



AMERICA'S
KIDS BELONG™



FOSTER FRIENDLY™

BY AMERICA'S KIDS BELONG



BUSINESS GUIDEBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Thanks for your interest in America’s Kids Belong Foster Friendly program. Our mission is to improve the experiences and outcomes of kids in foster care. We accomplish this through three key focus areas:



Family Recruiting

We work to recruit and retain foster parents until there are more willing families than kids awaiting placement. Our ***I Belong Project*** is one key program that creates videos of kids in foster care eligible for adoption as a way to help them find forever homes.



Community Engagement

We equip businesses, faith communities and civic organizations to become ***Foster Friendly*** and connect these groups to foster families via our innovative ***Foster Friendly App*** until there is a community for every family.



Sustainable Change

We work with governors’ and mayors’ offices, child welfare, and other leadership voices to raise awareness and drive sustainable change in foster care, leading to hope for every community.

Did you know...

that nearly half of parents stop fostering within the first year? One of the most-cited reasons is ***lack of community support***.

While an app doesn’t have the power to change that, it can create valuable connections between certified kinship and foster families and businesses and other community groups that desire to honor, appreciate and support their efforts to stand in the gap with vulnerable kids.

This guidebook will show you how easy it can be to make your business Foster Friendly!



WHY SUPPORT FOSTER CARE? HELP TO FIND YOUR “WHY”

You likely get requests every day to sponsor this or promote that. It’s hard enough to remain profitable these days, so how do you discern what to say yes to?

It really comes down to understanding your **why**.

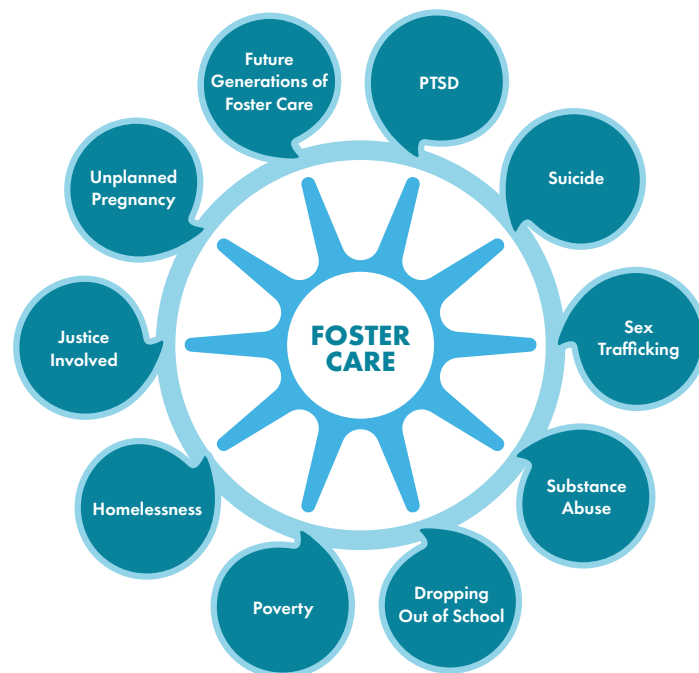
Here are three reasons that a commitment to support foster care makes good business sense.

1. Non Controversial Social Responsibility

Caring well for kids in foster care is one issue everyone can get behind that garners broad-based support.

2. Generational Impact

Investing in foster families has the power to create generational change. Businesses that support foster care are helping create sustainable change in foster care.



