



Thornwell

FOSTER CARE

Prospective Thornwell Foster Parent Resource Guide

2024



Thank you for considering opening your heart and home to children and families! There is an urgent and desperate need for more foster families in South Carolina, and across the nation. As you consider, it's okay to have lots of questions! We don't expect you to know it all (or anything at all). Our goal is to answer your questions and support you on your journey.

At Thornwell, we believe that every young person deserves a safe, loving, stable home – for however long they need it. Foster parents provide just that as they stand in the gap for children and families. It's a beautiful picture of God's goodness and grace.

We are committed to supporting you as you make the decisions that are best for your family. You're never in this alone! We encourage you to review and discuss the information provided in this prospective foster parent resource guide as a family. The more information you have, the more informed decisions you can make about your next steps. Take your time, consider your motivations, and open your heart to what this journey may look like for your family.

Reach out to Kaley Lindquist with questions!

we are here for you

Kaley Lindquist

*Program Marketing and
Recruitment Specialist*

klindquist@thornwell.org
(864) 923-8446



- [Can I adopt a child that I foster?](#)
- [What books will help me learn more about foster care?](#)
- [What books will help me introduce foster care to my children?](#)
- [How will foster care impact my children?](#)
- [What should we do to prepare our family for fostering?](#)
- [What should I do to prepare my home for fostering?](#)
- [How long does the licensing process take?](#)
- [What are the greatest needs for fostering? LGBTQ+ Youth](#)
- [How will foster care impact my marriage?](#)
- [How can I love a child and let them go?](#)
- [What does contact with the child's family look like?](#)
- [What can I do if I can't make a long-term commitment to fostering?](#)
- [What are the greatest needs for fostering? Siblings](#)
- [Can I foster if I'm single?](#)
- [What are the greatest needs for fostering? Teens](#)

Statistics

Every day there are nearly **4,000** children and youth in South Carolina foster care and not nearly enough homes to welcome them in.



There are **407,493** kids in foster care.

59% of kids in US foster care have been in care for over 12 months.

Average time spent in foster care is **20.5 months**

117,470 kids are waiting to be adopted.

45% of children in foster care live with a non-relative foster parent; **34%** with kin; and **4%** are in a group home.

Adoption

There are many children across our state, our country, and our world that could benefit from a loving, safe, stable home – some need it only for a short time through foster care and others need it forever through adoption. It may be confusing to navigate all your options as you try to decide which path will be best for your family.

Foster care is designed to be temporary. Foster parents offer a home for children or youth that cannot currently live with parents or family members – typically due to allegations of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. The goal is always to reunify families whenever safe and possible. Foster parents play an integral role in the health and healing of the child or youth and can be key in helping that young person maintain important bonds and connections. While there are times that reunification is not possible and the goal may become adoption, foster parents need to be able to support – truly champion – family reunification.

Adoption is designed to be permanent.

There are thousands of US children and youth who need a forever home through adoption. Adoption through foster care is one option for families looking to add to their family permanently. In South Carolina, the children in greatest need of immediate adoption are older children, teens, large sibling groups, and children with high level behavioral or special needs.

To start the process to become an approved adoptive home, please start an adoption application at heartfeltcalling.org.

Want to learn more?

- Heartfeltcalling.org
- AdoptUSKids
- Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption



