

FOSTER ROSTER

Utah's Foster Family Magazine

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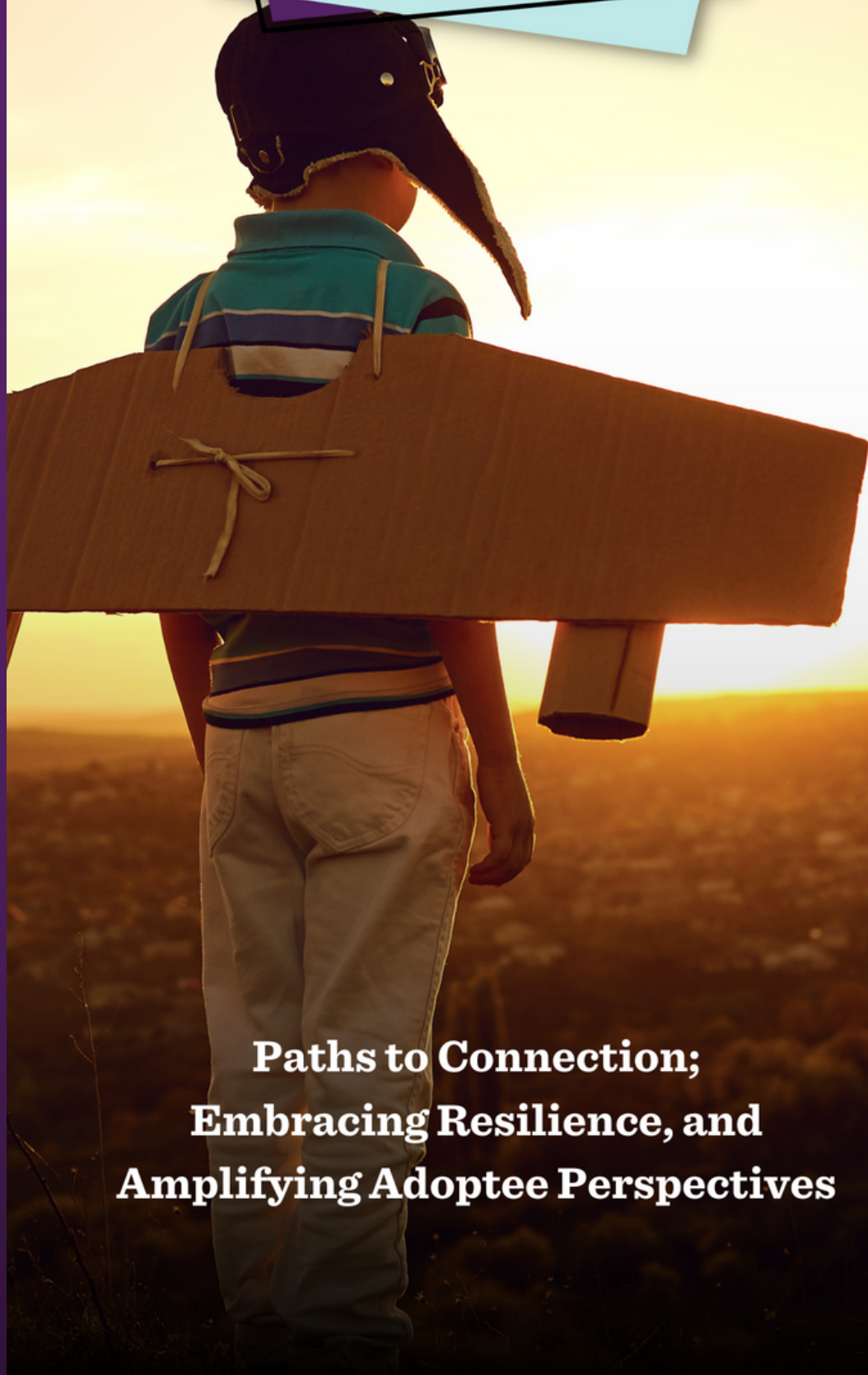
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UTAH FOSTER CARE Symposium

**Paths to Connection;
Embracing Resilience, and
Amplifying Adoptee Perspectives**



SIBLING CONNECTIONS

By Heidi Naylor, Director, Retention Services, UFC



It is estimated that 85% of youth who enter into the Foster Care system do so with at least one sibling. The longer they remain in care, the more likely they will be separated. Maintaining family bonds makes them more resilient. It becomes a protective factor for their mental health.

