolation. The environments and support networks around them- at home, work and school — all help shape their growth. "Part of helping young people navigate adolescence is making schools safer and more welcoming," Denis said.

The Casey Foundation's investment in the Student Conflict Resolution Toolkit is part of a larger effort to prevent youth from needing to enter the justice system, keeping them in the classroom or on other positive paths toward long-term success. Fostering supportive educational spaces is particularly essential for students considered at high risk of justice system involvement or those already traversing that system.

The Student Conflict Resolution Toolkit "A Guide To Solving Conflict On All Levels" is a comprehensive, easy-to-use guide to tools, methods and techniques for assisting students and faculty with planning and improving student conflict resolution. It's straightforward, simple explanations and directions lead the reader through the selection and application of practical tools that have been drawn from student research and interviews.



To view all 25 pages of the toolkit, please go to the following link:
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e4461d57513322d472e21ed/t/68d1b8f9f9dc254217f05507/1758574841539/Student+Conflict+Resolution+Toolkit-20250316-draft3.pdf>

Article taken from The Annie E. Casey Foundation and posted on Posted November 24, 2025

Becoming a Member: What You Can Expect.

Join WFAPA's Leadership in Advocating for Foster and Adoptive Families!

WFAPA's leadership has been instrumental in educating policymakers and involving foster and adoptive parents in discussions surrounding issues that impact the foster and adoptive system.

We would love for you to join us in this journey! Our members are the backbone of our organization, enabling us to continue to advocate and influence public policy on behalf of foster and adoptive children and parents across Wisconsin.

Creating a community of foster, adoptive, and kinship families is one of the most effective ways to amplify our collective voice.

As a member, you'll gain access to numerous benefits and information, including:

- Four yearly newsletters.
- Up-to-date details on State-level news.
- Peer support and guidance for allegations.
- Information on scholarships.
- Reduced conference rates.
- Opportunities to get involved in foster care projects.

WFAPA is a 501(3)(C) non-profit organization comprised of a volunteer Board of Directors.

Joining Is Easy!

You can visit wfapa.org and click on the Membership tab, or mail membership form to:

CONTACT Michelle Ward
W7018 Discovery Drive
Fond du Lac, WI 54937



WFAPA Membership Form

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

County _____ I am a Foster/Adoptive Parent. (circle one) I have fostered for _____ years.

I am with _____ agency.

Would you be willing to help out with WFAPA? _____ Yes _____ No

SUPPORT OR BECOME A MEMBER OF WFAPA!

_____ Single Adult Membership, \$10

_____ Donation of \$5 or \$_____

One-Time Amount Donation

Billed monthly for 12 months.



WFAPA'S ADOPTION QUILT

Our WFAPA Adoption Quilt Project!
We're excited to announce that we're creating another WFAPA Quilt and we want to hear from you. If you're an adoptive parent or were adopted yourself, we would love to share your story. Every adoption experience is unique and we want to celebrate the diversity of these stories. Adopting a child is an emotional and powerful experience, and just like pregnancy and birth, no two stories are alike.

Creating a Beautiful Quilt with the Power of Storytelling

Our quilt will be made up of many stunning creations, each woven together with other quilt squares to form a larger and stronger whole. As we add more pieces, our quilt grows and becomes even more remarkable. Once finished, the quilt will not only be a masterpiece of art, but it will also hold countless stories that make it truly one-of-a-kind.



Receiving a Blank Cloth Square and Fabric Marker

Would you like to participate in our adoption quilt project? Reach out to Sherry Benson, WFAPA Treasurer and Social Worker Liaison, and she will send you a blank cloth square and fabric markers along with return postage. To complete your submission, please write a brief article about what your adoption means to you (without revealing any identifying information) and mail it along with your quilt square and markers. You can contact Sherry by calling or texting her at (715) 923-1124 or by sending an email to misssherry2@yahoo.com.

👉 The reason I get sad on holidays is because I have no one to share it with and I have never had anyone to share it with since I was 2 months old, some people may not realize it but its hard to have never have had a family. But what I have to say to all foster kids is we're all SURVIVORS."

