

Happy Holidays!

The holiday season is here! We want to wish you a safe and happy holiday and a peaceful, prosperous new year!

We can't say enough, how grateful we are for all of our foster parents and staff that pour so much time and effort into fulfilling our mission. We thank you and look forward to another year with all of you, as we continue to make great strides to help youth in need.

"Christmas is not as much about opening our presents as opening our hearts."

— Janice Maeditere

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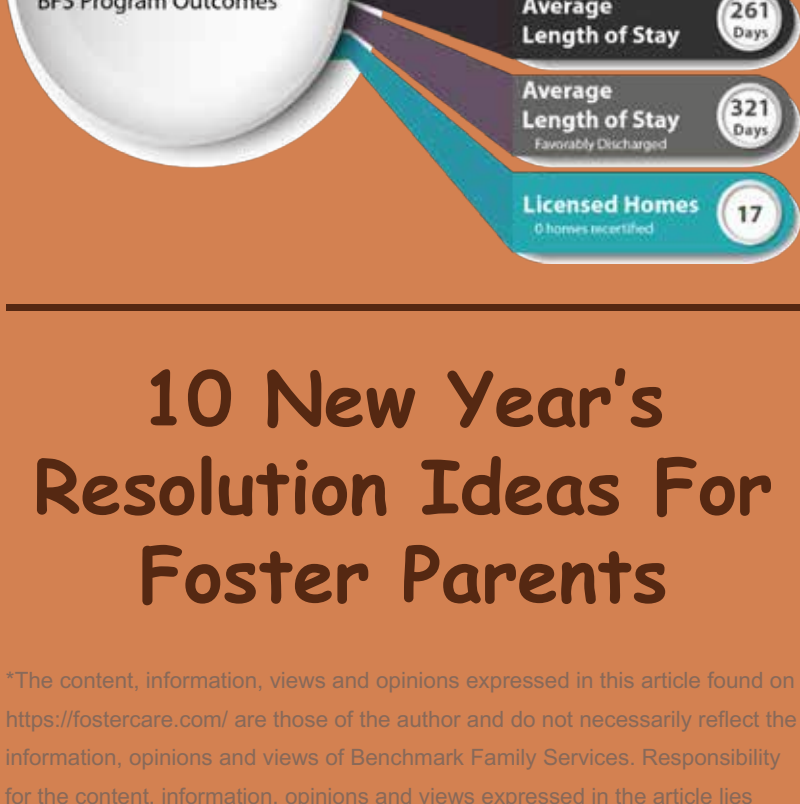
We want your feedback!

How would you rate Benchmark Family Services?



Don't forget! You can stop by your local Benchmark office on any Friday, between 9-10am, to have refreshments and snacks with the Staff. This is a great opportunity for building relationships with staff and other Foster Parents and getting to know everyone in the office. Children are welcome.

Program Outcomes



10 New Year's Resolution Ideas For Foster Parents

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As we look ahead to a new year, this can be a time to reflect on how we've parented the children. Parenting children with special needs is a challenge. Often it can be the little things that lead to our biggest successes. Here are some realistic thoughts and ideas for this year.

- Say "Yes" More.** Try saying "yes" to spending quality time doing things together along with setting aside some individual time for each child.
- Say "No" More.** As foster parents we hear "I want", "I need", and "Everybody else has/does it". Be empathetic to the child's needs before saying "no". Give a reason to help the child understand your rationale. Look at alternatives or compromises. Say "No, and..." to encourage more cooperative behavior.
- Worry Less.** Keeping kids safe should be a priority, but don't let your large and small worries drive your life. Take care of yourself and the things you can control. Provide ways for children to safely explore what's around them.
- Listen More; Talk Less.** Ask your child questions – What do you think? What are you feeling? What would you do? Tell me about it.
- Negotiate Less; Explain More.** Kids deserve to know the thinking behind our decisions and expectations, but should not be equal partners at the bargaining table. We are the adults.
- Read a Little More.** Reading is a good way to spend time together. Reading with your child, and in front of your child, will also help them grow as readers. Grab books, magazines, and newspapers and have them available for children.
- Write a Little More.** Get in the habit of writing notes of encouragement, recognition, and daily appreciation of life.
- Expect a Little More.** In the New Year, expect more from your children, like good behavior, responsibility, manners, and kindness. When we place limits and restrictions, we get the minimum. When we expand our expectations, we may be pleasantly surprised.
- Expect a Little Less.** Be okay with a little less constant scheduling and activities. Slow down, you move too fast. Children need a lot of slow to grow. Create a daily schedule that is more balanced and realistic. Teach kids how to relax and model the behavior for them.
- Connect More.** Take steps to maintain personal friendships, and stay connected with family, other parents, the community, those less fortunate, and the natural world.

