



# STARTING BLOCK

REACHING THE VULNERABLE



**PENFL**

PENINSULAR FLORIDA

**FOSTER CARE NETWORK**

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# PURPOSE & SCOPE



## *Mission*

**The mission is to activate and equip the church into caring for vulnerable families and hurting kids.**

## *Purpose*

**The purpose of this discussion is to lead your church through a process of discovering the tools and methodologies that align with the vision and call that God has for your church as you minister to vulnerable families and hurting children in your community.**

## *Overview*

**This discussion will walk through the heart and history of “the system”, investigate a Biblical perspective, and finally introduce you to methodologies, tools, and agencies to put you on a path to making a difference in your community.**

# *Heart &* **HISTORY**



The church has always been God's choice to engage, support, and love vulnerable families.

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The Bible shows us that God's heart is for his people and the family. While sin has brought brokenness to our world, God longs to bring healing and wholeness to all of us.

In the 1800s the church played a significant role in caring for orphans. Religious organizations ran many orphanages, and nuns would often serve as caretakers. The church believed it was their responsibility to provide for those in need, and caring for orphans was seen as a charitable act. The orphanages provided food, shelter, education, and religious instruction to the children.

To provide oversight and accountability the government slowly began to step into caring for orphans. As the government stepped in the churches stepped out. The church is now stepping back in to fill the void and restore its role as a leading force in caring for those in need.

We must remember that we, as the body of believers, as the CHURCH, are called to love, care and protect the vulnerable. Together, we can work toward restoring hope and bringing Jesus to the lives of those who need HIM.

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. - Psalm 147:3*



# NOTES

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,  
is God in his holy dwelling Psalms 68:55

# A BROADER BIBLICAL *perspective*

"WHATEVER YOU  
DID FOR ONE OF  
THE LEAST OF  
THESE... YOU DID  
FOR ME."

The Bible speaks of God's deep love and care of vulnerable individuals. This extends not only to those in need of foster care or adoption, but also to families need support and care. Our communities need the church and Jesus has sent the church to be his hand extended.

Jesus himself exemplified a deep concern for the vulnerable. He spent much of his ministry caring for the sick, the poor, and the marginalized. In Matthew 25:35-40, he says, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."



# NOTES

"learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression;  
bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's  
cause." Isaiah 1:17



# Phases of CARE

Caring for vulnerable families and hurting kids can be broken down into 4 phases.

## PREVENTION

Preventive care for children and families at risk of entering the foster care system involves providing them with the necessary resources and support to address any challenges they may be facing before they escalate into a crisis that requires removal of the child from the home.

## FOSTER CARE

Foster care is a system in which children who cannot live with their birth families are temporarily placed with other families or caregivers. The ultimate goal of foster care is to reunite children with their birth families when it is safe to do so, but in some cases, children may be adopted by their foster families or other permanent caregivers.

## ADOPTION

Adoption is a legal process that establishes a parent-child relationship between individuals who are not biologically related. It involves terminating the parental rights of the child's birth parents and transferring those rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parents. Once the adoption is finalized, the adoptive parents become the legal parents of the child, with all the rights and responsibilities that come with parenthood.

## AGING OUT

When a child ages out of the foster care system it means that they have reached the age of 18 years old and are no longer eligible for the support and services provided by the foster care system. Without the support of the foster care system many of these young adults struggle to find housing, employment, and other resources necessary for a successful transition to independent living.

# *3 Levels of* **INVOLVEMENT**

Involvement within each phase can be organized into three levels.

## **DONATE FOR PHYSICAL NEEDS**

Donating physical items such as meals, food, and household needs is a wonderful way to provide support and care to individuals or families who may be struggling or simply needs additional support. These tangible items can make a significant difference in their lives during this season.

## **PROVIDE RELATIONAL SUPPORT**

By providing relational support, we can help families and individuals not only meet their basic physical needs but also address the emotional and social challenges they face. This type of support recognizes the importance of building relationships and community, which can have a long-lasting positive impact on those in need.

## **OPEN HOMES**

Opening up your home to vulnerable families and kids is a very personal and impactful way to get involved. Families within churches can offer temporary or permanent housing to those in need, providing a safe and supportive environment for them to thrive.



