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Buckner Foster Care and Adoption — Guide —



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Who We Are



Buckner foster care and adoption exists to provide safe and loving home environments for vulnerable children. We believe foster care and adoption are profound ways to change a child's life forever, and our commitment to help you means we provide comprehensive services for you and the children we serve together.

Buckner Foster Care and Adoption is part of Buckner International, a diverse global ministry dedicated to transforming the lives of vulnerable children and families. Established by R.C. Buckner in 1879, Buckner International has a long history of serving children and families in challenging life situations.

For more than 146 years, Buckner International has been transforming lives through hands-on ministry, serving the most vulnerable from the beginning to the end of life. Buckner is one of the oldest and most unique faith-based service organizations of its kind.

The earliest record of adoption services provided by Buckner was dated 1884. Throughout our history, we have had the privilege of placing more than 4,000 children in loving adoptive homes.



Values and Practices



Dr. R.C. Buckner's core values for ministry came from James 1:27, which states, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." This still forms Buckner's core values today.

We are people motivated by our faith.

Buckner follows Christ-centered values which are ministered with professional competence. Our team of trained case managers and social workers build personal relationships and offer emotional support to every child and family we serve.

As we seek to transform the lives of vulnerable children and to build strong families, we always put the child's needs first.

Buckner Core Values

- Christ-like
- Servant spirit
- Passion-driven



**Buckner
finds
families**
for children,
rather than
finding
children
for families.



I Am Buckner

I am **Buckner**.

And I am answering the call.

I am compassionate.

Devoted.

Trustworthy.

Joyful.

I am more than 130 years of Faith in action,

Hope at work,

And Love borne out.

I am answering the call.

I am a humble servant of a loving God

Who created me for a purpose

And filled me with a passion:

To **help** the helpless.

To **defend** the defenseless.

And to **love** the unloved.

Just as **He** did.

This work is my ministry.

This world is my mission field.

And this life is my testimony.

I am answering the call.

I am...

A need met.

A prayer answered.

A life **redeemed**.

I am...

An orphan, welcomed in with
open arms.

A senior adult, given the gift of dignity.

An adoptive mother, introduced to
her new son.

I am...

A donor's grace,

A founder's conviction,

And a Savior's mercy delivered every day

To a world in need.

I am answering the call.

I am...

Ready, willing, and able.

Wherever there is need, I will go.

Whatever it takes, I will do.

Whomever I can, I will serve.

With all my **heart**.

With all my **soul**.

With all my **mind**.

And with all my **strength**.

I am Buckner.

And I am answering the call.



Adoption and **the Gospel**

Caring for orphans is more than a mere act or deed. It is more than a rule to follow. As Christians, when we look after orphans in their distress (James 1:27), we are not only obeying a command, but we are also displaying the gospel and what Christ accomplished through the cross and resurrection. We care for vulnerable children through foster care and adoption because we understand that we were once orphans who have now been adopted into the family of God.

While the word “adoption” is only used five times in the Bible (and all of those by Paul), God’s heart for adoption is seen throughout the scriptures. There are several stories of the outsider — the orphan, the widow, the sinner, the outcast — being brought into the family of God. From Abraham to Rahab to the woman at the well, all of these stories foreshadow the cross, the ultimate story of Christ inviting orphans to become heirs.

“God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” – *Romans 5:8 ESV*

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

– *Galatians 4:4-5 ESV*

According to Ephesians 1, God chose us for adoption through Christ before He ever spoke the world into existence. In His glorious, indescribable, incomprehensible grace, He determined to call us — we who would fall short; we who would betray Him for other loves; we who would be consumed by selfish desires — sons and daughters in Christ. He is determined to love us, to want us, to pursue us, to choose us and to adopt us.

We ourselves have been adopted. Our God is a God of adoption. Above all else, this is why we are compelled to care for at-risk children through foster care and adoption.



Our Services **at a Glance**

FOSTER CARE. Providing temporary homes for children who have been removed from their families due to abuse or neglect.



KINSHIP CARE. Providing support and resources for families caring for the child of a relative or loved one.

