



Good evening! I would like to start by offering my thanks to Governor DeWine for caring about foster care outcomes, and to the Children Services Transformation Advisory Council for hosting these series of forums.

My name is LaShondra Tinsley, I am a foster care alumni. I serve in the Foster Care Alumni Advocate role. As a foster child, maybe because of my age when I entered into care or simply God's grace, I did not experience some of the seen and unseen traumas some children experience while in care. While nothing is perfect, looking back, I believe my experience in care allowed me to see a healthy life, healthy interactions and what was possible.

Still, as an adult, I was very naive and gullible. Which allowed a lot of my later hardships. While I was protected in care, I needed to learn soft and life skills, that many parents teach their children. Some examples are hygiene as a young lady that has begun menstruation, speaking up when needed, a first kiss, intimacy, credit, recognizing your gifts and talents so that you can develop them. That unfortunately there are some terrible people in the world and here are some red flags. Abuse, drugs, human trafficking, and how you don't have to become the dysfunction that you were being rescued from. Later in life, major purchases, like your first car or house, and help to achieve these accomplishments, follow up care. These among many other very critical soft and life skills.

I think it would greatly benefit children, and society as a whole to have monthly meetings in a group-setting format. Places where trained professionals can teach these life and soft skills at age appropriate levels and different life experiences. Preparing them for not only adulthood, but also a successful one. One where the child, who is now an adult, is thriving, overcoming their former dysfunction, and ending the family cycle of dysfunction. Allowing these former “statistics” to become contributing members of society. This could save taxpayers money by preventing a foster child from going to prison, being on welfare, among many, many other ways of saving tax dollars. By simply taking the steps now while the child is developing, to prevent hardships and in some cases tragedies for the child and society

In addition I believe foster parents should have monthly trainings as well. To teach on how to deal with a child that has experienced sexual abuse, and is now demonstrating sexual behaviors themselves, a child that has experienced self destructive, and violent behaviors, and many other inappropriate behaviors, and has begun displaying them. How to teach positive coping skills and healthy habits, not only for the child but the foster parent as well.

When the foster parent does not have the skills and tools to deal with these types of behaviors, they often see the foster child as being bad or unruly and send them away to another home, neglecting these serious issues and allowing it to linger into adulthood. Not knowing what these behaviors may manifest into. Group settings will allow for the foster parents to ask specific questions. Allowing them to get advice on things they may be dealing with at that moment and how to handle them. Since foster parents are with these children 90% of the time, start to notice different gifts and talents a child may possess, so that they can be developed in a positive way, doing this could potentially become the child’s livelihood. Also teach the child what resources are available to them. Being in a group setting for a child may encourage one to speak up, or ask a question when seeing peers asking. It would also allow for the child to be physically taken out of the foster home for awhile where they can be observed for signs of any type of abuse or neglect, and be in a safe place where they are taught what abuse etc. is in all forms. When the time comes for them to speak up, they have a safe place, and a safe adult they can do it at. Also teaching resources available to them.

I'll finish by saying thank you again for taking the time to have these forums, and allowing people like me, a foster care alumni one who has actually been through the system, to come and speak, giving our advice and our opinions, in hopes of transforming the foster care system for more positive outcomes.