



More people are
needed to provide love
and support to foster
youth in Fresno County.

**Find out how
YOU can help.**

Be a Hero

for Fresno's Foster Youth



Heroes Wanted



Resource families provide stability for foster children in their time of need

BY MATTHEW CRAGGS

Every day in Fresno County close to 2,000 foster youth are without a place to call home. They need someone to love and care for them while their parents are unable to, someone who can step in and provide stability at a time when a child needs it most. They need a hero — and in the child welfare system, those heroes are resource parents.

Formerly called foster parents, resource parents are caregivers who provide stability and support to a foster child while working toward permanency.

“Permanency means the child is safe, taken care of, and doesn’t need the system,” says Tricia Gonzalez, Interim Deputy Director of Child Services, Fresno County Department of Social Services.

Many times, permanency means returning to live with biological parents. When this is not possible, resource parents are called upon to permanently care for foster children by adopting them.

Whatever their path may be, Gonzalez points out that foster youth need to maintain connections. These connections — siblings or friends at school or church — create a grounding sense of normalcy when a child’s world is turned upside down.

That’s why the department favors placements with kin (such as grandparents, aunts or uncles) or mentors (people who have an existing connection to the child, perhaps through school or sports).

There are only 100 resource families in Fresno County right now, though not every home is the right match for a

child. Some lack proximity to a child’s connections or don’t speak the same language. More resource families are needed in Fresno County, particularly homes for children who are medically fragile, young adults, sibling sets or LGBTQ.

“LGBTQ youth are more likely to have been abused at home,” Gonzalez says, “and less likely to find an accepting placement.” Children unhappy in foster care are more likely to run away, increasing their chances of victimization.

In an effort to increase, diversify and strengthen available resource families, California has created a new Resource Family Approval (RFA) process that promises improved care for foster youth and extensive support for caregivers.

The streamlined RFA application combines elements of foster parent, relative care and adoption applications — creating one pipeline for all paths — minimizing the system’s impact on the child and resource family. Under RFA, the

extensive pre-placement training — covering parenting skills, child safety and coping with trauma — aims to prepare more people to handle a wider range of special needs.

Gonzalez believes the RFA changes will build a bigger, stronger support network for the county’s most vulnerable residents.

“This is a big change to how we’ve traditionally thought about foster care,” Gonzalez says. “It’s an exciting time to be a partner as we move forward.”

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Tricia Gonzalez
Interim Deputy Director of Child
Services, Fresno County
Department of Social Services



What is a resource parent?

Formerly referred to as foster parents, resource parents support a foster child who cannot be cared for by birth parents. Resource parents are now approved through one process to provide temporary, adoption or guardianship placement with a foster child.

A RESOURCE PARENT:

Receives training and support.

Extensive pre- and post-placement training gives resource families the tools to provide high-quality parenting. Support services help ensure children and families have a successful placement.

Works to support reunification. Working with child welfare professionals and birth parents, resource families support reunification with the child’s biological family when possible, using their training to help the child adapt to changes as they make their way home.

Provides permanency in a foster youth’s life. Research shows that a stable and loving connection to one adult during this critical time can improve outcomes for foster youth.

**RESOURCE PARENTS
ARE NEEDED NOW.
KEEP READING TO FIND OUT WHY.**



Fresno County embraces QPI, an approach to strengthening foster care by refocusing on excellent parenting for all children in the child welfare system. Learn more at www.qpicalifornia.org.

You can be a resource parent!

When a child enters foster care, the smallest things can provide hope and comfort. Seeing friends at school. A “goodnight” whispered in a familiar language. Resource families are the facilitators of the small things that make childhood grand.

Resource families from all walks of life are needed to provide their unique skills and perspectives to a larger network of support. The more diverse the network becomes, the better chance the child welfare system has of placing youth in well-matched homes.

RESOURCE PARENTS CAN BE ...

- ★ Single, married or divorced
- ★ Adults of all ages, in their 20s, 50s or “kids at heart”
- ★ Experienced parents or not

MOST NEEDED ARE RESOURCE PARENTS WHO ...

- ★ Speak a foreign language (such as Spanish or Hmong)
- ★ Are an LGBTQ or ally household
- ★ Have a pre-existing relationship with a foster child as a relative, coach or neighbor
- ★ Live close to a foster child’s school, church or favorite playground

SUPERHERO POWERS NEEDED:

- ★ Reads endless bedtime stories
- ★ Turns a teenager’s frown upside down
- ★ Heals boo-boos with a single kiss
- ★ Offers unconditional love and support when a child needs it most



Kay Crockell, 65, has fostered 50 children over the last 40 years, specializing in infants with special medical needs. Seen here with her grandchildren (the children of her adopted children), Kay believes being a foster parent was what she was meant to do with her life.

PHOTO BY JOHANNA COYNE

The Best Decision

Kay has welcomed 50 children into her home over the last 40 years



BY MATTHEW CRAGGS

Certainly, it’s difficult to ignore a child in need. For Kay Crockell, it’s impossible. For close to 40 years, Kay was a foster parent for one simple reason: “Every child deserves to have a family that loves them, cares for them and wants what’s best for them.” For so many, Kay was — and is — that loving family.

