

CARING HEARTS FOR CHILDREN
FOSTER/ADOPT
ORIENTATION





WELCOME!

**YOUR FOSTER CARE JOURNEY
STARTS HERE**

ABOUT CARING HEARTS

Caring Hearts for Children is a nonprofit agency licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. We provide foster-to-adopt, adoption and kinship care services. Our licensed homes care for boys and girls, ages birth through 17 years.



Since 2011, Caring Hearts has serviced **more than 1,200 foster children**. Since the start of its foster-to-adopt program in 2017, the agency has **completed more than 300 adoptions by 200 different families**.

ABOUT CARING HEARTS

OUR SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Foster care
- Foster-to-adopt
- Adoption
- Kinship care



WE SERVE THE FOLLOWING REGIONS IN TEXAS:



- Region 3/3B
- Region 2
- Region 7

Our values put the **CARING** in Caring Hearts for Children



Child - Centered

Accountable

Reliable

Intentional

Nurturing

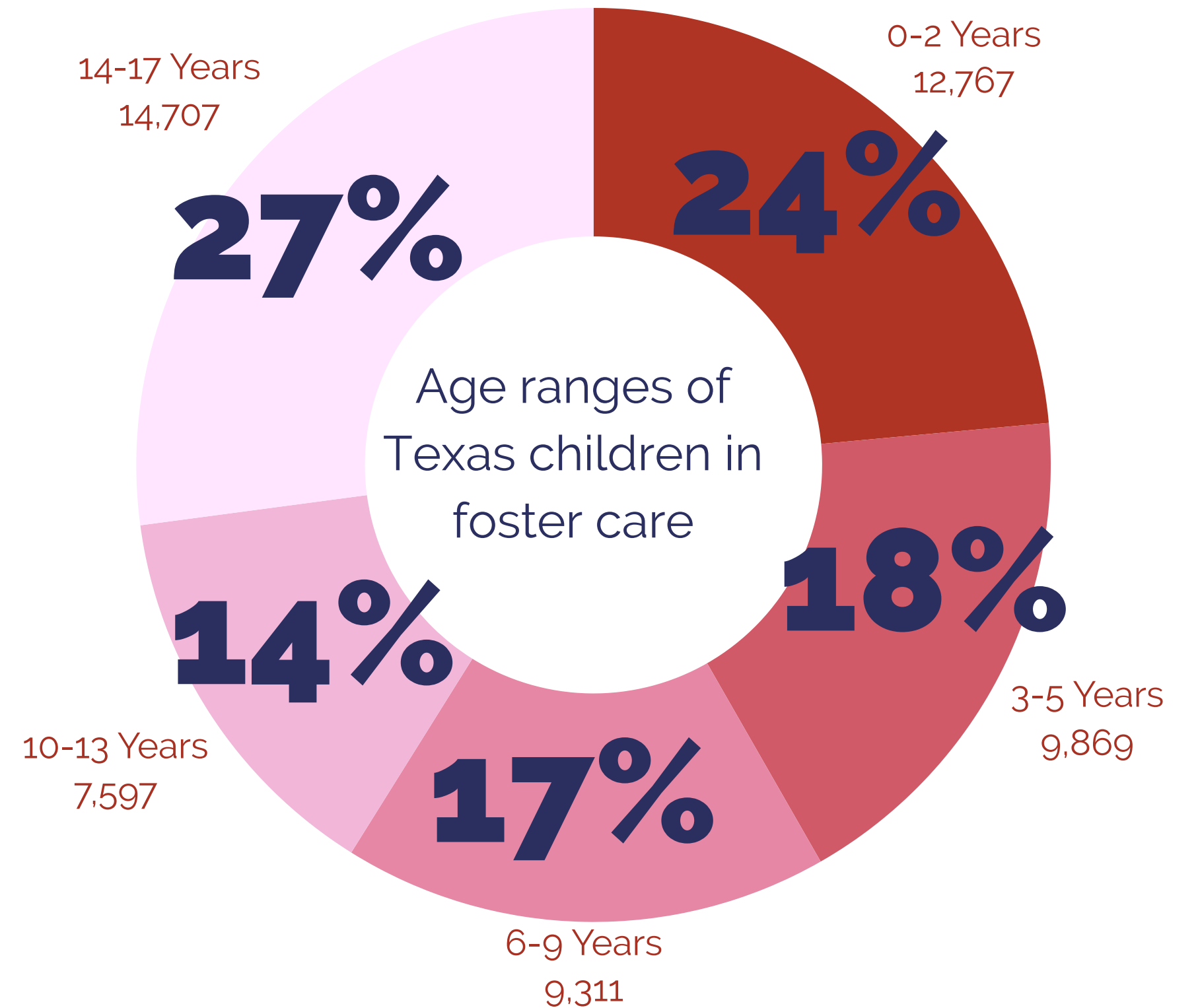
Giving

BY THE NUMBERS

Number of children in
foster care

427,910
in the U.S.

46,000
in Texas



ABOUT THE CHILDREN

While children in care are ages 0-21 and most ethnicities, children with the greatest need are:

- Teens
- Sibling groups, all ages
- African American and Latino
- Medically fragile
- Foster to reunify



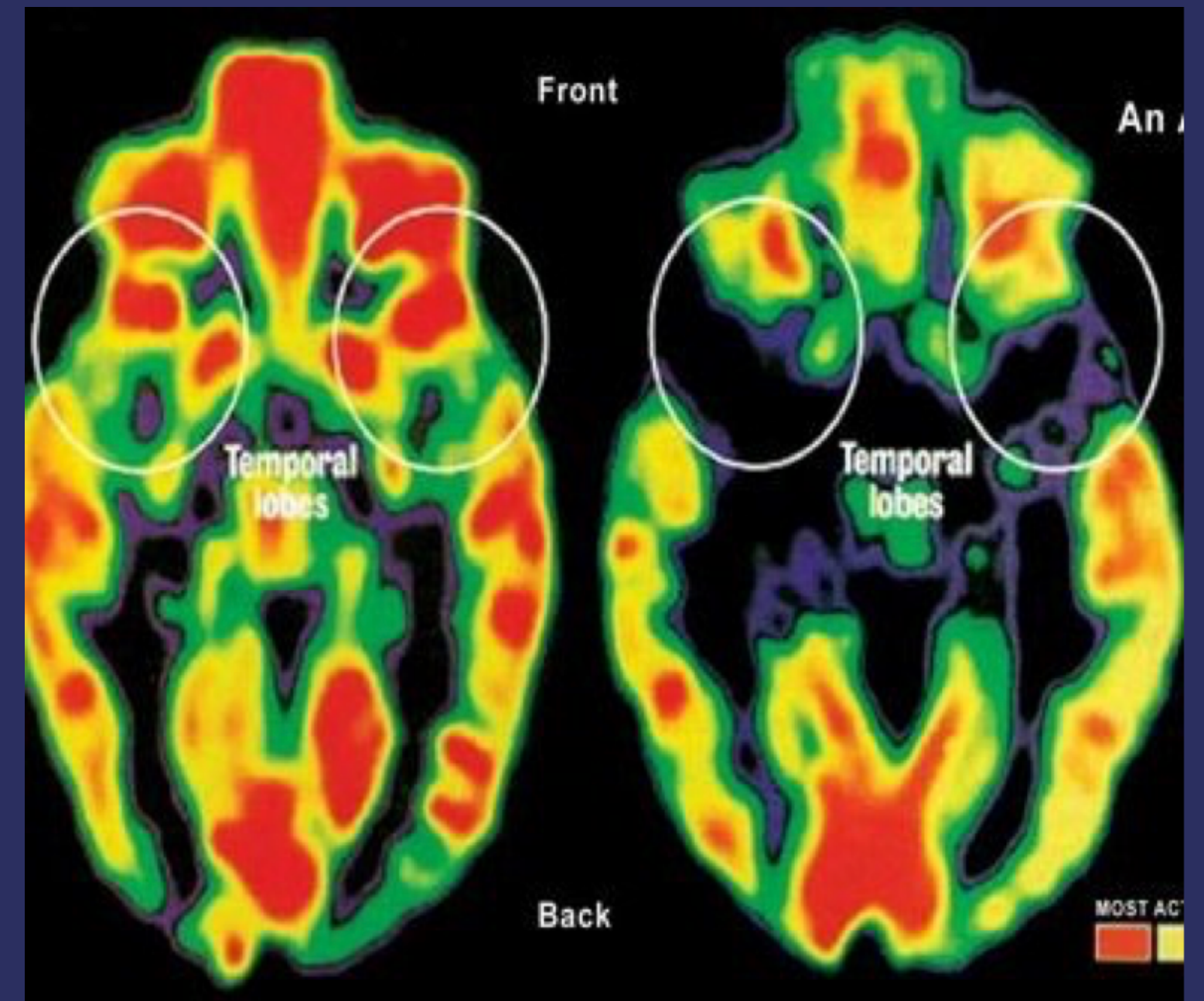
WHAT HAVE KIDS EXPERIENCED?