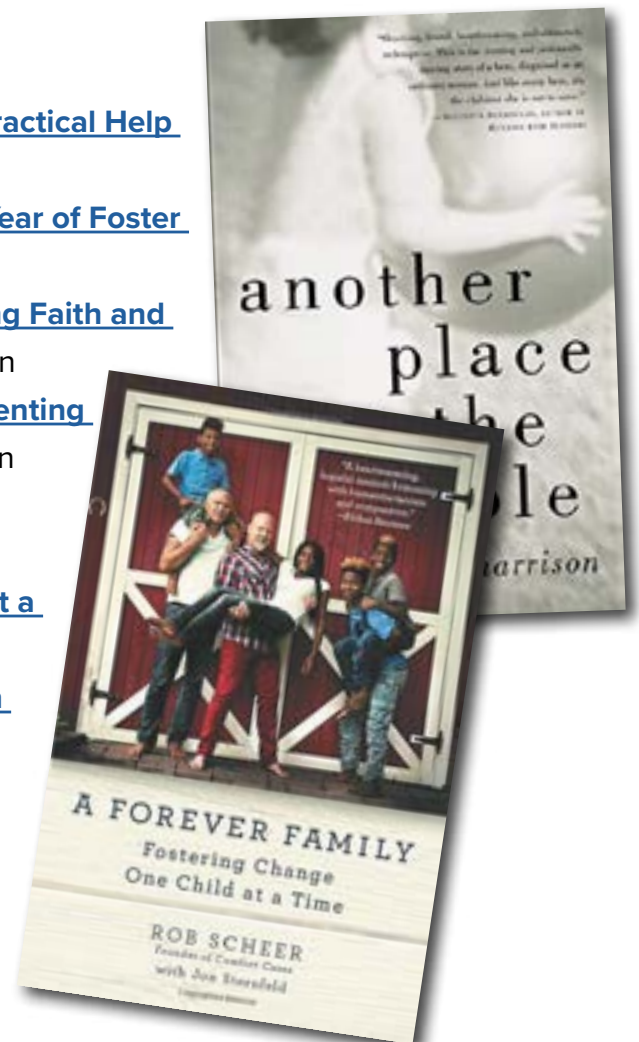
Book Suggestions for Book Clubs, Bible Studies, and Children

Adults – Foster/Adopt and Trauma Parenting Guides

- [The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma](#) by Bessel van der Kolk, MD
- [The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family](#) by Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- [The Connected Parent: Real-Life Strategies for Building Trust and Attachment](#) by Karyn B. Purvis and Lisa Qualls
- [The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind](#) by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson
- [The Grown-Up's Guide to Teenage Humans: How to Decode Their Behavior, Develop Trust, and Raise a Respectable Adult](#) by Josh Shipp (former foster youth)

Adults- Foster Parent Encouragement and Stories

- [Foster the Family: Encouragement, Hope, and Practical Help for the Christian Foster Parent](#) by Jamie Finn
- [Keep the Doors Open: Lessons Learned from a Year of Foster Parenting](#) by Kristin Berry
- [Fostered: One Woman's Powerful Story of Finding Faith and Family Through Foster Care](#) by ToriHope Petersen
- [Reframing Foster Care: Filtering Your Foster Parenting Journey Through the Lens of the Gospel](#) by Jason Johnson
- [Another Place at the Table](#) by Kathy Harrison
- [A Forever Family: Fostering Change One Child at a Time](#) by Rob Scheer
- [Recipes for Risk: Finding Purpose and Passion in Foster Care](#) by Julie Mavis



Adults- Book Club books to consider reading with a group (Fiction and Memoire)

- [Three Little Words](#) and [Three More Words](#) by Ashley Rhodes-Courter (Memoire)
- [Redefining Normal: How Two Foster Kids Beat the Odds and Discovered Healing, Happiness, and Love](#) by Justin and Alexis Black (Memoire) **Trigger Warning: This story contains mentions of domestic violence, trauma, sexual assault, and other difficult issues faced on the road to healing*
- [Before We Were Yours](#) by Lisa Wingate (Fiction)
- [Spilled Milk: based on a true story](#) by K.L Randis (Fiction)
- [The Language of Flowers by Vanessa Diffenbaugh](#) (Fiction)

Adults – Bible Studies

- [Fostering Prayer: A 40 Day Guide for Foster Parents](#) by Jessica Mathisen
- [The Gift: Unwrapping God’s Design for Foster Care and Adoption](#) by Pam Parish
- [Faith to Foster](#) by Fostering Great Ideas
- [Second Mother: A Bible Study Experience for Foster and Adoptive Moms](#) by Jodi Jackson Turner
- [Thornwell’s Foster Care Bible Study](#) (see Section 8) by Thornwell

Kids – About Foster Care

- [No Matter What: A Foster Care Tale](#) by Josh Shipp
- [The Invisible String](#) by Patrice Karst
- [Love You From Right Here: A Keepsake Book for Children in Foster Care](#) by Jamie Sandefer
- [Your Parents’ Love](#) by Abbie Mabary
- [What Makes a Family?](#) By Hannah Bruner
- [The Joy of Avery series](#) by Rhonda Wagner
- [The Stuffed Giraffe: A Foster Care Story](#) by Kimber Kaye Daley
- [Home for A While](#) by Lauren H Kerstein
- [Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster Care](#) by Jennifer Wilgocki
- [Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights](#) by Julie Nelson
- [Kids Need to Be Safe: A Book for Children in Foster Care](#) by Julie Nelson
- [Murphy’s Three Homes: A Story for Children in Foster Care](#) by Jan Levinson Gilman



Thornwell Blogs and Videos

Stories You Will Want to Hear

Explore the Thornwell foster parent stories via our blog and Youtube channel. Here you will discover powerful testimonies and inspiring stories!

