

National Foster Care Month 2014

BUILDING BLOCKS TOWARD PERMANENT FAMILIES

"Foster parents play an important role in family reunification as they provide information, compassion, mentoring, and other supports to birth parents." — *Irene Clements, foster and adoptive parent and president of the National Foster Parent Association*

May is National Foster Care Month, a time to recognize the role each of us plays in the lives of children and youth in foster care.

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Social Services Helped Change My Story

A parent's story

As I look back over the past few years of my life as a mother, I can hardly believe that my kids and I have made it this far! We have definitely had our ups and downs and our fair share of time being involved with CPS. I had a very tough childhood and, like most people, I continued that cycle over and over, losing custody of my children three times. After the third time, I became involved with Washoe County Social Services and a new program that would eventually change my life as well as the lives of my children.



Even after being assigned to the Safe FC program, I let it be known to everyone that I just wanted to complete my "to-do list"—like I had done the two times before when I had lost my children. But that was not how this program worked. After 3 long weeks, I finally met my reunification worker. It did not start off well, but I found that my resistance didn't get me anywhere.

This program and my worker made me take a hard look at what I was doing wrong in my life and in my parenting. They made me set goals and work on them and even show how I was doing this. They did not give me programs that I had to attend, only suggestions. AA didn't really work for me, but counseling was amazing, and other programs were trial and error. My social worker even supported me when I found a church, which offered everything I had been looking for in one place.

I got my children back after 6 months and am now very successful in my spiritual, personal, and professional life. My children and I are thriving because of the amazing resources offered to us by the county social services program and my social worker. My social worker will forever be a hero to me and my children. She knew every grim detail of my life and accepted me and helped me to find hope within myself. She called me on my mistakes, pushed me to achieve my goals, and even admitted when she was wrong. I learned through my experience that social services is not here to make our lives hard but to help us become the parents we want to be by offering advice, structure, accountability, and resources.

Learn more about the Washoe County Department of Social Services' [Nevada Initiative to Reduce Long-Term Foster Care](#) (PDF - 109 KB) and other Children's Bureau [Permanency Innovations Initiative \(PII\)](#) grantees.

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The Children's Bureau, within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, funds the National Foster Care Month initiative on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website each May.