



*St. Joseph*  
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[www.consecrationtostjoseph.org](http://www.consecrationtostjoseph.org)

## St. Joseph's Ministry in Kentucky

*A Resource Guide for Church Leaders*

*A Faith-based Foster Care/Adoption  
Recruitment and Support Initiative.*



**DCCH  
CENTER**  
For Children & Families

**FOSTER CARE  
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*Special recognition to the Texas Catholic  
Conference of Bishop's St. Joseph  
Ministry model. Their inspiration helped  
launch DCCH Center and Diocese of  
Covington's Ministry.*



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### **Introduction**

Please join us in supporting the nearly 10,000 children in the foster care system in Kentucky. There is a role for each of us! Our resource kit provides a process for each church to discern how their congregation can engage.

### **What is the St. Joseph Ministry?**

The objective of the St. Joseph Ministry is to raise awareness of the many ways Christians can support children who enter the State of Kentucky, Child Protective Services (CPS) system. This awareness will be measured by the number of individuals, families and churches becoming involved in foster care and adoption. Browse the resources here and contact DCCH Center for Children and Families (<https://www.dcchcenter.org>) or the Covington Kentucky Diocese Pro-Life Office (<https://covdio.org>) for more information.

### **We know:**

- Taking care of the orphan is a fundamental teaching of the Church.
- Being a foster/adoptive parent for children in the CPS system is very difficult. Children are often older. Regardless of age, they also often have mental, emotional, psychological, and/or physical challenges. Many have siblings also needing care, and they wish to be together.
- Children in the general foster care population move on average three times because the foster family may not be adequately prepared or supported to care for them. Moving and inconsistent care can add to the trauma experienced in the original abusive environment.
- It takes a village to raise any child, but especially children who have experienced trauma. There are many roles and ways we can wrap a foster child and their families – biological, foster, and adoptive -- in a nurturing network of support.

### **Call to Action:**

As St. Joseph accepted the task of fostering Jesus, we as Christians are called to also care for the orphan. This role can come in many forms: fostering, or adopting, providing respite and other supportive services to youth coming from the foster care system. It might also be as simple as praying and offering tangible gifts to a child or new foster / adoptive family when they need it the most.

- Full-time fostering of a child for a season
- Adopting a child or sibling group and making a lifetime commitment



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- Becoming a Respite Provider, Mentor, or Volunteer for youth
- Being your church contact person to help disseminate information for the St. Joseph Ministry
- Becoming a prayer warrior for the child and family fostering/or adopted in your church
- Donating goods for a new foster or adoptive family, find out if they need a bed, car seat, dresser, or some clothes/toys for the child
- Offering your time with tutoring a child, babysitting, or transportation to and from school or other activity, or offer a meal to a busy foster/adoptive family when most needed
- Making a financial donation to your local non-profit foster care or pro-life agency



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## A Prayer for Foster Children

Dear Joseph, foster father of Jesus and protector of the Holy Family, in you we contemplate a model of courage and compassion.

Help us be more courageous in making space for God in our lives, so we may be better guardians of the vulnerable, especially the children and their families seeking our care.

As we contemplate your role, alongside the Blessed Virgin Mary, as first teacher of the faith to Jesus, may we recognize our own call to live with conviction and fidelity God's mercy and faithfulness.

Help us to be more compassionate, so we may be present and faithful to all, but especially to those children whose lives are chaotic, anxiety-filled and too often marred by violence.

As we contemplate the Holy Family's moments of stress in Jesus' young life – your betrothal to the Blessed Virgin Mary, your flight to Egypt, losing Jesus in the Temple – may we recognize our own call to give tender care and protection to those whom God brings to us.

Help us to be strong and wise in our faith, yet tender and open to love, as you were. May God grant that our families, including our Church family, be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel.

Amen.