Our son came to us at 11. He had been on the Adoption Exchange twice. That is where we first discovered him. He had been in foster care since he was 4 ½. We were his fourth adoptive placement. By the time he had made it to our home, he couldn't remember how many moves he had made. He lost something with each of those moves. He began to view everything as temporary, including family. When he first came into care, his oldest half-sister went with her birth father. He and his two remaining siblings entered the Christmas Box house. Family came and claimed his remaining sister. Leaving him and his brother to enter Foster Care. They moved and moved and moved together. Until it became clear that the trauma bond they shared was making it nearly impossible for either of them to heal. The hard decision was made to place them separately.

When we appeared, we knew he had three older siblings. However, we had no information where any of them were placed. Even after reviewing his file, we knew little. Siblings are the one set of people that you expect will always be with you. You will know them longer and better than anyone in your life. Although our son had siblings in our home, he mourned the loss of those who had been through so much with him. The ones that looked like him. The ones that shared his blood. We actively tried to find them. When my sister called, she mentioned that a girl lived six houses away from her. She said the girl was adopted and that she was positive that she was related to our son. We were unsure, as we had been told that both his sisters were with family. We sent her on a mission to discover more about the situation and get back to us.

A few days went by when she called again and asked us if we would call and talk to her adoptive Mom. I quickly called her. After only a few minutes on the phone, I realized we had indeed found his sister. She had entered foster care herself a few years earlier and had been moved from Salt Lake to less than 10 minutes away from us in Utah County.

We discovered finding our son had become a mission for his sister. No one knew where he was. We arranged for them to be surprised after school that day. All we told him was that we had an amazing surprise for him. We knocked on the door, and his sister opened it. There was no question she was his sister; they looked so much alike. They immediately embraced and began to cry. My son was shaking. He kept looking back at me, asking how. He knew we had tried everything we could think of. This was left in someone else's hands, and the pieces had fallen into place. To call this a miracle is almost minimizing how amazing it was that these siblings found their way back to one another. They sat for over a couple of hours sharing pictures and stories, vacillating from crying to laughing. They were almost too scared to end the visit if they lost each other again. Even more impressive is that his sister knew where the other two siblings were. We left that night with all his siblings' names, phone numbers, and addresses. And, of course, the promise of another visit. This was amazingly healing for our son. But it also turned into more children for us to love. His brother spent at least one weekend a month with us. He was able to attend both of his sister's weddings. He connected with his birth family, like his favorite Grandpa Herman, whom he missed dearly and was only with us for a few more years. A large part of him was healed by connecting with his family again. Siblings deserve the opportunity to be together or, at the very least, have contact if it is healthy and they cannot live together.

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475 West Price River Dr. Suite 152
Price, UT 84501
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1680 West Highway 40 Suite 100
Vernal, UT 84078
Main: 801-743-7336

Moab

125 West 200 South Suite 121
Moab, UT 84532
Main: 801-514-7692

St. George

230 North 1680 East W-113
St. George, UT 84790
Main: 385-758-3661

Richfield

201 East 500 North
Richfield, UT 84701
Main: 435-979-2233

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MENTOR?



By Michelle Ostmark, Mentoring Specialist

A mentor is defined as “a trusted counselor or guide.” People we trust and can talk to when things are tough, sad, and confusing and those we want to share our accomplishments and joy with. It is the opportunity to make an impact on someone’s life.

Thinking back, who are the people who have impacted and influenced you the most in your life? Are they teachers, friends, parents, colleagues, or even your children? Think back to those who helped you in your past and those who help you currently; these people continue to show up even after the dust has settled.

These people continue to show up because they care; they want to teach and encourage us while offering support, love, and understanding. They are mentors.