FOSTER-TO-ADOPT. Providing permanent homes for children who, after residing in your foster home, become available for adoption.



WAITING TEXAS CHILDREN. Providing permanent homes for children living in foster care, and whose parents' rights have been terminated.



DOMESTIC INFANT AND CHILD ADOPTION. Providing permanent homes for infants and children whose birth parents have made a voluntary plan of open adoption.



Basic Requirements

Applicants must have an interest in working with the type of children Buckner serves – children of all ages and ethnicities, with trauma histories involving abuse and neglect, as well as separation from their family of origin. Buckner Foster Care and Adoption places children in the homes of heterosexual, cisgender couples married at least four years as well as qualifying heterosexual, single, cisgender adults.

Program	Age*	Marriage	Single	Citizenship	Other Requirements	Cost	Wait Time
Foster Care	*	4 Years	Yes**	U.S. Citizen, Legal Permanent Resident, or Other Qualified Alien	-----	Minimal: FBI Finger Prints, Etc.	4-6 Months for Licensing; Short Wait for Placement
Foster-to-Adopt	*	4 Years	Yes**	U.S. Citizen or Legal Permanent Resident	-----	Minimal: FBI Finger Prints, Attorney Costs to Finalize	4-6 Months for Licensing; Short Wait for Placement
Waiting Texas Children	*	4 Years	Yes**	U.S. Citizen or Legal Permanent Resident	Will, Life and Health Insurance	Minimal: FBI Finger Prints, Attorney Costs to Finalize	4-6 Months for Approval/ 6 Months to a Year for Placement
Domestic Infant and Child Adoption Program	*	4 Years***	Considered Per Policy	U.S. Citizen or Legal Permanent Resident	Active in Christian Church,**** Will, Life and Health Insurance,	25% of Adjusted Gross Income; Min: \$14,000 Max: \$25,000 FBI Finger Prints, Attorney Costs to Finalize	4-6 months for approval: Expected minimum wait of 2-3 years
Kinship/ Fostering Connections	*	2 Years	Yes**	U.S. Citizen, Eligible for or Legal Permanent Resident, or other Qualified Alien	Minimal: Client Support through the Fostering Connections Act*	FBI Finger Print, etc.	Under 60 Days for Licensing
Respite Care	*	4 Years	Yes**	U.S. Citizen, Legal Permanent Resident, or Other Qualified Alien	-----	Minimal: FBI Finger Prints, Etc.	4-6 Months for Licensing; Short Wait for Placement

