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# Why are we here?

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## **There is a shortage of foster homes in Oklahoma.**

Foster parents play an important and significant role in the lives of foster children and are an essential player in the multidisciplinary child welfare team.

Foster Parents should be treated with respect and dignity by all for the time, attention, and love that the foster family shares with the foster child(ren) in their home. It is the foster parent who knows the child intimately and should be valued for that knowledge. A judge should be asking for this voice within the court room if said judge is to be acting in the best interest of the child.

Foster parents are human. Part of being human means that there is an emotional connection and attachment that occurs during nurturing and caretaking that must be handled delicately and balanced with respecting the rights that are intact of the natural family. It should not be considered unnatural for a foster parent to grieve for a child postplacement and the foster parent should not be made to feel as such.

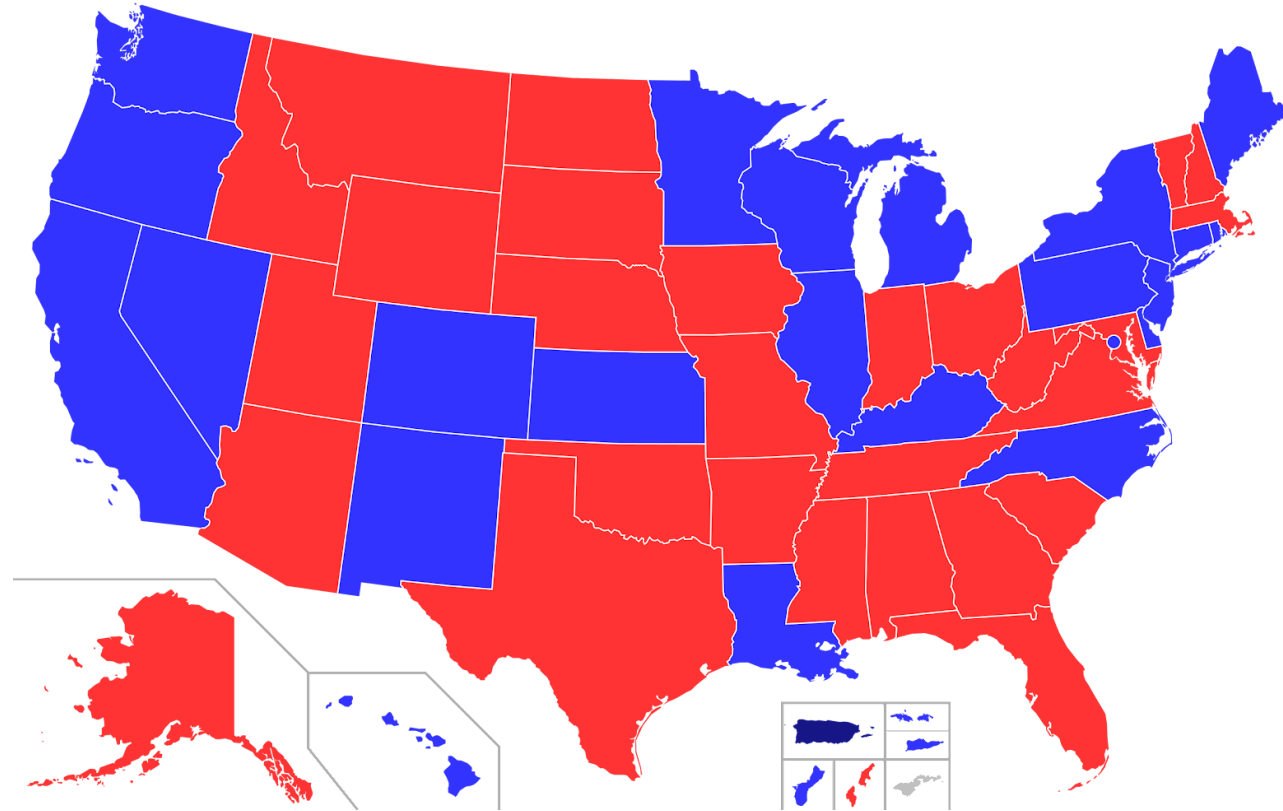
# Observations:

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- ❖ The parent's rights to parent are taking priority over the child's rights for safety and timely permanency. The focus should be on the child that is the most vulnerable in this tragedy and when considering best interest, permanency should be at the forefront of our minds.
- ❖ Oklahoma Foster Parents have less rights than other states such as TX, AL, FL, AR, MO, KY, SC.
- ❖ We already know that fostering is an emotionally expensive experience for foster parents. Sadly, we are losing high-quality homes because like the children placed in those homes, the foster parents experience a great deal of trauma.
- ❖ The courts are inconsistent with acknowledging & respecting the role that foster parents play within the multidisciplinary child welfare team, some interact with foster parents', and some do not. There is little uniformity in applying the laws and how a deprived docket is run from one county to the next.
- ❖ Foster parents are asked to take a child into their home and love them as their own, include the foster child in their family as a member, involve the child in activities of interest to the child in order to allow the child to engage in activities of their peers all while forming emotional attachments between the child and the foster family. Yet, the child and the foster family are not valued for this ability to attach and are given little regard when permanent decisions are being formed.
- ❖ There is a lack of accountability and transparency within the grievance process if there should be a situation arise between caseworker and foster parents. At times leaving these grievances unresolved and homes closing.

# Oklahoma Foster Parent Rights compared to the following states' foster parent(s)' rights:

- ❖ Alabama
- ❖ Arkansas
- ❖ Arizona
- ❖ Florida
- ❖ Georgia
- ❖ Kentucky
- ❖ Missouri
- ❖ North Carolina
- ❖ South Carolina
- ❖ Texas



Foster Parent Right:	States already have this right:
Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration as a professional member of the child welfare team.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Be notified of and be given appropriate , ongoing education and continuing education and training to develop and enhance foster parenting skills, and to be notified of and given access to local and statewide support groups.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Be informed about ways to contact the state agency or the child-placing agency in order to receive information and assistance to access supportive services for any child in the foster parent’s care.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Receive timely financial reimbursement for providing foster care services.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Be notified of any costs or expenses for which the foster parent may be eligible for reimbursement.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Be provided a clear, written explanation of the individual treatment and service plan concerning the child in the foster parent’s home.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Receive, at any time during which the child is placed with the foster parent additional or necessary information that is relevant to the care of the child.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Be notified of scheduled review meetings, permanency planning meetings, family team meetings and special staffing concerns for any foster child placed in the foster parents’ home to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input be given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Communicate with other foster parents to share information regarding the foster child. Specifically, to receive any information concerning the number of times a foster child has been moved and the reasons why and to receive names and phone numbers of previous foster parent if the previous foster parent has authorized such release.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Communicate with other professionals who work with foster child within the context of the team including, but not limited to therapists, physicians, and teachers.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information regarding the child and the child’s family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information shall be limited to that information authorized by State code.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
Be given reasonable notice of any change in or addition to the services provided to the child pursuant to the child’s individual treatment and service plan.	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
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Foster Parent Right:	States already have this right:
<p>Be given written notice of:  Plans to terminate placement of the child with the foster parent  The reasons for the change in termination of placement  The notice shall be waived only in emergency cases</p>	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
<p>Be notified by the applicable state agency in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings; including notice of the date and time of any court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer hearing the case, the location of the hearing, and the court docket number of the case;</p>	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
<p>Be considered as a preferred placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parent is to reenter foster care at the same level and type of care, if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the home of the foster parent.</p>	AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, SC,TX
<p>Be provided fair and impartial investigation of complaints concerning certification of the foster parent</p>	AL, AR, GA, KY, MO, OK,SC,TX
<p>Be provided the opportunity to request and receive a fair and impartial hearing regarding decisions that affect certification retention or placement of children in the home.</p>	AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK,SC,TX
<p>Be allowed the right to exercise parental substitute authority</p>	AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
<p>Have timely access to the appeals process of the state agency and child placement agency and the right to be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the right to appeal</p>	AL, AR, GA, KY, MO, OK, SC,TX
<p>Be given the number of the statewide toll-free Foster Parent Hotline</p>	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
<p>File a grievance and be informed of the process for filing a grievance.</p>	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
<p>Receive a copy of the liability insurance policy the Agency maintains for every Department contracted foster home placement.</p>	OK
<p>Maintain the values and routines of the foster family while respecting the rights and confidentiality of each foster child in the home including avoidance of scheduling visits infringing on the foster family's celebration of holidays or vacation time. This would not preclude visits from occurring if the foster family is in agreement to such or if the Agency is responsible for transport etc.</p>	AR, FL, GA, KY
<p>Have the right to attend and be heard at any Department or court proceeding related to the child currently or previously placed in the home. Such right shall not be construed to require a foster parent to be made a party to such proceeding.</p>	AL, AR, AZ, FL, GA, KY, MO, OK, NC,SC,TX
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Foster Parent Right that Oklahoma does not include:	States already have this right:
To be assured that all members of the foster parent’s family are safe from physical violence, emotional abuse, and harassment.	AR, KY, TX
To receive postplacement counseling for loss, secondary trauma, and grief.	AR, AZ, KY, TX
To receive, upon an open records request a copy of all information contained in Agency records about foster parent home and foster care services provided by the family.	KY, AR, AL
Under parental substitute authority, the foster parent is allowed to cut child’s hair, authorize necessary medical procedures, and travel out of the state.	SC,
The right to mediation procedures and foster parent may request mediation without a threat of reprisal.	AL, TX, FL
To have priority consideration for adoption if foster child who has been placed in the foster home for a period of at least (12) months becomes eligible for adoption.	AL, AR, GA, KY
Update postplacement as information is gathered by the agency upon request by the foster parents.	MO
If a child who is in custody of DHS through an emergency, temporary or permanent court order as a result of dependency, neglect, or abuse, has been in the same foster family home for a period of 9 months ;, it shall be presumed that the State Agency has not identified any other placement options and the child shall remain in the foster family home unless the Agency has concerns for the child’s well being. The foster parent or parents of the foster family home shall after 9 months period be the first persons considered to be the child’s permanent adoptive home after termination of parental rights occurs.	AL, KY, MO, SC
To be reminded in writing that the foster parent has a right to speak in court	AL, AR, KY, OK, TX, SC
The ability to refuse placement without reprisal.	AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, MO, SC, TX
To be provided a period of respite from providing foster care without reprisal.	AL, AR, AZ, KY, FL, MO, NC, SC
Foster parent has the right to intervene as a matter of right after 6 months of placement in any action involving the action of involuntary termination of parental rights involving a child who is placed with the foster parent. Such intervention may be made anonymously, the foster parents shall be identified by initials and shall receive service through his/her counsel or if not represented by counsel, by providing a preferred mailing address to receive notices from the court and other parties.	KY-6 months SC-9 months AL-12 months TX-12 months
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# Foster Parent Stipend Per State:

	AL	AR	AZ	GA	KY	MO	OK	NC	SC	TX
<b>Ages: 0-5</b>	\$17.59 (0- 2 years) \$18.11 (3-5 years)	\$400 per month or \$13.15 per day	\$24.94 per day	\$27.80 per day	\$24.10 per day	\$450 per month or \$14.79 per day	\$17.72 per day	\$514 per month or \$16.90 per day	\$20.64 per day	\$27.07 per day
<b>Ages: 6-12</b>	\$18.56 per day	\$425 per Month or \$13.97 per day	\$22.64 per day	\$29.99 per day	\$24.10 per day	\$510 per Month or \$16.77 per day	\$20.42 per day	\$654 per month or \$21.50	\$24.10 per day	\$27.0 per day
<b>Age: 13+</b>	\$19.05 per day up to the age of 21.	\$450 monthly up to age 14.79 per day / \$475 monthly for 15-21 years or \$15.62 per day	\$30.63 per day	\$32.62 per day	\$26.20 per day	\$630 per month or \$20.71 per day	\$22.62 per day	\$698 per month or \$22.95 per day.	\$25.47 per day up to age 20	\$27.07 per day



# What can be done?

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- 1) Recognize the importance of foster parents and the foster child that they are caring nurturing and helping to heal from adverse childhood experiences which include loss & trauma and many times abuse.
- 2) Support legislation that encourage shorter length of time for permanency for children.
- 3) Support legislation that encourage educating OKDHS/Judges, DA's, Foster Parents about adverse childhood experiences and the long-term affects of loss and trauma.
- 4) Support legislation that protect foster parents' rights within the State of Oklahoma such as SB 1551 by Senator Roland Pederson.
  - Most of the states mentioned in my presentation have legislation that has already been passed to support foster parents being the first in line for adoption of their foster child after (9-12) months if the child's natural parents' rights are terminated either voluntarily or involuntarily.
  - Increase transparency and accountability by making the foster family file available upon request of the foster family of all information held in the file as other states currently are doing.
  - Support legislation that meets or exceeds other states laws regarding foster families if you want to retain foster families by supporting their emotional needs, as well as financial needs.

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“Mama- Why do us girls  
have to continue to  
suffer because of ‘that’  
mom’s choices?”

~ M.Leighton Age 8



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“Each child represents either a potential addition to the protective capacity and enlightened citizenship of a nation or if allowed to suffer from neglect, a potential addition to the destructive forces of a community. The interest of the nation are involved in the welfare of this array of children no less than our great material affairs.”

~ Theodore Roosevelt

# References:

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