- Trauma
- Homelessness
- Trafficking
- Loss of a caregiver, family and community
- Six risk factors for trauma
- Difficult pregnancy
- Difficult birth
- Early hospitalization
- Neglect
- Abuse
- Trauma
- Kids with a lack of access to basic needs
- They will need unique parenting
- They will heal through relationships with you and connection to family when possible



HOW CAN TRAUMA AFFECT KIDS?

- Every child has experienced trauma because they have been removed from everything they know as home
- They will use behavior to communicate a need
- They may use their downstairs brain (fight, flight, freeze) instead of the frontal lobe (logic and reasoning)
- They will experience fear even when they are safe
- They have strong survival instincts



BUT, THERE IS HOPE!

Using a new model of parenting, we can help bring healing by understanding:

- Some forms of traditional parenting can be counterproductive to parenting children from hard places
- Behaviors are expressing a need and not an attack on you
- Daily tasks may not be within a child's skill set and they may need to be taught – even very basic things
- Helping the child understand and express their needs positively is a part of the parenting process
- You will have to take steps to show the child that you are on their team
- Reinforcement with frequency, duration and intensity is key

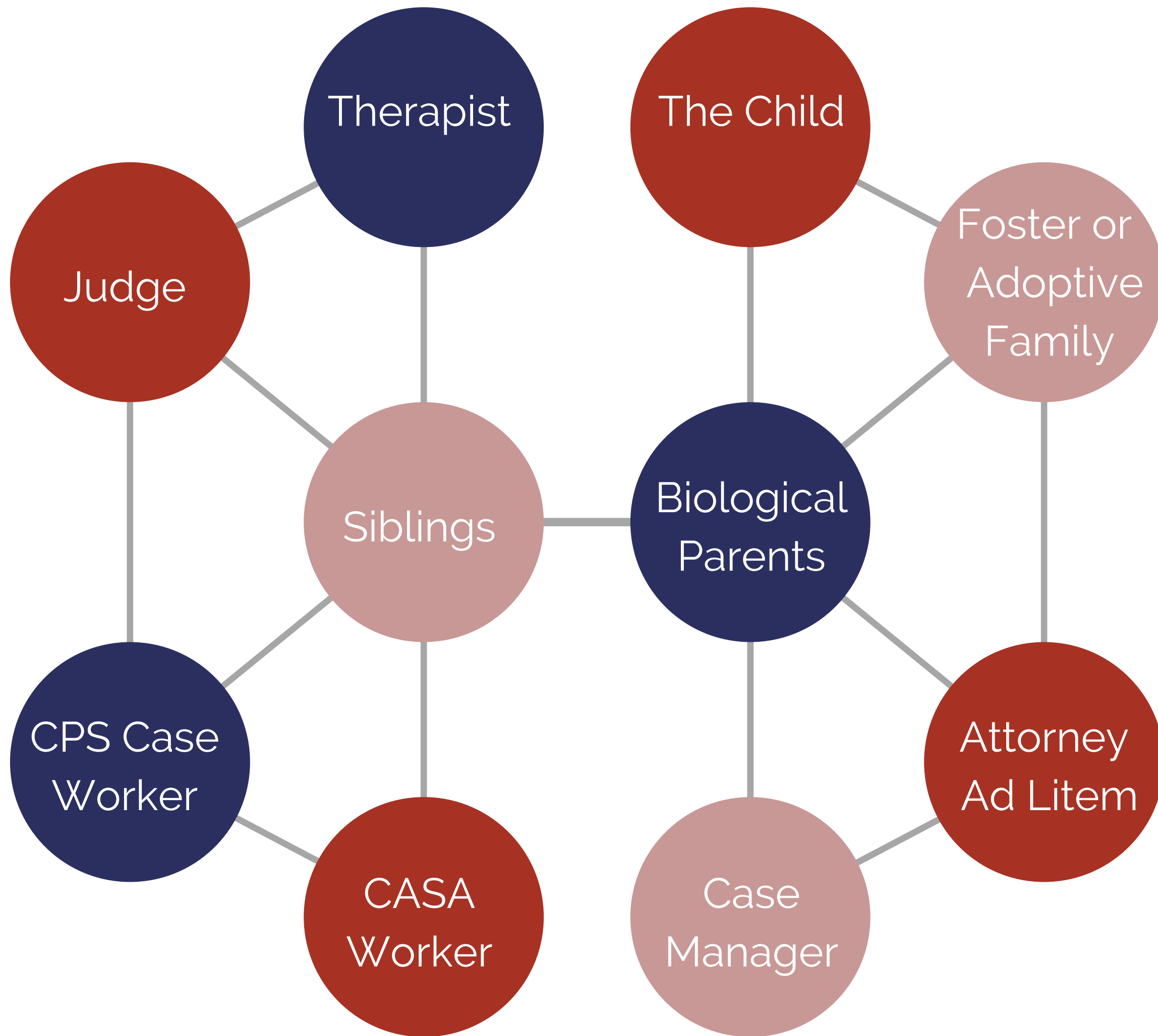


PARENTING KIDS IN FOSTER CARE

- Examine your motivations and expectations:
 - Justice
 - Compassion
 - Personal loss
 - Privilege
 - Belief system
- Are you prepared to parent in a way that considers a child's history – to be a change agent through healing relationship and meet children where they are?
- Gather a support system of people who will be willing to:
 - Get trained to babysit
 - Bring meals
 - Understand the challenges
 - Love your kids
 - Understand trauma

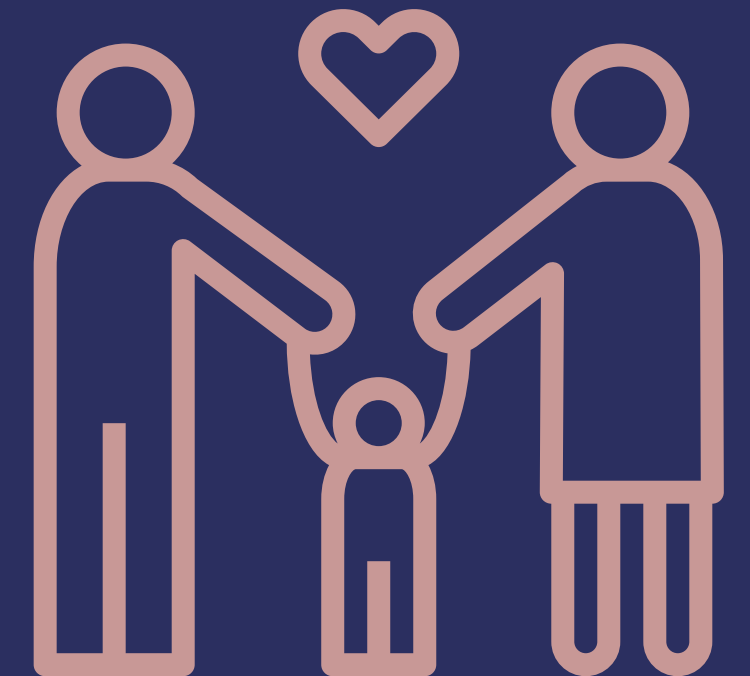


THE TEAM



PARENTS

- It is always important to have empathy and not be judgmental about a biological parent
 - These are often the people that kids look up to most
- Being a part of the child welfare system can be cyclical - often, parents were involved with CPS themselves
- It is important to refrain from an “us against them” mentality
- Parents will need to work through a service plan
- It is beneficial for parents, children and foster parents to have healthy communication boundaries established throughout the duration of a placement