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### **Where to start?**

This resource guide provides tools for each phase of implementing the St. Joseph Ministry into church life. There are most likely families within the church who are already involved in every aspect of the child welfare system, but church leadership might not be fully aware of them. This can range from having been a child who was once in Child Protection Services or being/having been foster or adoptive parents. Perhaps there are Church members who are social workers, teachers, law enforcement, judicial or other professionals, or volunteers who have been or are working with the CPS and foster care system.

No matter how strong the connection to the church, foster parents often report feeling isolated or invisible in their communities. Foster children's needs can be very overwhelming, and parents do not know how to seek assistance from their church family. Foster parents can feel different, sometimes viewed with suspicion, or put on a pedestal and afraid to ask for help.

### **PHASE ONE: AWARENESS**

Provide an opportunity for your church congregation to be aware of the ministry, need for foster/adoptive parents, and learn how people from the church can support those with the calling.

### **Evaluate**

First assess what the leadership knows. This could be the pastoral staff, office, or other ministry leaders within the church. Ask:

- Do we have any foster and adoptive parents in the congregation?
- Who has children/grandchildren in the state child protection system? How might they fit into this ministry?
- Do we know of grandparents with custodial rights of their grandkids?
- Do we have anyone who works or volunteers directly with the child welfare system?
- What other ministries do we have right now which might naturally integrate support for foster families, such as the Bereavement, St. Vincent DePaul, Social Outreach, Fellowship or Pro-life groups.
- Can we contact current foster parents to complete the foster family survey?



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### **Establish a Core Committee**

Provide a clear mandate to the core committee. Determine if the committee can support existing ministries to include the care for foster children/families. Determine if formation of a new program is needed.

### **Liturgical Awareness**

Review the calendar of events and the liturgical resources for ways to incorporate prayers for foster families into liturgies and services, and to refer to their needs in sermons.

### **Compassionate Awareness**

Provide a training for parish/church clergy, staff, and key volunteers on trauma informed care and the intricacies of the foster care system. Perhaps a therapist within the church or general community could lend expertise. Professional, research-based training increases compassion for children harmed by abuse and neglect, removed from their birth homes, and placed in foster care. It also explains how trauma affects the brain, the behavior, and self-worth of a child.

## **PHASE TWO: INFORMATION**

By reviewing the church's annual calendar, integrating events relevant to foster families, and using the resources in this guide, you will be able to keep the congregation informed of the ways they can support foster families.

### **Events**

Consider how the church can highlight foster care in liturgies and activities during events already happening in the life of the church. Review the calendar (page 12) for special holidays or holy days for ideas.

### **Handouts**

These can be used in meetings, bulletin inserts, distributed electronically, or in other communication tools used by the parish/church. Some possible topics include:

1. Prayer for Foster Children.
2. How do children enter the foster care system?
3. What role will you play?



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### **KAPE: Kentucky's Adoption Profile Exchange**

A free photo listing with brief profiles of Kentucky children waiting for an adoptive family can be found at [prd.webapps.chfs.ky.gov/kape](http://prd.webapps.chfs.ky.gov/kape).

### **Presentations**

Foster care professionals from DCCH Center can offer support. Schedule time for an information session to explain the needs and process of the St. Joseph Ministry, and answer questions from individuals/groups within the parish/church.

### **PHASE THREE: NON-DIRECT ENGAGEMENT**

This is the easiest level of engagement and allows for the greatest number of people to become involved. There is little or no direct contact with children in foster care. The commitment is typically short term or one time. Current ministries within the church may be able to integrate this engagement into already existing programs.

While the state of Kentucky and DCCH Center provide reimbursement to foster parents for their time and expenses, it is not always enough to cover all the basics for the child.

Implementation of non-direct engagement will have the greatest impact if it is used to guide people to a deeper level of engagement with children and their families in the child welfare protection system. Opportunities for reflection and renewal should be provided to all involved at this level.

