



Love Box Information Packet

COMMUNITY | EMPOWERMENT | HOPE





THE NEED

Recent data indicates that there are almost half a million youth in our nation's foster care system.

Every year, over 20,000 youth in the foster care system age out, entering adulthood while losing essential support services, whether they have the skills to do so effectively or not.

While many youth in foster care are reunited with relatives after a short period of time, more than 28% of youth in foster care remain in the system two years or longer. Young people who have grown up within the foster care system have experienced instability in their lives and often disproportionately suffer with learning disabilities, limited life skills, health issues, and emotional and behavioral struggles that lead to negative developmental outcomes.

In addition to the trauma caused by the disruption to their family and home environment, youth in foster care often have a wide variety of other serious emotional and physical needs including:



Difficulty forming healthy relationships with adults and peers



Chronic health problems



Substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, or involvement in risky behaviors



Delays in academics and educational progress, which put them behind their peers developmentally

OUR SOLUTION

You will commit to showing up in meaningful ways **at least once a month**. Love Boxes can be personalized care packages to meet practical needs or it can be the act of bringing a meal, babysitting, or taking the kids to do a specific activity. You have the freedom to get creative! The only thing we ask is that you commit to writing handwritten encouraging notes for each of the children and caregivers.

HOW DOES THIS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- ☆ Providing support to caregivers allows for a more stable and nurturing environment and empowers parents to focus on what matters - what the child needs to heal.
- ☆ Providing a child with typical childhood experiences (playdates, extracurriculars, camps) helps promote positive mental health, emotional well-being, and identity formation.
- ☆ Providing multiple healthy role models to develop authentic connections is essential for children to learn to create healthy trust-based relationships with supportive secondary adults - YOU!
- ☆ Providing opportunities for children and youth to learn skills, practice new things, get excited about education, and be exposed to developmental growth helps prepare them for independent living.

"The consistent, enduring presence of a caring adult in a young person's life can be the difference between staying in school or dropping out, making healthy decisions or engaging in risky behaviors, and realizing one's potential or failing to achieve one's dreams."

(Bruce and Bridgeland, 2014)



PROGRAM BASICS



Minimum of a **year's worth of monthly support** (deliveries and/or activities) with a specific foster family. We match you intentionally, based on proximity and the family's scope of needs



You work with your Love Box family to **determine a schedule** that works best for you both. You will commit to initiate contact with the family each month.



The Love Box drop off or hangout can take place **anywhere** (a park, your home, a restaurant, etc.) but typically at the fostering family's house.



Show children, youth, and caregivers that they matter and are important. Your role is to **build a relationship** with the children and serve as a mentor as well as to provide the parents with support and community.



We are completely volunteer based and can only grow our impact by good people (like YOU!) stepping up and helping out. Thank you for **investing in serving** the foster care community.

PROGRAM BASICS

LOVE BOX CONTENTS

- A handwritten note encouraging the child/ youth and caregiver (over time these will become more personal as you get to know the family)
- **Suggested items for children:** books, favorite snacks, interest-based items, arts/crafts/activities, clothes, etc.
- **Suggested items for parents:** Meals, household supplies, pantry items, gas cards, gift cards, etc.

LOVE OUTSIDE THE BOX

Many families have important and essential needs that do not “fit” in a box. We encourage this! Volunteers may also choose to:

- Pay for an activity or sponsor an extra-curricular opportunity
- Babysit or plan playdates to allow for the caregiver to have a break
- Transportation for after school pick up or extracurriculars

You'll receive a monthly newsletter with possible Love Box ideas; however, we encourage you to tailor your support to the family's needs.

The newsletter also includes a monthly impact form that you are **REQUIRED** fill out.



VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST



- 1 Gather a group!** Talk to your friends, family, and colleagues. Group members can help support you as the Love Box leader and can help offset financial costs.
- 2 Complete paperwork.** All members must fill out confidentiality and liability waivers. Leaders and any members consistently interacting with the family must also be live scanned. Each individual leader or co-leaders must also pay a processing fee [online](#).
- 3 Familiarize yourself** with this Love Box packet as well the FAQs.
- 4 Get matched!** We will match you with a foster family based on location, compatibility, and scope of needs. Finding a good fit is vital, as we know how important this relationship is!
- 5 Meet the family!** Your case manager will schedule an initial meeting between you and the fostering family and conduct a formal needs assessment.
- 6 Attend training.** Love Box leaders and group members wanting to interact with the family must complete a Love Box training as a group with your Angels case manager. Training is approximately 90 minutes.
- 7 Schedule 1st meeting!** You will reach out to your fostering family to schedule your first hang out with them and set up a plan for the following months. Many groups have a consistent schedule they keep. (for example 3rd Saturday of every month).
- 8 Show up.** Each month, you will reach out to your family to see how you can best support them.
- 9 Complete monthly impact forms.** This is essential to help us track outcomes/impact and provide you support.

FOSTER CARE BUZZ WORDS

- **Social Worker**- Foster care social workers are responsible for overseeing the well-being of children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse, neglect, or other reasons.
- **Licensing Social Worker**- These social workers work directly with foster families to receive and keep their foster care license.
- **Placement Social Worker**- These social workers contact families to coordinate placements for youth in care.
- **ILP Social Worker**- County social workers who are assigned to youth who are identified as likely to age out of foster care at age 18 in order to provide support in the Independent Living Program.
- **AB-12 Social Worker**- County social workers who are assigned to youth at age 18. Replaces their regular county social worker.
- **DHS**- Department of Human Services
 - Every single youth in care has a DHS social worker; also referred to as a county social worker
 - Some foster family homes may have a DHS licensing worker*
- **FFA**- Foster Family Agency
 - Youth in care may also have an FFA social worker, this occurs when youth referrals are sent from DHS to an FFA
 - Some foster family homes may have an FFA licensing worker*
- **Some local FFAs:**
 - Legacy Family Services, Kern Bridges, Victory Family Services, Koinonia Family Services, ChildNet Youth and Family Services, Pathway Family Services, Aspiranet, etc.

***Reminder:** Foster homes themselves have their own social worker, as well as each youth has their own social worker

- **CPS-Child Protective Services**- Responsible for providing child protection, which includes responding to reports of child abuse or neglect.
- **Jamison Children's Center**- A Temporary Shelter Care Facility, operated by the Human Services Department of Kern County.
 - This is where all youth enter into foster care in Kern County, and where they may be housed between placements.

FOSTER CARE BUZZ WORDS CONT.

- **Juvenile Dependency vs. Delinquency**
 - **Juvenile Dependency** is a youth who is a dependent of the Dependency side of the Juvenile Court when their home is deemed unfit because of neglect or abuse. This youth has a county social worker and will temporarily be housed at Jamison Center in between placements or if picked up while a runaway.
 - **Juvenile Delinquency** is a youth who is a dependent of the Delinquency side of the Juvenile Court due to having trouble with the law/being charged with a crime. This youth has a county probation officer and will be temporarily housed at juvenile hall in between placements or if picked up while a runaway.
- **Group Home-** A facility of any capacity which provides 24-hour non-medical care and supervision to youth in a structured environment.
- **STRTP- Short Term Residential Therapeutic Program:** A residential facility operated by a public or private agency providing specialized and intensive care and supervision, services, and treatment to non-minor dependents. Form of a “group home”.
- **TAY- Transitional Age Youth**
 - Foster Youth ages 16-24
- **ISFC- Intensive Services Foster Care**
 - This is a level of care for youth that involves in-depth treatment and behavioral support, or youth with special healthcare needs
- **CFTM- Child and Family Team Meeting**
 - These meetings bring family members together so that, with the support of professionals and community resources, they can create a plan that ensures child safety and helps to address needs and goals. Some of our case managers/volunteers may be invited to attend these meetings.
- **ILP-Independent Living Program (16-21 years old)**
 - ILP provides training, services, and benefits to assist current and former foster youth in achieving self-sufficiency prior to, and after leaving, the foster care system.