— FosterClub member tahuahua, age 15, from California, in foster care more 15 years 💕

👉 It is a very hard times for us around the holidays, it hurts like HELL. I have been there so many times not having any family to go to for the holidays. However it will get better because you can make your own family and do the things you wish you could have done as a child. THINGS WILL BE BETTER."

--- FosterClub member Nori, age 21, from California, in foster care more than 3 years 💕



WFAPA's Board of Directors

President

Tina Christopherson
Tel: 715-938-6667
E: info@wfapa.org

Acting President & Vice President

Sherry Benson
Tel: 715-923-1124
E: misssherry2@yahoo.com

Secretary

Michelle Ward
Tel: 920-922-3824
E: twowards@charter.net

Treasurer

Sherry Benson
Tel: 715-923-1124
E: misssherry2@yahoo.com

Activity Chair

Lauri Thorssen
Tel: 715-816-4152
E: lthorssen@gmail.com

Advisor to the Board

Prof. Rosemarie Carbino
Tel: 608- 238-3710
E: carbino@wisc.edu

By-Law Chair

Vacant

Conference Chair

Tracey Gunn
Tel: 970-367-6717
E: tagun64@gmail.com

FASPP Advisor & SAAN

Norma Schoenberg
Tel: (920) 922-9627
E: ---

Finance Chair

Larry Ward
Tel: 920-922-3824
E: twowards@charter.net

Finance Co-Chair

Vacant

Fundraising Chair

Caitlyn Huls
Tel: ---
E: hulsca@medford.k12.wi.us

Grant Writer Chair

Caitlyn Huls
Tel: ---
E: hulsca@medford.k12.wi.us

Hospitality Chair

Melinda Kasch
Tel: 262-707-5527
E: mkasch@wi.rr.com

Legislation/Lobbyist Chair

Jared Key
Tel: ---
E: info@wfapa.org

Membership Chair

Michelle Ward
Tel: 920-922-3824
E: twowards@charter.net

Newsletter Chair

Tammy Boettcher
Tel: 715-330-2291
E: info@wfapa.org

Partnership Chair

Vacant

Social Worker Liason

Sherry Benson
Tel: 715-923-1124
E: misssherry2@yahoo.com

Technical Advisor

Larry Ward
Tel: 920-922-3824
E: twowards@charter.net

Website Manager

Tammy Boettcher
Tel: 715-330-2291
E: info@wfapa.org

Website Designer

Brittany Stuart
Tel: ---
E: ---

12 Ideas For Supportive Adults To Help Their Young Person Through The Holidays



1. Prepare the foster youth in your care for the holidays in your home

- Have a discussion with the young person about your family's holiday customs. Do you celebrate over multiple days, or is there one "main" celebration? Are there religious customs? Will gifts be exchanged? What should they wear? Who will they meet? What preparations need to be done in advance? Will there be visitors to the home? Will they be taken on visits to the homes of other family or friends? And in all of these events, will your youth be expected to participate? Knowing what to expect will help to decrease anxiety around the holidays. Avoid surprises and you will decrease seasonal tensions.

2. Prepare friends and family before you visit

- Let people know in advance about new family members in your home. Surprising a host or hostess at the door with a "new" foster youth may set up an awkward situation — such as a scramble to set an extra place at the table — making the young person feel like an imposition right from the start of the visit. Your preparation of friends should help cut down on awkward, but reasonable questions such as "who are you?" or "where did you come from?"

3. Remember confidentiality

- You may receive well intended but prying questions from those you visit with over the holidays. If your young person is new to your home, it is natural that family members ask questions about your youth's background. Understand that questions are generally not meant to be insensitive or rude, but simply come from a place of not knowing much about foster care. Think in advance about how to answer these questions while maintaining your youth's confidentiality. Use the opportunity to educate interested family and friends. Discuss with your young person how they would like to be introduced and what is appropriate to share about their history with your family and friends. (Remember, they have no obligation to reveal their past.)

4. Arrange meeting your family in advance, if possible

- The hustle and bustle of the holidays can make it particularly chaotic for your young person to participate in your family traditions. Anxiety may run high for young people already, and the stress of meeting your relatives may be a lot to deal with. If possible, you can arrange a casual "meeting" in advance of "main events." If it is not possible or practical to meet beforehand, make a list of names of some of the people they'll meet and their connection to you. You can also encourage a quick call from relatives you plan to visit to deliver a personal message of "we are

excited to meet you" so that your youth knows they will be welcome.