Examples of Non-direct engagement:

1. Prayer.
2. New material goods. Abused and neglected children often enter the foster care system with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing. New items needed include:
  - Clothes and shoes
  - Gifts for birthdays and holidays
  - School supplies
  - Blankets, bedding room decorations, beds, or dressers
  - Car seats, portable play pens
  - Diapers
  - Formula
  - Personal hygiene products



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3. Other material support could be tuition assistance if the family chooses to send the child to private school.
4. Services such as meals, haircuts or styling, home repairs, cleaning or vehicle maintenance, services for special events such as proms, holidays birthdays, etc.
5. Support groups for birth parents, social workers, and material help for birth family clients.
6. Provision of meeting space and/or refreshments for classes and meetings.
7. Material support for older youth, 18-21, entering Independent Living programs. This can include apartment furnishings, help with securing a job, transportation, etc.
8. Donations to DCCH Center and Pro-Life agencies.
9. Orphan Care Alliance in Kentucky provides support for DCCH Center and youth in Kentucky's foster care system, and offer a gateway for linking needs and donations for youth in foster care. <https://www.orphancarealliance.org>

### **PHASE FOUR: DIRECT ENGAGEMENT**

Fewer church members may be able to identify and help with this level of engagement. Often, training and background checks will be required. On-going, consistent interaction with the children and their families provide the greatest results. Having church staff and representatives trained with appropriate clearance will improve engagement by other church members. Providing a foundation of faith and spirituality allows people to find fulfillment and support in challenging circumstances. Training and information on trauma-informed care is essential at this level of engagement.

Examples of Direct engagement:

1. Hosting celebrations, picnics, holiday gatherings, or birthday parties, for a child in care from your church.
2. Academic tutoring for the child in care.
3. Mentoring and/or volunteering directly with the youth in care.
4. Respite care for the foster and adoptive parents.



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5. Offering a special skill or professional services to the foster or adoptive families.
6. Becoming a CASA worker (Court Appointed Special Advocate)
  - <https://casaforkidsnky.org>
  - <https://www.casanky.com>
  - <https://www.kentuckycasanetwork.org/who-we-are/about-us.html>
7. Joining the Foster Care Citizen's Review Board
  - <https://kycourts.gov/courtprograms/cfcrb/pages/default.aspx>

### **PHASE FIVE: INTEGRATION**

As families become aware of children in foster care system, their gifts and needs, they will become more aware of their role in nurturing and supporting children. This integration will allow a deeper awareness of the Holy Spirit and ensure a growing network of care and support.

A robust foster care support network can also spur deeper reflection on the criminal justice system, the educational improvement, and societal responses to end the root causes for children being removed from birth families and brought into foster care.

*DCCH is a ministry of the Diocese of Covington Catholic Church. What follows are some suggestions for incorporating the foster care message into the Catholic liturgy and traditions. Other denominations may want to consider similar ideas to utilize within their services and traditions.*



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#### **Suggested Prayers of the Faithful**

For all children in foster care, who are waiting for adoptive parents or who are in danger because of their family's circumstances, that they may experience God's healing love through the care given to them by all involved in the child welfare system... we pray to the Lord.

For those who work in child welfare – the judges, attorneys, guardians, social workers, support staff, and therapists – that they may shower God's goodness and love upon the children and their families with whom they come in contact... we pray to the Lord.

For foster parents, who often stand in the gap for children who suffer emotional, physical, verbal, and spiritual harm from their family's circumstances, that they may know their foster children are a gift from an eternal God, who deserve to be cared for as God's precious children... we pray to the Lord.

For foster parents and those who work in the child welfare system, that they may be the hands, feet, eyes, voices, and heart of our loving God to children in foster care... we pray to the Lord.

For our faith community, as we strive to be a witness of God's love in action, that we may embrace children in foster care, their families – biological, adoptive and foster; and the volunteers and professionals in this work, and that we may sincerely seek effective ways to minister in this often difficult, yet essential work... we pray to the Lord.