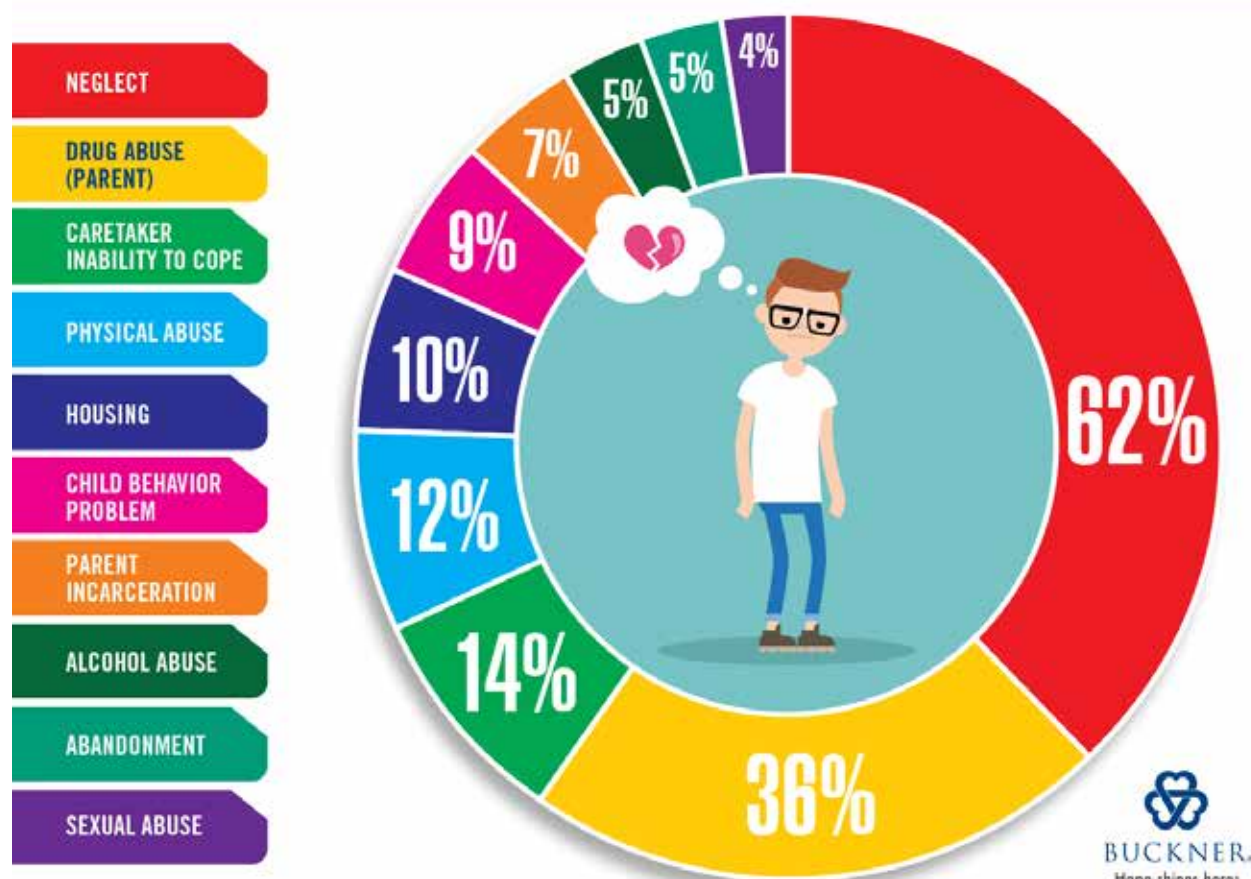
Additional requirements for all: Reliable transportation • Annual income sufficient to care for additional children
Ability to meet Residential Child Care Licensing standards. • High school diploma, General Education Development (GED) or demonstration of basic skills.

* Must be 21 years old to provide foster care, 25 years old to adopt. ** Single applicants cannot cohabit with another adult unless other such adult is a biological relative. *** Married individuals with more than two marriages will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**** Required for approval for a Domestic Infant Child Adoptive Placement only.

Foster Care and Foster-to-Adopt

Why kids are removed from their homes.



NOTE: These categories are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will total more than 100% and counts will be more than the total number of entries. Source: Children's Bureau

Buckner foster care provides a unique opportunity for a family to share their lives with a child in need of a temporary home. Currently, there are approximately 400,000 children living in foster homes in the United States with more than 31,000 in Texas. These children are placed in foster care by no fault of their own. When you become a Buckner foster parent, you make an investment in the life of a child. These are children who belong in families and who need families to love and care for them.

Types of Foster Families:

Child Care Service (Basic Care)

– Provide temporary homes for children that meet a child's basic developmental needs, including: a loving family; nutrition; clothing; a feeling of belonging; safety; a place to play and to be heard ("voice"); socialization; interpersonal skills; care for personal health and hygiene; extra supervision; education (including attending to special education needs); and service planning.



Therapeutic Care

Provide care for children who require additional structure, support and significant supervision. Children receiving treatment services may have emotional disorders, mental retardation, developmental disorders or significant medical needs. They may require the services of a professional therapist or medical professional.

Buckner Support

- Training (up to 50 hours per year)
- Case management
- Home study assessment
- Daily per diem
- Annual family retreat at Camp Buckner
- 24 hour on-call support
- Support groups
- Liaison with Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- Monthly supervisory visits
- Respite care

Transitioning from Foster to Foster-to-Adopt

In the state of Texas, parents are required by law to determine a permanency plan for their children within one year of the children being placed in foster care.