Foster, adoptive, and kinship families have a unique role in the life of a child in care; just like their primary family, you are irreplaceable because of the work, sacrifice, and love you give to the children and families you serve.

Mentors are foster families who choose their role and the time they dedicate to helping other families starting the foster care journey or seasoned foster families needing additional support for a hard case. Mentors decide to help guide and support foster families beginning this journey by assisting them in navigating the entire system, listening, offering support and resources, and often becoming trusted friends, using their experience and ongoing training.

Becoming a foster parent takes a great deal of consideration, preparation, and patience when faced with uncertainty and multiple changes to a family when a child in care enters a home through foster care. Families willing to open their hearts and homes to a child in care will need support once they receive that initial call for placement.

While we started this journey for many reasons, we go into it for the same reason: to make a difference in a child’s life. Our best teacher is someone who can relate to our situation and is also bound to the same confidentiality we are. You can talk to a mentor about your case and the children in your home, knowing they will maintain the same confidentiality for your family, children in care, and the primary family. Mentorship is necessary to empower foster families through support, resources, connection, and advocacy to improve the lives of the children placed in our homes through foster care.

New families are encouraged to participate in the mentoring program. The Mentoring Program is also available for families with multiple placements who need support. You can learn more at www.utahfostercare.org/mentors or contact Michelle at Utah Foster Care by calling 1-877-505-5437 or by email michelle.ostmark@utahfostercare.org.

“ —
| **PASS ON WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED.** |
— ”

YODA TO LUKE SKYWALKER. RETURN OF THE JEDI.

My Proudest Moment

By Shannon Smith, Retention and Recruitment Specialist



My proudest moment as a foster parent happened a few months ago after we took in another placement—a week-old baby boy. We took in his older brother and sister in 2022, so when we found out he was coming into care, the decision was already made to keep this group of siblings together.

My daughter and I were driving home discussing baby boy, how soft and cute he is, and how much we loved having him in our home. My daughter got quiet for a moment and said, “I bet his mom is really sad and missing him. I hope she can get him back.” My heart leaped out of my chest in gratitude for this little 6-year-old who understands why we do this and what foster care is about.

Her 6-year-old self is starting to understand the magnitude of having a child come into our home that at any time could leave. She is learning what it takes to be a foster family - to bring children into our home with the knowledge it may not be permanent. Understanding that having a new baby is fun and sweet, he isn't ours, and his mom misses him. To gain compassion and empathy for the baby's mother, she loves her baby and needs time and help.

When we decided to be a foster family, we also decided to be a part of the primary families. We choose to talk positively about them. We are honest with the kids we care for and their situations. We discuss how we are a temporary place for children so their families have time to heal and get help. We are kind to their families and include them in decisions about their kids. In front of the children and their primary families, we acknowledge and accept that they are mom and dad. We have hard conversations with our kids in care about why they are in foster care or why they had to come live with us.

I am so proud of my daughter for understanding that foster care can be hard. It's not just about the fun new baby we all dearly love. It's about being a safe temporary place for kids so they can go back home.

EASTERN REGION UFC STAFF

Kobi Prettyman

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McKay Esplin

TRAINER

Shannon Smith

RETENTION SERVICES SPECIALIST

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FOSTER-ADOPTIVE CONSULTANT /
RETENTION SPECIALIST

UTAH DIVISION OF CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES (DCFS)

DCFS HQ

195 North 1950 West,
Salt Lake City, UT

Eastern Region DCFS Offices

Need to Reach Your RFC?
Call your local DCFS Office

Blanding (435) 678 - 1491

522 North 100 East

Castle Dale (435) 381 - 4730

1060 North Desbee Dove Road

Moab (435) 261 - 2368

1165 South Highway 191, #1

Price (435) 636 - 2360

475 West Price River Drive, #152

Roosevelt (435) 722 - 6550

140 West 425 South, #330 - 15

Vernal (435) 781 - 4250

1052 West Market Drive

UTAHFOSTERCARE.ORG

CLUSTERS



Support groups for foster, adoptive, and kinship families who meet monthly for support & training.

