

Collecting Family and Youth Stories Guide For Foster Family Appreciation Day

CHAMPS Seeks Foster Family Stories

CHAMPS is building a bank of stories about amazing foster parents and families in honor of National Foster Family Appreciation Day. Specifically, we want to identify and highlight (1) foster families and (2) youth with experience in foster care who are willing to share their personal experience with foster parenting. For example, from foster parents, we'd like a few sentences about why they're proud to be a foster parent or what inspired them to get involved. From youth, we'd like to hear how foster parents played a positive role in their life, or an example of how a foster parent who helped out in a memorable or special way.

What is National Foster Family Appreciation Day?

May is National Foster Care Month, a time to recognize the many people who support their well-being. Each year, Congress enacts a Congressional resolution designating May as National Foster Care Month. This same Congressional resolution also establishes **National Foster Family Appreciation Day on May 31** and provides an opportunity to publicly thank the many amazing foster families around the country who help children in foster care heal and thrive.

- For the second year in a row, the CHAMPS campaign is leading a communications effort to mobilize organizations nationally to participate in Appreciation Day activities. A focus of this communications effort is to leverage social media to express thanks to foster parents.
- CHAMPS is developing a social media toolkit to assist interested organizations in getting involved.

How will the foster family stories be used?

These stories will serve as an important foundation to the communications activities being planned in conjunction with National Foster Family Appreciation Day by providing real examples of the vital importance of foster parenting in the lives of children and youth. We will share selected foster family stories, photos and videos via our Facebook page and Twitter account. We will also share written stories and photos as handouts with policymakers. These stories will be posted to the CHAMPS website in a special section dedicated to National Foster Family Appreciation Day. A social media toolkit is being prepared for National Foster Family Appreciation Day and it will provide sample tweets and posts that link to the stories.

Note: Depending on how much media attention is paid to "Appreciation Day," there may be opportunities for families and youth to speak about their experience with reporters. When

workingwith families and youth to gather their story, please try to determine whether they would be willing to have their name on a list for possible media contact. CHAMPS can assist with media engagement.

What format do you need for the information?

Stories can be captured in two ways: 1) written format, such as a short paragraph (ideally with a photo) or 2) a short (30-60 second) home-made video (such as with a smartphone). An easy way to submit the story is through an online Google form (more details below). The link to the online form [is here](#), and here: <https://forms.gle/npuwZC7FX6NgahzP6>

Where to begin / target states

It would be great to have family and youth stories from all 50 states if possible. However, we have identified a set of target states to serve as starting points.

- Tier 1 states are states with governors who have given public remarks this year about the importance of foster parents and are most likely to be receptive to messaging about foster parent appreciation. These are:
 - **South Dakota, Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, Virginia**
- Tier 2 states are states with CHAMPS state campaigns (including active & in-development). We expect partners in these states to be actively engaged in “Appreciation Day” so having family and youth stories will be especially helpful. These are:
 - **New York, Georgia, Vermont, Nebraska, Ohio and Maine**
- Tier 3 states are states where there is media attention on foster parent shortages and/or recruitment efforts. This provides is a foundation we can build on. These are:
 - **Minnesota, Iowa, Colorado, Washington, Oregon, Texas, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Kansas, Oklahoma, West Virginia**

Capturing the stories

We are hoping to build a bank of approximately 40-50 stories from families or youth.

It’s important to find families and youth who are interested and excited to share their own insights about why foster parenting is important to them – or in the case of a young person, why a foster parent was special to them.

- It’s not necessary to find families or youth that have a particular type of experience.
- It’s also not necessary to find families or youth who can speak about policy implications; however, if there are some who are especially interested in policy, please collect their names and ask if they’d be willing to work with CHAMPS on policy related messaging, such as a blog post.
- It would be wonderful to engage a diversity of families and youth (e.g. economic, geographic, race/ethnicity, age, family structure) to highlight the many types of families that share a commitment to foster parenting.

Checklist

An online form is available to help gather information about foster families. The [form is here](#) and covers the elements listed here. If you're capturing the story another way, please refer to this checklist as a guide.

1. Name: first name only (or if more comfortable, use proxy such as "foster mom" or "foster dad")
2. Email: for contact with CHAMPS only; this will not be shared publicly
3. Twitter/Instagram Username(s) (optional, we will use this to tag you when we post the story)
4. Story: In 3-5 sentences, tell us why you're proud to be a foster parent, or for a youth, how a foster parent made a positive difference in your life
5. State/location
6. Individual or family photo (please don't send photos that include any children currently in foster care due to privacy issues)
7. Video (optional but recommended due to popular format). Include a 30-60 second video of yourself and/or your family speaking about why you're proud to be a foster parent or how a foster parent made a positive difference in your life. Begin the video by introducing yourself. You may find it helpful to prepare and read from a short script. (See prompts below.)
8. Consent: (this will be in the Google form); I consent to having my first name, state, story, photo(s), and/or video(s) used a part of Fostering CHAMPS' social media content, including minor edits for grammar or clarity as needed. (checkbox)

What questions to ask?

Parent Prompts:

- What inspired you to become a foster parent?
- Describe how a child has made a difference in your life.
- What has being a foster parent taught you?
- What's one thing you love about being a foster parent?
- Describe how you have made a difference in a child's life. For example:
 - I helped Billy reunite with his birth mom and they're doing so well now.
 - With love and consistency, Angie was able to start doing better in school and feeling better about herself.
- Have you recommended foster parenting to others? If so, what did you say was a reason to do it?

Youth/Young Adult Prompts:

- What's one example of something a foster parent did that helped you heal from prior trauma or hardship?
- What's one example of something a foster parent did that helped you have a "normal" experience as a teenager – something that made you feel more like your friends who were not in foster care?
- What's an example of an important lesson or value you got from a foster parent?

- What is something special about a foster parent you know? Would you like to thank a particular foster parent for something she or he did?
- What three words describe “a great foster parent?” For example, how might you complete this sentence: “My foster mom was great because she _____.”
- Being in foster care has a lot of challenges. What is one thing a foster parent can do to help make it less difficult for young people in care?

What is CHAMPS?

CHAMPS is a national campaign to ensure bright futures for kids in foster care by promoting the highest quality parenting. CHAMPS builds on research that shows loving, supportive families – whether birth, kin, foster or adoptive – are critical to the healthy development of all children. Leveraging this research, CHAMPS aims to spur policy reforms in 20 to 25 states over five years to ensure that foster parents are equipped with the training and support they need to be the best they can. CHAMPS also aims to help improve the public’s understanding of foster parenting and create a more positive perception of foster parents. More information is available at: www.fosteringchamps.org

How to submit a story

Please submit using this Google form: <https://forms.gle/npuwZC7FX6NqahzP6>

With questions or to discuss, please contact hope@fosteringchamps.org