As a foster parent, if a child in your home were to become available for adoption, you would be the first choice for permanency. Being both a foster and adoption agency, we have the capabilities to train you and license your home for the foster-to-adopt program. We will gladly walk you through the adoption process, including assistance with TDFPS and your attorney, as well as help with the preparation of a court report for adoption finalization.



Waiting **Texas** Children

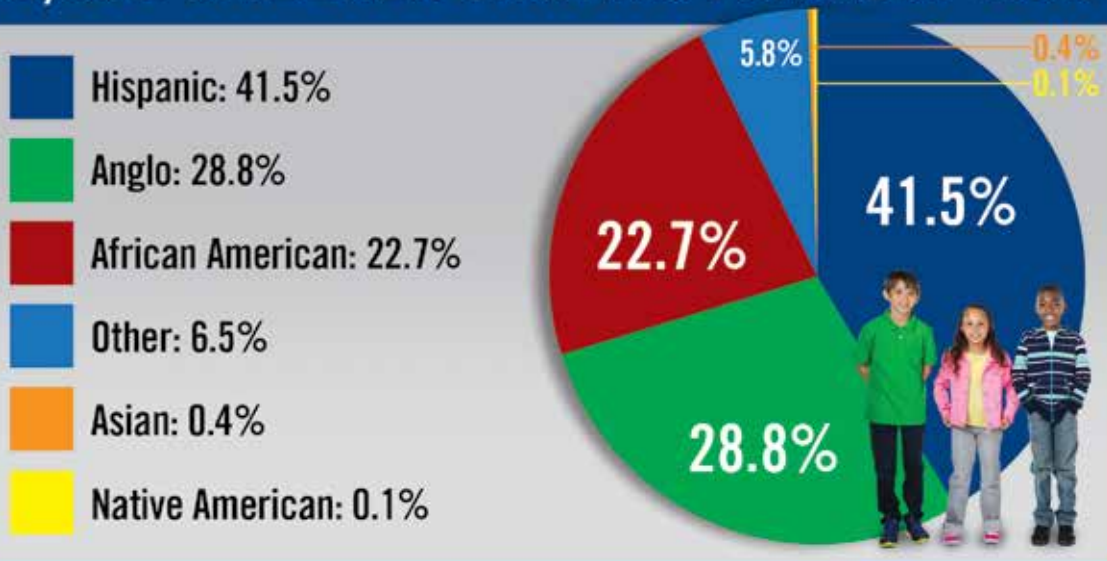
In the state of Texas, there are almost 7,000 children in foster care who are waiting to be adopted. Their parents' rights have been terminated so their only permanency plan is adoption. If they are never adopted, children anywhere between age 18 and 21 will "age out" of the system with no one to support or care for them.

Buckner is dedicated to recruiting and approving loving adoptive homes for these waiting children. Many of these children are in a sibling group, or are older children and teenagers. Some of them have significant physical, educational or emotional needs. However, every single one needs and deserves a family. Buckner is a licensed foster care provider and adoption agency, which means we are able to facilitate the adoption of children in Child Protective Services' care who are waiting to join a family through adoption.

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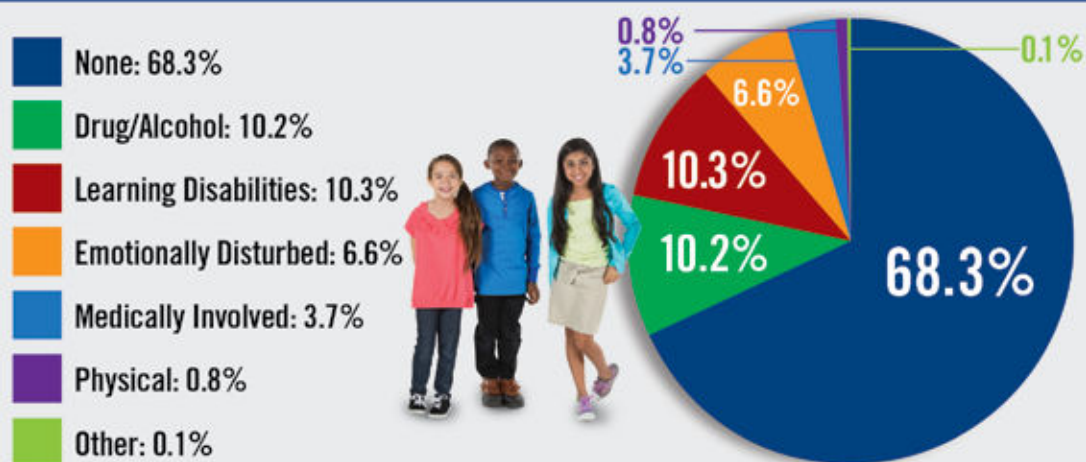