3. Significant Community and Economic Impact

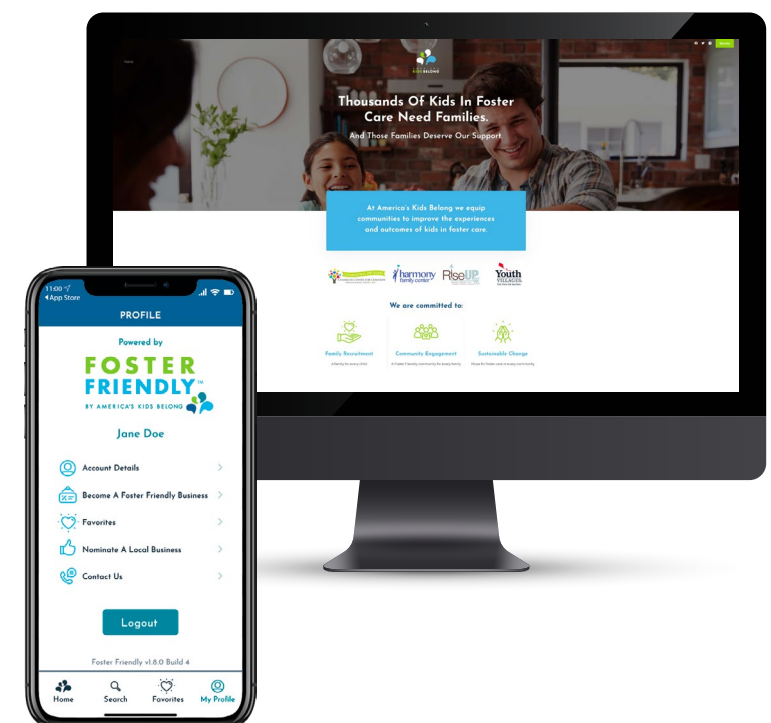
When kids in foster care age out (at age 18) without a stable, loving family they are at greatly increased risk for 10 social wounds that directly impact our communities and they’ll require an average of \$300,000 in social services over their lifetimes.

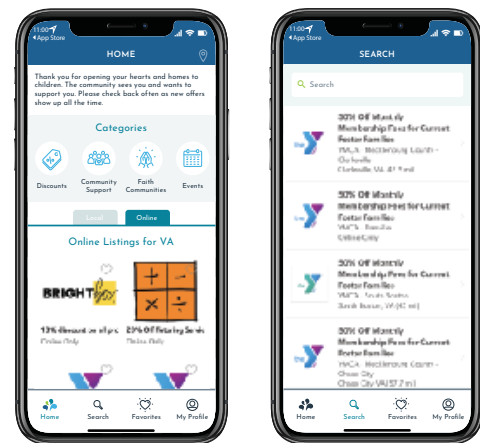


ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND APPRECIATION

When you choose to participate in our Foster Friendly App we do our best to recognize and appreciate your support. We’re also open to working with you to find other opportunities that benefit your business. Here are some of the ways we do this:

- Business showcased on app.
- Business logo featured on website.
- Business discount showcased on social media (LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook) at least once a year.
- If interested, AKB will produce a video case study to further promote the business’ support of the mission.





WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

When you say “Yes” to joining our Foster Friendly Community and App here’s what will happen next:

1. Register: Scan one of these QR codes and then:

- Download the Foster Friendly App.
- Under **My Profile** choose *Become a Foster Friendly Business* and complete the registration form.
- Then, also under My Profile, go to **Account Details** and toggle on “I am a foster friendly business.”



2. Approval: Once you register on the app, the state coordinator will review and approve your submission to be published to the app. At that time you’ll receive a confirmation email, a Foster Friendly sticker (for your window) and digital badge (for your online profiles) that you can use to let families and the community know yours is a Foster Friendly business!



3. Parent ID Card: Every foster parent with the app has a discount card that shows they are a verified foster parent. The card should be presented when they come to redeem an offer.

4. Offer Term: Our hope is to build a long-term partnership with you and your business in support of our local foster care community. For the specific offer we ask for a minimum six-month commitment. We can revisit and refine the offer after that time to ensure it remains well aligned with your business needs.

Note: Our goal is to invite and engage as many businesses as possible. For this reason we cannot offer exclusivity to our participating businesses.

IDEAS FOR OFFERS BY BUSINESS CATEGORY

Here are some ideas of how to support foster families based on business segment.

Automotive

- Transportation is often a barrier to foster families taking in more kids, especially sibling groups. If there are more than three kids in a family, they often are split up because homes aren’t equipped to say yes, and transportation is a key piece of that.
 - View [Nissan video](#) here.
 - [Tennessee version](#) here.
- Extra kids mean extra messes in vehicles and extra wear-and-tear on vehicles.
- Ideas:**
 - Loaner vans for foster families who take in large sibling groups.
 - Discount on vehicle purchase for foster parents upgrading to larger vehicles to accommodate more kids.
 - Discounts on tire rotations, oil changes and other routine maintenance.
 - Free car wash or upgrade on service to include interior.

Celebrations

- Many kids will be spending their birthdays in a strange home, away from bio family and friends – all that is familiar to them.
- Kids in foster care often tell us they have never had a birthday party.
- Special celebrations can help make them feel special, seen and valued.