Every journey is **powerful!**



Children in Fostering Families

“Start children off in the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6

We care about our children more than anything else in the world. What we bring into our home impacts them – good and bad. Foster care holds many unknowns and that can be scary. Bringing children into your home who have experienced trauma will bring challenges. But many foster parents share that overcoming these challenges as a family (parents and children of all ages) not only brings them closer together, helps them to communicate, and teaches them new skills, but it is life-changing in largely positive ways. Children learn important lessons about empathy and caring for others. They see first-hand faith and values played out in their home. They develop admirable character traits and dream of changing the world for the better, seeing the world as much bigger than themselves. Of course, all these positives are part of the big picture. In the day-to-day there may be bickering over sharing toys and the television remote. There may be jealousy for their parents’ attention. There may be initial frustration and confusion in transition and changes to routine. These challenges can often be overcome with time, care, and age-appropriate conversations.

At Thornwell, we want to help you make the best decision for your family – the whole family. As you decide what fostering will look like for your family, we encourage you to have conversations with your children all along the way. Listen to their doubts, concerns, questions, and expectations. Validate the challenges of being a foster sibling. And together decide what is needed. Your safety is our priority. If a child in the home is a safety concern, we will work with you to mediate the situation. That may mean finding resources, services, support, or respite. That may mean an emergency removal from the home depending on the situation. Consider your children’s needs and listen to their opinions.

DID YOU KNOW?

Neglect is the primary reason children enter foster care (64%)

Want to learn more?

- [Should I foster with young kids?](#) – Video from Thornwell foster family
- [How does foster care impact family?](#)- Video from Thornwell foster family
- [Foster the Family: Encouragement, Hope, and Practical Help for the Christian Foster Parent](#), by Jamie Finn
- [Foster Care and What I Feared Most for My Own Kids](#), Jason Johnson Blog
- [Understanding the Impact of Foster Care and Adoption on Children Already in the Home](#), Jayne Schooler, Focus on the Family
- [It's Okay to Wonder](#), [Braver than Me](#), and [Say Yes Again](#), by Rhonda Wagner
- [Your Parents' Love](#) by Abbie Mabary
- [Kids Need to Be Safe](#), by Julie Nelson
- [The Stuffed Giraffe: A Foster Care Story](#)
- [Saturdays are for Baseball: A Foster Care Story](#), by Kimber Daley
- [Pavi Sharma's Guide to Going Home](#) by Bridget Farr
- [The Great Gilly Hopkins](#) by Katherine Paterson
- [Everybody, Always for Kids](#) by Bob Goff and Lindsey Goff Viducich



Family Preparation for Fostering

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” - Mark 10:13

Foster care often starts as the mission or passion of a parent. But it is not only the parents that are impacted by either the big picture of foster care (being involved in “the system” and court and child welfare) or the smaller picture (day-to-day) of fostering. Children in the home may have varying familiarity with foster care and adoption based on your family’s experiences or how they themselves entered your family. It is important to talk about foster care as a family before, during, and after a new child enters your home. Your permanent children likely will have questions. They may be excited, nervous, scared, or completely opposed. Listen to and validate their thoughts, feelings, and concerns.



Just as one spouse may have needed some time, information, and encouragement to make the decision to foster, children may need those things as well. From the beginning, we encourage parents to include children of all ages in age-appropriate conversations about what foster care will mean for the family and what their role will be.

Foster care will impact everyone in the home – sometimes the children in the home most acutely. Be prepared for big emotions, challenges with transitions, and lots of questions. This is a learning experience for them, and they don’t have all the same coping, communicating, and conflict management skills that you have learned over time. That’s okay! Fostering will help them to learn those skills and more!

