

FaithBuilders Testimony

Special Committee on Foster Care Adequacy

FaithBuilders is a volunteer organization whose mission is to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the least of these. We believe that for us, the least of these are children and families in crisis within our community. We have a tier of services, which include goods and services, mentoring, respite care and occasionally foster care for unique situations and/or specific children.

GOODS: FaithBuilders offers a variety of items ranging from food, clothing, diapers, formula, toiletries, cleaning supplies and laundry soap to larger and more specific needs such as beds, furniture, appliances, cribs, car seats and strollers. Beginning with the provision of goods, our goal is to build trust through relationships and form support networks for these families and children in crisis to assist them with stabilization of the family unit. We have a network of donors, along with a storage area with frequently requested items that we collect on a regular basis.

SERVICES: FaithBuilders offers transportation assistance such as rides or bus passes for those we serve to get to medical appointments, job interviews, court dates and other necessary appointments. We also provide budgeting assistance, resume preparation and assistance in obtaining important documents that may have been lost in prior transition. Without this paperwork, often times individuals are unable to obtain a job, state assistance and medical help for themselves and their children.

MENTORING: FaithBuilders works with teenagers in foster care, as well as unaccompanied youth not connected with the system to build a support network and gain the skills and tools necessary to be self-sufficient adults within our community. We work with the schools to equip these students with whatever is necessary to obtain their high school diploma and thus begin furthering their education. We also mentor teenage mothers, as well as young mothers within our community who are trying to balance work, home and often times school. We provide consequential care, as well as life skills training to further their success in their career, as well as their role as parents.

RESPITE CARE: FaithBuilders takes children into their homes who are in crisis in lieu of foster care. We provide a stable environment for the children while assisting the parent(s) in stabilizing a home environment. During the respite period, parents are encouraged to visit their children regularly and we provide anything the child needs during their stay in our homes. There is no charge for our services and no reimbursement. The homes that take these children are often times licensed foster homes, especially if they do any long-term placement, as to adhere to the KDHE 90-day respite rule. If a home only does short-term respite, often times they are not licensed but has a FaithBuilders run background check and the director will go over with them what to expect and how to interact with the biological families. We also offer trainings for new and current respite parents and encourage all our families to attend the Deciding Together training through DCCCA.

FOSTER CARE: If FaithBuilders is working with a child and/or family whose children go into state's custody for some reason, often times that home will become a Non-relative kinship placement and obtain an emergency license to maintain a stable placement for the child and further facilitate the relationship with the parents. All licensed foster homes follow DCF licensing regulations.

The success of FaithBuilders is due largely to its ability to stand alone, disconnected from the state/federal child welfare system. We approach the family from a different perspective. Because we do not receive any state/federal funding and we are a group of volunteers, parents seem to trust us more. They allow us to walk closer with their family, building support while educating and training them on easier/better ways to parent. The time and effort we put into these families is significantly greater than the system can provide, as they have too few workers and too much need. In a perfect world, no one would need services and all would be able to stand alone. In a better world, there would be greater cooperation between the state agencies and those groups that come alongside the families to support them. As of now, there is little if any cooperation, which does not yield to maximal outcomes.