

Finding Foster Parents for Teens

What are your current challenges in this area?

1. Fear from the foster parents and fear from the teens themselves
2. Perceptions of foster parents that behaviors of teens in care are more difficult than teens not in care
3. Foster parent concerned about influence of older youth on younger kids in home
4. Foster parent preference for young kids
5. Youth placed often go AWOL and are more assertive with foster parent about rights in system than younger children
6. Space in homes for sleeping arrangements are less flexible with teen placements

What is working?

1. Involve teens in MAPP classes - Focus one MAPP class only on teens
2. Involve teens in Orientation sessions
3. Emphasize benefits of taking teens
4. Normalizing teenage behavior for prospective foster parents (whether or not in care) For re-placements – facilitate trust between teen and new foster parent using B2H or other workers
5. Gradual introduction when matching foster parents with family
 - Two week trial
 - Respite
6. Engaging teen to identify networks for permanency e.g. coach, third cousin, people the youth goes to when AWOL
7. Experienced foster parents of teens mentor prospective foster parents

What is not working?

1. Targeted recruitment (e.g., to teachers, CASA volunteers) doesn't always work
2. PSAs don't work

If money and permission were not a factor, what would you do differently to address this issue?

1. Bring youth (formerly foster care) into MAPP training
2. Eliminate preference of age for foster parents
3. Rebranding foster care in society would assist in recruiting quality home for teens
4. Revise myths/perceptions in society about teen behaviors (e.g. schools)
5. Get rid of Wednesday's Child – it can backfire for teens – unwelcome publicity ('oh – you're a foster child')
6. Transition center for teens to help them be involved in matching process (e.g. Nelson House – Erie)
 - Keep siblings intact
7. Permission for targeted recruitment (e.g. schools) without measurable results – it plants seeds!
8. Trying to recruit empty nesters/Silver Sneakers for homes for teens

Do you have any lingering thoughts or questions about finding foster parents for teens?

1. Start with describing teen as person, but don't sugar coat it