

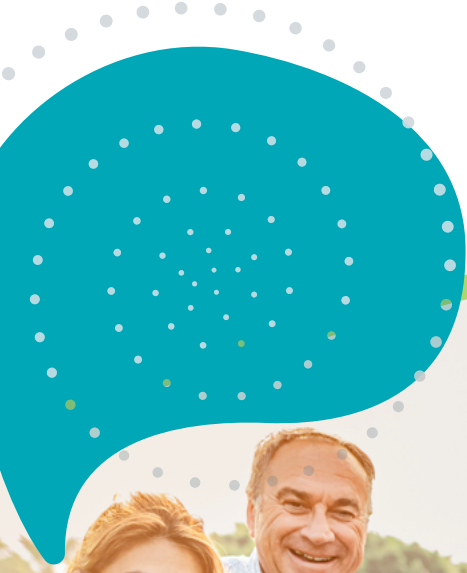
Foster Care Moment

YOUR GUIDE TO ENGAGING
YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY TODAY

With



T E N N E S S E E
KIDS BELONG™





THANK YOU FOR USING YOUR VOICE.

It's even more powerful than you know.

Thank you for your commitment to giving a voice to the voiceless. It's no exaggeration to say that children in foster care are among the most vulnerable in our country. But the solution is easy. The solution is you and your faith community working together with the child welfare system.

The following document is a guide to introducing foster care needs to your faith community through three weeks of focused education and storytelling, intended to be given in 5 minute awareness-raising spots during your service or event.

(If you have already shown the recommended videos in this guide, reach out to your local TKB staff for more recommendations via the QR code).



The goal is to deepen understanding of foster care needs, empower the congregation to act, and ultimately move them toward engagement by the end of Week 3 by signing up to attend a Next Steps event.

Your Next Steps Event can be based around a full dinner, lunch, or even just dessert and coffee. Whichever way you choose, we encourage you to create a special, warm and inviting atmosphere where people can feel empowered, supported, and inspired.

You have the power to change the story for children in foster care. We can hardly wait to get started.

Sincerely,

The Tennessee Kids Belong Family

Kristin Allender
Executive Director

THE BIG PICTURE

A Foster Care Snapshot



There are well over
8,000 children in
Tennessee's foster care system.



Over **7,500** children in foster
care have the goal of being reunited
with their birth family and just need a
loving foster family while they wait.



There are over **450** children
in Tennessee who are available
for adoption and are waiting for
their forever family.



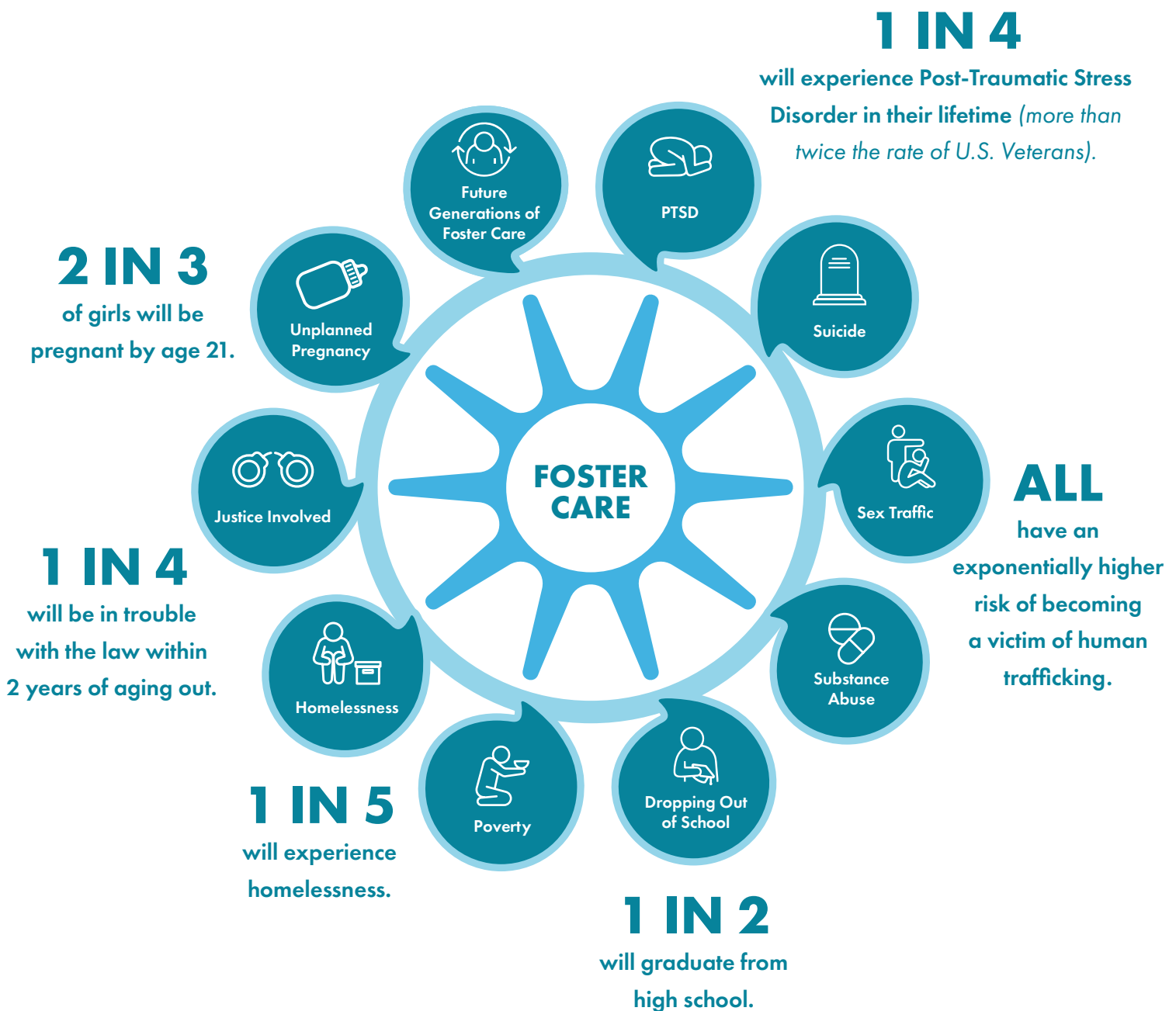
Every year roughly
800 children in
Tennessee age out of the foster
care system without a family or a
place to belong.