UINTAH BASIN | ROOSEVELT

Jennifer Collier (719) 252-2136

UINTAH BASIN | VERNAL

Lynn Conner

ltweetyc2000@yahoo.com

CARBON / EMERY

Jennifer Eden

jenisthebomb@gmail.com

GRAND / SAN JUAN

Jackie Brown (435) 678-3019

jackiewbrown@gmail.com

RSVP FOR TRAININGS:

Please register for all classes on Bridge. If you need help, please contact your regional trainer.

CARBON/EMERY CLUSTER

Chronic Blocked Care

Les Harris, LCSW

February 7, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

CJC | 80 S. Fairgrounds Rd.

Join us for our monthly support group.

GRAND/SAN JUAN CLUSTER

Chronic Blocked Care

Les Harris, LCSW

February 20, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

UFC Office | 125 W. 200 S, #121

Join us for our monthly support group.

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER

Chronic Blocked Care

Les Harris, LCSW

February 21, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

2995 Comstock Cir., Vernal

Join us for our monthly support group.

CARBON/EMERY CLUSTER

Make Stuff - Feel Better

Belinda Thayn

February 21, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Castlevue Hospital Classroom

Layer your experiences onto existing art by adding canvases.

STATEWIDE

Love Languages

Denice Beacham

February 26, 10:00 am-Noon

Online!

STATEWIDE

Single Foster Parent Cluster

February 26, 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

We meet every fourth Monday!

Watch the Bridge app for the link and other info.



Utah Foster Care was granted the All Children - All Families (ACAF) Solid Tier of Recognition. The ACAF National Training Program offers expert training, capacity building, and coaching on a diverse range of LGBTQ+ topics for child welfare professionals and caregivers, as well as professionals in social and human services.

Thank you to Human Rights Campaign Utah for the important work they do. We appreciate the education and support in showing up for Utah's children in foster care.

To learn more and find resources, visit utahfostercare.org/lgbtq

The beautiful thing about life, is that we will never reach an age where there is nothing left to learn, see or be; it's magical really." - Dulce Ruby

CARBON/EMERY CLUSTER

Acute Blocked Care

Les Harris, LCSW
March 13, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
CJC | 80 S. Fairgrounds Rd.
Join us for our monthly support group.

GRAND/SAN JUAN CLUSTER

Acute Blocked Care

Les Harris, LCSW
March 19, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
UFC Office | 125 W. 200 S, #121
Join us for our monthly support group.

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER

Acute Blocked Care

Les Harris, LCSW
March 20, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Vernal UFC | 1680 W Hwy 40
Join us for our monthly support group.
No childcare available.

STATEWIDE

Suicide Prevention

Denice Beacham
March 20, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Online!

STATEWIDE

Single Foster Parent Cluster

March 25, 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Online!
We meet every fourth Monday! Watch the Bridge app for the link and other info.

UINTAH BASIN CLUSTER

"What Happened to You?"

Brian Young, SSW
July 10, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Vernal DCFS | 1052 Market Dr
Based on the book by Dr. Bruce Perry and Oprah, we'll talk about the critical need to understand the effects of trauma on the brain.

SUMMER

SAVE THE DATE

RETREAT JUNE 17 & 18, 2024

FOR YOUTH IMPACTED BY FOSTER CARE AGES 5-18

SKILL BUILDING, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING, AND
TIME TO PLAY, RELAX, AND ENJOY WHAT THE SWELL RETREAT OFFERS!



Overnight Camping, ages 12-18
June 17th 10am - June 18th 8pm
June 18th 10am-8pm, ages 5-11
www.swellretreat.com



TRAINING



To register for in-person classes, please contact the Cluster Facilitator sponsoring the training or your region trainer.

You are welcome to attend any class being offered.

When you've completed the training, please complete the class assignment in the Training Portal.