Thornwell is here to support your family as you have important conversations within your home. We want everyone to feel safe, comfortable, and valuable in the fostering journey.

Here are some tips for preparing your family to foster:

- Talk about foster care early and often in age-appropriate ways; allow children to share their honest emotions and ask questions
- Introduce books, shows, movies, etc. that reflect foster care in age-appropriate ways
- Connect with foster families that have children close in age to nurture new friendships and to normalize fostering families
- Set family rules and expectations that will help children to feel safe, comfortable, and valuable as a member of a foster family; children should know clearly what their role is and what it isn't
- Discuss how you (as parents) will make decisions about accepting new placements and what that might look like. Will children be invited to give input? Will they know before a child shows up?
- Have regular family meetings or child-parent check-ins to process decisions, challenges, or transitions

Want to learn more?

- [How to Talk to My Kids About Fostering](#), Embracing and Empowering Families
- [Talking to Your Toddler about Foster Care](#), Her View From Home
- [How to Prepare Your Family to Welcome a Foster Child](#), Camelot
- [Sesame Street in Communities: Foster Care](#)
- Thornwell's recommendations on foster care books for children

Foster Home Types and Needs

“Be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” Matthew 7:24-25

You do not have to own a home to be able to foster. There are foster parents that foster successfully in all types of homes – owned homes, rented homes, town homes, condos, and apartments. No matter where you live, you will need to meet the requirements that Thornwell sets for all licensed foster homes in addition to the requirements set by South Carolina Department of Social Services.

Each foster home must have space for an additional child. Everyone living in the home must have a bed in a designated bedroom with a door that closes. Children may not share a bedroom with an adult (over 18). Children may share a bedroom with other children – either other children in foster care regardless of relation or the children permanently in your home. There are requirements regarding which children can share a bedroom based on age and gender.

At Thornwell, we will support you as you prepare your home for foster care licensing. We will walk with you through every step of the process, helping you to understand what is required. Basic home requirements include fire, health, and safety regulations. You may need to purchase a new fire extinguisher or smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. If you do not own your home and you need to make updates to meet foster home licensing requirements, you’ll need to talk to the landlord or homeowner to see if those changes are permissible. You will likely have to cover the cost of these changes out-of-pocket. However, Thornwell never wants cost to be the only factor that stops you from being able to pursue licensure. We do have home readiness assistance available on an as-needed basis.



Our top tips for preparing your home:

- Update your fire safety and readiness with 2A10BC fire extinguisher and proper smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors per SC Fire Marshal guidelines
- Update your child safety and readiness (if you plan to foster young children) with child safety locks, outlet plugs, and a locking medicine box
- Use your Thornwell issued document organizer or a foster care binder/ file cabinet to stay on top of important licensing documents, child placement documents, and foster parent training certificates
- Update your bookshelves, movies/shows, games, etc. with options that reflect diverse characters and encouraging messages. These, as well as toys, can also be added over time.
- Prepare welcome baskets as you get closer to welcoming children or youth into your home. You never know who will be joining your family or for how long so buying lots of clothing for certain genders or sizes may not be helpful. But most children and youth can appreciate a basket of new toiletries, blanket, journal, picture frame for a family photo, crayons/ colored pencils, snacks, and a water bottle. You might include a brief note welcoming them and introducing your family.

Want to learn more?

- For lots of great tips on setting up your home for fostering, follow @foster.parenting on [Instagram](#) or visit her website for [helpful freebies and templates](#)
- [Fire Marshal Guidelines](#) (Code Enforcement) for SC foster homes
- [Ideas for Ways to Prepare your home](#) to welcome children in foster care, [home safety considerations*](#), and [“must-have” items](#). *Note that CPR education is a part of Thornwell’s foster parent licensing.

Licensing Process and Timeline

Foster home licensing takes time as it is a detailed process that ensures homes are thoroughly safe, capable, and equipped. At Thornwell, the process typically takes three to six months although this timeline relies heavily on the foster family's pace in turning in paperwork and completing necessary steps.

