

WHY?



WHY THE RETENTION OF FOSTER PARENTS IS VITAL

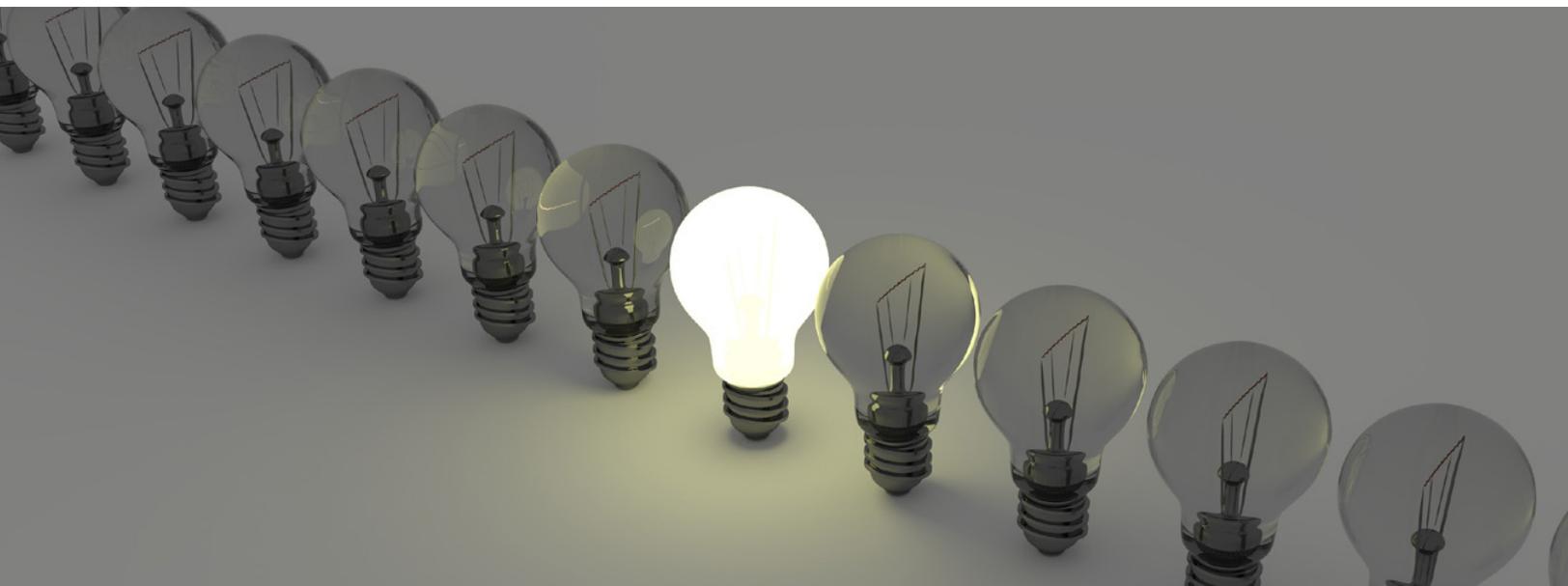
Nationally, as many as 50% of foster parents quit after the first year.¹

As the years go on, attrition continues to take a devastating toll on foster families. We know this is difficult work and that self-learned realization naturally leads some foster parents to decide they just aren't cut out for this. That's understandable. We also know there are good reasons foster parents eventually stop fostering.

Adopting and changes in family circumstances are two common reasons. Sadly however, two common and often preventable reasons for foster parents quitting involve them feeling inadequately supported and resourced. One report from the National Foster Parent Association showed that "struggles dealing with stress" and "difficulty processing grief and loss" were among the top reasons given.²

¹ <https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/opinion/stop-losing-half-foster-parents-first-year>

² <https://fostercare.team/foster-parent-turnover>



The prevalence of inadequate support is a big reason for high turnover rates among foster parents. The impact this has directly on the youth in foster care is sobering. High turnover rates also severely impacts the foster care system as a whole, creating systemic problems. We believe the church has a unique array of built in supports, assets, and strengths that when harnessed could provide a game changing solution to help foster parents be resourced to learn, grow, and ultimately stay.

3 TROUBLING IMPACTS OF HIGH FOSTER PARENT TURNOVER RATES:

1. When good foster parents quit, children in foster care suffer.

A big reason for multiple placements for children in foster care is high turnover rates among foster parents. Every time a kid in foster care is placed into a new foster home they lose emotional and relational stability. Key supportive relationships are threatened with the loss of familiar community among friends and teachers. Continued severed relationships among important adults in their lives continue patterns of trauma and cause setbacks forming trust. Children also face potentially significant academic setbacks with each new placement. One study suggested of the kids who aged out of foster care, one-third experienced five or more school moves, resulting in an average loss of four to six months of academic progress per move!³

