



Child Care for Foster Children: An Overview

When children are removed from their parents due to abuse and neglect, they are in crisis and need a safe, loving family environment. But for our youngest children, one of the top barriers to finding placement is the lack of access to child care. In a survey of emergency shelter workers charged with finding placements for the foster children in their care, an estimated 25 percent of placement denials were due to the lack of child care. Young children are languishing in emergency shelters because the families that want to care for them work outside of their homes and cannot access child care.

Increasing access to child care would enable a larger pool of families to become foster parents, providing a stable home for more children in need. Furthermore, we know that for all the benefits that high quality child care has on children ages 0 to 5, the impact can be even more dramatic for young children who have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect and removal from their homes.

The Access Barrier

Immediately following a child's removal, foster parents, including relative caregivers, struggle to access child care because state-funded child care programs usually operate at full capacity. Many of these programs sign up children during short enrollment windows that may not align with a child's placement into foster care. While other families get nine months to navigate the complicated child care landscape and arrange for child care, foster parents (especially kin caregivers) often get less than 24 hours. This means that caregivers who work or are in school cannot take in a child without significantly disrupting their lives or putting their family in financial jeopardy.

Proposed Solution: Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children & Parenting Foster Youth

We can help foster families and parenting foster youth by building a bridge to long-term child care. To do this effectively, we propose a comprehensive statewide program providing integrated support to ensure foster children can access high-quality child care by:

- Providing foster families and parenting foster youth with an emergency, time-limited voucher to help them pay for child care for up to six months following a child's placement in their home. This voucher would pay for care while the foster parent is at work, school, or fulfilling training and home approval requirements.
- In tandem, foster families and parenting foster youth would be provided child care navigation support. Navigators would help families use their vouchers to facilitate immediate access to child care and would continuously work with the families to transition or stabilize the children into long-term, high quality child development settings through the larger, ongoing state subsidy system. The navigators would be administered by the county Resource & Referral agencies and would help foster families and parenting foster youth develop a long-term child care plan and effectively access the complex child care landscape.
- Once care is selected funding would be provided to the Resource & Referral agencies so that they can train their local child care workforce in trauma-responsive best practices to better meet the unique needs of abused and neglected children.

Support and More Information

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