For our church community, that we may be more courageous in making space for God in our lives, so we may be better guardians of the vulnerable, especially children and their families seeking our care... we pray to the Lord.

For our faith community, that we may be more compassionate, so we may be present and faithful to all, but especially to children whose lives are chaotic, anxiety-filled, and too often marred by violence and drug addiction... we pray to the Lord.

For our government leaders, that lawmakers and agency directors may make wise decisions in the funding and operation of our state's child welfare system, so children and families have the resources and services they need to flourish... we pray to the Lord.

For young people who have recently aged out of foster care or soon will, that they might find the mentors and supports needed to navigate a new wise lifestyle for themselves... we pray to the Lord.



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### Calendar of Events

*Catholic Holy Days and Holidays*

- March 19** -Feast Day of St. Joseph, patron of foster parents
- April** -National Child Abuse Prevention Month  
-Last Sunday in April, Blue Sunday  
National Day of Prayer for Victims of Child Abuse
- May** -Month of Mary, Mother of God  
-National Foster Care Month  
-Mother's Day  
-National HELP (Honor, Encourage, Love and Pray) for Child Welfare Professionals Week
- June** -Father's Day
- July 26** -Feast of Saints Anne and Joachim, Jesus' grandparents
- October** -Respect Life Month
- November** -National Adoption Month
- December** -Feast of the Holy Family



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#### Liturgical Resources and Sermon/Homily Notes

##### *Litany of St. Joseph*

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy,  
God, the Father of Heaven, God the Son, Redeemer of the world, God the Holy Spirit, Holy  
Trinity,  
One God

Holy Mary, Saint Joseph, Noble Offspring of David, Light of Patriarchs, Spouse of the Mother  
of God, Chaste Guardian of the Virgin, Foster Father of the Son of God, Zealous Defender of  
Christ, Head of the Holy Family,

Joseph Most Just, Joseph Most Chaste, Joseph Most Prudent, Joseph Most Courageous, Joseph  
Most Obedient, Joseph Most Faithful,

Mirror of Patience, Lover of Poverty, Model of Workmen, Glory of Domestic Life, Guardian  
of Virgins, Pillar of Families, Comfort of the Afflicted, Hope of the Sick, Patron of the Dying,  
Terror of Demons, Protector of the Holy Church.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, SPARE US, O LORD

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, GRACIOUSLY HEAR US, O LORD

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, HAVE MERCY ON US

V. He has made him lord of his household.

R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let Us Pray, O God, who, in your loving providence, chose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse  
of the your most Holy Mother, grant us the favor of having him for our intercessor in heaven  
whom on earth we venerate as our protector: you, who live and reign forever and ever.

AMEN.

**Luke 2:52** Jesus “increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor of God and man.” Under the  
paternal care of St. Joseph, we too can find him as our “increaser” to grow closer in the presence  
of God.”

“St. Joseph is our guide and our model. Because our vocation is like his. We must live his life,  
practice his virtues, and assimilate his spirit.”

-*St. Peter Julian Eymard*

“Let us love Jesus above all, let us love Mary as our mother; but then, how could we keep from  
loving Joseph, who was so intimately united to both Jesus and Mary? And how can we honor  
him better than by imitating his virtues? Now, what else did he do in all his life but contemplate,  
study, and adore Jesus, even in the midst of his daily labors? Behold, therefore, our model.”

-*St. Madeline Sophie Barat*



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**Exodus 20:12** “Honor your mother and father”

“The position of St. Joseph as husband and foster father gives witness to the dignity of fatherhood.”

*-Venerable Joseph Mindszenty*

“Although you (St. Joseph) are not necessary for the conception and birth, nevertheless you will be necessary for (his) sustenance; and your first care will concern his name.”

*-St. Albert the Great*

“Saint Joseph's dignity springs from his privilege of being the legal father of the Incarnate Son of God. Here, then, is a man whom the Son of God calls father, one whom he (Jesus) serves and obeys and before whom he kneels for a paternal blessing.”