At Thornwell, a Licensing Specialist will guide you through the process of licensure. They will be your support and advocate. The basic steps to licensure are:

1. Watch the [Thornwell Foster Care Introduction Video](#)
2. Complete, Sign, and Email the Intake Application plus supplemental documents
3. Meet Your Licensing Specialist and schedule a virtual orientation
4. Schedule and complete medical, fingerprinting, and other required appointments for all applicable household members
5. Register for and complete online education modules called "pre-service" training through Heartfelt Calling and attend two live virtual classes
6. Complete all required paperwork
7. Health and Safety Inspection by SC Fire Marshal
8. Home Visit with Thornwell Licensing and/or Family Specialist
9. Completed application packet is sent to SC DSS State Office for final approval
10. Once your license is approved, you are eligible to receive and accept calls for the placement of children

We ask for your patience as we work to license your family to welcome children into your home. You are excited! We are excited too!

Want to learn more?

- [Foster Family Handbook](#), South Carolina Department of Social Services
- [Licensing Flow Chart](#), South Carolina Department of Social Services



LGBTQ+ Youth

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Micah 6:8

There are many things to consider when deciding the range of behaviors, identities, and needs that you feel comfortable serving in your home as a foster parent. Be discerning and realistic but keep an open mind. Not everyone has the capacity to serve every need. That’s okay.

LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in the foster care system. They also face disparities in care or treatment by the system. According to Children’s Rights, Inc., a 2019 study revealed that roughly 30% of youth in foster care identify as LGBTQ and 5% identify as transgender.

All children and youth in foster care deserve a loving, safe, affirming home that will nurture them as they process grief, loss, and heal from trauma.

As you consider fostering youth who identify as LGBTQ+, you might ask yourself these questions:

- Will a youth in my home feel safe, welcome, and valued for who they are regardless of their sexual identity or orientation?
- Will a youth in my home be subjected to slurs, jokes, or lectures about gender or sexuality?
- Will a youth in my home be expected to attend activities or events that are openly hostile or unsupportive of LGBTQ people?
- Will a youth in my home be able to discuss their identity, orientation, or feelings of attraction openly?

At Thornwell, we are on a mission to find a home for every child and youth in foster care in South Carolina. We will support you as you find the need that you can meet. Not every child or youth will be a good fit for your home. We understand that and support you. You always have the right to say “no” to a placement when called. We will help you say “yes” whenever it is a good fit with encouragement, support, resources, and community.

Want to learn more?

- [Supporting LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care](#), Healthy Children
- [Supporting LGBTQ Youth and Parents in Child Welfare Systems](#), Human Rights Campaign
- [LGBTQ Youth in the Foster Care System](#), Human Rights Campaign
- [Showing Support for LGBTQ+ Youth](#), @foster.parenting on Instagram

Marriage

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Foster care will impact all your most important relationships – especially your marriage or intimate partner relationship. Foster care is rarely easy. It will bring new stresses and challenges into your life. It will disrupt (at least for a time) your regular schedule and routines. That’s why it is so important for everyone in the home to be on board when you commit to fostering. It takes an “all hands on deck” approach to help a child who has experienced trauma adjust to their new life in your home.

Couples who foster as a true team, often find that their marriage is strengthened. They grow closer in their shared mission and ministry.

Our tips for couples:

- Discuss your expectations, motivations, and desires before welcoming children into your home
- Listen to each other’s thoughts, feelings, and concerns without judgement regularly
- Respect each other’s boundaries at all times
- Communicate your needs and respond kindly to the other’s needs

At Thornwell, we encourage couples to commit to foster care as a team. If one person is not completely on board, we recommend not moving forward yet. You might spend time to gather more information, address perceived barriers, assess your current capacity, and seek support and counsel of friends and current foster parents. You may find that with time, information, and support, you can enter foster parenting wisely together.

If you find that you cannot get on the same page, we encourage you to find other ways to support children and families impacted by foster care with your time, talent, or treasure. You might become a Guardian Ad Litem or wrap-around a current foster family. You might donate to ministries that serve kids and families like Thornwell.

Want to learn more?

