

Foster Parent Champions

For most of us, making a major life decision involves gathering the opinions and input of a lot of different people. Sure, we turn to “the experts” and we do the research. But we also ask our family members and our friends for their thoughts—especially if those people in our circle of trust have experience with the topic at hand. Ultimately, recruiting more families to be foster parents is very similar to how we go about making those big decisions. And this is where Foster Parent Champions play such a vital role.

Just last year, the Coalition started working closely with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and individual counties to develop Foster Parent Champions. We know that foster parents are the best, most powerful recruiters of future foster parents. They always have been and likely always will be.

Foster Parent Champions bring to life the world of foster care. When they have the opportunity to talk with prospective foster parents, they share not only how to survive but to thrive in a lifestyle that can be quite challenging; a lifestyle that requires the potential foster parent to make many major changes.

Foster Parent Champions:

- Have lived experience that simply can't be duplicated with brochures, billboards, or presentations by social workers.
- Can pose, as well as answer, tough questions that the rest of us probably wouldn't think of asking.
- Have been down the long road of home studies, licensing, and training requirements.
- Know firsthand all the ins and outs of fostering, such as shared parenting, difficult child behaviors, and working as part of a team.
- Shine an honest light on the agency and its role in the community.
- If they have birth children of their own, have done the difficult balancing act of helping everyone feel a part of the family.
- Are masters at juggling schedules and making it look easy.

Foster Parent Champions can also play a key role for new foster parents—that of

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a mentor, coach, or partner in the journey. Not to mention, the Champions themselves benefit from being involved in such a way. We have heard from some who shared feeling empowered in their new roles. They appreciate being involved as team members with agency staff; in fact, Champions often become an integral part of an agency's recruitment team. Others have shared their excitement about "getting out there" and doing a number of recruitment activities on their own. Some foster parents enjoy flexing their creative muscles and contributing innovative ideas to the recruitment plan.

If you're already fostering, and looking for additional ways to flex your creativity and passion for helping kids, consider becoming a Foster Parent Champion in your county. You can make a huge difference in the lives of even more children by helping recruit more families in your area. When we say, "every child needs a champion," we're talking about **you!** [Contact your Foster Care Coordinator](#) to find out more.

Turn a Life Around Rebooted

Every year, National Foster Care Month provides us with an opportunity to celebrate and to say thank you to those of you who are turning lives around by caring for children and youth in foster care. As you have probably heard us and others say, we need more people—more families—like yours in every community and county of Wisconsin. With around 8,000 children and youth in out-of-home care here in our state, the need for more foster families has grown, too.

Just last month, we kicked off the *Turn a Life Around* foster care recruitment campaign. Some of you may remember the first version of this campaign from 2011. When we first launched *Turn a Life Around* all those years ago, we were amazed by the huge response it earned. An astounding number of people visited FosterParentsRock.org or called us to learn more about becoming a foster parent—and we are hoping for a similar result this time around, too.

Foster Care Month may have come to an end for another year, but the need for foster families has not gone away. We still need your help in sharing the message that Wisconsin children need more people who can give them a safe, secure, and caring place to stay—for a little while, or a long while. Here are a few ways that you can still help us share that message:



- Take the #HandstandForFosterKids challenge. (See page 3)
- If you are a foster parent, share a message on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or a blog about why you started fostering or why you continue fostering. You might include a link to FosterParentsRock.org to encourage anyone who may be interested to learn more.
- Download, print, and hang up a [poster](#) to show your support.

Thank you for all that you do to help support children and youth touched by foster care!



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#HandstandforFosterKids— The Challenge Continues!

Every day children and teens enter Wisconsin's foster care system. Their lives have turned upside down. They come as infants, toddlers, part of a sibling group, or a teen in need of a safe place. And they need your help: they need more foster families who can care for them—for a short time, or for a lifetime—and help turn their lives around.

This May, the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families issued a challenge—*#HandstandforFosterKids*—hoping to raise awareness for the need for more foster parents in every county and community. Dozens of people have already participated and we want to keep the challenge going! Here's how you can join the effort to raise awareness of the need for more foster parents:

- **Prepare:** Practice your handstand skills or recruit a friend or family member to help. Using a wall or having a partner hold your legs is absolutely okay!
- **Record:** Before you turn yourself upside down, be sure you are recording your *#HandstandforFosterKids*. Call out three or more people who you are challenging to do a handstand and help raise even more awareness for the need for more foster homes. (There are some suggestions of what you might say in your video on the next page.)
- **Stand** on your hands! (Or your head if you prefer! Or, you can even snap a photo of yourself and rotate it upside down!)
- **Upload:** Post your video or photo for all to see on Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter. Be sure to use the hashtag *#HandstandforFosterKids* and tag those you are challenging, as well as @coalitionforcyf.



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Here are a few ideas of what you might say in your video, or use as text to accompany a still image you are posting:

- I'm turning upside down to help raise awareness of the need for more foster families in every county and community. Learn how you can turn lives around as a foster parent at fosterparentsrock.org! @coalitionforcyf #handstandforfosterkids
- Join me in raising awareness for the need for more foster parents in every county and community! Turn a life around for a child in care; get started at fosterparentsrock.org. #handstandforfosterkids @coalitionforcyf
- I'm doing a #HandstandForFosterKids! Join me in raising awareness about the need for more foster families in our community. I challenge @person1, @person2, and @person3. Let's see it & learn more at fosterparentsrock.org. @coalitionforcyf
- Here I am turning a life around by doing a #HandstandForFosterKids! You, too, can help turn lives around by driving awareness for the need for more foster families. Visit



fosterparentsrock.org & @coalitionforcyf. I challenge @person1, @person2, and @person3 to show me your handstands within 3 days.

- Our @BusinessCompanyNameHere teammates are all doing a #HandstandForFosterKids! We challenge @business1, @business2, & @business3 to join us in helping drive awareness for the need for more foster families in our community. Visit FosterParentsRock.org & @coalitionforcyf for more details. Turn a life around!



We are always here for additional information, resources, and support. You can contact us toll-free at **800-947-8074** or via email at info@wifostercareandadoption.org.



Find Us on Social Media @coalitionforcyf



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