5. Have extra presents ready to help offset differences

- It should not be expected that all relatives purchase presents for your youth. Be prepared with other small gifts and for those family members that express concern over not having brought a gift, offer one of your "backups" for them to place under the tree. Extra presents may be addressed "from Santa", even for older youth, to help offset a larger number of gifts other children may receive at the same time. Children often keep count of the number of gifts received (right or wrong) and use it to compare with other kids, so sometimes quantity is important.

6. Facilitate visits with loved ones

- The holidays can be a busy time for everyone including foster parents and caseworkers. But it is especially important during this time of year to help your young person arrange for visits with loved ones. Don't allow busy schedules to mean the postponement of these important visits. Try to get permission for your youth to make phone calls to relatives (if long distance charges are an issue, ask if calls can be placed from the foster care agency or provide a local business or individual to "donate" by allowing the use of their phone). A youth may wish to extend holiday wishes to relatives and friends from an old neighborhood, but may need your help getting phone numbers together.

7. Extend an invitation

- If it is safe and allowed by your foster care agency, consider extending an invitation to siblings or bioparents through the holidays. It need not be an invitation to your "main" holiday event, consider a "special" dinner for your youth to celebrate with their loved ones. If this is not a possibility to do within your home, consider arranging a visit at a local restaurant (ask the caseworker if it would be appropriate for the visit to be unsupervised or if your supervision would suffice). Extending an invitation to their loved ones need not signal to a young person that you support their bio-family's lifestyle or choices — rather it tells a young person that you respect their wish to stay connected to family. You will also send a message to the youth that they aren't being put in a position to "choose" your family over their bio-family and that it is possible to have a relationship with all the people they care about.

8. Understand and encourage your youth's own traditions and beliefs

- Encourage discussion about the holiday traditions your young person experienced prior to being in foster care, or even celebrations they liked while living with other foster families.

9. Understand and encourage your youth's own traditions and beliefs

- Encourage discussion about the holiday traditions your young person experienced prior to being in foster care, or even celebrations they liked while living with other foster families. Incorporate the traditions the youth cherishes into your own family celebration, if possible. Use the opportunity to investigate the youth's culture and research customary traditions. If the young person holds a religious belief different from yours, or if their family did, check into the traditions customarily surrounding those beliefs.

10. Assist in purchasing or making holiday gifts or in sending cards to their family and friends

- Allow young people to purchase small gifts for their relatives, or help them craft homemade gifts. Help send holiday cards to those that they want to stay connected with. The list of people that your youth wishes to send cards and gifts to should be left completely to the youth, although precautions may be taken to ensure safety (for example, a return address may be left off the package, or use the address of the foster care agency) and compliance with any court orders.

11. Understand if they pull away

- Despite your best efforts, a young person may simply withdraw during the holidays. Understand that this detachment most likely is not intended to be an insult or a reflection of how they feel about you, but rather is their own coping mechanism.



- Allow for "downtime" during the holidays that will allow the youth some time to themselves if they need it (although some youth would prefer to stay busy to keep their mind off other things — you will need to make a decision based on your knowledge of the young person). Be sure to fit in one-on-one time, personal time for your youth and you to talk through what they are feeling during this emotional and often confusing time of year.

12. Call youth who formerly lived with you

- The holidays can be a particularly tough time for youth who have recently aged out of foster care. They may not have people to visit or a place to go for the holidays. In addition, young people commonly struggle financially when they first leave foster care. A single phone call may lift their spirits and signal that you continue to care for them and treasure their friendship. Be sure to include these youth on your own holiday card list. A small token gift or gift basket of homemade holiday goodies may be especially appreciated.

TIPS FOR RECOGNIZING LEARNING DISORDERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers are often the first to notice that a child might have a learning disorder. Sometimes the signs are easy to spot — a student who just isn't making headway in reading, for example. Or a child who, despite obvious effort, can't seem to master the times tables. But the signs are not always as clear, and many children, embarrassed that they are struggling to do things that seem easy for other kids, go to pains to hide their difficulties.

Here are some less-obvious signs of learning disorders in children to watch for in the classroom.