Ideas:

- Free birthday cake or cupcakes with their names.
- Discounted or free birthday party package at a kids’ venue.
- Balloons to celebrate adoption days.
- Birthday party entertainment giveaways and/or discounts: favor bags, inflatables, clowns/magicians/other entertainers.

Recreation

- Kids in foster care don’t often get to just “be kids.” Help them enjoy some simple childhood pleasures like visits to museums, zoos, trampoline parks and other kid-friendly destinations.
- Ideas**
 - Free or deeply discounted family pass for foster/kinship families.
 - Behind-the-scenes experience.
 - Discounts on food and/or drinks.
 - Gift of apparel/merch.



Fitness

- Help foster parents maintain their sense of self-care and well-being as they continue to work out and have childcare available.
- Allow kids to have a safe place for sports and activities.
- **Ideas:**
 - › Discounted family membership/kids activities, regardless of the number of kids in home on any given day.
 - › Discount off family membership plan at Ys or similar facilities.
 - › Provide scholarships or discounts for summer camps/classes.
 - › Offer equestrian therapy/riding lessons.

Discounted Restaurant Meals Are The #1 Request Of Foster Families!

Food

- Cooking and dining out become exponentially more costly when the number of kids at the dinner table doubles or triples unexpectedly.
- Foster parents often talk about the need to go out for a cup of coffee with another foster parent who “gets it.” Become a foster friendly location that invites them in and says, “We see you. Come rest and refuel.”

- **Ideas:**
 - › Care package of grocery essentials for new foster arrivals.
 - › Grocery discounts.
 - › Meal discounts.
 - › Kids eat free.
 - › Discount on meals and/or drinks.
 - › Special seating or reservations to help foster families.

Health & Beauty

- Delight kids in foster care with a haircut, manicure, skin care or other personal care treat that might not have experienced before, or at least recently.
- Offer a little self-care to weary foster parents.
- **Ideas**
 - › Discount on massages.
 - › Free back-to-school haircut for child in foster care.
 - › Discount on makeup/skin care consultation for teen girls in foster care .
 - › Discount on spa/hair treatments for active foster families.

Photography

- Kids in foster care may not have printed photos of themselves. Help them see and appreciate themselves at their best with a portrait sitting.
- Capture kinship and/or foster families and the kids they’re caring for with discounts on family sessions or adoption day celebrations at the courthouse.

- **Ideas:**
 - › Discount on family sessions.
 - › Photos of adoption day/reunification day celebrations.
 - › Portraits of kids in care.
 - › High school senior portraits.
 - › Discounted photo memory books.

Real Estate

- Help kinship and foster families afford a new home or home renovation to accommodate more kids.
- **Ideas:**
 - › Discount on realtor commissions. Or, donate a percentage of commission to America’s Kids Belong. Give clients an opportunity to choose from a list of non-profit organizations you support where you will donate a percentage of commission or a fixed amount from a transaction.
 - › Discount on remodeling services.
 - › Design consultation to make more efficient use of space.
 - › Discount on storage unit to create more living space.

Retail

- When kids enter foster care they often don’t get to bring everything they need. Retail and other gift cards can be a true gift to enable kids, especially teens in care to shop with more dignity, trendy clothes. It’s hard to get involved in sports in a new school without the right apparel and gear too.

- **Ideas:**
 - › Clothing gift cards.
 - › Sports apparel and equipment discounts.
 - › Self-care discounts, including blow dryers, flat irons, makeup, facial products, hair care products, etc.
 - › Cold weather apparel – jackets, hats, scarves and gloves.
 - › Footwear discounts, BOGO.

Services

- It’s always something. Help busy foster families meet those unexpected and often costly needs that pop up. It’s tough for foster parents to make time for everything.
- **Ideas:**
 - › Discounts on lice treatments or bed bug treatment.
 - › Keep homes bug free with discounted insect and/or rodent treatment.
 - › Free or discounted lawn care and mulch services .
 - › Snow removal.
 - › Junk hauling.
 - › Carpet cleaning.
 - › HVAC maintenance.
 - › Technology support – safe and secure computers/phones.



Sports/Entertainment

- Kids entering foster care is extremely traumatic. Help them do things that bring them joy and promote connection with their foster families during hard weeks.
- **Ideas:**
 - › Discount on movie tickets, bike rentals and other outings.
 - › Discounted or free memberships to zoos, aquariums, children's museums.
 - › Note: The number and identities of kids change frequently in foster families, so when possible offer family-package discounts (e.g., up to 6 kids).

