



WE ASKED:

“As states move towards reopening, what supports would help you and your family make that transition most successful?”

The Family Voices United campaign brings together the voices of young people, birth parents, and relative caregivers with lived experience in the child welfare system to drive change in foster care. Learn more at familyvoicesunited.org.

Why COVID-19 Transition Support?

As the many states in the United States consider reopening after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, policymakers and administrators need to consider how to reopen in a way that keeps families safe. The voices of kinship caregivers, birth parents, current and former foster youth will provide insight into what strategies and supports will be most successful in reopening society to keep our most vulnerable families physically, mentally, financially secure and cared for.



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A collaborative project of The Alliance for Children's Trust & Prevention Funds, FosterClub, and Generations United with support from Casey Family Programs.

Some key themes that came out of the responses we received to this question:

- Families need clear, cohesive and a consistent messaging on COVID-19 safety, precautions, and updates.
- Kinship caregivers need respite care resources and options and access to technology for virtual services like mental health and self-care workshops, tutoring sessions.
- Emergency supports like COVID testing, sanitizing wipes, masks, SNAP, virtual health visits, and mental health services are essential and should continue as states re-open.
- Former Foster Youth need assistance navigating basic needs like access to affordable housing, food and mental health services.

Here is what young people, parents and kinship caregivers said...



Cloth masks to be free and accessible.

Amber Barker, Former Foster Youth and Birth Parent from Oregon

As a work from the home employee (prior to COVID), **the support my family could use the most is respite care**. Due to all summer camps and daycare canceled, our nephew will not have any activities during the day once school ends next week. I did sign him up to a few virtual camps, however, space was limited. I think as long as there is something to keep him occupied, that would assist us. Although the state is reopening, my family will continue to **take precautions recommended by the CDC**. We are hoping the respite care that might be available,

will continue to follow CDC guidelines to keep our family safe.

Bianca Martin, Relative Caregiver from Virginia with UMFS, Formed Families Forward

Online academic tutoring support for middle and high school students in core subject areas this summer and throughout the next school year- even if classes resume in person. **Zoom type mental health check-in services** with advice for students anxious about transitioning from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, 11th to 12-grade high school students. **Priority funding for VA public schools to be able to add more social workers, school nurses, psychologists, and counselors.**

Liz, Foster parent from Virginia



Quicker services like, child care for families to find work that may have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. **Also, telehealth is something I believe should be continued unless it's an emergency, continued SNAP until all phases of reopening are complete I believe more delivery meals should be available especially for families with children that have special needs** and getting out isn't the easiest and isn't safe.

Pasqueal Taylor, Birth Parent from Louisiana with the Birth Parent National Network

"Access to good affordable healthcare so that if we need to get tested we can easily."

Former Foster Youth from Wisconsin

"Because of being an older adult raising children in my home. **I am fearful of my child**

returning to school without knowing they are well protected from bringing the virus home to us. Because of that, it will depend on the outcomes of the pandemic getting closer to the school year to know I would feel about that. **I would almost rather homeschool and have the support at home than to send them back and forth.** I am the childcare provider for my granddaughter as well while her mother works. I need reassurance that they will be precautions in place for us.

I know as an older adult and with an immune disorder, I will have to be even more cautious. Because of that, I will be more likely to continue with staying safer at home for a while. So **I would appreciate the community assisting in that by continuing the senior shopping days and times.**

I think social distancing should continue for a while. Even the **masks should continue for a while.** I am concerned about another outbreak coming about the time children are back in school and we have to start this all over again. I also think there are a lot of unknowns we just don't know how to anticipate."

Gail Engel, Kinship Caregiver from Colorado with Grand Family Coalition

"The only thing I can think of that can help a family come back towards reopening to the world is help with everything they might need for the family. **Help with rent so that the landlord doesn't bother them because they didn't pay rent for the tie they were out of work and make sure that they have a job to go back to so that they can keep food on the table for the family.** Make sure that school is going to be open so that the children can be back with their friends and teacher. children also do think things as well as the parents. Kids go through cabin fever as well. They need to get out and have some fun too."

Keyna, Birth Parent from New York

"What would help me, my family and other members of society would be not to open back up until store shelves are stocked with the **necessary protection items such as masks, gloves and sanitize wipes/spray. These items are needed for one to go out into society!**"

Raven Sigure, Birth parent from Louisiana with Casey Family Programs Birth Advisory Council.

"I think that I would be able to navigate through the reopening with support finding a job."

Weston Charles-Gallo, Former Foster Youth from Missouri with Missouri Youth Advisory Board

It would be helpful to have transparent, real news that is balanced instead of fear-mongering and focusing on the bad instead of the good. Places like parks and community centers providing mental health support services and counseling.