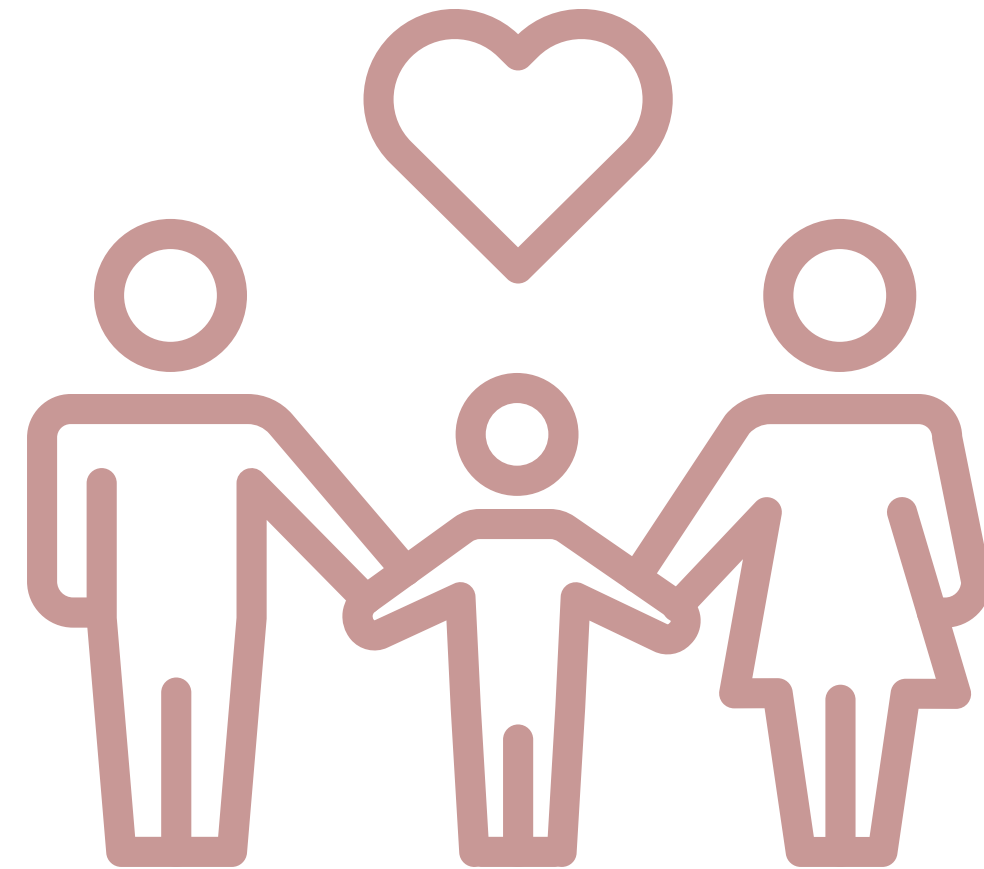
THE CHILD



- Child is removed from biological home and placed in a kinship home or foster home
- The initial permanency plan is reunification with biological family
- The child will have visits with parents to ensure connection remains intact

FOSTER PARENTS

- Parent children
- Support parents
- Contact with CPS caseworker and child placing agency case manager
- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)
- Ad Litem
- Transport to visits, doctor appointments, dental and therapy
- Service plan
- Foster parent documentation





REQUIREMENTS

- 21 years or older
- Financially stable (proof of income for last 60 days)
- TB test for every individual in the home
- Be open to sharing family history
- Adequate sleeping space
- Two relative and three non-relative references
- FBI checks, DPS, FPS, local law enforcement, out-of-state checks (any household member/frequent visitor over 14 years old)