THE "AGING OUT" CRISIS

Every year **800-1,000** youth in Tennessee age out of the foster care system without a stable, loving family to help them navigate the world ahead of them and walk alongside them to help them reach their full potential.

Permanence and a sense of belonging are crucial to the development of a child. A loving, safe, and supportive family provides both of these things.

**When a child is without a family,
the results can be tragic.**



CORE MESSAGES

**We have a national problem.
But local faith communities can be
the solution.**



There are well over 8,000 children in the Tennessee foster care system. Some of these children are available for adoption. Most of them just need a foster family to love them unconditionally until they can be reunited with their birth family.



The outcomes for kids who age out of the system without a family are bleak. They are highly likely to end up in prison, addicted, in a crisis pregnancy, homeless, or trafficked.



Tennessee needs more foster & adoptive families to care for these children.



Faith Communities can be the solution to this crisis. If one family in every faith community in Tennessee took in a child, and the rest of that faith community wrapped around those families with support, every child would have a home.



The number one cause of breakdown in foster families is a lack of social support. From meals and childcare, to tutoring and lawn care, faith communities are perfectly positioned to care for foster families who have answered the call to take in a child.

Change the Narrative

Your words matter. You can help us debunk myths, break down foster care stereotypes, and empower children, foster families & birth families. Here are a few messaging guidelines we recommend.

- We do our best to label the situation and not the child. Avoid referring to children as “foster children,” and instead use **“children in foster care.”**
- While we understand everyone’s best intentions to help children, our goal is always to empower children, birth, and at-risk families. With that in mind, we avoid language that would imply that any organization, person, parent or family would “save” or “rescue” a child in foster care. For example, instead of saying “We can help rescue these kids,” you can use empowering language like **“These kids are amazing and unique - and we can help them find the perfect home!”**
- To ensure safety, please do not share identifying information about children in care including real names and locations in sermons, print material, social media, etc.



FOSTER CARE MOMENT

WEEK 1

Educate

One of the largest issues we face in addressing the national foster care crisis is that it is largely an invisible issue.

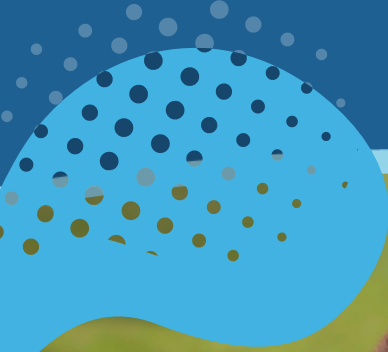
We must first tell the story in order to change it.

