

## **Marin Voice: County's kids need foster and adoptive homes**

By **BREE MARCHMAN** / April 23, 2023

Imagine you are 6 years old. Or 16. A social worker comes to your school to interview you about things you'd rather not talk about. Before you know it, you're picked up and taken to a strange home in a different neighborhood far, far away from your family, school, friends and community.

This is the reality for more children than it should be. Nearly 40% of Marin children entering foster care are placed in resource homes in other counties because we don't have enough families in Marin willing to take our children into their homes.

The solution sounds simple: find more people in Marin willing to provide temporary or permanent homes to foster children.

Yet, somehow, people don't seem to realize how critical the need is, and that there is a lot of support for families who never thought fostering was something they could do. And for people in Marin who don't think fostering is right for them, there are other ways to meaningfully support foster children.

Children enter the child welfare system through no fault of their own. It is up to caring adults to work together to find them stable and loving homes.

At Marin County Children and Family Services, our goal is to keep foster children in Marin, with their siblings, and with foster parents who are a good match for their needs.

We need more families willing to take in sibling groups, teenagers and children with special behavioral needs. We also need more families who are Spanish speaking.

Those interested in fostering need to complete the resource family approval process, which includes training, interviews and background checks. Once approved, a resource family may provide temporary care to a young person while biological families work toward reunification.

A resource family may also choose to provide a permanent home through guardianship or adoption if the child or children are unable to return home.

Some people might think, "I'm not ready to make this commitment to a child." Well, the good news is that there are many other ways you can support foster children.

Anyone can volunteer with our program called “Friends of the Family.” This program links community members to resource families and foster children who can use support. This could include anything from dropping off a hot meal to a family who just received a new placement to taking a foster youth on a hike two times a month while the resource family takes a break.

The amount of support given to a resource family directly impacts their success. Many resource families report that they could foster more youth if they had a bigger support network, which could include someone like you.

There are several other avenues of support given to resource families. The CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) program provides individual advocates to foster youth to make sure they are getting what they need.

The Marin Foster Care Association has several additional support programs. These include the Community Resource Center, which has everything from clothes to baby supplies to toys for children. Funding for extracurricular activities and even therapeutic support for resource parents is also available.

Learn more about becoming a resource parent or a “friend of the family” by joining one of our monthly orientation meetings; these virtual meetings are hosted by a social worker and a resource parent who discuss the application process, training and support available as well as answer questions. For orientation dates and details, visit [FosterOurFutureMarin.org](http://FosterOurFutureMarin.org) or call Leslie Fields at (415) 473-6418.

You may also join an informal “Lunch and Learn” online gathering to ask questions. For details, find the page online at [bit.ly/40p2Twv](http://bit.ly/40p2Twv).

For an interactive discussion about foster care and adoption in the county, join the Marin Communications Forum on May 3 to hear from foster and adoptive parents, a foster youth and county staff. This event is sponsored by First 5 Marin Children and Families Commission. For details or to register, email [Michelle@First5Marin.org](mailto:Michelle@First5Marin.org).

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