

**Foster Care  
&  
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*Shelter from  
the Storm*

## Who Am I?

Growing up is hard work. And no matter the circumstances, every person struggles with finding their place in the world and figuring out just who they are. Now imagine that you've been removed from your family by a stranger, and delivered to a strange home with people you've never met before. Everything that you once had as a touchstone to help you learn about your world, your environment, and your place in life is now just *gone*.

For many children and youth entering care, even moving into an environment that is culturally and ethnically the same or similar to what they have known, is going to require an adjustment. And, just like them, you and your family will need time to adjust, too.

So, how can you help this new member of your family adjust and feel comfortable? Being aware of each person's identity and individuality means accepting their cultural values, traditions, beliefs, customs, rules of behavior, food preferences, language, personal style, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, spirituality, political beliefs, gender identity, and economic systems. Everyone



Image source: [theteenexperience.wordpress.com](http://theteenexperience.wordpress.com)

deserves to have their heritage honored, celebrated, and cherished. As a foster or adoptive parent, the responsibility of helping acknowledge, encourage, and develop the personal identities of the youth in your care.

This issue of Fostering Across Wisconsin has some helpful resources, tips, and information that we hope will be valuable to you and your family throughout your journey of foster care and adoption. Please know that we are always here to talk with you, provide support, and offer suggestions and additional resources specific to your family and your situation. You can reach us at 1-800-947-8074 or via email at [info@coalitionforcyf.org](mailto:info@coalitionforcyf.org).

## About Identity

How a person identifies is, by definition, a personal business. Some identity categories include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, and ability. Each child or youth who you bring into your home comes with a new, exciting personality and many identities. Sometimes the children and youth who may come into your life will have traits and identities that appear to be similar—that match your family's home life. At other times, the children and youth placed in your home may present traits and qualities that seem unfamiliar, which may cause you to feel a bit uneasy. The truth is every individual is different and complex; however, the great thing about that complexity is that it gives you and your family the chance to learn.

As part of your fostering journey, you will have the great opportunity to help the children and youth placed in your home find out who they really are developmentally, and what that will mean to them as they grow up. In doing this, it can be helpful to take some time to think about your own identity. Consider these questions:

- What would you say if someone asked you to describe yourself? Would this change based on who asked? Why?
- If someone asked you how you identify what would you say? Would this change based on who asked? Why?
- Do a lot of the people in your daily life

hold the same identities as you?

- Are the characters you see on TV/in movies/in mainstream media who identify like you portrayed in a positive light?

The answers to these questions may give you some insight into how you identify and also how common of an identity you hold. The more common an identity, the more likely we are to share it with others.

Knowing yourself is the first step. The next step is to get to know the children and youth in your care, as well as their birth families (parents, siblings, extended family members). Sometimes we fall into the trap of thinking of identities as obvious when really they appear over time, with trust, and relationship building. You will receive information from a placement agency or the previous placement, and that information is good to have. Each person and their family, however, has their own story to tell you, too. When we take the opportunity to ask and listen, we can grow and learn from one another.

Do you have questions about how to help a child or youth understand and develop his or her own personal identity during the challenging time of being placed in foster care? We encourage you to ask questions, get support and advice, and remember that we are here to help anytime.

### Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (WFAPA)

WFAPA provides great opportunities to get together with other foster parents through its spring and fall conferences. They also have an extensive website, [www.wfapa.org](http://www.wfapa.org), a newsletter and a network of supportive WFAPA members and other foster parents who can be a resource for you.

**The fall conference will occur on Oct. 18-20 at the Stone Harbor Lodge in Sturgeon Bay.**

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in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

## Helpful Resources

### Coalition Tip Sheets

<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/Resources/FCARCTipsheets.aspx>

- Honoring Your Child's Racial and Cultural Identity
- Caring for the Hair of your African American Child
- Twenty Ideas for Keeping Connections to Racial and Cultural Identity
- Advocating for LGBTQ Youth
- Working with Children who have been Traumatized
- Shared Parenting: Putting the Needs of Children First

### Videos

**Knowing Who You Are:** In this video, 23 individuals share their perspectives about why race and ethnicity matter.

<http://www.casey.org/resources/initiatives/KnowingWhoYouAre/video.htm>.