Not living up to their potential

If you notice that a student who seems as if they should be succeeding, but they aren't — either in one specific subject or in their overall school performance — it could be a sign that they have a learning disorder.

This is often described as a discrepancy between ability and aptitude, i.e. a gap between what it seems a student should be able to do and what they're actually able do.

Some examples of how this gap might appear in the classroom include:

- A student who writes fantastic essays but has serious difficulty getting through basic math assignments, or vice versa
- A kid who's great at answering questions in class but can't get their point down on paper
- A student whose intelligence is obvious in person, but isn't reflected on their report card

Not trying hard enough

Kids who aren't doing as well in school as expected may appear to be lazy or just not applying themselves, when in fact they may be struggling with a learning disorder. Adults with learning issues recall being told repeatedly, before they were diagnosed, that they weren't trying hard enough. Kids who look like they're not trying may actually be trying very hard, but failing, or trying to hide an embarrassing deficiency.

Off track

If a student constantly has to be reminded what to do next, you might think they're not paying attention, but it

could be a sign that they're having difficulty with what's called "working memory" — holding, processing, and building on new information. This is a common issue for kids with learning disorders.

Other signs to watch for include:

- Difficulty following directions — especially if the student is hearing the information for the first time or there are several steps to remember
- Daydreaming
- Difficulty copying from the board
- Trouble remembering assignments and doing them correctly

Hiding out

Students with learning disorders often try conceal their struggles from teachers and peers. Even if they're managing to keep up with school work, with extra effort, it may be taking a big toll on their self-esteem. If a student comes across as excessively shy during class — hanging back during group projects, sitting in the back row, or doing everything in their power to avoid being called on during class — they may be trying to hide a learning issue.

Acting up

It's also important to remember that hiding doesn't always look like what it is. In fact, for some kids it may look just the opposite. Where some students shrink down, hoping to go unnoticed, others act out, drawing attention away from deficits by becoming the class clown, being defiant, or pretending to be "too cool" to care how they're doing in school.

Missing homework

Students with learning disorders often struggle to get homework in on time — or at all. Homework troubles happen for a number of reasons.

- A child may feel embarrassed to hand in work that is incorrect or unfinished
- Total wipe-out. Kids who struggle with memory and organization may have simply forgotten there was an assignment due at all
- Lost! Even when homework does get done, it still has to make it from home to school

Every kid is bound to miss an assignment

Characteristics of learning disabilities that can hide in plain sight

once in a while, but if a student routinely fails to turn in their homework it's time to take a closer look at what's going on.

Timing troubles

Kids with learning disabilities often struggle with time management, transitions, and organization. These timing troubles can cause problems both in school and at home. Tell-tale signs to watch for include:

- A child who always seems to take "too long" to complete tasks — from assignments to putting on their shoes after gym
- A student who's parents report that it takes them hours to get through their homework at night
- A kid who's chronically late to school ("I missed the bus — again!") or always seems to be rushing from one class to another



Test stress

Most kids will have test anxiety now and then, but if a student seems to have more trouble than expected it can be a clue that they have a learning disorder. Some things to watch for:

- A student who always ends up scrambling to finish the test on time — or routinely exceeds the time limit — regardless of reminders
- A child who's always the last one still working on a timed assignment
- Very messy handwriting
- Serious pre-test anxiety
- A student who fails numerous tests despite having studied

Emotionality

School can be an emotional minefield for students with learning disorders. From struggling to keep up with peers to falling behind on schoolwork, the opportunities to feel bad about themselves can be overwhelming.

- Kids with learning disorders often struggle with feelings of shame, embarrassment, and low self-esteem. If a child often seems to be down on themselves, depressed, or frustrated at school, an undiagnosed learning disorder could be a cause
- Kids with learning disorders may develop serious school-related anxiety — especially before they are

Continued on page- 15



Join Us As A Sponsor Today

Empowering Foster and Adoptive Families: Join Our Mission as a WFAPA Sponsor!

WFAPA is committed to supporting, advocating, and providing resources for foster and adoptive families across the country. We are proud of the progress we have made so far, but we know that our work is far from over. With the help of supporters like you, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of these families.