Travel

- The unrest and uncertainty of foster care can cost kids the opportunities to just "be kids." Foster families have to jump through hoops in order to take a child out of state. So finding fun in their own communities is very valuable, as is help with travel logistics if they are focused on getting the necessary approvals for travel.
- **Ideas:**
 - › Discounts on travel and stays at in-state parks and family-friendly destinations.
 - › Help foster families book a vacation full of memories and experiences that will last a lifetime.
 - › Provide a limo/ride for a special occasion.

"The zoo didn't suddenly erase the trauma he had endured, but for the first time since he came to our home several days ago, he was able to be a 9-year-old little boy, to laugh, explore, pet a kangaroo, and not feel like a caretaker/protector to his younger siblings."

- Foster mom

Other

- No matter what your business, if your customers are adults with families, you can create an offer to let them know you see them and you appreciate and honor the hard work they are doing on behalf of vulnerable kids.
- It's our privilege to work with any business to craft an appropriate offer.



Stronger Together

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS SUPPORT

It takes entire communities to wrap around families and children in foster care. By partnering with America's Kids Belong, you can provide support and awareness to your community that makes a significant, upstream impact on local children and families.

The Foster Friendly App offers an easy way to support your community, employees and our most vulnerable kids, along with courageous foster parents who stand in the gap for these kids.

Here are some additional ways to partner with us.

Business Sponsorship

We invite you to also consider becoming a corporate sponsor. If your business would like to explore/design a sponsorship opportunity that aligns with your mission, email Brian Mavis at bmavis@amkidsbelong.org and we'll work with you to create a custom sponsorship package.

In-Kind Donation

Another valuable opportunity is for a business to make an in-kind donation. Email Brian Mavis at bmavis@amkidsbelong.org and we'll make arrangements with your state's team to coordinate the donation process.

Add Trauma Awareness To Staff Training

Will you consider making your place of business more welcoming and accessible for families of kids in foster care by offering trauma awareness training to staff and employees. This also is valuable when it comes to hiring young workers who may have experienced trauma, no matter their backgrounds.

Make HR Practices Foster Inclusive

Another wonderful way to support the mission is to embrace the trauma awareness training (above) and then actively recruit, hire, train and mentor kids who have been in foster care, particularly kids 18 and above who have aged out of foster care.

Additionally, consider including foster families in your employee benefits and participating in foster care awareness initiatives with employees.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. How many children are in foster care in my area?

A. Nationwide more than 400,000 kids are in foster care. And more than 20,000 age out every year. Without the stability and love of a family they face a challenging future and are at a much higher risk for the top 10 social wounds including homelessness, drug addiction, justice involvement, etc.

Q. Do people get paid to be foster parents?

A. Foster parents receive stipends to meet some of the expenses for each child; however, it does not cover the full cost of their care. Think of all that it takes to care for your own children on a monthly basis. Now imagine you have two kids at the breakfast table and by dinner, without advance warning, you have five kids, including a highly traumatized sibling group who has just been separated from their family of origin under painful circumstances. That's a lot for anyone to take on.

Wrapping around these families with some simple discounts and other services are a way to say, "We see you," and we value the gift you're giving our communities as you stand in the gap with these vulnerable children. Its value goes far beyond the cost of the extra sandwich.

Q. Does this program include adoptive families too?

A. We support and promote foster care and adoption, specifically adoption of kids out of the foster care system. But this program was created to serve the acute needs of foster families because of the pressures that come with the situation described in the previous question.

Right now half of foster parents quit fostering within the first year because they feel so overwhelmed, isolated and unsupported by the community. Our Foster Friendly program is a simple, yet effective response to that problem.



About America's Kids Belong

America's Kids Belong works to dramatically improve the experiences and outcomes of kids in foster care so they find and thrive in safe, loving families, supported by Foster Friendly communities where they belong.

America's Kids Belong currently operates in 10 states including: California, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah and Virginia. We are achieving our mission in three key areas of focus:

1. **Family Recruitment** - A family for every child.
2. **Community Engagement** - A Foster Friendly community for every family.
3. **Coalitions for Change** – Hope for every community.



americaskidsbelong.org