*-St. Peter Julian Eymard*

The Foster Father role is more than contractual. In Latin, the title literally means Nurturer of the Son of God. This spiritual fatherhood is forever as it shows the enduring loving relationship between the spiritual father and the child. St. Joseph's role as foster father was more than just legal fatherhood, it was an authoritative, affectionate, faithful, and everlasting fatherhood.

**Matthew 25:35-40** “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.” Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

As a good nurturing foster father, St. Joseph did for the least of these and he did it actually for Jesus. What better model do we have to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for sick, visit the imprisoned and lonely?

Joseph was the savior of the Savior, as he protected Jesus from the evil wrath of Herod.



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**Matthew 1:20** “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

Joseph knew Mary, and she was full of grace, he instinctively had to have felt Mary's profound holiness. When she confided this overwhelming news with Joseph, and what this special calling meant for her, it was probably too much for Joseph to comprehend. It was not out of mistrust, but rather his own sheer sense of inadequacy to be her espoused. It took God's urging through an angel to quell his fear, to reassure him that he could fulfill his special role as the Spouse of the Mother of God, Most Chaste Guardian of the Virgin, Foster Father of the Son of God, Head of the Holy Family, and Zealous Defender of Christ, among many of St Joseph's titles.



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### Foster Family Survey

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have family in town or a small group who supports you?    Yes    No

Names of children and youth under your care:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special snacks, treats, activities your children enjoy:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your children's favorite types of food or meals?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please describe a day of the week that is most challenging because of transportation, therapy, visits, homework, etc.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please list your favorite things on this list:

Restaurant(s)    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Relaxation activities    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Dessert(s)    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Beverage(s)    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Color(s)    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Sport(s)/Team(s)    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Flower(s)    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Song(s)/Genre(s)    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_



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### **What Role Will You Play?**

*Five ways to help children through the St. Joseph Ministry*

#### **Foster Parenting**

- Nearly 10,000 children are in out of home care in the state of Kentucky.
- Foster homes are most needed for children over 10, sibling groups, and minorities.
- Foster parenting requires self-sacrifice, and the church wants to support you in this important role and unique calling.

#### **Biological Family Support**

- About three out of every four children will be reunited with birth parents or relatives.
- After ensuring for the safety, Kentucky's top priority is to help birth parents heal and find the resources to regain custody of their children.
- Biological families need more support to help them break the cycle of abuse, poverty, and/or addiction and the church can offer support.

#### **Independent Living (IL) Youth**

- At age 18, youth living in foster care who are not able to reunite with birth family and are not adopted age out of the system, or are given the option to extend their state custody until age 21 and garner more IL supports.
- Without strong network of support, these young people are vulnerable to being homeless, exploited, and having difficulties with legal and moral decision making.
- Long-term relationships and guidance are required to offer them a future worthy of their human dignity.

#### **Adoption**

- Minority ethnic group children over two years old are more likely to age out of the system without the opportunity of being adopted.
- Nearly 600 children in Kentucky's child welfare system are ready for adoption— many are sibling groups or teens.
- Adoption from the foster care system costs little to nothing, adoption assistance and other financial perks help defray future costs for rearing a child through adoption.
- All children, including those adopted at infancy, experience trauma. Healing can occur. Parents need both professional services and the support of a community.

#### **It Takes a Church**

- Pray for the children and parents within your church.
- Offer material support.
- Get directly involved such as tutoring, respite, transportation, mentoring services.
- Become a CASA Worker/Join a Foster Care Review Board.