Recently retired from foster care, Kay and her late husband fostered 50 children since 1977, ultimately adopting five. Nine years into her service, Kay became one of the few foster parents in California trained to care for newborns on life support. While she admits this level of care wasn’t a path she planned, Kay recognized a need for specialized care that she could provide.

“While the kids were in my home ... it was my job to prepare them for going home,” she says.

Kay welcomed 24 newborns on life support into her home. While the infants faced special medical needs, Kay believes a child’s needs are far simpler, more universal.

“Love, trust and security,” Kay says. “That’s what we all thrive on.”

Kay recalls a 3-year old child who had been kept locked in a room and didn’t talk when first brought to her home. Within six weeks, the child was talking. She believes unconditional love — loving them however they are — and not having expectations are key to a foster child’s success.

“When they trust you and feel secure, they can do anything,” she says.

It’s this message Kay has shared over the last 21 years as a co-facilitator of the pre-placement training for new foster parents, now called resource parents. Addition-

“It’s definitely the best thing I’ve done with my life.”

Kay Crockell
40-year veteran resource parent

ally, from 1997 through 2014, Kay was the president of the Foster Adoptive Kinship Parent Association of Fresno County Chapter 5, an organization in which she remains active. Their goal: providing resources and assistance to resource parents and youth, creating a stronger network of support amongst caregivers.

“The child is the center of this and we’re all a team — social worker, teachers, and biological and foster parents — and we all have to work together,” Kay says. “It’s definitely the best thing I’ve done with my life.”

Seeing her children transition into adulthood and start families of their own has reaffirmed why she became a resource parent. “This is what I’m supposed to do with my life,” says Kay, who was never able to have children of her own. “I’m a grandma today because of my adopted children. I’ve been blessed. [My children] are so glad we’re a family. They tell me that every day.”

Putting Dreams Within Reach

Resource parent makes a commitment to older youth



BY MATTHEW CRAGGS

When LaTrina Bowen sees a child in need, she sees a community in need. In close to 30 years of foster service, LaTrina has fostered well over 100 adolescents, each time feeling that if she could make a difference in that one life, she could make a difference in her community.

“I started working with the 14-18 age group because I noticed something missing in foster care,” LaTrina says. “Everyone wanted the cute, little kids — the babies and infants — while the older kids got left behind.”

The older children who come to her home often come with layers of trauma, and LaTrina realizes being placed in her home is just another trauma “added to the pile.” In addition, many older adolescents find themselves dealing with the emotional and physical developmental changes of becoming an adult.

Like any child, traumatized teens act out. But where a 2-year-old may throw a tantrum, a teenager may display sexual tendencies, defiant behavior, stay out all night or leave the home — possibly not returning for days.

LaTrina believes that many of these behavioral problems make older youth appear high-risk to resource parents who may opt out of taking these children.

“This is the age that society says is the hardest to turn around,” LaTrina says. “People believe these children are set in whatever pattern of life they’re in.” LaTrina recognizes it’s a difficult task — she often turns to her church group or Fresno’s Independent Living Program for support and resources — and she’s seen many successes.

“I demonstrate to them that I’m trustworthy,” LaTrina says. “I believe in them. If they’re honest enough to allow me to help, I’ve made a commitment to not give up.”

While her home may not be filled with the cute little pitter-patter of toddler feet, LaTrina finds reward in helping older foster youth take the steps uniquely important to them.

Things like turning an F grade into a D, learning how to ride a bus, or filling out an application for college financial aid. These seemingly small steps become a life’s milestones.

“Dreams once so far off [are] now within reach,” she says. “If a child is successful in high school, they’ll most



“If we can save one child, we can save a community.”

LaTrina Bowen
Resource parent for adolescent children



likely be successful in life. They’ll pay it forward.”

LaTrina hopes her modeled behavior influences the youth when they have children someday, creating a ripple effect that will spread love and care across her community and beyond.

“If we can save one child, we can save a community,” she says.

A smooth transition to adulthood

To help ease the transition from the foster care system into adulthood, Fresno’s Independent Living Program (ILP) offers free classes and resources for foster youth ages 14 to 21.

“I was used to my parents doing everything for me,” says Breiona Muhammad, who entered foster care when she was 16. Before ILP, “I didn’t even know what a bank account was.”

At the ILP offices in downtown Fresno, she had access to resources including:

- ✦ finance and budgeting classes,
- ✦ housing and furniture vouchers,
- ✦ free bus passes,
- ✦ mock job interviews and new work clothes,
- ✦ college tours,
- ✦ restaurant field trips to practice etiquette and
- ✦ basic health care (including birth control).

Now 19, Breiona says the resources were integral to becoming independent, but it was ILP’s role as a social hub to share experiences with other foster youth that proved invaluable.

“I was very shy at first,” she says. “Being more social, it helped me break through my shyness and I was able to get a few jobs because of it.”

Thanks to ILP, Breiona — like so many others — is now free to be the adult she was always meant to be.



