

# STARTING A CHURCH FOSTER CARE MINISTRY





## PRAY

All the tools in the world can't do more than God. This is His ministry. It's His heart. God is the founder of foster care ministry. We just work for Him. Rely on the work the Holy Spirit is doing in the hearts of those He has called. Be prepared to guide them into foster care when they are ready.

CAFO offers several good resources in the area of prayer for your foster care ministry.

Download the Foster Care Prayer Guide here: [tinyurl.com/127-cafoprayer](https://tinyurl.com/127-cafoprayer)

Watch the Fostering Movement on a Foundation of Prayer Video here: [tinyurl.com/127-cafoprayervideo](https://tinyurl.com/127-cafoprayervideo)



## IDENTIFY A CHURCH CHAMPION

If you're reading this you may be the church champion. If you aren't, but you have a passion to see a foster care ministry developed in your church, then your first step is to identify and recruit a church champion. The church champion is the person who takes a ministry vision to a ministry reality. Depending on the size of the church this can be a staff champion or high capacity lay leader. Rarely is this person the senior pastor. Sometimes the champion has a personal "orphan" experience. The champion could be a current or former foster or adoptive parent, a professional who has worked in the child welfare field (caseworker, therapist, etc.) or an adult who was in foster care as a child. It's important to find a team builder and avoid lone rangers. You also want a church champion who respects and "gets" the church culture.

Who are possible champions?

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## DEVELOP A CORE START-UP TEAM

A ministry of this nature can't be developed or sustained by one person. If the church doesn't already have several people to help develop the framework encourage your church champion to develop a core start-up team. Look for individuals who are passionate about foster care.

Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Organizer
- Adoptee
- Foster Parent
- Teacher
- Church Staff
- Social Worker
- Therapist
- CASA Volunteer

Who are possible team members?

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## DISCERN AND DISCOVER

Encourage the church core start-up team to pray for God's guidance moving forward. [Download Getting Started: Discern, Discover and Launch here: tinyurl.com/127-gettingstarted](https://tinyurl.com/127-gettingstarted). Emphasize the Discern/Discover portion of the document to help them seek God's direction.



## CONNECT WITH THE CHURCH'S VISION

Work with the church champion and core start-up team to identify the church's vision, mission, and/or strategy and align the foster care ministry to those. Identify existing ministries in the church that could be connected with foster care and encourage the start-up team to look for ways to connect.



## INSPIRE THE CONGREGATION

- Ask your pastor to preach on James 1:27 at least once a year
- Show a short 2 to 3-minute video about foster care during a service. Several options can be found on [Project 1.27's Vimeo Page: vimeo.com/project127](https://vimeo.com/project127)
- Host a Foster Care Film Night
- Include awareness messages in existing church communications (newsletters, social media, bulletins, etc.) Project 1.27 can provide templates upon request
- Host a Foster Care Info Table after service. Project 1.27 can provide templates for brochures, flyers and other materials upon request
- Host a Foster Care Info Lunch immediately following a service
- Implement a simple step-in project.

### STEP-IN PROJECT IDEAS:

Ways to Support Kids in Foster Care

Download: [tinyurl.com/127-support](https://tinyurl.com/127-support)

Caring for Kids in Your Own Backyard

Download: [tinyurl.com/127-backyard](https://tinyurl.com/127-backyard)

Supporting Foster and Adoptive Families in Your Church

Download: [tinyurl.com/127-supportfamilies](https://tinyurl.com/127-supportfamilies)

- Identify foster families in your church and highlight them in some of your communication materials
- Hold a Foster Family Blessing ceremony during one of your services. Blessing ceremonies are similar to a baby dedication, but without the baby/child- as it is usually inadvisable to publicly identify children or teens in your church who are in foster care

What is the church's vision or mission?

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What are some current strategies or focuses?

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What are some current ministries?

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How might the current vision, strategies and ministries connect with foster care?

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## BECOME A FOSTER/ADOPT FRIENDLY CHURCH

A foster adoption friendly church is a church where:

- Caring for vulnerable children is part of the church culture;
- Everyone in the congregation is consistently reminded to care for vulnerable children;
- Foster, kinship and adoptive families find encouragement and practical support;
- Children who have experienced trauma, grief and loss can grow into the people God designed them to be.

By focusing on the four key areas above, you can create a church culture where kids in foster care can find a safe place to learn about Christ, and a place where foster families can continue to be spiritually fed, while knowing the needs of their children in their care are being safely met. You can find more details in the Resource section of this tool kit.

Download the Foster Adopt Friendly Church handouts for more suggestions. Contact Project 1.27 for permission to adapt the badge to your ministry.