As we continue our journey, we invite you to consider becoming a sponsor of WFAPA. With a one-time yearly donation of \$300.00 or a monthly donation of \$25.00 for one year, you can help us achieve our goals. Plus, since we are a 501(3)(C), your donation is tax deductible.

By becoming a sponsor, your company can benefit from the positive publicity of supporting our mission and organization. We also help promote your business on various platforms such as:

- Our website, www.wfapa.org.
- Our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/wfapa.
- Social media.
- Our quarterly newsletters.
- Our conferences.

If your company is interested in joining our cause, please reach out to us. For more information, visit our website at www.wfapa.org, select 'Support Our Work', and then click on 'Sponsors'.

“ We all get a little depressed around the holidays usually more than any other time... I know that at times I can't help but cry when I think of my family and what they are up to and if they even think of me at times like this but there really is isn't anything I can do but pull myself together and pray that they are safe and for God to give me strength to be a good person and know that one day this will all be over and I one day will have a choice in the matter.... ”

— FosterClub member ashman, age 17, from Texas in foster care over a year



Mama Kasch's Kitchen — Chicken Spaghetti

It's meaty, cheesy, and loaded with tender pasta – what more could you ask for?

Prep Time: 20 Minutes Cook Time: 30 Minutes Total Time: 50 Minutes



Ingredients:

- Spaghetti – Use dry spaghetti and break it into 2-inch pieces before boiling.
- Butter – I cook with salted butter. If you use unsalted, add a pinch of salt to the sauce.
- Onion – Yellow (brown) onions are fine, but you could also use a sweet onion.
- Garlic – Use fresh garlic, not jarlic.
- All-purpose flour
- Milk – Any kind of milk will work.
- Chicken breast – Cooked and cubed. A rotisserie chicken would work well.
- Condensed cream of chicken soup – You could also use cream of mushroom soup. Using a low-sodium can of soup will keep the sodium levels down.
- Red bell pepper – Diced.
- Green bell pepper – Diced.
- Cream cheese – You'll need 4 ounces, so about 1/2 a package. Softened.
- Cheddar cheese – I like sharp cheddar but you could use any kind of cheese, really.
- Pepper – Freshly ground pepper.
- Parsley – Minced, optional.

Chef Tips

- Use rotisserie chicken to save time.
- Chop the bell peppers finely for better texture in each bite.
- Keep some pasta water on hand to adjust the sauce as needed.
- Let the dish rest for a few minutes after baking to set.
- For extra flavor, add red pepper flakes or smoked paprika.

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F and spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Cook the spaghetti in salted boiling water, according to package directions, until al dente, reserving 1/2 cup of pasta water before draining.
3. Melt the butter over medium heat. Add onion and cook for 6–8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened. Add garlic and cook for another minute then turn the heat off.
4. Sprinkle in the flour and stir to combine. Slowly pour in the milk, whisking constantly. Bring to a simmer and cook gently for about 2 minutes, stirring until thickened.
5. Stir in the chicken, cream of chicken soup, diced bell peppers, cream cheese, and 3/4 cup cheddar cheese. Mix until smooth and fully combined. Season with salt and more pepper if needed.
6. Toss the cooked spaghetti with the sauce mixture, adding reserved pasta water as needed to thin the sauce a bit.
7. Transfer to the prepared baking dish and top with the remaining 3/4 cup of cheddar cheese.
8. Cover the dish with foil and bake for 20 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 10–15 minutes, until the cheese is melted and bubbly. Optional: Garnish with fresh parsley before serving.

“ For many years after I entered into foster care holidays and birthdays have been really tough on me. There have been times that I cried even if it was one of the best days of my life. To overcome this feeling of isolation and rejection I tried to stay focused on the positive things that were taking place in my life especially focusing on the people who displayed real love and affection toward me.”

— Foster Club member Marjory, age 18, from Ohio, in foster care more than 3 years



“ The reason I get sad on holidays is because I have no one to share it with and I have never had anyone to share it with since I was 2 months old, some people may not realize it but it's hard to have never have had a family. But what I have to say to all foster kids is we're all SURVIVORS.”

— Foster Club member tahuahua, age 15, from California, in foster care more than 15 years

Continued from page- 13

- diagnosed, when they don't understand why they can't keep up with their peers.
- Additionally, kids with learning disorders often struggle with "self-regulation," meaning they lack the tools to manage and process emotions and are easily overwhelmed- which can lead to outbursts.
- For example, a student who flies off the handle when they're asked to stay in their seat, or is reduced to tears when asked to try a challenging assignment.