While Glaudi Quezada (front left) was undergoing treatment, her sons Candido, 9, and Luis, 13, were cared for by Luisa Lopez and her husband, Jose (at back). Together with child welfare professionals at Fresno County, the resource family and the biological mother worked on reuniting the family.
PHOTO BY JOHANNA COYNE

Helping Families in Crisis



BY EDGAR SANCHEZ

Reducing the effects of trauma

The traumas faced by foster youth, both before entering the system and during foster care, can cause children to act out.

Fresno County is helping to reduce trauma-related behavioral issues with SB163 Wraparound services, which offer children and their resource families a wide range of support to meet their needs. This includes but is not limited to intensive in-home support for the child and his resource parent, assistance out in the community, as well as assistance in the school setting. Children with behavioral issues at school can be matched with a family specialist, which is a one-on-one coach who assists the child with anything they may be struggling with, be it emotionally or behaviorally.

Family specialists analyze the behavior and suggest to the teachers, parents and the child ways to avoid new outbursts. The children learn new skills and ways of managing their feelings and more appropriate ways to express themselves.

Wraparound services create more successful placements for foster children and their resource parent with the goal of providing permanency for the child.

Biological mother grateful to resource family who took in her sons

Two years ago, a young widow from Parlier was arrested on drug-related charges, leading to an immediate 55 days in jail and the breakup of her family.

Her name was Glaudi Quezada, 37, a meth addict, drug dealer and mother of seven. Her three daughters were placed in the custody of an aunt in Hanford, an arrangement Glaudi accepted. But some of her sons were placed with Luisa Lopez and her husband Jose, resource parents who live in Selma.

At first, Glaudi resented the resource parents.

"I hated Luisa and Jose, because I felt that they were stealing my children's love from me," Glaudi says recently.

Today Glaudi is sober, about to start a new career, and grateful to the couple who cared for three of her sons when she couldn't.

"Today, my thinking is different," she says. "I am very grateful to Luisa and Jose."

The role of a resource family is to provide stability and love in a child's life while a biological parent is unable to. Luisa and Jose, who have two sons of their own, were happy to fulfill that role.

Like a seed planted in golden soil, the idea of becoming foster parents was her husband's, Luisa says.

"Both of my pregnancies were extremely difficult, so my husband didn't want me or the baby to die if I became pregnant a third time," the 39-year-old says.

On the day of Glaudi's arrest, her sons, Luis, 13, and Pablo, now 19, were placed with Luisa and Jose. Weeks later, Pablo moved in with his aunt in Hanford; his brother Candido, 8, was also moved into the home.

For 16 months, Luisa and Jose treated their foster kids with the same respect that the couple displayed for their sons Joshua, 14, and Yeshua, 5. For a time, Luisa and Jose took the boys on weekly visits to a live-in facility where their mom was completing court-ordered drug rehabilitation.

Working together with child welfare professionals, Luisa and Jose supported reuniting the boys with their birth mother. In late 2015, Glaudi regained custody of her children. She's recently been hired by Fresno County to conduct parenting classes

for mothers in similar situations.

The families remain friends. This past Mother's Day, Glaudi delivered a bouquet of flowers to Luisa.

"I have a beautiful relationship with Glaudi," Luisa says of the woman who once despised her. "She has apologized to me, and I love her and respect her."

"I have a beautiful relationship with Glaudi. ... I love her and respect her."

Luisa Lopez
Resource mother who provided care for Glaudi Quezada's sons



Take the Next Step



Be a hero for Fresno
County's foster youth



Be a resource family —
for a child, for yourself, for
your community.

[www.co.fresno.ca.us/
fostercare](http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/fostercare)

1-877-533-KIDS (5437)

While more beds and bedtime stories are
always helpful, Fresno County has a particular
need for caring homes for children who are:

medically fragile

sibling sets

young adults

foreign language speakers

living in rural areas

LGBTQ



Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee

The mission of the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee is to provide oversight for and promote communication between the Board of Supervisors, the Department of Social Services and its related agencies, and the community, with emphasis on providing information and recommendations that make the system more effective and efficient.

Be a resource family!

When your heart and mind are all-in and you're ready to add your love and strength to the resource family support network, you've already taken the first step toward helping children in your community. Next, it's important to learn more about becoming a resource parent.

1

ORIENTATION

Attend an orientation (held twice a month, schedule available online) where child welfare professionals discuss the foster care system and adoption and licensing process. Pick up an application and take some time with your decision.

2

APPLICATION

After submitting your application and a Livescan (fingerprinted background check), you'll schedule a home visit where child welfare professionals will learn more about you and your household, and work with you to address any concerns.

3

PRE-PLACEMENT TRAINING

Over four weeks, you'll receive 24 hours of free training covering parenting skills, child safety, and how to help children adjust to your home and work with biological parents and social workers.

4

FRESNO COUNTY RESOURCE FAMILY APPROVAL PROCESS

Upon completion of the approval process, you'll be contacted for placement when a child needs your unique one-of-a-kind love and support. Resource parents will receive post-placement training if the child has any special behavioral or medical care needs.

**CALL 1-877-533-KIDS (5437) TODAY
FOR INFORMATION ON THE NEXT
ORIENTATION SESSION!**