Call to Action:

Pray to be shown your one next step

Moments to Consider:

- ♡ “Worthy of Belonging” Video
- ♡ Local family testimonial
- ♡ Interview with Tennessee Kids Belong staff
- ♡ Bulletin Insert





WEEK 1 - EDUCATE

WHAT TO SAY

If our faith community's goal is to love God and love others, what does it look like in both global and local contexts? Faith communities often talk about caring for the Orphan. Our faith community has done some beautiful things in this area. But for the next few weeks we're going to take some time and challenge ourselves to expand our view of what orphan care looks like.

An issue rarely discussed and often misunderstood is foster care in the United States. As a result, the children are invisible, no one knows how to get involved, and the story doesn't change.

That's why we're partnering with an organization called Tennessee Kids Belong to learn about how our faith community – and each one of us in it – can be the solution to meeting foster care needs.

Follow the QR code below to play the "Worthy Of Belonging" Video.



WHAT TO SAY

Let's take a moment to reflect on the gravity of all of that.



There are well over
8,000 children in the
Tennessee foster care system.



There are about **450**
children in Tennessee who are
available for adoption and are
waiting for their forever family.



Every year roughly **800**
children age out of the Tennessee
foster care system without a
family or a place to belong.

Those are intimidating numbers... but just take a moment and think of the 11,000 + faith communities in our state. This problem shouldn't be a problem at all! In fact, if just one family in every faith community took in a child, and the rest of the faith community wrapped around that foster family as a support system, every child would have a home! We would actually have a line of families waiting for a child, instead of a line of children waiting for a family. And isn't that the way it should be?

Foster care is a place where the faith community can step in to help the child and family reconcile and reunite. And when that goal is not attainable, we as the faith community can step in as adoptive parents. This is the gospel lived out.

That's why we're stepping bravely into the gap alongside Tennessee Kids Belong to assist in a statewide campaign with the governor, child welfare agencies, and other faith communities, businesses, and influencers around our state. There are ___ children in our county system, and ___ open foster homes. (Reach out to your local [TKB staff](#) for these numbers). Children, on average, will spend 429 days in care – some will remain in care for a few days while others will spend many years in limbo.

From fostering and adoption, to supporting foster, adoptive, birth and at-risk families, there are countless ways to get involved. Soon we'll be hosting a Next Steps Event where you can learn more about your role in this movement. Not everyone is called to foster or adopt – but we are all called to care. So mark your calendars for _____ at _____ am/pm.

Together we can show that whether through reunification or adoption – every child belongs in a family.

Kids deserve to be more than a statistic.

They deserve to be seen, heard, and fought for. Together, we can embrace the call to care for the vulnerable – showing them they are brave, beautiful, and worthy of belonging. Please join us in praying about your next step as an advocate for children in foster care.

FOSTER CARE MOMENT

WEEK 2

Advocate

It's a lot easier to fall in love with a child than a statistic.

Now that you know the numbers, it's time to start giving them a face and a voice.

Call to Action:

Pray and sign-up for the Next Steps Event

Recommended Resources:

- ♥ Tennessee Kids Belong I Belong Project Montage
- ♥ Next Steps Event Sign-Up Insert





WEEK 2 - ADVOCATE

WHAT TO SAY

Last week we talked about expanding our call to caring for the orphan to caring for one of our nation's most vulnerable populations – children in foster care. If you were here last week you may remember the staggering numbers:

- More than 8,000 children in our state's foster care system.
- 450 of them available for adoption and waiting for a forever family.
- Roughly 7,500 are in need of a loving foster family to care for them while they wait to go home.
- A tragic 800-1,000 age out every year at 18 without a loving, stable family to call their own.

These kids are especially vulnerable as the majority of them will end up unemployed, homeless, incarcerated, in a crisis pregnancy, addicted, or trafficked. These statistics are largely unknown, but I know that this is a faith community that will fight to change them now that they have been brought to light.

That's why we're partnering with an organization called Tennessee Kids Belong – as well as the governor, the child welfare system, and other faith communities, businesses, and influencers around the state to change the story.

Too often faith communities and the government don't get along. We think we're too different. We think we'll get in each other's way. We forget about the power of collaboration. And the reality is – these kids suffer as a result.

Here in Tennessee, our governor has invited faith communities in to be a part of the solution. And we have the opportunity to respond and show them we are in this with them.

WHAT TO SAY

As Tennessee Governor Bill Lee said at the launch of the Every Child TN campaign, "We're a lot better at fixing potholes than we are at fixing hearts, and until people of faith come alongside us in hard situations... we're handicapped unless we have people with some eternal sense of purpose beside us."