Kinship caregiver from Colorado

States should re-open because the shutdown took away ALL **access to services, resources & supports that really helped me to care for my grandchildren.**

Linda Stolle Relative, Caregiver from Idaho with I work with Relatives As Parents Inc

As our state reopens our family needs clear and consistent information. I feel like we hear a lot of conflicting information and it makes it hard to know how to respond and plan what we as a family will do. In addition, **we would benefit from additional resources to help our children know that it is safe and okay to go out and what they can do to keep healthy.** We have spent so long working to be proactive we just need to help their brains shift to a calm place while knowing COVID is still out there. Also, how do you help your children understand that extended family visits and normal summer activities might need to look different? We want our kids to know life can keep going and most importantly they can bring all that joy and laughter back. **COVID is a silent and invisible force we all have to navigate and I just hope we can find common language and resources.** Finally, **we need reminders for self-care and finding joy and laughter in our community in safe and healthy ways.** We need ways to focus more on what's strong and less on all that is wrong.

Kara Georgi, Birth Parent from New York with Children's Trust Fund Alliance



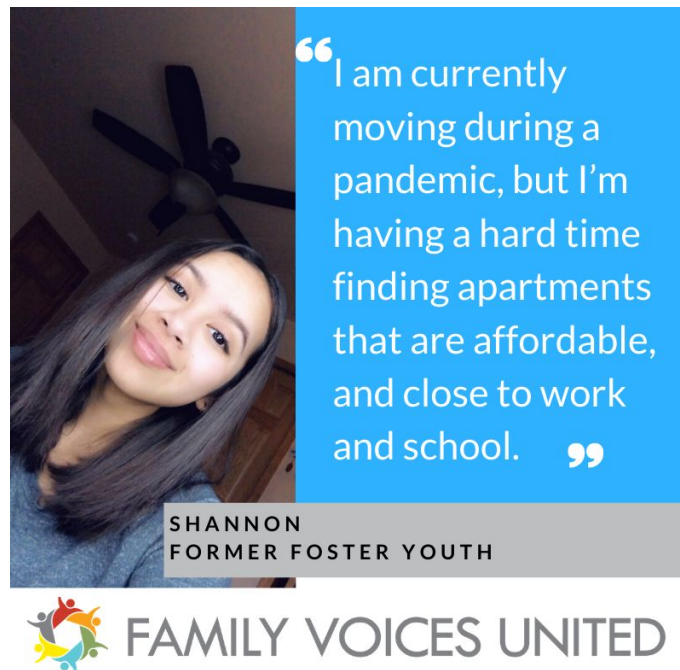
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Most families at this time could use social support from friends and neighbors in the community. Alliance is the best medicine for this type of hate in this world.

Juliana, Former Foster Youth from California

As we move towards reopening it is very scary! I feel it is too soon to move into reopening as the uncertainty is dangerous. I think that we need to keep up our guard and not take chances. **The support that I most need is help with all 5 grandchildren** who have been cooped up in the house for the last 3 months. **Summer programs that can work with the children in our homes.**

Mercedes Bristol, Relative Caregiver from Texas with TX Grandparents Raising Grandchildren



Honest news about the Coronavirus from those who have had it and survived, how they got it, and how they are now, not talking news reporters, perhaps the community mental health centers could take the lead.

Relative Caregiver from Colorado

“Being able to pay for food.”

Jeramaya Gramby, Former Foster Youth from Pennsylvania

My family and I are going to stay at home as much as possible. We believe that there is going to be a rise in Covid-19 cases in our state that will continue through the summer into the fall at which time there will be a second wave. My family and I **practice social distancing and wear masks when we have to go out.** I have all the support I need right now provided by the support

system I have built for my family and I. **I am part of a support group for fathers and I offer support and encouragement to anyone I can.**”

Birth Parent from Arizona

For my family and me. Reopening means more traffic. Maybe **have businesses open later**. More people will result in longer lines to get basic needs. I also know that there are people and family that need to get back to work. Reopening is still a lot of people are still being affected because you are limited to the number of people in places that I understand. I don't feel that things will be the same because people are afraid. They still don't have a cure.”

Annie Henderson, Relative Caregiver Virginia with Kinship Support Family Forward

“In all honesty the support I would need is **mental health support**. The pandemic is a traumatic experience in which **we need help to cope with some triggers and to go back to normal**.”

Jose Angel Canizal, Former Foster Youth from California with California Youth Connection, NFYI, FosterClub.



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About the Family Voices United campaign

The Campaign elevates the voices and perspectives of young people, parents, and kinship caregivers, collectively known as family voices or “constituent voices”. Individuals with lived experience in the child welfare system are currently sharing their stories and expertise to educate, inform and transform the systems that serve children, youth and families - both in policy and practice. With new federal legislation - the Family First Prevention Services Act - states, tribes, and territories have new opportunities to implement changes that many constituents have identified are needed to fully support keeping children safe in strong, supported families.

Join the movement! Sign up at FamilyVoicesUnited.org