- [Marriage and Foster Care](#), The Foster Journal Blog
- [The Best Thing You Can Do For Your Marriage in Foster Care](#), Jason Johnson Blog
- [Fostering or Adopting: For the Husband That's Not Sure](#), Jason Johnson Blog
- [Real Mom Podcast, Season 1: Episode 3: On Husbands + Therapy + Girl Scout Cookies](#)
- [Resources for Your Marriage in Foster Care](#), The Forgotten Initiative
- This [Instagram post](#) about communication in a marriage while fostering can be helpful from @foster.parenting



Reunification and Saying Goodbye

“The Lord Himself goes before you; He will be with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid or discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8

Reunification is the ultimate goal of foster care whenever safe and possible. Reunification means that a child returns to their parent(s), biological relatives, or fictive kin (someone they have a pre-established close relationship with but are not related to by blood.) This may take days, weeks, months, or even years.

The fear of getting “too attached” is often one of the greatest barriers to fostering. It is normal to try to avoid pain, loss, and uncertainty. However, saying goodbye is the goal of foster care - foster care is meant to be temporary. It is the role of the foster parent to temporarily stand in the gap for a family as they work towards reunification. It is important for those considering foster care to consider if they can champion reunification efforts – champion the family. There is rarely an understanding of the timeline for a child staying in your home at the time of placement. Permanency efforts may take days, months, or years to complete. This uncertainty is undeniably hard to navigate at times.



You may feel the need to guard your heart to avoid getting “too attached.” Kids deserve your love and attachment! They may not have experienced safe and healthy attachments before. You are building a foundation for all their future relationships. At Thornwell, we believe in the power of family – and that families belong together. We will offer foster parents gentle care and counsel as they develop healthy relationships with families whenever safe and appropriate. We’ll equip you, walk alongside you, and help you to navigate all the emotions, decisions, and transitions that come with being a foster parent. Goodbye may not be easy, but as an adult you have the support, the coping skills, and the emotional complexity to work through your feelings and fears.

Want to learn more?

- [Reframing Foster Care](#), Jason Johnson – Book Available on Amazon
- [Real Mom Podcast, Season 2: Episode 8](#) – On Staying Guarded + Packing up and Saying Goodbye + Talking Adoption with Your Kids
- [The Forgotten Podcast, Season 9: Episode 8](#) – Saying Goodbye: Navigating Reunification as a Foster Parent
- [Love and Loss in Foster Care: What I Learned When We Said Goodbye](#), Fostering Great Ideas
- [Love You From Right Here](#): A Keepsake Book for Children in Foster Care, Jamie Sandefer
- [Invisible String](#), Patrice Karst – Book Available on Amazon

Shared Parenting

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” 1 John 4:11

Shared parenting is a relationship between foster parents and the child’s parent or family member. This type of positive, supportive relationship can be beneficial to all involved because the goal of foster care is to reunite the child with their family of origin. It can also be intimidating for foster parents.

Children love their parents and often want more than anything to be with them – regardless of the abuse, neglect, or abandonment they experienced. When children enter foster care, they are separated from everything they’ve ever known – the good and the bad. Foster parents provide a safe, stable temporary home for them to heal and thrive. They can also help build, mend, or strengthen important relationships in healthy, safe, and meaningful ways with parents or other family. Reunification may take days, months, or even years to occur. That is precious time lost if a child cannot nurture those connections.

Foster parents are always in control of when, how, and what personal information (if any) is shared with parents or family members. Shared parenting is not a mandate, but it is an encouragement. Each case will be different and the team at Thornwell and at DSS will advise foster parents as to when it is wise, safe, and appropriate to interact with certain family members.

When foster parents can champion families, we often see quicker and more stable reunification. Foster parents may also maintain contact with the child after they leave the home when relationships are built on trust, respect, and kindness.

Shared parenting may look different with different parents, in different seasons, and as parents prove stable. It may look like regular updates, emails, phone calls or texts. It may look like inviting parents to school, extracurricular, or important events like birthday parties. Of course, these interactions should be with the guidance of the entire child and family team.

At Thornwell, we believe that families belong together. We offer gentle care and counsel to all our foster parents as they champion family reunification through healthy relationships whenever safe and appropriate. We'll equip you, walk alongside you, and help you to navigate all the emotions, decisions, and transitions that come with being a foster parent.

Want to learn more?