Brian Young, Northern Region
brian.young@utahfostercare.org

Terumi Sagers, Salt Lake Region
terumi.sagers@utahfostercare.org

Terri Rowley, Western Region
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Denice Beacham, Southwest Region
denice.beacham@utahfostercare.org

Liz Rivera, Director of Education
liz.rivera@utahfostercare.org

TRAINING KEY

Online

In-Person

Both

A close-up photograph of a child's head, seen from the back, resting on a bed. A brown teddy bear is positioned behind the child's head, and a red and blue plaid shirt is draped over it. The child is wearing a patterned nightgown. The background shows a bed with a patterned sheet and a dark blanket.

DIFFERENT NEEDS

By Rin Dillow, Foster, and Adoptive mom, Instagram: parent.on.purpose

If you treat your children from foster care the same way you treat your biological children and expect them to respond the same way, you're likely going to be disappointed, frustrated, and exasperated.

Your biological children and your children from foster care need different things. They come from different experiences, histories, triggers, and traumas.

Your biological children have (hopefully) had a lifetime of establishing and building trust with you. You know one another in and out; you can read their cues, understand their "isms," and know their needs and schedules naturally.

Your children from foster care come to you as strangers, and an entire lifetime behind them you weren't there for, even if that's just a lifetime in utero, you are still a stranger.

You must learn their cues, which takes time, patience, and a different level of care than your biological child. You have to study behaviors and identify triggers to help them work through fear and anxiety in a way that isn't natural. It takes a lot more adjustment and often professional help to figure out what's going on and how to help your child through it.

The needs will be different, and the ways to meet those needs will look different.

With kids, it's easy to see how this could frustrate and create a sense of "unfairness" which *will* happen because kids are very in tune with what is and isn't the same, especially with siblings.

A level of understanding and communication with your biological children as to why their siblings might not have the same options, schedules, help, etc. as them is necessary, but when done well, this can instill a sense of empathy, care, and understanding in your biological children while simultaneously creating a space of safety and healing for your children from foster care.

A script I often use: "Different people need different things, and it's my job to give you and your siblings what you need, and that will sometimes be different."



UTAH FOSTER CARE IN THE NEWS!

CARE COMMUNITIES PILOT PROGRAM SEEKS TO SUPPORT FOSTER FAMILIES ACROSS THE STATE

BY Michael Camit, KSLNewsRadio

Editor's Note: Care Communities will be launched statewide in the coming months. Details will be forthcoming.

SALT LAKE CITY — Foster parents in Utah can take advantage of a new pilot program called Care Communities. The program aims to give people the chance to support foster families in the state.

The Care Communities program was first introduced into the state by Utah's First Lady, Abby Cox.

Program Director Tami Carson said foster parents face many challenges, but they don't need to face them alone.

According to Utah Foster Care, 40% of foster parents don't continue fostering past the first year. Providing more support to foster parents is one way to curb the high dropout rate.

"The children coming into foster care, the goal is for them to go home to their family, their biological or primary family. And foster parents have to do a lot of extra work to make sure that happens. So this program is an opportunity for religious communities, faith communities, nonprofits or businesses or other social groups to work with us and we give them training and then ongoing support and mentoring," said Carson.

HOW DO CARE COMMUNITIES WORK?

Care Communities are groups that build a team to figure out the best way to serve foster parents. Carson said that most people don't know just how difficult that parenting role is.

The demands in your time are higher than traditional parenting ... You're going to relearn a lot about what parenting looks like. Those demands and time really revolve around what the best outcome [is] for these children in the home," said Carson.

Additionally, the care teams offer emotional help to foster parents. Carson shared that one infertile couple came to see how their sacrifices not only helped the children they were raising but their biological parents as well.

"Their hearts completely transformed from a couple who was here because of infertility and now was really here for these kids. And they were willing to do the work over that last year and a half. We will work as hard as possible to help the parents of these children overcome these challenges. All that time providing a loving and stable home for the children that they're caring for," Carson said.

To participate in the program, Utahns can visit the Utah Foster Care website. If you don't want to be a member of a care team, Carson said you can volunteer to help in other ways.

"Those of us who can't do that right now, we can't be foster parents right now or maybe ever, but we can be friends with and learn how to be a very intentional friend for foster families and support the parents and that hard work they're doing," said Carson.