6,999 CHILDREN WAITING FOR ADOPTION



Many of the waiting children are minority children over the age of 6, and several are part of a sibling group. Some have been abused or neglected, and all have lived in foster homes or residential programs, so they may come to adoptive parents with challenges. Buckner is committed to preparing families for those obstacles and supporting families as they work through them.

CHILDREN WITH DISABLING CONDITIONS PLACED FOR ADOPTION IN 2016:



Interested in learning more about the waiting children in need of an adoptive family? The Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE) allows you to view profiles of waiting children online at <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/application/TARE/Search.aspx/Children>.

Domestic Infant and Child **Adoption**

Buckner provides permanent homes for infants or children whose birth parents have made an open adoption plan and want to maintain a relationship with the adoptive family.

If adoption is believed to be the best option, the birth parents then choose the adoptive family. With Buckner's assistance, the birth parents and adoptive family determine the openness of their relationship in the life of their child. Buckner supports both the birth parents and the adoptive family through education, counseling and support groups. Much of the financial cost of this program funds these support services before, during and after placement.



Kinship Care

37 percent of all children in Texas foster care are living with and being cared for by relatives, also known as kinship care, according to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). Kinship care and adoption is a growing trend for the state and for Buckner.

Buckner supports kinship families by connecting them to the resources you need to help provide a loving, nurturing home for the child and strengthen your family's connection through:

- Assistance in becoming licensed as a kinship foster home
- Training
- Case management
- Home development
- Information and referrals to resources
- Monthly financial aid once licensed
- Spiritual support and counseling



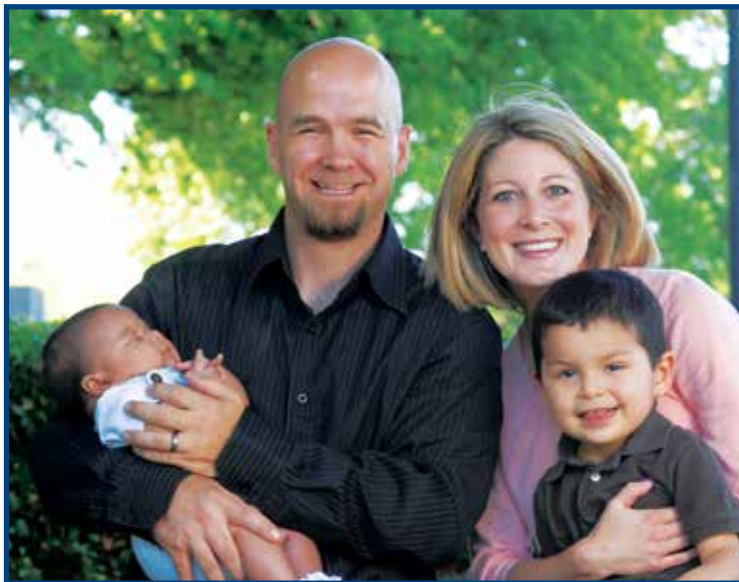
Respite Care

Occasionally our foster parents need time away without the children, whether it is for an anniversary getaway weekend or because of a family emergency. We do our best to provide them with respite care support during these times, so they can leave knowing the children are being cared for by licensed caregivers.

If you are unsure about fully jumping into foster care, respite care can be a great way for you to dip your toe in the water. It gives you a short-term way to care for these children, while also blessing our foster families.

