



Navigating Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Care for Children & Youth with DD in Virginia

IFSP Coordinated Regional Council Meeting, March 26, 2025

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Formed Families Forward's **mission** is to improve developmental, educational, social, emotional and post-secondary outcomes for **children and youth with disabilities and other special needs** through provision of information, training and support to adoptive and foster parents, and kinship caregivers.



Nearly 14% of Virginia children are in formed families!

Who we are...

Family-led, family-run 501c3 nonprofit organization, supporting **foster**, **adoptive** and **kinship families** in northern Virginia who are raising children and youth with disabilities and specialized needs. We do this through:

- In-person trainings and classes (we host and we come to you!)
- Webinars
- Fact sheets, videos, topical webpages and other resources
- Direct consultations, virtual in and in person
- Connecting families to resources
- Youth/young adult and parent/caregiver support groups
- Youth and parenting classes



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Funding Sources

- Funding sources are largely federal- we operate a Community Parent Resource Center, funded by US Office of Special Education Programs.
- FFF is the family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (Va Department of Education project).
- Several local grants/contracts to deliver specific trainings.



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Who and How we serve...

- Trainings, webinars, consultations to families, resources, peer support groups for youth/young adults and parents/caregivers, parenting classes and systems navigation are all **free of charge** to families and professionals who serve families.
- Last year, we hosted sponsored and/or presented **over 3 dozen training events**, attended by **@1450 participants**. Directly served more than 2000 families & professionals; services reached more than 4000.
- **98** participants who completed evaluations agreed the presenters know the content well. **100%** of the responding participants agreed the training materials were high quality.



Resource Directory

- An online interactive Northern Virginia Family Resource Directory
- Can narrow searches by jurisdiction, insurance, Medicaid, and trauma expertise

<https://FormedFamiliesForward.org/resource-directory/>

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Step 1:

Choose a Topic:

[ADOPTIVE, FOSTER, AND KINSHIP SERVICES AND RESOURCES](#)

[CONDITION SPECIFIC INFORMATION](#)

[EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND RESOURCES](#)

[FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES AND RESOURCES](#)

[LEGAL ADVOCACY SERVICES AND RESOURCES](#)

[MEDICAL AND HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND RESOURCES](#)

[MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES AND RESOURCES](#)

[TRANSITION SERVICES AND RESOURCES FOR YOUNG ADULTS \(AGE 18-21\)](#)

Or view a provider directly:

• [SEARCH ORGANIZATIONS & PROVIDERS BY NAME »](#)

[About This Resource Directory](#)

[Who We Are And What We Do](#)

[Give Us Feedback »](#)

Formed Families Together

- Formed Families Together peer-led support groups for **adoptive and foster parents and kinship caregivers** meet monthly
- **Virtual group- First SUNDAY of each month, 7:30 – 9 PM**
- **In-person meeting- Third Wednesday of each month, 7- 8:30 PM in Fairfax**
- Led by FFF staff and a volunteer all trained as peer group facilitators
- <https://FFtogether.eventbrite.com>



Recent and Available Trainings and Events

- *Critical Crossroads: Resources for Recognizing and Addressing Trauma in Children and Youth with Disabilities* webinar
- *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders* webinar series
- *Accessing Special Education: Evaluation and Eligibility Basics* webinars
- *Functional Behavior Assessments: What Families Should Know* webinar
- Three videos featuring lived experiences of families and educators, *Understanding Trauma*, *Addressing Trauma* and *Building Trauma Sensitive Schools*



MORE Trainings and Events

- ***Learning Your Way*** online, on-demand special education, collaboration and trauma courses for families and professionals. Open now.
- **Topics** include:
 - Special Education 101
 - Constructive Communication and Collaboration
 - Trauma 101
 - Kinship Care
 - Other Health Impairments
 - Positive Parenting



Brief overview video



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PqVuWQm8As&t>

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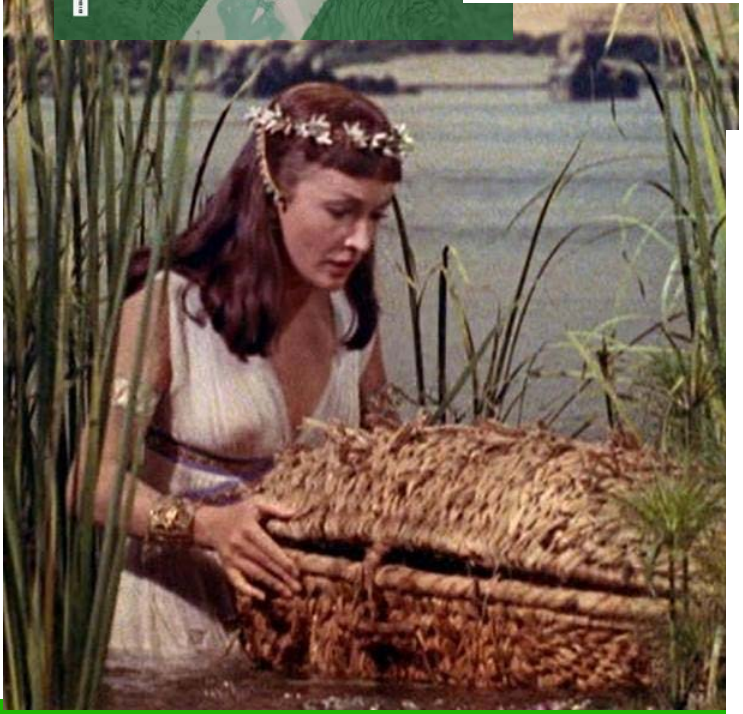
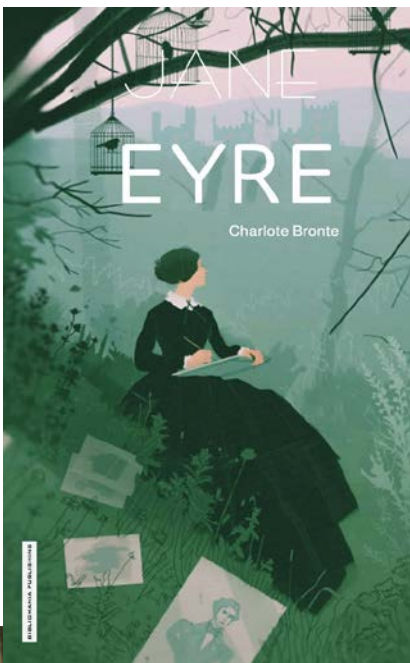
Three “Formed” Family Types