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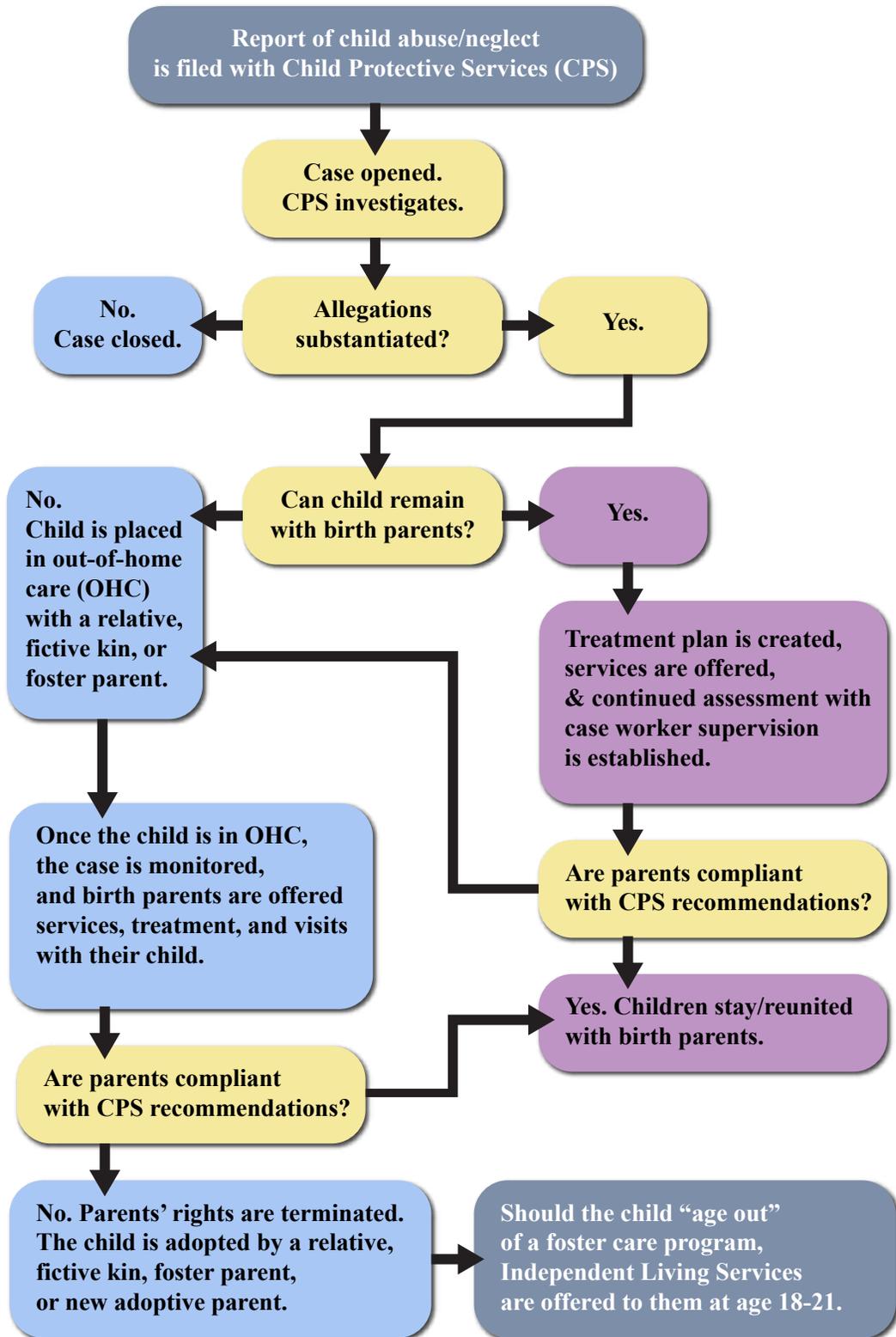
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### How Foster Children Move Through The System





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### Contact Information

#### **DCCH Center for Children & Families** **Therapeutic Foster Care & Adoption Program**

75 Orphanage Road  
Fort Mitchell, KY 41017  
(859)331-2040  
[dcchcenter.org/inquire](http://dcchcenter.org/inquire)



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