# The CARE GRID

Prevention	Foster Care	Adoption	Aging Out
 <p>Goal: To provide safety &amp; keep a family together.</p>	<p>Goal: To stabilize a foster or kinship placement or reunify a family.</p>	<p>Goal: To preserve adoptive placement or finalize adoption.</p>	<p>Goal: To help prepare a youth for independence.</p>
 <p>Goal: To heal family and prevent removal.</p>	<p>Goal: To support foster and kinship families toward reunification.</p>	<p>Goal: To support adoptive parents and children.</p>	<p>Goal: To build support network for youth.</p>
 <p>Goal: To provide relationships to heal &amp; strengthen families.</p>	<p>Goal: To recruit safe, quality temporary homes.</p>	<p>Goal: To find forever homes for children &amp; youth.</p>	<p>Goal: To deepen support for youth by providing "home".</p>



# *The* CARE GRID

Prevention	Foster Care	Adoption	Aging Out



# my COMMUNITY



To know where you are going,  
you have to know where you are.



## Current Stats in this Community

### In my community...

Children in foster care

#

Children waiting for adoption

#

Foster families in the county

#

Foster families needed to meet the demand

#

Children aging out of the system this year

#

NOTES





# Get INVOLVED PREVENTION



## 1 CarePortal- Level One

By equipping a care-sharing network to meet practical needs we are unleashing the power of community to strengthen families, support safe reunification, stabilize temporary foster and kinship placements, and accelerate timely permanence for children.



## 2 Mentorship- Level Two

Support at-risk families by creating a wraparound support team that provides groceries, holiday assistance, and other essential resources. Develop parenting classes that can be hosted at the church to equip families with valuable skills.

Strengthen connections with the local child welfare office to better serve at-risk families in your community.



## 3 Open Homes- Level Three

Many states have programs designed to keep children safe and families together by connecting at risk families with stable loving families. These families essentially become extended family and keep families and kids out of the foster care system.

# Get INVOLVED

## FOSTER CARE



# 1

### Wrap Around Support - Level One

Support foster families with wrap-around care teams. Foster families provide love and stability to children in need, but they can't do it alone. Create teams to help with meals, cleaning, babysitting, and errands—simple acts that make a big impact. By working together, we can ensure foster families feel supported and equipped to continue welcoming children into their homes.



# 2

### Royal Family Kids Camp Kids Mentor Program - Level Two

Royal Family Kids Camp fosters resiliency, self-esteem, hope and positive memories. The camp curriculum and activities are woven through the modality of Trust-Based Relational Intervention to ensure our children are experiencing truly life giving activities throughout the 5-day experience.

[forthechildren.org](http://forthechildren.org)



# 3

### Open Homes - Level Three

Recruit families from your church to open their homes. Becoming a foster parent is a wonderful way to positively impact a child's life. Foster parents provide a safe and nurturing home to children who have been removed from their birth families due to abuse, neglect, or other issues. Foster parents help children heal and thrive by providing love, support, and stability during a challenging time.



# Get INVOLVED ADOPTION



## 1 Wrap Around Support - Level One

Create wrap-around support teams to uplift and strengthen adoptive families. From providing meals, household help, and babysitting to offering support, these teams ensure families feel supported as they navigate the lifelong journey of adoption. By surrounding adoptive families with practical care and community, we help create a stable, nurturing environment for both parents and children.



## 2 Relational Support Groups - Level Two

Establish a support group for adoptive families to help them navigate the unique challenges of adoption. This group offers a safe, supportive space where adoptive parents can share experiences, seek advice, and receive emotional support from others who truly understand both the joys and complexities of adoption.



## 3 Adopt - Level Three

Across the country, many children and youth in foster care are waiting for permanent, loving families. The majority are over the age of 8, with many being boys between 11-16. Sibling groups are common, making families willing to adopt multiple children especially needed.

- Current Living Situations – Most reside in foster homes, while some are in residential facilities or group living settings.
- The Need for Family – None of these children asked to be in their current situation, but all need the love and stability of a permanent home.



# Get INVOLVED

## AGING OUT



### 1 Wrap Around Support - Level One

These teams can provide mentorship, life skills training, meals, transportation, and emotional support, helping young adults transition successfully into independent living. By surrounding them with a caring community, we can help ensure they have the stability, guidance, and resources needed to build a strong future.



### 2 Mentoring - Level Two

Many teens aging out lack stable guidance and support, making mentorship critical in helping them navigate education, employment, life skills, and emotional well-being.

- In-Person & Virtual Mentorship – Build a meaningful connection through regular meet-ups or phone-based mentorship programs.
- Provide Guidance – Help with essential skills like budgeting, job applications, college planning, and personal development.

Whether through weekly calls, virtual check-ins, or in-person meetings, mentoring provides a crucial lifeline of support for young adults aging out of foster care.