2. Losing so many foster parents annually hampers states' already burdened foster care systems.

Even significant recruiting gains are not net gains if within a year many of these foster families are no longer active. This places enormous burden on the morale and performance of case workers who also have significant turnover rates. That becomes a difficult systemic issue itself. Lost caseworkers equals lost experience and that directly impacts foster parents. This continues a vicious cycle of instability for all involved. Unfortunately, the cultural norm of foster care is that most states' foster care systems are perpetually investing massive effort and resources in recruitment and retraining. Continuing retraining is a costly financial problem for states since the average cost of one couple recruited, trained, and licensed is \$6,000.⁴

3. The loss of foster parents stunts foster care itself.

The church is filled with incredible loving families, many of whom would be phenomenal foster parents! If they don't have the proper emotional, financial, relational, and spiritual support they will likely become another sobering attrition statistic. It takes time to become good at anything in life. Foster care is difficult and complex and takes time for people to become good at it. Kids in foster care deserve good foster parents. Sadly, great people don't become good at foster parenting simply because they don't last long enough to learn and grow from experience. The culture of success and wisdom gained collectively through experience suffers greatly in foster care when good foster parents call it quits too soon.

³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/02/every-time-foster-kids-move-they-lose-months-of-academic-progress/284134>

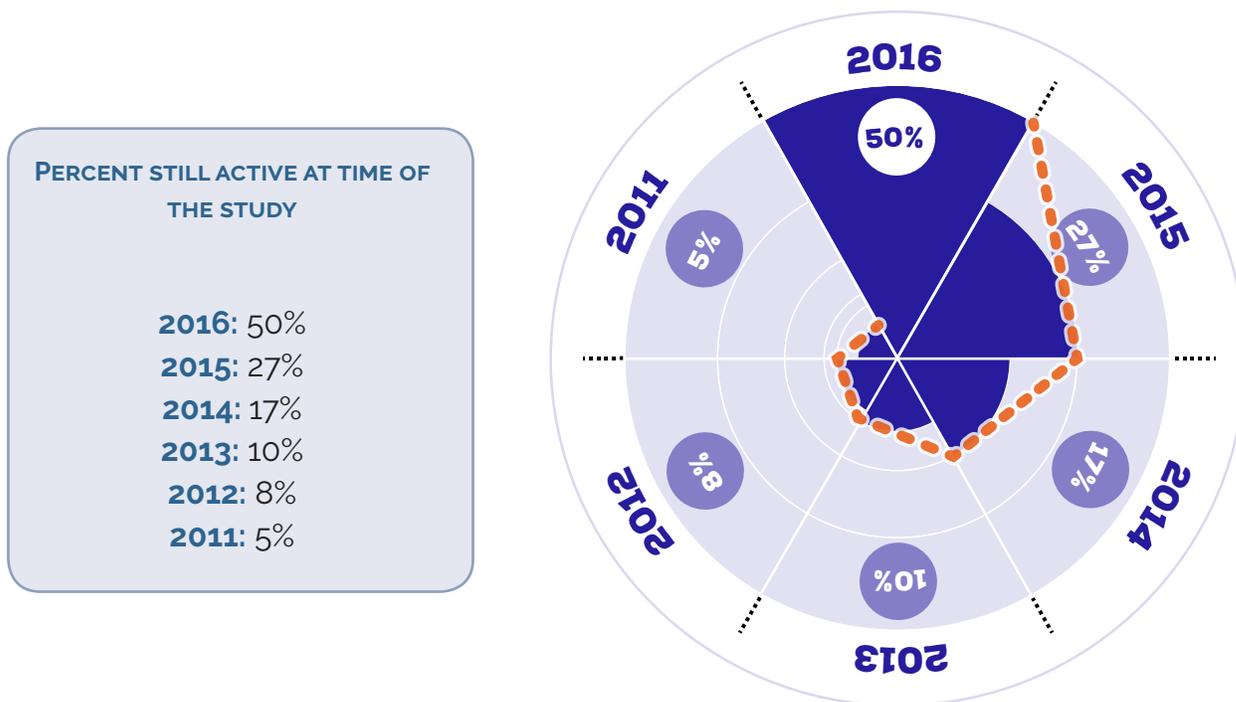
⁴ <https://fostercare.team/foster-parent-turnover>

THE CHURCH'S HUGE OPPORTUNITY IN FOSTER PARENT RETENTION

Think of foster care as a race and the foster parents as the runners. When foster parents lack a solid footing in the starting blocks to push off and get out strong, they'll struggle to even start. Many will trip and fall early on and simply quit the race over frustration. Who can blame them? The church has a great opportunity to set the starting blocks firmly with providing things like wrap around support, trauma training, inspiring stories, and ministries creatively designed to help meet the needs of foster families. Foster families can then push off with greater confidence and a solid footing to make it around the track. And keep running! Then they can learn how to run each lap better and enjoy the race as they proudly share their success stories with other runners. On some turns foster parents will even feel the wind at their back. The church has a big opportunity to help foster parents around the track and keep them running. That starts by supporting and retaining foster families--one family at a time. We owe it to the precious kids in foster care--for they are the ones for whom we run.

From the Center for State Child Welfare Data.⁵

They looked at **14,834 newly licensed foster homes** opened in one state **between 2011 and 2016**



⁵ <https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/analysis/five-years-after-opening-most-foster-homes-are-closed/32545>