



Debunking Myths About Foster Care

All children/teens in foster care are bad, juvenile delinquents, or runaways.

Every child in foster care has experienced trauma simply by entering the system. Removal from their parents, the most significant protective factor in a child's life, has a lasting impact on psychological and neurological development, even in cases of reunification.

Children and youth in foster care, just like anyone else, can develop behavioral issues as a way to cope with the trauma they've experienced. This does not make them bad or delinquent but rather highlights their need for support and healthy attachment to loving adults in their life.

Foster parents undergo training to help understand the impact of trauma and how to best support children in their care. At David & Margaret, we offer around-the-clock support for you and your child as you navigate the complexities of foster care. Ultimately, when children (and parents!) feel safe and supported, positive behavior and healthy relationships will follow.

All children in foster care have been sexually or physically abused.

While there are children who have experienced sexual and physical abuse in the foster care system, an overwhelming majority of youth are removed from their homes due to "neglect." In fact, in the state of California, neglect is the reason for over 87% of removals.

In many cases, neglect is conflated with the symptoms of poverty, meaning children are removed from their homes because their parent(s) cannot afford adequate care. In other cases, it may be due to parental mental illness, substance abuse, or unsafe living conditions.

The foremost goal of foster care is reunification with biological families by providing supportive services to parents and children that create stable homes and uplift their lives. In cases of clear sexual or physical abuse, or if a parent is proven unfit by the court, parental rights are terminated, and the child is eligible for adoption if no extended family is available.

I will get too attached; it would be too hard to watch a child leave.

The fear of getting "too attached" is the number one reason that holds people back from becoming foster parents. Ironically, getting attached is exactly the point. Children and youth in foster care are removed from their home, family, and often school and friends, leaving them with uncertainty and instability. Loving, supportive foster parents provide these youth with a sense of belonging, value, and purpose.

Inviting a child into your family, providing for them, and sharing your heart will make it difficult to say goodbye – and that's okay! A child can never have too many people that love them, and a healthy relationship will have lasting impacts far beyond their time in your home.

Foster care is about what is best for children and their families. David & Margaret provides ongoing training to support parents as you cope with transitions. If you are worried about loving a child too much, you may be just right for the job!

Foster parents are in it for the money.

Foster parents receive a monthly stipend set by DCFS to help cover the costs of food, clothing, school supplies, and other essentials. While the stipend can be a huge help for foster families, it is often not enough to cover everything. It's no secret that kids are expensive and the cost of extracurricular activities, family outings, and adding a member to your household can add up.

Becoming a foster parent also has an emotional cost. Parents invest time, love, and support into their children because they care and want the best future for them as possible.

Once a child is placed in my home, I am on my own with no support.

When you become a foster parent at David & Margaret, you are joining a community. Before placement, prospective parents undergo trauma-informed training to help parents prepare for challenges. Our experienced social workers offer around-the-clock support for any issues that may arise and can assist in providing linkages to additional resources as needed.

Foster youth in California are also eligible for full Medi-Cal coverage, including vision, dental, and mental health services until age 26. This is a huge relief for foster parents who do not have to incur those extra costs.

David & Margaret also matches parents with a mentor, someone with experience as a foster parent, to lean on for advice and support as you navigate the world of foster care.

Teenagers in foster care have severe behavioral issues and are “too old” to influence positively.

Teens in foster care, just like younger children, have experienced trauma by entering the system. Depending on the individual case, some teens may have been through several placements or reentries to the system. Each transition in foster care compounds on a youth's feelings of instability and uncertainty, and behavioral issues may develop as a coping mechanism.

Whether they admit it or not, teens need structure, guidance, love, and support to set them on the right path. Due to the stigma of teenagers in foster care, there are fewer foster families that accept teens, which leads to placement in group homes and congregate care settings.

Over 20,000 young adults age out of foster care each year in the US, 30% of which will become homeless and only 1 out of 6 will go on to earn a college degree. Teens in foster care have access to college scholarships, independent housing, and additional resources to help their transition to adulthood, but having healthy attachments to supportive adults is one of the key factors that former foster youth credit for their success.

Foster parents must be old and experienced.

To be eligible to become a foster parent in California, you must be at least 21 years old, pass a background check and medical screening, have an independent source of income, and have enough physical space to accommodate a placement.

Prospective foster parents are not expected to know everything, or even have experience parenting. David & Margaret foster parents undergo a training process before a child is placed in their home to cover essential information about what to expect as a foster parent and how to deal with problems as they come up. We have 24/7 on-call social workers who can offer support in crisis situations and provide the resources needed to support you and your family.

As long as the basic requirements for eligibility are met, all you need to be a successful foster parent is an open mind, heart, and home.