



Having a Heart for Foster Care & Adoption

Learn more at icareaboutorphans.org

With roughly 400,000 children and youth currently in the U.S. foster care system, “the least of these” need help and hope that’s often found only through a loving church and community. Following are some practical ways you can get involved in a caring ministry to some of the most vulnerable youth in our society today.

Ideas to help foster and adoptive parents:

1. **Pray** – foster and adoptive parents need the church to lift them up in prayer, seeking the Lord on their behalf. Many families need the Lord’s protection as they are under spiritual attack and dealing with a host of emotional, physical and mental challenges.
2. **First-night kits** — imagine how a traumatized child feels being placed in an unfamiliar home; the smells, noises, and general environment may seem strange and uncomfortable. First-night kits give foster families a tool to calm a child’s fears. These kits should be organized by age and gender, filled with items like a toothbrush & toothpaste, a comb or brush, underwear, a stuffed animal, a bedtime story book, etc.
3. **Provide meals as needed** — frozen meals are especially helpful since these families may encounter unexpected changes in their schedule.
4. **Provide clothing** — foster and adoptive families may not get much warning before receiving a child into their care. They need extra sets of clothing organized by gender, size, and season of year to provide for these children. Or provide gift cards so parents can purchase what’s needed most.
5. **Resource list** — create a list of support groups, resources, counselors, therapists, and treatment centers for foster and adoptive families in your church or community.
6. **Help recruit foster and adoptive parents**
7. **Encourage local businesses to aid foster families** — by offering discounts or free services.
8. **Host or support appreciation events** — to celebrate the hard work and dedication of foster and adoptive parents with special banquets, picnics, evenings out, etc.



Having a Heart for Foster Care & Adoption

Learn more at icareaboutorphans.org

9. **Provide reduced-cost day care** — or participate in “mom’s day out” events through your church.
10. **Become a respite family** — give foster and adoptive families a much-needed break by providing temporary care for their kids, which may involve overnight care. Being a respite provider may require some paperwork and additional training.
11. **Celebrate *National Foster Care Month (May)* and *National Adoption Awareness Month (November)*** — children in foster care need someone to care for and nurture them because of the crisis their biological families are experiencing. Pray for these children, the families who are involved in respite and foster care, and for the social workers who give so much time and energy for these kids. Encourage your church to talk about the need for more foster and adoptive families and how the church can and should be involved in the lives of these families.
12. **BE THERE!** — just like any family, foster and adoptive families need someone to be there, to love and support them through this journey. It may be a new experience with unique and unexpected challenges and these families often feel alone. Be flexible, be consistent, be understanding and be committed. Ask the family what they need and ask often.

Ideas to help children:

13. **Collect toys for birthdays or Christmas** — many children are placed in foster homes without their toys. A simple, heartfelt gift can mean a lot to them. For older youth, provide gift cards so they can purchase their own presents.
14. **Provide care packages throughout the year** — kids in foster care need all sorts of things you or I take for granted — like clothing, school supplies, a backpack, sports equipment, luggage, etc.
15. **Volunteer to tutor** — offer to help with basic math, reading, writing, etc.
16. **Provide after school child care** — give kids (and their foster or adoptive parents!) a break by taking them to the park, jumping on the trampoline, playing board games, etc.



Having a Heart for Foster Care & Adoption

Learn more at icareaboutorphans.org

17. **Host a fun outing for a child or the whole foster family** — like swimming at the pool, bowling, miniature golf, batting cages, or an age-appropriate movie. Always seek parent approval beforehand, and understand that a child's situation or trauma history may limit such activities.
18. **Host a special occasion party** — every child needs to be celebrated, but sometimes kids in foster care are overlooked on their birthday or Christmas, or at other times of the year. Foster families may not have the resources to splurge. A simple holiday-themed party can be very meaningful for these kids and for foster and adoptive parents.
19. **Sponsor a child through performing arts** — provide them with free lessons in music, dance, etc.
20. **Sponsor a child to summer camp** — attending a Christian camp can be life-changing for any child, but few kids in foster care have this opportunity.
21. **Become a mentor to older youth** — spend time with them and invest in their lives. For example, you might offer them a job where they can learn new skills and prepare for life as an adult.
22. **Become a foster or adoptive parent** — kids need to experience stable, loving and healthy families. There's a big need for families who are willing to open up their homes to sibling groups (rather than split them up), kids with special needs or teenagers.