



# **BUILD YOUR VILLAGE**

**A FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE  
PARENT'S GUIDE TO  
CREATING A WRAP-  
AROUND SUPPORT TEAM**

# BUILDING SUPPORT AS YOU FOSTER OR ADOPT



What is Wrap-Around?

Why is it Non-Negotiable?

The Three Steps to Building Wrap-Around Support:

## 1. Understand Your Wrap Around Team's Role



Find out what your agency provides

## 2. Build Your Inner Circle



Helping your friends and family become a strong support system

## 3. Build Your Outer Circle



How to develop large-scale community support as a foster/adoptive parent

# BUILDING YOUR TRIBE: WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT



## WHAT IS WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT?



Wrap-around support is a way for friends, family, or like-minded people in the community to support active foster, kinship (relatives) or adoptive families.

We strongly believe that everyone has a role to play in ensuring every child has a loving home.

After all, not everyone is called to foster or adopt, but everyone is called to care.

Everyone can do something.

Whether you're 70 and can bake a lasagna or 17 and can mow a lawn, you can serve vulnerable children and families, and be part of the solution to Virginia's foster care crisis.

"It is simply impossible to foster well without support, which is a humbling realization. I wish we'd asked for help much sooner. We deprived our friends of a blessing, and our own family of much-needed support."

- Janet Kelly, VKB President



Did you know? Wrap-around support is an "evidence-based" model with success in all kinds of communities!

It really does take a village!

# BUILDING YOUR VILLAGE: WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT



## WHY IS WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT NON-NEGOTIABLE?



When a new baby comes home from the hospital, friends and family respond with cards, meals, playdate invitations for bio kids, and other expressions of love and support.

## WHY?

Because we all intrinsically understand a new addition to the family means an adjustment period. And that the parents' attention needs to be on that new addition, showering it with love and attention to form healthy attachments.

**That same transition period occurs when a child is placed in a foster family for the first time.**

**And, because of trauma and special needs, the need for support can continue for months, even years.**

"No one is strutting their way through foster care; we're all limping in some way – each wired for struggle and worthy of grace."

- Jason Johnson

# BUILDING YOUR VILLAGE: WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT



## THE SPECIFICS: WRAP AROUND SUPPORT IS NON-NEGOTIABLE BECAUSE . . .

**It is Critical:** Half of all foster families quit within a year and a stunning 93% quit within 5 years, most citing a lack of support as the main factor.

**It Prioritizes What's Important:** Kids from hard places are often challenging to care for. Having someone else cook dinner, take bio kids or foster kiddo, or pick up dry cleaning can be life-saving game-changer for a foster family, enabling them to keep fostering.

**It is Preventative:** Wrap Around Support prevents burn out, allowing breathing room to maintain spiritual, emotional and relational health, all of which are necessary to bring healing to kids in care.

**It Works:** Not only is wrap-around support considered evidence-based, best practice in the child welfare world, it affirms a Gospel-centered approach to the foster care crisis.

**It is Inclusive:** Having a wrap-around teams give others a chance to be part of a blessing by supporting you in your foster care journey. And it opens up your kiddo to more healthy adult relationships.

**It is Motivational:** Serving on a wrap-around is a great way for non-fostering families to "dip their toe in the water" and get a feel for what fostering is like. How many more families would foster if they knew they'd get this kind of support?

**It is Empowering:** It gives opportunities for the church to be the church, with each person offering their own unique gifts and abilities.

# 1. UNDERSTAND YOUR WRAP AROUND TEAM'S ROLE

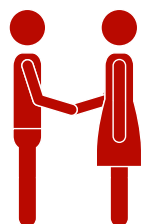


Wrap-around support is designed to complement, not replace, the services you should be getting from your agency.

Your Agency's goal is to make sure you and the children in your care have the support you need. However, you are not the only family they are caring for; in fact many social workers, especially ones who work for the local Department of Social Services, are overburdened by how many children they have in their care.

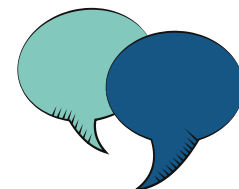
Most agencies are equipped to provide things like mental health services, support groups, and even some transportation needs.

You'll ask your wrap-around team to help with the rest!



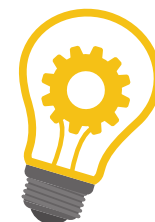
Before forming a wrap-around team, schedule a face-to-face meeting with your agency contact.

Make a list of the anticipated needs your family will need once a kiddo comes to live with you.



Write down all the ways your agency will meet those needs. Get the agency to commit in writing to meeting those needs.

Take special note of the ones they will are not equipped to meet.



Get ready to ask your wrap-around team to meet the needs your agency is not equipped to meet.

## 2. BUILD YOUR INNER CIRCLE



Your most crucial support comes from your existing circle of close friends and/or family. They are the ones who know you best. However, they may need help understanding the journey you've embarked on, and how to best support you through it.



Sit down with your close friends and family, either individually or at a small get together in your home.

Explain why you have a heart to foster or adopt and why you need help. Sample language for this conversation is at the end of this guide.



Be prepared in advance to answer questions on specifics for each role: How many meals you'll need each week? Which night is marriage/date night? When you will need rides? If helpful, use the wrap-around worksheet at the end of this resource.

Create a plan together. Break it down so the support is spread out among everyone involved.



Give them each a copy of Virginia's Kids Belong's "Loving On Your Loved Ones" guide

Figure out an online system for staying organized. We recommend MealTrainPro, but a google calendar or SignUpGenius will work too.



Ask your most supportive friend to take lead updating your needs, especially once you get a kiddo placed, so you are only fielding questions from one person, not each support team member.