FOSTER CARE BUZZ WORDS CONT.

- **AB-12- Assembly Bill 12**
 - Created California's Extended Foster Care (EFC) Program which allows eligible youth in the child welfare and probation systems to remain in foster after age 18 as an NMD (Non-Minor Dependent) until age 21. Provides a monthly living allowance. To maintain eligibility a youth must be engaged in one of the following: enrolled in high school or GED program, enrolled in college or vocational program, employed 80hrs/mo, participation in a program or activity designed to remove barriers to employment, or have a medical condition that prevents engagement.
- **THP- Transitional Housing Program (18-21 years old)**
 - Allows eligible foster youth to extend foster care beyond age 18 and up to age 21 through programs like the Independent Living Program. Provides affordable housing, life skills training, daily living skills education, mentoring w/ a life coach.
 - Agencies w/ programs in Kern County: Aspiranet, Victory, Covenant “Building Blocks”
- **THP Plus- Transitional Housing Program Plus (21-24 years old)**
 - THP-Plus is a program for young adults who exited foster care (including those supervised by Probation) at age 18 and are currently between the ages of 21-24. Program focuses on coaching, life skill development, educational/vocational skills. Youth must acquire their own housing. May remain in the program for 24 months and are given a monthly living allowance.
 - Agency w/ program in Kern County: Covenant (55 spots)
- **SILP- Supervised Independent Living Program (18-21 years old)**
 - SILP's are a non-licensed foster care placement that a youth finds on their own. This could be a room you rent from a relative or friend, an apartment, a college dorm, etc. Must meet certain criteria and be approved by an AB-12 social worker.
- **Dream Center-** Kern County's one-stop resource center for current and former foster youth aged 16-24.

California mandated reporting easy steps...

What must be reported and how to report!

What Must be Reported

Any of the below acts involving anyone under the age of 18:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

The mandated reporter must only have **reasonable suspicion** that a child has been mistreated; no evidence or proof is required prior to making a report. The case will be further investigated by law enforcement and/or child welfare services.

How To Report



By Phone

Immediately, or as soon as possible, make a telephone report to child welfare services and/or to a Police or Sheriff's department.

1. Child Welfare Services Phone #

Kern County Child Abuse Hotline - 661.631.6011

2. Police Department Phone #

Bakersfield Police Department - 661.327.7111

3. Sheriff's Department Phone #

Kern County Sheriff's Department - 661.391.7500



In Writing

Within 36 hours, a written report must be sent, faxed or submitted electronically. The written report should be completed on a state form called the 8572, which can be downloaded at: http://ag.ca.gov/childabuse/pdf/ss_8572.pdf

Other Information

Safeguards for Mandated Reporters:

- The Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) states that the name of the mandated reporter is strictly confidential, although it is provided to investigative parties working on the case.
- Under state law, mandated reporters cannot be held liable in civil or criminal court when reporting as required; however, under federal law mandated reporters only have immunity for reports made in good faith.

Failure to report:

- Failure to report concerns of child abuse or neglect is considered a misdemeanor and is punishable in California by six months in jail and/or up to a \$1,000 fine.
- For the complete law and a list of mandated reporters refer to California Penal Codes 11164-11174.3.

BAKERSFIELD ANGELS

RECOMMENDED BOOK LIST

TRAUMA-INFORMED BOOKS

- The Connected Child by Dr. Karyn Purvis
- The Whole-Brain Child by Daniel J. Siegel
- The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk, MD
- The Deepest Well by Nadine Burke Harris, MD
- Childhood Disrupted by Donna Jackson Nakazawa
- What happened to You by Bruce Perry and Oprah

TEEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOOKS

- . StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath
- . 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens by Sean Covey
- . How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie

MENTOR AND LEADERSHIP BOOKS

- Grit by Angela Duckworth
- Start with Why by Simon Sinek
- Dare to Lead by Brené Brown
- How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

MINDFULNESS BOOKS

- A Still Quiet Place for Teens by Amy Saltzman
- Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain by Daniel J. Siegal
- Stuff That Sucks: A Teen's Guide to Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can by Ben Sedley

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Where do we get our boxes?