- Become a Foster Adopt Friendly Church  
Download: [tinyurl.com/127-church](https://tinyurl.com/127-church)
- Step In  
Download: [tinyurl.com/127-stepin](https://tinyurl.com/127-stepin)
- Step Up  
Download: [tinyurl.com/127-stepup](https://tinyurl.com/127-stepup)
- Step Beyond  
Download: [tinyurl.com/127-stepbeyond](https://tinyurl.com/127-stepbeyond)



## RECRUIT FOSTER FAMILIES AND VOLUNTEERS

As you begin to inspire the church through sharing the needs of kids in foster care and God's view of the church's role in serving them, be prepared to provide other options for involvement. Many people will be compelled to step forward and do something, although most will not be cut out for the work of a foster parent. And yes, James 1:27 is clear that caring for orphans is not optional. It is an expectation of the Church. So, while not everyone can foster, everyone can - and should - do something. Some alternative options include:

- **Recruit volunteers to support active foster families in your church.**

Use your church champion and core start-up team to identify current foster families in your church and build support teams around them. Ask the families what type of support they need and develop a plan to recruit and train volunteers to fill the gaps. If possible find one lead volunteer who will oversee certain types of support, such as transportation, meals, prayer, supply closet, babysitting, etc.

- **Recruit volunteers to support new foster families in your church.**

As you begin to recruit new foster families, work with them to identify their own support team. We recommend you ask them to identify at least four people who will be on their support team, although most families will build a larger team. These individuals can be from their church, but they don't have to be. They can be friends, co-workers, neighbors or family members.

- **Recruit volunteers for Royal Family Kids Camp.**

If there isn't already a Royal Family Kids Camp in your area, consider starting one. You can learn more about Royal Family Kids at [RFK.org](http://RFK.org) or by viewing Samantha's Story, a 5 minute inspirational video about the work of Royal Family Kids Camp. [View it here: tinyurl.com/127-samantha](http://tinyurl.com/127-samantha). To inspire your church, consider showing Camp - a feature film that gives a good overview of what happens at a Royal Family Kids Camp - available on Netflix.

- **Recruit volunteer mentors**

If there is a local mentoring program in your community, considering partnering with them by recruiting volunteers from your church, that you can send through their training program and background check process, with the agreement that they will match your volunteers with a child in foster care. You can learn more about mentoring, or find out if there is a mentoring organization in your community through the National Mentoring Partnership at [mentoring.org](http://mentoring.org).

- **Recruit volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) advocates**

CASA volunteers are sworn in as officers of the court and act as the child's voice in court. You can learn more about CASA and find out if there is an organization in your area at [casaforchildren.org](http://casaforchildren.org). You can also watch CASA Explained in Three Minutes, a short video that does just what its name claims here: [tinyurl.com/127-casaexplained](http://tinyurl.com/127-casaexplained).

- **Host a Foster Care Fair**

Consider hosting a Foster Care Fair to share with church members the wide range of ways they can support foster families in the church. If you are able to identify lead volunteers for various areas of ministry (e.g. babysitting, prayers, meals or transportation, among others), invite each of them to have an Info Table at the fair. You can also invite representatives from local agencies that serve kids in foster care such as mentors, CASA or Royal Family Kids Camp.





## ORGANIZE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

There are many ways your church can offer support to foster and adoptive families in your church, such as:

- Organize a supply closet for immediate needs (PJs, diapers, gift cards, etc.)
- Prepare meals for foster families when they take in new children
- Organize a Foster Parent's Night Out
- Host a Foster/Adoptive Family Support Group (See Support Group Tool Kit)
- Collect school supplies for kids in foster care
- Collect car seats, cribs, beds, bikes, musical equipment
- Collect funds to pay sports/activities/music fees or purchase musical equipment
- Recruit mentors for youth aging out of foster care
- Encourage business owners to hire teens in foster care
- Provide training for church volunteers about trauma exposed kids
- Develop a sensory room for trauma exposed kids
- Provide buddies for trauma exposed kids during church services

What are the next steps to recruit and support families?

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## RESOURCE LIST

### TOOLS FROM PROJECT 1.27

Getting Started: Discern, Discover and Launch

Download here: [tinyurl.com/127-gettingstarted](https://tinyurl.com/127-gettingstarted)

Starting a Foster Care Ministry in Your Church

Get ideas here: [project127.com/churches](https://project127.com/churches)

Support Team Blog

Read and sign up here: [tinyurl.com/127-supportblog](https://tinyurl.com/127-supportblog)

### RESOURCES FROM THE CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE FOR ORPHANS (CAFO)

Growing a Foster Care Movement in your Community

Download here: [tinyurl.com/127-cafomovement](https://tinyurl.com/127-cafomovement)

Monthly Newsletter from CAFO

Sign up and read here: [tinyurl.com/cafo-monthly](https://tinyurl.com/cafo-monthly)

The Foster Care Prayer Guide

Download here: [tinyurl.com/127-cafoprayerguide](https://tinyurl.com/127-cafoprayerguide)

### BOOKS TO PURCHASE

Everyone Can Do Something by Jason Johnson

Buy it here: [tinyurl.com/127-everyonebook](https://tinyurl.com/127-everyonebook)

Reframing Foster Care by Jason Johnson

Buy it here: [tinyurl.com/127-reframingbook](https://tinyurl.com/127-reframingbook)