Respite Care: Provide relief care for 72 hours to 14 days for children in placement with other foster families, usually on weekends or vacation periods.

Substitute Care: Provide relief care for 8 to 72 hours to children in placement with other foster families, usually when the foster family needs a short break or has a family emergency.



Top Five Tips for Foster Parents from Foster Care Alumni

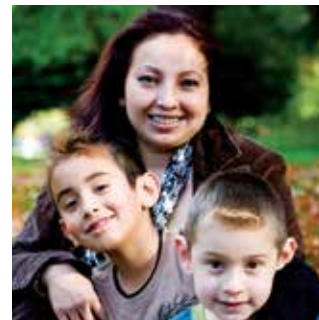
What must life be like for youth who “age out” of foster care? Thankfully, Buckner offers specific programs to these alumni in several areas of the state in an effort to remain connected with them and support them as they pursue education and a career. We find that it is vital to listen to their thoughts about their experience in foster care. Here’s the advice they have asked Buckner to share with prospective foster and adoptive parents:

1. Acknowledge that my history has forever changed who I am.

“The day I was removed [from my family’s care] made me a completely different person,” said one alumnus. “Become experts on helping kids and youth through trauma, loss, fear and loneliness. Expect that we’re not like ‘normal’ kids. We have messed up backgrounds. When you sign up to be a foster parent, understand that you’ve signed up to help us work it out.”

2. Be ready to commit.

Understand the type of child you can best parent. How much attention and supervision are you willing and able to give? Once you accept me into your home, be ready to stick with me no matter what comes. Buckner staff can be a great support here!



3. Think about older kids.

People often think about younger kids when they talk about foster care. “We need families who can parent us older kids too, even though we may not always say it,” said another alumna. You don’t have to have all the answers. Even young foster parents should think about us, because they can relate more, are more active, and have more energy.

4. Have a good marriage.

We need the stability of a strong marriage to help us manage the challenges we face. Also, we learn from what we see.

5. Let us make some of our own choices.

It lets us practice making decisions, and we can learn from both good and bad decisions while we have you there to keep us safe, comfort us when we are hurting, and help us get back on track.

How I discovered God's Secret Wisdom Through Foster Care

A Foster Parent's Story

There are usually two reactions when I tell someone I am a foster parent: They think I am either a rock star or that I am crazy. In all honesty, I am neither. I am just an average guy who became a foster parent for selfish reasons and continues to foster for selfish reasons. Let me qualify that statement.

My wife, Kristi, and I struggled with infertility for years. We were ultimately blessed with a daughter after multiple treatments. After her birth she needed emergency surgery, and I was out of options. I prayed for help, giving up control to Jesus for perhaps the first time in my life. Once my daughter was safely through surgery and we settled into family life, I quickly took control back and began to work out my "plan" for another child, house in the suburbs, white picket fence, the whole bit.

Most of my life I have held onto the misconception that I am in control. When my carefully mapped out goals were successful, I would take credit, rather than thanking God for showing favor to me and my family. With that mindset, I looked to foster care – what I thought was the most convenient and cost effective way to complete my life plan and expand our family. Ha! I knew Jesus, but I didn't fully trust God. Fostering would soon change that. It is how God taught me His secret wisdom.

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him." – 1 Corinthians

2:9 ESV (Read also Luke 8:10 and 1 Corinthians 2:7-10)

For the last four years, my family has fostered seven children. Here are the lessons learned through those placements:

1. God will provide. He is able to do what you cannot. Our first two placements turned our house

upside down. We went from one child to three, and they stayed for three months. I never thought we would make it, but I saw their need for parents who were committed. We were later blessed to be present at their adoption by a wonderful family who would be theirs forever.

2. I learned to trust God without waiting for proof. Our second placement was a young boy who stole our hearts. We desperately wanted to adopt him, but the state decided to reunite him with his father. Angered, I argued with God (and anyone else, for that matter) that this man couldn't possibly be a good dad. I am ashamed now of my judgment on him. He and his son recently joined us to watch a football game. It had been 18 months since we had seen him, and he was doing wonderful. This man is truly his father, and should have been all along. God knew better.