Your case manager will supply your group with boxes. However, a box is not required if you would prefer to deliver your items in a different way or if your support is more “outside of the box!”



Do we have to fill a box for each child in the home or does the whole family get one?

You can create individual boxes, but we recommend one box for the whole family with items for each person in the home. You may also want to create just one box with general household items (but don't forget notes for everyone!).



How does a volunteer group find out what the foster family's needs are?

The Love Box leader has a contact number for the caregiver and is responsible for building a relationship with them, as well as finding out what the needs/wants are for the children and family each month. **We suggest taking the initiative to give ideas and options- it can be so overwhelming for some parents to ask for help!**



Are we allowed to be left alone with the children?

Not unless you choose to be approved as a babysitter or respite provider. We encourage all groups to nominate one Love Box member to complete this process. Deeper relationships form when volunteers are able to have one-on-one mentorship, taking children on special outings, providing transportation for the fostering family, and being able to give the parents a break.



Is there a financial limit we can spend on the family?

No, there is no limit, but we ask that you spend a reasonable amount. This program is about consistent support, meaningful connections, and experiences. We want the program to focus more on relationships than the care packages.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Are we allowed to ask personal questions?

No, please do attempt to get information from the children or foster parents about why the children are in foster care. It's up to the child whether or not they share any information with the volunteer.



Are we allowed to hug a child?

We ask that you do not initially attempt physical contact with the child. Over time and with trust they might initiate it. Please be aware that children in foster care often have inappropriate or non-existent boundaries due to abuse/neglect and need help in establishing healthy emotional and physical boundaries. Always keep this in mind. A great way to establish healthy touch is to start with a fist-bump or high-five.



Are we allowed to take pictures of the children?

You may only take pictures if you've been given permission by the child and caregivers. Even if you are given permission to take a picture of a child in foster care, you are NOT allowed to post any picture of the child to social media or share in a public setting due to privacy and confidentiality as well as the safety of the child.



What if I have a concern?

If you ever have a concern about your volunteer group, the foster family, or any children in care, we ask that you speak with your Bakersfield Angels case manager and they will go over the best way to proceed. It's important to navigate any issue as carefully as possible. **It is important to note that you are a mandated reporter and if you have cause to have any suspicion of child abuse or neglect you required by law to report to the relevant authorities.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Do I have to provide a box each month?

No. Many volunteers choose to pay for an activity, event, extracurricular activity, babysit or take the family on an outing, etc., in the place of a traditional “Love Box”. Every family has unique and diverse needs and requires different types of support.



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

We do birthdays BIG at Bakersfield Angels!

We know birthdays can be hard for many children in foster care because they are not with their families or because they have not had an opportunity or the resources to celebrate their birthdays. You can help support your family as they plan parties! Here are some practical ways you can help children be CELEBRATED:

- Buy a personalized birthday cake based on the child's interests
- Provide the favors for the party
- Provide decorations (balloons, streamers, banners, etc.) and help decorate the house the day of the party (and clean up when it's done)
- Find a location for the party
- Plan a drive-by birthday parade
- Show up at the party and celebrate an amazing child!



NATIONAL ANGELS C.H.A.T.S.

(Connection, Healing, Advocacy, Teaching, Support)

National Angels hosts quarterly online "C.H.A.T.S." for volunteers and mentors across the country to attend. They are a resource for volunteers and even prospective volunteers to learn more about child welfare, volunteering, trauma, etc., and how they can make a difference in the foster care community.

These are a great opportunity for volunteers to come together and meet other people who are doing this work!



"In this Love Box I am an idea generator, a dinner maker and food deliverer, an extra set of hands, a support for our leads, a voice of compassion, and trauma-informed love. It also gives me a chance to work as a team with other loving members, to problem solve, to lead from love, and to practice selflessness."

- Lexi, Love Box Member