The state estimates there are more than 2,600 children currently in foster care in Utah.



NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

By Adriana Gardiner: Adriana Gardiner served as UFC's foster-adoptive consultant and retention specialist in the Uintah Basin. She currently lives out of state and continues to serve foster families.

As the New Year starts, we often think of new resolutions and goals to tackle over the next 365 days - whether it is spending money more frugally, losing weight, or living healthier, foster parents have a fantastic opportunity to influence others and to make a difference in the next generation and beyond. This year, keep your resolutions meaningful. Connectedness, self-care, advocacy, and inner growth are great goals to focus on as you navigate 2024.

Make a Lasting Bond

Invest time in activities that strengthen relationships between you and your children. Game nights and other family activities that include all members are a great way to spend free time. Take a minute to compliment the children for something they have done right or acknowledge a quality in them. A few minutes spent asking about their day and actively listening to their answers go a long way. Small things add up to a lot for these children.

Take Care of Yourself

Take time for yourself, your marriage, your friendships, and your birth/adoptive children. Foster parenting is stressful and often thankless. Taking care of yourself and your family will help to prevent burnout, and children learn to take time for self-care when they see you do it; this will be a lesson that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

Self-Improvement

Make time for self-improvement—maybe a college class or learning to do something you have always wanted but did not. Take time to read, exercise, listen to music, or walk. Children learn by example, and your enthusiasm for learning will be contagious.



Advocate

You are the number one advocate for children in placement. You are the person who spends most of your time with them and knows them the best. Advocate for them. Be their voice with their case managers, therapists, school personnel, GAL, etc. Consider writing a letter with their progress report for the people involved in their case.

Network

Take some time to network with fellow foster parents. Only other foster parents know firsthand about the complex issues of fostering children. It is a rough road, full of happiness and heartache. Seasoned foster parents can support you in traveling the road ahead and look for new foster parents to Mentor and listen to. Also, be on the lookout for new potential foster parents; you have the insight into what it takes to become a resource family and can be instrumental in finding new families for foster children.

Keep up the good job

Being a parent is hard. Being a foster parent is harder. You are already doing it. Keep on loving and fighting for these children.

HELP THEM KNOW THEIR STORY

by Utah Foster Care Staff



Every February since its inception, Black History Month has been a way to honor the contributions and legacy of Black leaders, both past and present. It is a time to reflect on the impact and change Black people have made on the world, including the world of foster care.

In 1976, President Ford recognized Black History Month and urged people to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

Over-Represented in Utah

Blacks make up only about 1% of our population, but Black children in foster care make up about 8%. These children are over-represented in our foster care system, and when they leave their homes, they're at risk of losing more than their families. They may also lose their identity and a sense of belonging to their community. In the last couple of years, we have seen the challenges and impact all children can face with the loss of connection and belonging, and this is especially true of all children in foster care.

Seize the Opportunity

This Black History Month, let's “seize the opportunity” to help a child in foster care know their story and empower them to know who they truly are. You can do this by asking them about their cultural and ethnic identity and prioritizing embracing who they are.

Several studies have shown that children who have a strong and positive cultural identity have greater self-esteem, higher education levels, improved coping skills, psychological adjustment, and decreased levels of loneliness and depression.



UFC limited funds available to meet special needs of children in care when DCFS is unable to.

QUESTIONS?

Northern Region

Anna Gibson - (801) 392-1114

Salt Lake Valley Region

Tina Porter - (801) 994-5205

Western Region

Amy Smith - (801) 462-0745

Eastern Region

Shannon Smith -
shannon.smith@utahfostercare.org

Southwest Region

Diane Fillmore - (877) 656-8065

REMINDER:

- Dispersal of funds can take up to four weeks
- Checks are mailed to the foster parent's home address
 - Funds are for children in foster care ONLY
- Items covered by the reimbursement or by Medicaid are not eligible

A Word on Vacations:

A child in care can receive vacation funds 1x in their lifetime. Vacation funds are restricted monetarily & may not cover all costs.



Utah Foster Care
5296 South Commerce Drive #400
Murray, UT 84107

utahfostercare.org

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