Kinship
Care

Foster
Care

Adoption

*What are your
images of
formed
families?*



WHO are Virginia's adoptive, foster & kinship families?

13.6% of children are in **homes headed by someone other than a birth or stepparent**

- 2% of children live in homes with adoptive parents; the rest are kinship (mostly grandparents), foster or other unrelated child (US Census, 2022 5-year est. ACS)

Foster Care:

- @ 5400 children/youth in foster care at any one time
- About 69% are age 7 and older
- 46% are in non-relative foster care; 2% are in institutional care; 12% in group homes; 18% in relative foster homes; 14% in independent living (Feb 2025 VDSS)

WHY are children in care?

Most common reasons/ conditions for last removals involved:

- Neglect (51%)
- Parent drug abuse (32%)
- Child behavior problem (20%)
- Physical Abuse (15%)
- Inadequate housing (13%)

Most recent case plan goal:

- Reunification (38%)
- Adoption (31%)
- Emancipation (12%)

(2025 VDSS data)



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Videos- Foster Care from Eyes of Child



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Foster Care Outcomes

- Average more than 3 placements per stay.
- Every year, 30,000 young people nationwide leave the foster care system without lifelong families.
- 56% of 19-year-olds and 70% of 21-year-olds who were in foster care had completed high school/GED.
- 50% of children in foster care have chronic medical problems; 25% of alumni have PTSD.

Sources: AFCARS/Casey Family & KidsCount (A.E. Casey Foundation)



Kinship Arrangements

- Informal arrangements- kin raising children are not the custody of local dept of social services (DSS).
- Formal arrangements:
 - Care provider has legal custody of child (court order)
 - Child in legal custody of DSS but care provider serves as foster parent
 - Adoption by relative
 - Birth parent places child with kin; after 3 continuous years, kin care provider can file petition to adopt
 - Standby guardianship (appointed by birth parent via court petition)
 - Power of Attorney for some specific duties



Video- Kinship Care



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Video - Adoption



The connection to Specialized Needs:

- **30-40% of foster children and youth have IEPs**, likely an underestimate of those with disabilities eligible for services. (Geenen & Powers, 2006)
- **Foster youth are 2.5 to 3.5 times** as likely than their non-foster peers to receive special education services. (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2014)
- While screening youth in foster care for special education needs increases their chances of receiving services, one study showed **84% of youth whose screenings indicated potential special education needs did not receive related services within 9–12 months** (Petrenko, Culhane, Garrido, & Taussig, 2011).
- At age 17, **34% of youth in foster care reported they had ever been placed in a special education classroom** (40% of males; 28% females). **67% reported they had received an out-of-school suspension** (72% males; 63% females) (data from California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study; CalYOUTH; Courtney & Okpych in McNamara et al., 2019)



- By 8th grade, **half of adopted children have been diagnosed with a disability** of some kind. **33% of all adopted children had received at least one out-of-school suspension by 8th grade**, compared to 10% of 8th graders living with both birth parents and 17% of children living with a single parent or in a stepfamily. (Institute for Family Studies, 2015)
- **40% of surveyed kinship households** had a child with special needs in residence. One quarter of those households included multiple children with special needs. (Grant, 2000)
- Children who live in kinship care with a relative have **more special health care needs, mental health problems such as ADHD and depression, and dental problems** compared with children who live with their parents. (Eleoff, 2010)
- For children (age 2-17) who live in nonparental care, the **rate of ADHD is two to more than three times higher** (15% all nonparental care and 26% of children in foster care vs. 8% of all children; NSCNC)
(Radel et al., 2016)

Why the high prevalence of disability in Formed Families?

<https://www.menti.com/alhjmg87b27z>



Supports for Formed Families impacted by ID/DD

- Public benefits (Medicaid; TANF; Child Care)
- Subsidies or 'adoption assistance' including enhanced payments based on intensity of disability-related needs. Uses Virginia Enhanced Maintenance Assessment Tool (VEMAT via VDSS)
- Children's Services Act
- Relative Maintenance Payments (kinship)
- Virginia Lifespan Respite Voucher Program, DARS (kinship)

Spring Forward Family Fun Day annual event



2025! Saturday, May 3
<https://bit.ly/FFFSF2025>



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