3. God will show you the way. After six foster placements, we wondered if an adoption was in God's plan for us. The difference is that now we are comfortable in that uncertainty. I trust God to know better than I. We are now fostering a little girl who has been a wonderful fit for our family. Her need is for us to commit to her for "right now." If she someday needs us to adopt her, we will look to God for guidance. And it will be perfect.

David Schwartz and his wife, Kristi, are Buckner foster parents for the past six years. Why does he continue to foster? "Fostering does more for me than I think I could ever do for anyone else," said David.

NAVIGATING THE PROCESS: To get started, call 1-855-264-8783 or visit buckner.org.

CPS REPORT &
INVESTIGATION

EMERGENCY
PLACEMENT

COURT ORDERED
PLACEMENT

PLACEMENT, FAMILY
RECEIVES SERVICES

COURT APPROVES
PERMANENCY PLAN

PERMANENCY
ACHIEVED



Who are the children we serve? They are children of all ages who may look different than you but who also have dreams and goals for their future. They may be afraid of the dark,

or love playing sports, or be good at art. They may be older or part of a sibling group. **But they are fearfully and wonderfully made and deserve to know the love of a family.**



"I don't think that our home would be what it is today without the help we've gotten from Buckner.

There are some tough times, and there are some really wonderful times. But looking back, I think this is the most important thing we've ever done."

-Bruce and Denise Kendrick,
Buckner foster
and adoptive parents
(pictured above)



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Inquiry and Pre-Application:

Visit our website for more information including, stories, blog posts, FAQ and more. Your next step is to attend our live virtual information meeting. Visit buckner.org/fostercareinfo to register. This meeting required for anyone applying for foster care or adoption.

Education and Formal Application:

Your next step will be to begin a pre-service training

class. We welcome all interested families who meet our basic requirements (see page 8) and have submitted a pre-application. This training does not commit you in any way, but it will inform you about all aspects of foster care, the types of children in foster care, and how the “system” works. As you proceed through this process, you will gain more insight into which program is best for you, and at that time you can submit a formal application to the program of your choice.



service training, you will need to complete additional training as required by each specific program and the related state regulatory requirements.

Screening:

All applicants are required to submit to specified

Consider this...



We encourage you to engage friends and family during this process. Feel free to invite them to attend pre-service classes with you and to consider becoming a substitute caregiver or respite care provider for your family.

When you need a weekend away, face an illness, or simply need a couple of days to go Christmas shopping, it is always great to have grandparents, aunts and uncles, or friends of the family as resources. Plus, the children will know the family providing short-term care while you are away.

background checks, including fingerprinting and a child abuse registry check. Our staff will assist you through this process and help complete your home study. This process helps us get to know you better and offers an opportunity to discuss your motivation, family history, expectations and the type of child whose needs you might be particularly gifted to meet. The home study will begin once you have completed your formal application and all related documentation. See Appendix A for a list of all required documents.

Licensing:

Once we have finalized your training, application, references, supporting documentation and home study, we will issue the appropriate license for your home and you will be ready to accept placement.

Placement:

Your license will allow you to accept placements only through Buckner. Once notified by the state, Buckner staff will determine the best match among our approved families and will contact you to consider placement. You will have opportunities to ask questions and receive detailed information about the child (to the extent that it is available), and you will be given the opportunity to say yes or no to the placement.

Permanency:

Our ultimate goal is to pursue a permanent family for every child in our care. This may be through reunification with biological parents, placement with other relatives or adoption. Your role in caring for these children is vital and transformative. We are so excited about how God may use you to redeem the life of a child.



Frequently Asked Questions

Where do these children come from? Most of the children we serve have been removed from their home by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services because of abuse or neglect by their parents or caregivers. We provide foster care for these children until their situations can be resolved by a permanency plan.

How can I handle the emotional and or behavioral issues these children have? You will be trained just like any other licensed professional. You will be part of a treatment team that includes child therapists, psychologists and caseworkers. There is on-call help 24 hours a day, as well as an assigned caseworker that will provide in-home support on a regular basis.