Avoidance

Students with learning disorders often go

to great lengths to avoid school situations that trigger anxiety or stress.

Some signs of avoidance to watch for include:

- Excessive absences
- Staying home "sick" on days when there are tests or other important assignments
- Refusing to participate in challenging activities
- Making frequent trips to the bathroom or asking to go to the nurse when faced with stressful assignments or tests
- Cutting class, or skipping school entirely

Helping students with learning disabilities get the attention and support they need to do better and feel better will benefit that child

— both in school and out — for years to come.

Article written by: Rae Jacobson, MS and was last reviewed or updated on August 7, 2025.

Rae is a writer, ADHD expert, and former senior editor at the Child Mind Institute. She received a master of science in counseling psychology from Loyola University New Orleans. Her work has appeared in New York magazine, the Daily Beast, Rolling Stone, Parenting, and Understood.org. Article taken from Child Mind Institute,

https://childmind.org/article/recognizing-learning-disorders-in-the-classroom/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=pub-ed-nl-2025-10-07&utm_content=recognizing-learning-disorders-in-the-classroom

10 Tips for Youth in Foster Care for Getting Through the Holidays



1. Stay connected to family and friends

Purchase or make cards to send out to family and friends during the holidays. It's a great time to create or update your address book. Be respectful of a foster family's privacy and check with them to see if you should place the return address of their house on the envelope or if you should use an alternative, like the address of the foster care agency (some people may have concerns about the safety of the home if too many people have the address). Make phone calls to friends from an old neighborhood or to previous foster families. (Get your family's OK first).



5. Write on

If you like to write, keep a daily journal for the holiday season. Use your writing as a way to vent feelings, work through anxiety and worries, and to reflect on the true meaning of the holidays. Some find it helpful to write "letters", even if they will never be sent, to loved ones you are missing or who have passed away. If you are inclined, you can send your stories to info@fosterclub.com.



8. You'll make it

Everyone appreciates a homemade gift. Consider making holiday ornaments, knitting scarves, or crafting bookmarks. Search the internet for ideas and instructions about making inexpensive holiday crafts. Most everyone loves homemade cookies or candies wrapped in pretty boxes. And in case you can't think of anyone in the whole world who would love your delicious and yummy homemade cookies, FosterClub's address is 753 First Avenue, Seaside, OR 97138.



9. Visit others who may feel alone

Older people in a retirement or nursing home may be away from loved ones during the holidays. Check with the home or a local hospital to find out if there are people who would enjoy having company during the holidays. Consider bringing a favorite holiday story to read aloud or load your iPod with a favorite Christmas song.



10. Connect at FosterClub.com

Be sure to visit the FosterClub message boards at www.fosterclub.com and connect with your peers who may be feeling the winter blues or struggling with the holidays. Post your feedback to an article written by a FosterClub AllStar at www.fosterclub.com/topics/kidsLikeMe.cfm. Let us know how you spend the holidays and give your own ideas about how to find your own peace during the season.



FosterClub

Continued from page- 05 CHILD POVERTY NEARLY TRIPLES TO 13% OVER THREE YEARS

for families in the face of rising costs in recent years. As housing, food, child care, and health care costs continue to rise, families find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet despite receiving assistance.

While poverty rose among all children from 2021 to 2024, children of color had steeper rises than others. Poverty among Black children rose from 8% to 23%, and among Latino children from 8% to 21%. Geographically, the South has the highest child poverty rates and saw the greatest increase, up 5% between 2019-21 and 2022-24.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation report also emphasizes the importance of accessible public government data in measuring both the effects of programs on reducing poverty and the role of inflation and location play in families' financial stability.

Researchers estimate child poverty costs the United States up to \$1 trillion annually in lost productivity, lower lifetime earnings and higher spending on health care, crime and public programs. Communities with high poverty rates bear the costs of higher spending on health care and increased crime, while schools have fewer resources and worse outcomes than wealthier districts.