- [Co-Parenting or Shared Parenting](#), North American Council on Adoptable Children
- [What is Shared Parenting for Children in Foster Care?](#) Family and Children's Resource Program
- [What Shared Parenting Actually Looks Like and How to Hold on To Hope](#), Fostering Great Ideas
- [Sharing Memories with Parents Makes Childhood Milestones That Much Sweeter](#), Fostering Great Ideas
- [Stepping Forward with Compassion, Rather than Standing Back in Judgement](#), Fostering Great Ideas
- [A Letter to Foster Parents From a Mom After Reunification](#), Fostering Great Ideas



Short-Term Foster Care

(Emergency Care and Respite Care)

Providing short-term foster care is a great way to ease into foster parenting. It is common for families to be nervous about how foster care will impact their family; they wonder if they will be able to handle the needs of an additional child. Short-term foster care allows a family to learn more about themselves as a potential long-term foster family and meets critical needs.

Short-term foster care refers to foster parenting that is typically for a defined amount of time, often less than 1-2 weeks. A family agrees to care for a child in foster care without the commitment of indefinite placement. This may be through an “emergency” placement or through a planned “respite” placement.

Emergency placements will be arranged through your Thornwell Family Specialist as with any placement. Typically, emergency placements calls come at/after 5:00 PM and are arranged for just one night or for the weekend. These are children or youth for whom no long-term placement has been identified or the long-term placement is not yet available. A timeline will be established, and a pick-up plan agreed upon before the child or youth is brought to your home. This is a great way to meet a significant need (so that children are not waiting long hours or overnight in DSS offices) and allows families to be flexible in when they are available.

Respite placements can be arranged through your Thornwell Family Specialist or directly with other foster parents. Typically, with respite care, the placements, timelines, and arrangements are agreed upon in advance. These are children or youth who are already placed in a long-term foster home but need a short-term place to stay so that the foster parents can take a break, focus on a family emergency, etc. This is a great way to meet a significant need (breaks for long-term foster parents) and allows families to assess their capacity for numbers of children, ages, genders, etc. You’ll have the support of the foster parents in obtaining as much known information as possible about the children, their needs, and routine.

At Thornwell, we want to support you and your family as you find the needs that you can best meet. Some families start with short-term foster care and then choose to do long-term care once they feel more confident and prepared. Other families find that short-term foster care is a need that they enjoy meeting and continue to provide emergency and/or respite care ongoing. Whatever you do, your Thornwell Family Specialist and the entire Thornwell Foster Care Team are here to support you as you serve children and families.

Siblings

“We know what real love is because Jesus gave up His life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.” 1 John 3:16 NLT

There are many things to consider when deciding the number of children that you feel comfortable adding to your family through foster care at any one time. Be discerning and realistic but keep an open mind. Not everyone has the capacity – or the space- for multiple children. That’s okay. There are ways to foster sibling connections even if the children aren’t all under your roof.

The National Center for Youth Law estimates that up to half of children in foster care have siblings who are also in foster care. Separating siblings often leads to loneliness, fear, and feeling disconnected. By keeping siblings together, you help to mitigate some of the trauma of removal and provide a natural support system. Research shows that often siblings placed in the same home experience many positive well-being outcomes such as fewer emotional and behavioral problems.

Things to consider when fostering siblings:

- Fostering siblings does not increase the number of case manager, family, or GAL visitations. But it will increase the number of required and as-needed doctor, dental, and therapy appointments.
- Siblings are still individuals and will have unique needs. Be prepared to care for them as a group but also address their individual needs.
- In SC, most sibling groups consist of two children but there are also sibling groups of 3, 4, or more children. In larger sibling groups there may be a wide age range with older children acting as parental figures to younger siblings. Parentification of children or youth can be tough whether the siblings stay together or are separated.
- Consider the physical space available in your home (number of beds), in your car, at your dinner table etc. Consider the mental, emotional, and time capacity of your family as well.

At Thornwell, we are on a mission to find a home for every child and youth in foster care in South Carolina. We will support you as you find the need that you can meet. Not every child, sibling, or sibling group will be a good fit for your home.

We understand that and support you. You always have the right to say “no” to a placement when called or tell us what you feel you can and cannot handle at that time. You also can say “yes” to a child or sibling outside your typical age range, gender, etc. We will help you say “yes” whenever it is a good fit with encouragement, support, resources, and community.



Want to learn more?