# 3. ADD YOUR OUTER CIRCLE



Just like close friends and family, people in other areas of your life can be a huge support system! They just need to learn HOW.

## CONNECT WITH YOUR DIFFERENT "GROUPS"



Work Place



Member Groups



School

- 1** Connect with the most supportive person and ask them to help you spread the word.
- 2** Explain that you are fostering or adopting, and the challenges you expect or are experiencing.
- 3** Explain your concerns and needs. Be specific to your family and situation.
- 4** Give them access to your online system. Add their efforts to the support you've already coordinated from your faith community.



# SAMPLE LANGUAGE FOR BUILDING A WRAP AROUND SUPPORT TEAM:

**Finding the right words to say to ask for help can be hard!  
These ideas can help you navigate conversations with friends &  
family members, especially those who are new to foster care.**

## **WHY DO WE NEED YOUR HELP?**

We have decided to foster because \_\_\_\_\_.

50% of foster families quit within the first year and 93% quit within 5 years, most citing a lack of social support. Foster families aren't always great at asking for help, but we know we will need it and we are trying to be proactive so that we can give this kiddo the best chance for wholeness and healing.

## **OTHER FACTORS:**

In addition to our personal reasons, Virginia is in the middle of a foster care crisis.

- We rank 47th in permanency, meaning over 500 kids in Virginia exit foster care without a being successfully matched with an adoptive family.
- 89% of those kids are addicted, homeless, incarcerated or pregnant within 2 years of aging out creating a social cost to taxpayers of over \$300,000 per child
- The biggest cost, of course, is the loss of human potential for our community when these kids aren't able to fully contribute their God-given gifts.

**SOLUTION:** The proven solution to this crisis is more foster and adoptive families AND more families to step up to "wrap-around" these families with support.

**TIMING:** We think we know the kinds of support we need, but don't know how long we will need support for. We may adjust quickly or, if the kiddo has lots of challenges, we may need support for longer. Some kids are fine for months into a placement, but then issues arise later as they start to feel safe.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Not everyone is called to foster or adopt, but everyone can do something and we need your help.

**THE ASK:** There are several ways to help. {Show them the worksheet.} Please let us know which jobs appeal to you.

**THE SPECIFICS:** We have set up an online account where you can sign up to help that will have all the details.

# THE SPECIFICS:

ASK YOUR MOST SUPPORTIVE FRIEND TO ENTER YOUR NEEDS INTO YOUR SYSTEM. YOU CAN HAVE MORE THAN ONE PERSON HELPING YOU IN EACH AREA.



Babysitting

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Age Appropriate  
Clothing



Meal Train

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Room Prep



Transportation/  
Run Errands

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Gift Cards for  
Meals & Outings



Ongoing House  
& Yard Work

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Attend Court  
Hearings



Listening Ear

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Other

## TIPS:

- Write down the name of one person who can help coordinate others for that task.
- Your wrap around team can help with more than one task.
- Use a Google calendar, SignUpGenius or any other tool. Meal Train Pro (\$15 per month) is our favorite tool to coordinate wrap-around teams.

# SUPPORT PROFILES

ASK YOUR MOST SUPPORTIVE FRIEND TO HELP COORDINATE THESE EFFORTS. BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ON YOUR PREFERENCES UNDER EACH TOPIC. WE RECOMMEND MEALTRAINPRO AS AN ONLINE COORDINATION TOOL.



## MEAL TRAIN

- Checks Meal Train for available dates & diet restrictions.
- Makes a meal.
- Drops it off according to instructions.

- Checks schedule for respite or babysitting needs.
- Babysits kids (either bio or foster) per instructions.
- Babysitters may need background & driving record checks.

## RESPITE/ BABYSITTING



## TRANSPORTATION

- Checks schedule for needs like transporting a kid or running errands.
- Some drivers need background & driving record checks.

- Checks schedule for clothing needs when kiddo arrives
- Purchases age-appropriate clothing for kiddo
- Drops off clothing with family

## CLOTHING



## ROOM PREP

- Collects family's (& kid's, if possible) decorating preferences.
- Coordinates the purchase of furniture & decor
- Preps for room for a kiddo!

- Serves as "on-call" support for foster family
- Willing to learn about trauma
- Will use discretion with sensitive information

## LISTENING EAR



## YARD & HOUSE WORK

- Checks schedule for needs like yard mowing, house cleaning or laundry & coordinates with wrap around lead
- Blesses family with this help, or purchases gift card to cover the cost of these things.

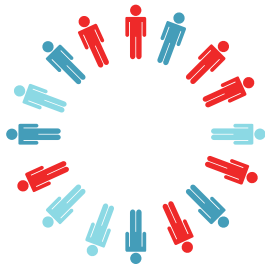
- Checks schedule for preferred activities of family
- Coordinate gift card purchases with other friends/family
- Drops off gift cards to family

## GIFT CARDS



## ATTEND HEARINGS

- Checks schedule for dates of hearings
- Knows or is willing to learn about child welfare process
- Shows up to support family at court hearings



**If you are part of a faith community doesn't have an existing foster care ministry that helps families organize wrap-around support, please consider putting someone on their staff in touch with VKB. A big part of our work is equipping faith communities in how to end the foster care crisis.**



**Trauma training is another non-negotiable for foster families. We recommend a trust-based and relational approach. Empowered to Connect offers an online TBRI (trust-based, relational intervention) class, and there are a few trainers here in Virginia who offer in-person classes. Email [connect@vakidsbelong.org](mailto:connect@vakidsbelong.org) for more information. The Connected Child, No Drama Discipline, & The Whole Brain Child books are excellent resources.**



**Thank you for your  
dedication and  
commitment to the  
children  
in your  
care!**

*Virginia's Kids*  
**BELONG**

AN AFFILIATE OF AMERICA'S KIDS BELONG