You see, while the government holds a lot of power, authority, and resources – it's the FAITH COMMUNITY that holds the families. When it comes to caring for children in the foster care system, government and faith community – we need each other. Because what's most important is that every child has someone to call 'family.'

The kids in the video we are about to show know that better than anyone else.

Follow the QR code below to play the "Tennessee Kids Belong I Belong Project Montage" Video



Next week we're going to talk more about all of the different ways you can get involved – whether it be taking a child into your home, or supporting a family who has – everyone here has a role to play. This is an informal, no-commitment event. You can learn more about the kids and how you can help.

We'd love to have you join us! So please be praying about your role in this story, and fill out that insert if you're interested in learning more. (Scan the QR code on your handout or on the screen for more information on a Next Steps Event).



FOSTER CARE MOMENT

WEEK 3

Engage

Before engaging with foster and adoptive families, we must first believe we have the power to change the story.

Some are called to foster or adopt.
We *all* are called to care.

Call to Action:

- ♡ Attend the Next Steps Event

Recommended Resources:

- ♡ "Say Yes: Form A Wrap Around" Video

Moments to Consider Including:

- ♡ Dedication of or prayer for foster families and those considering fostering
- ♡ Recognition of current foster and support families





WEEK 3 - ENGAGE

WHAT TO SAY

The last two weeks we've been diving into a largely invisible issue in our country – foster care. We learned that there are well over 8,000 children in the Tennessee foster care system. Some of these children need to be fostered until they can be adopted, others need a temporary, loving family to care for them while they wait to go home. And all need and deserve to be shown the love of our faith community.

So that's why we're talking about this. We want this calling to become part of our faith community's DNA.

You may be thinking I'm in no place to adopt. I'm too old, too young, single, don't own a house, can't afford it... the list goes on. But what many people don't know is that there aren't as many limitations to fostering and adopting as we often think.

While financial concerns are valid, don't let them deter you from considering foster care and adoption. While foster parents must be able to meet their own financial needs, a per-diem offsets costs of caring for children in foster care. Some children who are adopted from foster care receive an adoption subsidy.

That said, while caring for children from traumatic backgrounds is beautiful, it comes with challenges. Not everyone is called to foster or adopt. But I firmly believe that every single one of us is called to care. And there are countless ways to serve children and families.

WHAT TO SAY

Did you know that one of the most common causes of breakdown in a foster or adoptive placement is a lack of social support? But if we all choose to say “yes” to serving foster and adoptive families, as well as birth families and at-risk families, we will ensure children get the best care possible and that families feel strong enough to continue their work. That’s why in addition to fostering and adopting, we’re also going to be talking about Wrap Around care.

But before we jump in any further, check out this video.

Follow the QR code below to play the "Say Yes: Form a Wrap Around Ministry" video.



It really can be as simple as dropping off a meal to keep a foster family going. We can all do that. Hopefully that video has inspired you to get creative about how you can join this story.

So whether you’re interested in fostering, adopting, or supporting children and families in many other ways, we’d love to invite you to join us on _____ at _____pm/am for a Next Steps Event.

W



Words of Encouragement

R



Respite

A



Acts of Service

P



Prayer

We’ll be having a [dinner/dessert] to share more about foster care needs, what foster care looks like, support systems our faith community can form, what working with child welfare looks like, as well as myths and misconceptions about this issue.

WHAT TO SAY

The Next Steps Event will feature a panel of experts including foster parents, former foster youth, child mentors and advocates, child welfare staff, Wrap Around support families, and more. We'll hear them share and have time for a Q&A afterward.

If you're even considering getting involved – and I hope you are – I highly encourage you to join us!

Not everyone is called to foster or adopt, but we are all called to care. There may be 8,000 kids in our state system, but we need to stop thinking of them as the government's responsibility, and start thinking of them as OUR children. It truly does take a village. *(Please scan the QR code on your handout or on the screen for more information on a Next Steps Event.)*

Our faith community is part of the solution – you are part of the solution. And I can't wait to see how our faith community plays a role in this movement – together!





Tennessee Kids Belong works to improve the experiences and outcomes for kids in foster care in Tennessee.

Tennessee Kids Belong offers a variety of programs and resources including:



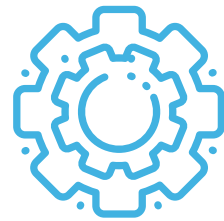
Family Recruitment

Our flagship video storytelling project, I Belong Project™, elevates the faces, voices and stories of kids in foster care who are legally free to be adopted to connect them with forever families.