- [Teens and Siblings Need Foster Parents](#), Forever Family Youtube Video
- [Lauren Fosters is a foster mom and former foster youth who shares about siblings](#)
- [How one couple helps foster siblings stay together](#), Good Morning America
- [Why Keeping Foster Siblings Together is Important](#), Washington Fosters
- [Siblings and Foster Care Placement](#), Advocacy in Action
- [The Importance of Sibling Relationships in Foster Care](#), A Family For Every Child

Single Foster Parents

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace.” – 1 Peter 4:10

At Thornwell, we welcome single individuals to foster with us. We have foster families in all shapes and sizes. All types of parents – married parents, co-parents, stepparents, single parents, foster parents - experience the joys and challenges of caring for kids. Your situation may look different from your friends who are parenting, but that isn’t a bad thing. In fact, it’s a great thing. We need different parent and home types to support the diverse and unique needs of children entering foster care. You can offer a child something special – you! Just as you are. Single foster parents are rockstars – especially when they are well supported!

Single individuals offer children and youth something special – extra time, attention, resources, space and care. But they can also offer something unique. Some children cannot be in a home with adults of a certain gender due to their past experiences of trauma. A single parent household can offer some safety and stability that the child may not be able to find in a household with adults of a different gender.

All foster parents need a community of support. This is just as true, if not truer, for single foster parents. You’ll need friends and family and neighbors to wrap around you in a variety of ways as you welcome children into your home. Every foster parent may need different support at different times. Generally, you’ll want emotional, mental, and spiritual support from people who love you so that you aren’t carrying all the burdens of foster parenting alone. You’ll want physical and tangible support from people in your community – this may be help with transportation, childcare or babysitting, quickly getting the supplies a child needs, meals or groceries on hectic days, help with errands, etc. We cannot thrive in isolation! Don’t be afraid to ask for help.



At Thornwell, we want to be a part of your community of support. We will be there for you every step of the way! And you'll be connected to a larger community of foster parents as well.

Resources:

- [Single + Foster Parenting: You are Needed](#), The Forgotten Podcast – Season7: Episode 6
- [Single Foster Parenting – Real Strategies from Real Moms](#), The Forgotten Podcast – Season 5: Episode 6
- [Hallie Graves, Single Foster Mom and Lawyer Extraordinaire](#), Around the World with The Archibald Project Podcast – Episode 36
- [Your Guide to Single Foster Parenting](#), The Forgotten Initiative



Teens

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.” 1 Peter 5:2

There are many things to consider when deciding what ages, genders, and behaviors your family has the capacity to care for well. Be discerning and realistic but keep an open mind! Remember that foster care is not about finding a child for your family but finding a family for a child. Children come into foster care at every age (0-18) and every child deserves a loving caring home.

The most significant need in South Carolina’s foster care system right now is for foster families to welcome older children and teens (age 7 and older). If you can consider fostering a teen, you are greatly needed!

While there are young children who enter foster care, there are already many foster families who want to foster young children. This means that there are waiting families, not waiting young children. That’s a great thing!



At Thornwell, we are on a mission to find a home for every child and youth in foster care in South Carolina.

We will support you as you find the need that you can meet. Even if you choose to open your home to teens, not every teen will be a good fit for your home. We understand that and support you. We will protect you as best we can on the front end by evaluating every referral we receive from the state. We consider all the information that is shared before we present any placement request to you. You always have the right to say “no” to a placement when called. You also have the opportunity to say “yes” to a child or sibling even if they are outside your typical age range, gender, etc. We will help you say “yes” whenever it is a good fit with encouragement, support, resources, and community.

Resources

- Follow @Fostertheteens on Instagram
- [Pros and Cons of Fostering Teens](#), TeenWire (2022)
- [Foster Teens, Foster Futures](#) (2020)
- [Foster Dad of Teens](#), Sam Mercer
- [Teens Need Families](#), AdoptUSKids
- [Teens and Siblings Need Foster Parents](#), Forever Family Youtube Video
- Lauren Fosters is a foster mom and former foster youth who shares about [fostering teens](#)

Use this space to brainstorm and write notes!



What are your hopes for the future in your fostering journey?



DID YOU KNOW?

May is Foster Care Awareness Month!

Thank you for considering partnering with Thornwell to make an impact within communities, homes, and hearts.