Can I specify the type of children I want? You will absolutely have the opportunity to specify the type of child you believe your family is best fit to serve; however, we hope you will be as open as possible regarding your preferences and giftedness during the home study process. We want to know your particular gifts and skill sets so that we can make the best possible match between your family interests and skills that meet the needs of the child being considered for placement. Keep in mind the narrower your preference, the harder it will be to make a match. You will always be given the opportunity to consider all of the information we have about each child we match with your family and then make a decision to accept a placement or not.

What if I get attached to my foster child? We hope you do! These children need to know love and connection from a family, and that can't happen if you don't allow yourself to become attached to them. When a child leaves to be reunited with his biological family or to live with relatives, it can be very hard for the foster family, but we hope you will see the reconciliation of the biological family as a beautiful picture of redemption in which you played a part. There is deep satisfaction in knowing you have been effective in making a difference in a child's life. As one family put it, "We know God has his hands on their lives. He brought them to us, we prayed for them and we know that God will not let our efforts be in vain."

We live out of state. Will you work with us for placement of a child? Buckner Foster Care, Foster-to-Adopt and Waiting Texas Children programs only place children in families in Texas, due to limitations of state licensing and contracts.

What is the difference between fostering/adopting with Buckner and fostering/adopting with the state? Our services are offered from a Christian perspective. Buckner was founded on biblical principles, and our faith informs how we operate – how we recruit, train, and license families. Also, our minimum standards are higher than the state's. We unapologetically require a lot because we believe the children we serve are worth it.



Stay **Engaged**



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AndAdoption**



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Appendix A: Required Documents

Pre-Service paperwork Checklist. This checklist is to help you track required items and the dates you submitted to Buckner. Priority items are marked in **red**.

Date Submitted	Document
	Preliminary Application
	Formal Application
	Copy of Driver's License
	Copy of Social Security Card
	Criminal History Background Check
	Prior State Central Registry Check Requirements, if applicable
	FBI Fingerprinting Information (Instructions will be emailed to you)
	2970c - Disclosure and Consent to Release Information
	Copy of Marriage License
	Copy of Divorce Decree(s) and Death Certificate(s)
	Copy of Auto Insurance
	Income Verification
	Copy of Diploma or Transcript
	Physician's Statement Form
	TB Test
	Rabies Vaccinations for Pets
	Medical Providers Form
	Consent Form for Release of Information
	School Information Sheet
	Floor Plan
	On-Site Training
	Pre-service Training, including Trauma Training
	CPR/First Aid
	Adoption, if applicable
	SAMA
	Medication Training (only occurs in some locations)
	Copy of Birth Certificate
	BCFS Disclaimer
	BCFS Policy Acknowledgement



	Daily Routines (see sample)
	Family Rules, Consequences, and Rewards (see sample)
	Fire Inspection (see evaluation checklist; Instructions will be emailed)
	Environmental Inspection (see checklist; Instruction will be emailed)
	Disaster Plan Questionnaire
	Family Violence Disclosure
	Trampoline Safety Agreement
	Medication Administration and Storage
	HIPPA Consent
	Ten-Year Residency History
	Firearms Safety Verification
	Inventory of Weapons, Firearms, Explosive Materials and Projectiles
	Water Safety
	Direct Deposit Form
	W-9 Form
	Child Care Plan
	Pictures (see instructions below)
	The front of your home
	The front yard
	The back yard
	Any pool, hot tub, pond, water garden, or other body of water on your property, if applicable
	Any outdoor play equipment on your property, if applicable
	Any pets or animals that inside or outside at your home, if applicable
	Your family (including everyone who lives in the home full and part time)
	The driveway/street entrance to your home
	The children's bedrooms
	Any outside buildings on your property, if applicable
	Online Training (submit one certificate per person)
	DFPS Medical Consent Online Training
	DFPS Medical Consent Acknowledgement Form
	DFPS Psychotropic Medications Online Training
	DFPS Trauma Informed Care Online Training
	DFPS Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child Online Training