**Breaking the Silence: LGBTQ Foster Youth Tell Their Stories** – a free resource available from [www.ncirights.org/legal-help-resources/resource/breaking-the-silence-lgbtq-foster-youth-tell-their-stories-dvd-and-resource-cd/](http://www.ncirights.org/legal-help-resources/resource/breaking-the-silence-lgbtq-foster-youth-tell-their-stories-dvd-and-resource-cd/)

**Out of Respect: The Story of Five:** This video documents the lives of five LGBTQ identified youth who will or who have aged out of the Milwaukee County foster care system. <http://vimeo.com/25508281>

**Struggle for Identity:** This video features transracial adoptees and their families as they confront difficult issues of racism, identity, and a sense of place in

candid discussion. This video is available to check out from our library at <http://arwlib.ascendclient.com/index.php>.

*(Please note: The Coalition library has limited copies of materials and you may be placed on a waiting list for requested items.)*

### Books

Pieces of Me, Who Do I Want to Be?, by Robert L. Ballard  
The Foster Parenting Toolbox, Edited by Kim Phagan-Hansel  
Inside Transracial Adoption, by Gail Steinberg & Beth Hall

### Helpful Web Resources

Foster Club  
<http://www.fosterclub.com/>  
Booster Club  
<http://www.fosterclub.com/booster/>  
Child Welfare Information Gateway  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/>  
National Indian Child Welfare Association  
<http://www.nicwa.org/>  
Seven Tasks for Parents: Developing Positive Racial Identity  
[http://www.nacac.org/postadopt/transracial\\_identity.html](http://www.nacac.org/postadopt/transracial_identity.html)  
Great Lakes Intertribal Council – for information and links to the individual tribes in Wisconsin  
<http://www.glitc.org/>  
Supporting Your LGBTQ Youth: A Guide for Foster Parents  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/LGBTQyouth.pdf>

## What is a Permanency Roundtable?

You may be hearing about Permanency Roundtables (PRT) occurring for children or youth in your care and you may be wondering things like: Why was I not invited? What is this about?

The Department of Children and Families, in partnership with Casey Family Programs, has implemented Permanency Roundtables throughout Wisconsin to improve permanency related outcomes for children and youth who were spending an extended amount of time in out-of-home care.

A Permanency Roundtable is a **structured, professional case consultation** that: results in a plan to expedite permanency for a child in care that identifies and “busts” systemic barriers to expediting permanency.

Each Permanency Roundtable has some expected outcomes for the child or children involved in the process:

1. The primary goal for every Permanency Roundtable is to achieve legal permanence through reunification, adoption or guardianship.
2. For some children, legal permanence is not possible or not immediately possible. For those children, the goal is to improve the likelihood of permanency by creating an action plan that will move the child closer to permanence.
3. And for still other children, even if their permanency status remains the same immediately following the Permanency Roundtable, the expected outcome would be a: reduction in the level of restrictiveness of the child's living situation (for example, if the child is currently living in a residential treatment facility, the action plan may involve steps toward moving the youth into an Independent Living program).

The Permanency Roundtable process also has some expected outcomes for the organizations that participate:

1. Increased staff competency

2. Identifying and “busting” systemic barriers and strengthening systems integration
- Key Values:

- a sense of urgency
- a relentless insistence upon permanency for each child
- “new eyes” - a fresh perspective
- strengths-based, solution-focused & non-blaming
- “out of the box” thinking
- transparency & “real-time” learning accountability for results at all levels

### PRT Data from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2013

Since July 1, 2011, Counties have completed **583** PRTs, with a total of **911** unique children including sibling groups. Of the PRT's that have occurred, many children and youth have achieved legal permanence as shown by the table below.

To learn more visit the PRT page of the DCF website:

Number of children that received a PRT	911
Number of children that achieved permanence	213
Number of termination of parental rights filed	31
Number of children that re-entered out-of-home care	8
Percentage of children that re-entered out-of-home care	3.7%

Type of Discharge	
Reunification	135
Transfer of Guardianship	45
Placement with Relatives	8
Adoptions	25

[http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/permanency\\_roundtables/default.htm](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/permanency_roundtables/default.htm)

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**Services Provided:** Resource Library · Phone Support · Networking/Outreach