### 3 Open home - Level Three

Consider opening your home to an 18-year-old who is aging out of the foster care system. Many young people in this stage of life face significant challenges as they transition into adulthood without the support of a stable family or home. Fortunately, many states offer specialized programs that provide financial assistance, mentorship opportunities, and other essential resources to help foster families guide these young adults toward independence. By welcoming an 18-year-old or older into your home, you can provide the stability, encouragement, and life skills they need to successfully navigate this critical phase of their journey.

# APPENDIX

## A1-2

Glossary

## A3

Resource

## A4

Recommend Reading

## A5

Drip Strategy

## A6

Evaluate and Debrief

*let's get in touch*





# GLOSSARY

**Adoption:** Adoption is the social, emotional, and legal process in which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family.

**Child Welfare:** Child welfare is a continuum of services designed to ensure that children are safe and that families have the necessary support to care for their children successfully. Child welfare agencies typically support or coordinate services to prevent child abuse and neglect.

**Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA):** is a trained volunteer appointed by a judge to advocate for the best interests of a child involved in the child welfare system due to abuse or neglect. CASA workers gather information about the child's situation, collaborate with professionals, and make recommendations to the court to ensure the child receives necessary services, a safe home, and a stable future. They serve as a consistent, trusted advocate for the child throughout the legal process.

**Foster Care:** Foster care is a temporary living situation for kids whose parents cannot take care of them and whose need for care has come to the attention of child welfare agency staff. While in foster care, children may live with relatives, foster families or in group facilities. Nearly half of kids who enter the foster care system will return to their parent or primary caretaker.

**Guardian Ad Litem:** Advocate for children in court proceedings, including child abuse and neglect, paternity and divorce/custody cases.



# GLOSSARY

**Guardianship:** A permanent commitment to be responsible for the well-being and support of a child until they reach adulthood. As a guardian, you have the authority to make medical and educational decisions for the child. In the case of foster care, guardianship is court appointed.

**Hotline:** The phone number provided that allows you to notify your state's department of child welfare if you suspect a child is being abused or neglected. Abuse and neglect can be reported anonymously and the service is available to use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends and holidays.

**Licensed Child Placement Agency:** A state or private agency that facilitates the placement of children in foster care. The child placing agency is required to abide by the minimum standards set by the state as they license foster families.

**Respite Care:** is temporary, short-term care provided to foster children, giving their foster parents a break to rest, handle personal matters, or prevent burnout. It allows foster families to recharge while ensuring that children continue to receive safe, nurturing care. Respite care can range from a few hours to several days and is typically provided by trained individuals or licensed foster families who understand the unique needs of children in foster care. This support helps maintain placement stability and enhances the well-being of both foster parents and children.

**Trauma-informed Care:** This approach recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and integrates this understanding into all aspects of care and support. It prioritizes safety, trust, and empowerment, ensuring that interactions and interventions do not retraumatize individuals.

# Resources

## CarePortal

CarePortal is a technology platform that connects churches and community members with the needs of vulnerable children and families, often working in collaboration with child welfare agencies. When a child-serving agency identifies a family in crisis, they can submit specific needs—such as beds, clothing, transportation, or financial assistance—into CarePortal. (Free)

[CarePortal.org](http://CarePortal.org)



Enrollment Link

## Care Communities

Care Communities are teams of volunteers who provide practical, emotional, and spiritual support to foster, adoptive, or kinship families. **Promise686** offers online training and resources. (Fee is associated with the training)

[Promise686.org](http://Promise686.org)



Enrollment Link

## Foster/Adoption Online Training Support

Chaplain Ted Stackpole offers free online Christian foster and adoption care training, providing practical tools for foster parents, church leaders, and ministry teams. This resource supports personal growth and fulfills training hour requirements for foster parents. Whether you're caring for a child or equipping your team, this training is a valuable way to learn and make a difference.

[ChaplainTed.org](http://ChaplainTed.org)



## Trauma-Informed Church Training

### Hope for the Journey Training

Your church has the opportunity to host Hope for the Journey, a valuable training designed to equip those who care for children from hard places. This training is ideal for:

- Foster and adoptive parents seeking tools to better support their children
- Children's ministry leaders working to create safe and nurturing environments
- School teachers looking for strategies to help students with trauma backgrounds

[HopeForTheJourney.com](http://HopeForTheJourney.com)