ADOPTIVE PARENTS

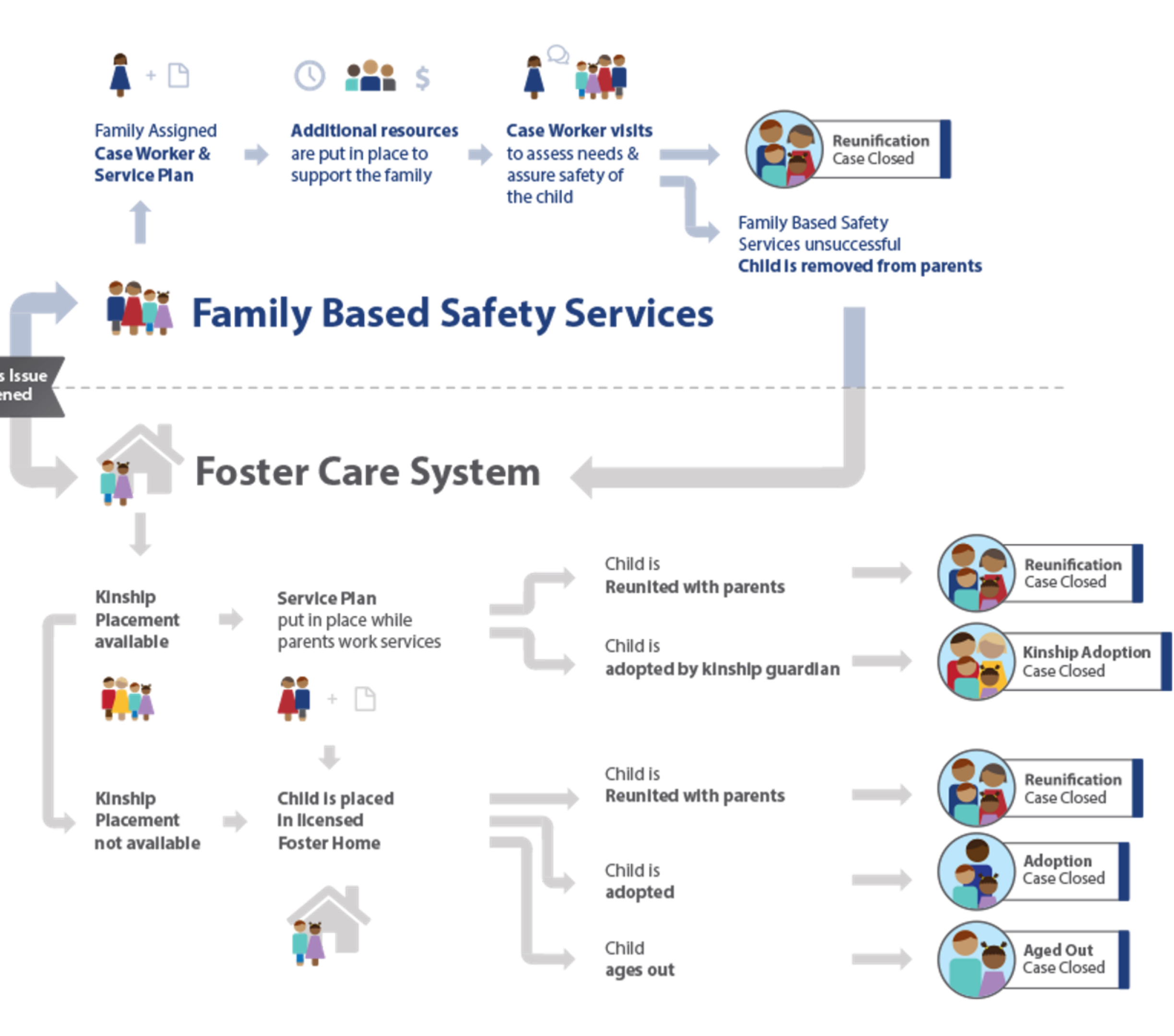
- When parents are unable to meet the goals of the service plan and parental rights are terminated
- Child may be adopted by the current foster or kinship family or a non-related licensed adoptive family

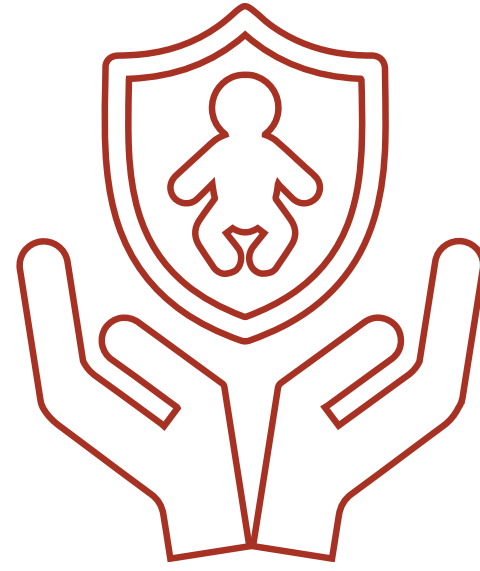




A CHILDREN'S JOURNEY

THROUGH FOSTER CARE





FAMILY BASED SAFETY SERVICES

- Parents complete a service plan while children remain in the home
- Additional support services are put into place if needed
- CPS continues to monitor the family to ensure safety and resources
- This is the best outcome for kids as long as the home is safe