The data from Measuring Access to Opportunity demonstrate that:

- Millions of children are kept out of poverty by supportive public policies; without them, child poverty would nearly double. Policymakers must prioritize policies and investments that empower all families to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.
- Government data must remain available to accurately measure the effects of public programs on reducing poverty.
- Policymakers should ensure the continued availability of high-quality data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and other surveys.

What the Supplemental Poverty Measure Reveals About Families and Policy
Child poverty fell to a record low, then rebounded, according to a new KIDS COUNT® Data Snapshot from the Casey Foundation.

In 2021, with federal pandemic relief and an expanded child tax credit, the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) showed child poverty at 5%, the lowest on record. By 2024, as temporary supports expired, the SPM rate rose to 13%. Without public support, it would have reached 25%.

In 2024, 61% of children in poverty lived in families with at least one working parent, underscoring that wages and supports are not keeping pace with costs. 

Key economic policies work to reduce poverty — and the data prove it

The SPM isolates the effect of policy by counting noncash benefits and tax credits. In 2024, programs such as the earned income tax credit, child tax credit, SNAP, Social Security, SSI and housing subsidies kept 8.5 million children out of poverty.

POVERTY ROSE ACROSS ALL GROUPS AND PLACES

Between 2021 and 2024, child poverty increased for every racial and ethnic group, with steepest rises for Black and Latino children. State SPM rates for 2022-2024 ranged from 5% in Maine to 19% in Louisiana and the District of Columbia; most Mountain West states had the lowest rates. Regional patterns show the South with both the highest average rates and the steepest increases.

RELIABLE DATA ARE ESSENTIAL FOR BETTER POLICY

The SPM helps leaders understand how choices affect children's daily lives and long-term outcomes.



Continued federal data collection is vital for tracking progress and targeting solutions.

FINDINGS AND STATS ABOUT THE SUPPLEMENTAL POVERTY MEASURE

Child poverty swung from 5 to 13% in three years SPM child poverty hit 5% in 2021 during expanded supports, then rose to 13% by 2024 as relief ended

KEY TAKEAWAY

Economic policies reduce child poverty- and we can measure the impact. The SPM shows that public investments cut child poverty dramatically.



In 2024 alone, tax credits and basic needs programs kept 8.5 million children above the poverty threshold, preventing the SPM rate from nearly doubling. Maintaining and strengthening these policies — and the data systems that track them — is essential to ensure children, youth and families have what they need to thrive.

Article posted on October 20, 2025 and taken from the Annie E. Casey Foundation www.aecf.org/blog/child-poverty-nearly-triples-to-13-over-three-years/ & www.aecf.org/resources/measuring-access-to-opportunity-a-10-year-update



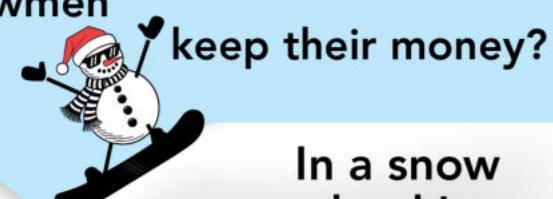
“ Well I am new to FosterClub and I would like to talk to other teens about being in foster care and how I feel and I have been in foster care for about a year now and I have been in four foster homes since May and I think no one understand me and maybe talking to other teens in foster care will help. I wish things could go back when I was a little kid and things could start all over but with out the abuse and neglect and things like that.”

— FosterClub member teeah, age 18, from Michigan, in foster care for a year

“ The holidays for me are very sad. I miss my family, My mom, and my three sisters. My father? I could care less what happens to him. I haven't seen my mom and my sisters for about 6 yrs. now, and I had to tolerate my father for about 4 years. I take 2 years out because he was never around. I smile a lot even when I'm not happy and on the holidays. People who know me think I'm crazy and people who don't think I'm shy. Mostly they think I'm weird because I wear a lot of black and wear neat(weird) hairdos.”

— FosterClub member LolitaSasuke, age 15, from Tennessee, in foster care less than 6 months

Where do snowmen



keep their money?

In a snow bank!



“ Holidays are hard even when u have found "new family" because u still feel awkward and ur mom and dad are not there so though it is easier it still makes u sad because u are reminded of what u don't have.”

— FosterClub member Divine, age 21, from Wisconsin, in foster care more than 3 years