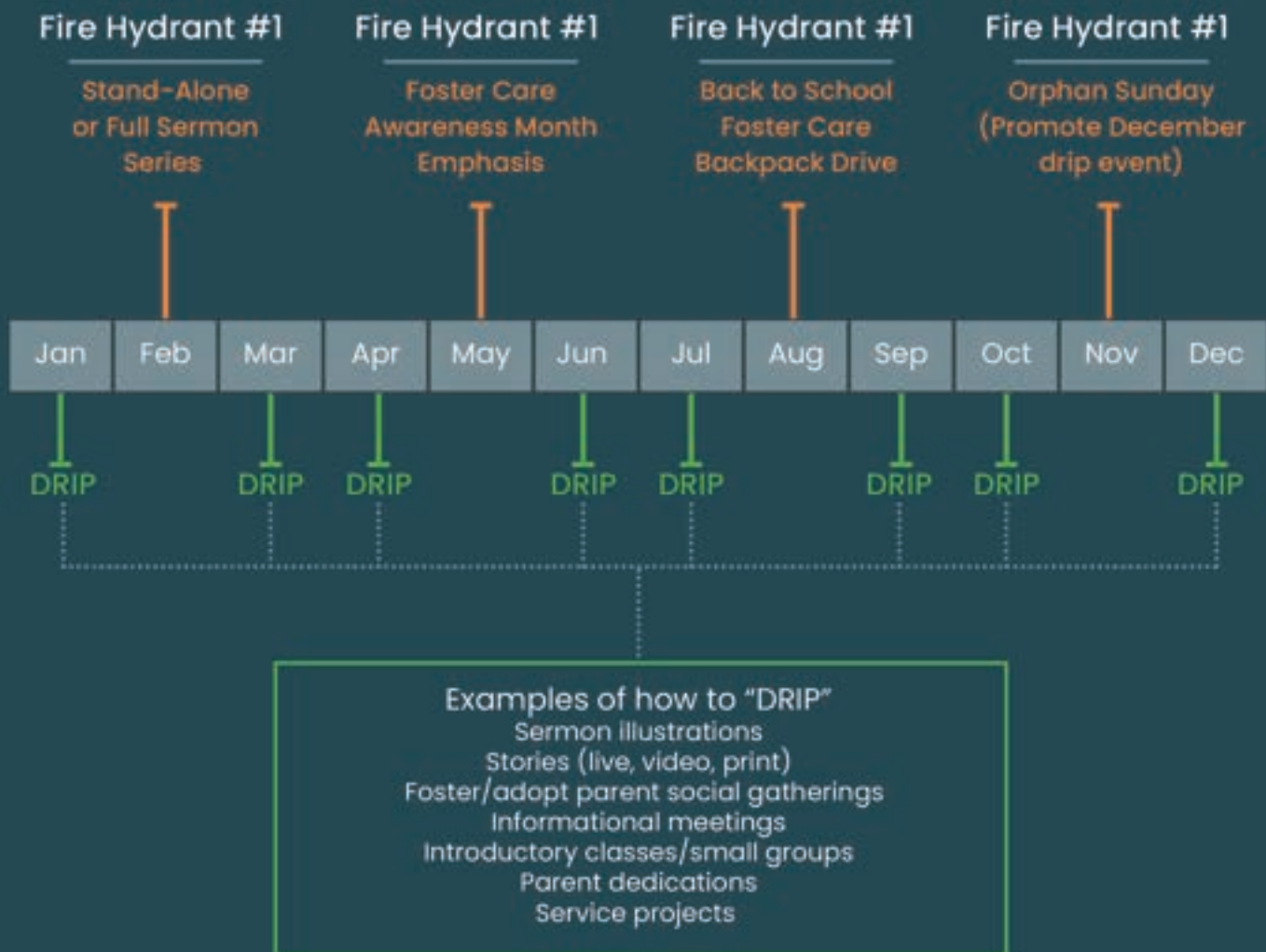
# RECOMMEND READING

- **Adopted For Life:** The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches by Russell D. Moore
- **Everyone Can Do Something** by Jason Johnson
- **All In Orphan Care** by Jason Johnson
- **The Connected Child:** Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family by Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine
- **Orphanology:** Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care by Tony Merida and Rick Morton
- **Orphan Justice:** How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adopting by Johnny Carr and Laura Captari
- **The Connected Parent** by Dr. Purvis and Lisa Qualls
- **Whole Brained Child** by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson
- **ReFraming Foster Care** by Jason Johnson





# SAMPLE ONE YEAR DRIP STRATEGY



## Reflection Exercise Template

# Evaluate and Debrief

Reflecting on different areas of ministry (support teams, communication, marketing, events, services, etc.) can help you identify what things are helping or hindering your ministry goals.

Ministry area:

Stop  
Doing

Do  
less of

Keep  
doing

Do  
more of

Start  
doing