KINSHIP PLACEMENT

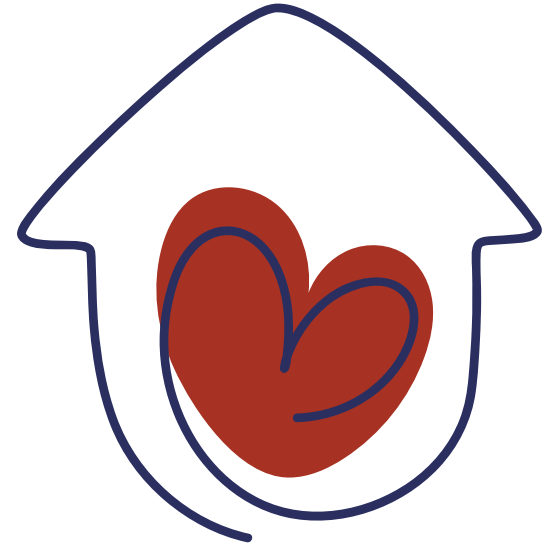


- Relative or fictive kin (families that knew the child prior to CPS involvement) that is safe for child to be placed with at time of removal or after a foster placement
- Relatives are first option for placement prior to child going to a foster placement
- Kinship families are often grandparents, aunts, uncles or family friends
- Kinship case manager assigned
- Children remain in placement until reunification or adoption

FOSTER PARENT

- Parent children considering their history.
- Contact with CPS caseworker, CASA, CPA case manager and Ad Litem
- Make your world as small as possible
- Help kids feel like they belong
- High levels of structure and high levels of nurture
- Being a foster parent has challenges, but nothing you can't work through with help





REUNIFICATION

- Parents complete service plan prior to reunification
- Additional support services in place if needed
- Children are returned home
- CPS continues to monitor the family to ensure safety and resources
- This is the best outcome for kids as long as the home is safe
- You have an opportunity to be a change agent through healing relationships with the entire family

FOSTER TO ADOPT

- Occurs if parents' rights are moving toward termination
- CPS will determine whether the child will be adopted by one of the following:
 - Kinship
 - Foster-adoptive family
 - Licensed adoptive family



STRAIGHT ADOPT

- Any given day there are 900 children in central Texas waiting for their forever family
- Eligible children are available for adoption
- Once licensed, your agency will submit your home study for children you are interested in
- Look for available children through TARE and the Heart Gallery
- Be prepared to adopt children with the most need



FIND WAITING CHILDREN: TARE

- Texas Adoption Resource Exchange
- Helps match adoption ready children with adoptive parents
- Families have to complete a family profile to see the full profile of children



**HEART
GALLERY**

A program of Partnerships for Children

FIND WAITING CHILDREN: HEART GALLERY

- An art exhibit showcasing photos of the kids by professional photographers who have donated their time to help these kids find families
- A collaboration between Partnerships for Children and CPS
- Goal is to find homes for children at risk for aging out of foster care
- Forever Family Filmings-KVUE Austin
- www.heartgallerytexas.com

AGED OUT

- Without a permanent family, the child ages out of foster care at 18 years old (or completion of high school if they turn 18 prior to graduation)
- The child may opt-in to foster care until they are 21 to receive additional services and support
- Only 3% of aged out youth take advantage of the free college tuition option without parents to guide them through the process

PROBABLE OUTCOMES



40% are homeless within the first year



50% struggle with substance abuse



60% end up in jail within the first year



70% are pregnant or parenting by their 21st birthday



80% of child trafficking victims have been involved in the foster care system

MEET JOANNA

she beat the odds...



Joanna was adopted as an infant. Came into care at age 13 due to adoptive parent feeling behaviors were “too much”



She spent time in a RTC, then a group home with less restrictions, but never should have been in care.