Community Engagement

Our innovative Foster Friendly program and app engage area businesses, faith communities and nonprofits to support kinship and foster parents with discounts, resources and support.



Coalitions for Change

TKB has collaborated with the past two governors' administrations to launch successful foster care initiatives that have helped the state exceed its recruitment and permanency goals five years in a row!



TENNESSEE
KIDS BELONG™

tnkidsbelong.org



T E N N E S S E E
KIDS BELONG™



FOSTER CARE MOMENT

WEEK 1

Every child in a loving home

Uniting **government, faith-based, business, and creative communities** to end the foster care and adoption crisis in the U.S. - **county by county.**



There are well over
8,000 children in
Tennessee's foster care system.



There are over **450** children
in Tennessee who are available
for adoption and are waiting for
their forever family.



7,500+ children in foster care
have the goal of being reunited with
their birth family and just need a loving
foster family while they wait.

We imagine a future in which every child in foster care in Tennessee - whether through reunification or adoption - belongs in a loving, safe and permanent home.

Because every child deserves to belong

Every year roughly **800** children age out of the foster care system in Tennessee without a family or a place to belong.

Permanence and a sense of belonging are crucial to the development of a child. A loving, safe and supportive family provides both of these things. When a child is without a family, the results can be tragic.

DID YOU KNOW?



Nearly 2/3

will experience an unplanned pregnancy by the age of 21



1 in 4

will suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder
(that's more than twice the rate of U.S. Veterans)



Less than 1/2

will graduate from high school



1 in 4

will be justice involved within two years of aging out



1 in 5

will experience homelessness



All

have a higher risk of being human trafficked

Financial Cost

Research from the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that just four outcome categories - education, early parenthood, homelessness and incarceration - cost society \$178,261 per youth aging out of foster care. When considering additional impacts like mental health, physical health, substance use, trafficking, and intergenerational effects, total societal costs conservatively exceed \$400,000 per youth over the child's lifetime.



800

foster youth

X



\$400,000

per person

=



\$336 Million

per year



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Join our story (and the story of these 8,000 children) by visiting us at
tnkidsbelong.org



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FOSTER CARE MOMENT

WEEK 2

10 Social Wounds of Foster Care

Making children in foster care a priority is not just a heart issue, it is a smart issue to care about. Kids who age out of foster care without belonging to a family are far more at risk for the following:

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Sign up for a next steps meeting to learn more and join the story.

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QR CODE
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8,000 children) by visiting us at
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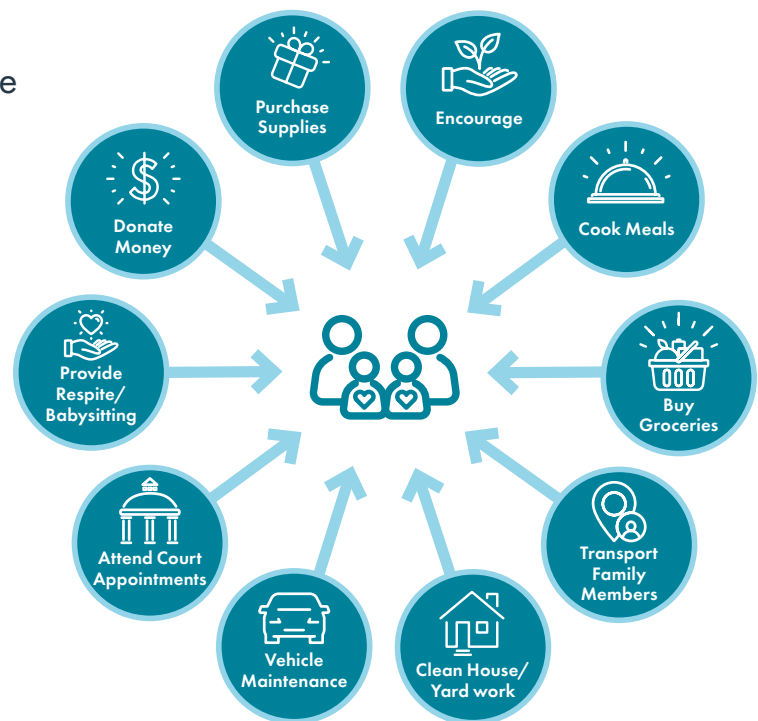
WEEK 3

Wrap Around Care Model for Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families

Did you know one of the most common causes of breakdown in a foster or adoptive placement is lack of social support? Not everyone is called to foster or adopt, but we are all called to care.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Sign up to attend the following event to learn how you can support foster families.



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8,000 children) by visiting us at
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