Challenges:

Managing Independence

General life skills

Health challenges

Self Value

Job Skills

JOANNA IS:

- Working at AISD for the last two years
- Wonderful and supportive mother
- Speaking on behalf of youth who have aged out of care

Joanna benefited from multiple supports from YES Mentoring, SH, Foster Angels, Foundation Communities, family of origin connection, a therapist and so many more

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DISPROPORTIONALITY

In Texas, a higher percentage of African American and Hispanic children:

- Are removed from their homes due to alleged abuse or neglect
- Don't return home to their families
- Grow up in foster care without being adopted or finding another permanent placement

The state has put several programs in places to address this issue:

- Subsidy
- Permanency care assistance
- Family group decision making
- Permanency round tables

ADOPTION SUBSIDY

QUALIFICATIONS:

- The child is at least 6 years old
- The child is at least 2 years old and a member of a non-anglo group that traditionally has barriers to adoption
- The child is being adopted with or joining a sibling
- The child has a verifiable physical, mental or emotional condition



FINANCIAL MATTERS



- Costs to become licensed:
 - Inspections
 - CPR/First Aid
 - Fingerprints
 - Household items
 - Locks
 - Etc.
- To become a foster parent, your family budget must balance
- You will receive reimbursements for the care of the children

NEXT STEPS

WHAT ROLE WILL YOU PLAY?



FOSTER CARE

Temporary
family for a child
in care



ADOPTION

Forever family
for children
waiting to be
adopted



FAMILY OF ORIGIN

Supporting
parents and
extended family
members



AGING OUT

Support for our
young adults



ENGAGING ROLES

Volunteer with an
organization that
supports families

NEXT STEPS

- Attend an orientation
- Examine your motivations and expectations
- Select a child placing agency
- Complete an application and all required paperwork
- Determine what children might best fit your family
- Participate in pre-service training with your agency
- Prepare your home for a child
- Participate in a home study
- Wait
- Placement



NOT READY TO BE A FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT?

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- Become a mentor
- Donate
- Volunteer with a resource service provider
- Volunteer with a child placing agency
- Become a CASA volunteer
- Become a certified foster care babysitter/respice provider

QUESTIONS?

WE'RE HERE WHEN YOU'RE READY

- **Find us online:**

- www.caringheartsforchildren.org

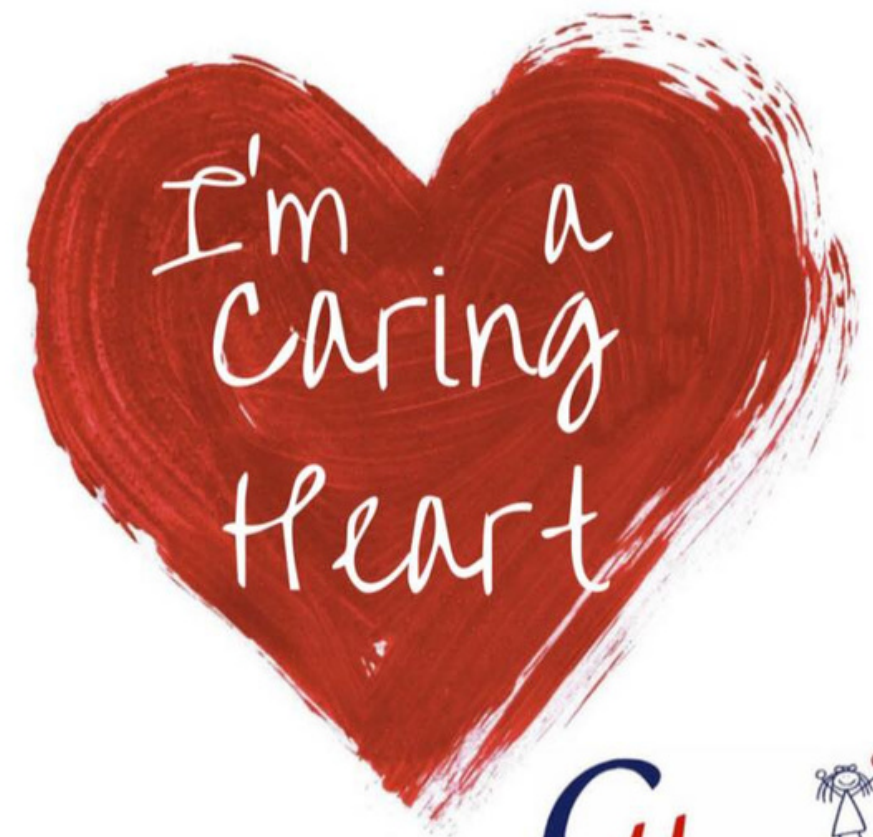
- **Give us a call:**

- (325) 356-3471

- **Stop by:**

- 7688 HWY 67/377, Comanche, TX 76442
 - Open 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Monday - Friday

- **Connect with us:**



THANK YOU!