As a foster parent, some days will be easier than others. Parenting a child with special needs takes time and effort. Remember that what you are doing is important and is having an impact on the child. For foster parents, you may not see this transformation right away. You are planting a seed in the life of a child that may grow in the future. With compassion and nurturing, your seed can take root and produce amazing results when we least expect it.

Thanks to foster parents everywhere and have a wonderful New Year!

Referral Bonus Opportunity

Every month, our agency receives more referrals for children in foster care than we have beds to accommodate. With your help, we will be able to provide more of these children with a good home and a bed to rest their head. Please help spread the word and get your friends and family involved in our mission. Remember, if you are currently a foster parent with us and you refer a new foster parent to Benchmark, you will receive a referral bonus after they are licensed with our agency. Please reach out to your regional office for more information!

Did you know?

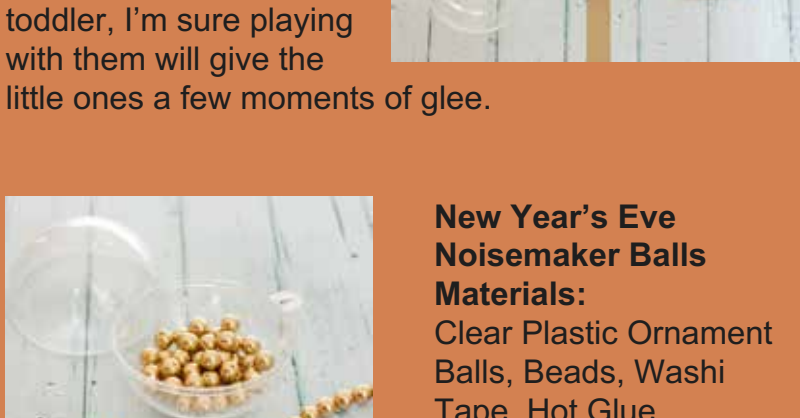
Over **420k** children in foster care

Over **250k** enter care each year

61% enter due to NEGLECT

With over 420,000 children in the foster care system, and over 250,000 children entering each year, we need your help!

It seems like every New Year's Eve, I'm on the hunt for a few fun things to do with my kids on New Year's to celebrate. We wear party hats, we watch the ball drop and yes, we have noisemakers. To take advantage of all the togetherness of winter break, we are going to make our own New Year's Eve noisemakers this year. While browsing through the Christmas clearance aisles, I was able to pick up items that are perfect for whipping up some easy noisemakers for the kids.



NEW YEAR'S EVE DIY NOISEMAKERS

These noisemakers are probably most appropriate for kids older than three, but if you are keeping a close eye on your baby or toddler, I'm sure playing with them will give the little ones a few moments of glee.

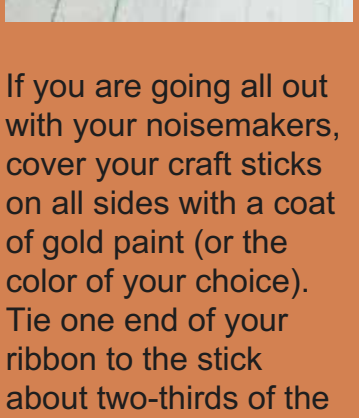


New Year's Eve Noisemaker Balls
Materials: Clear Plastic Ornament Balls, Beads, Washi Tape, Hot Glue

These are so quick to make! Open up your ornament, pour the beads into the ball and snap it shut. You could make these really fun by adding other items inside the ball with the beads—try some glitter or maybe even the numbers for the New Year being celebrated.



To make sure the ball won't pop back open too easily, I ran a bead of hot glue around the seam of the ornament to seal it permanently.

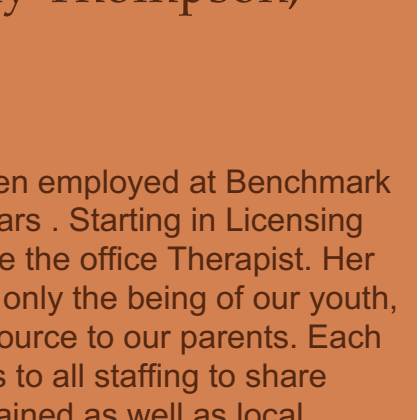


Apply gold washi tape over the seam, and tie some curling ribbon on the top for a polished look. Then you're ready to rattle! Little hands should be able to easily grasp these balls and shake away.



New Year's Eve Noisemaker Jingle Sticks
Materials: Large Craft Sticks, Jingle Bells, Ribbon, Gold Paint (optional)

If you are going all out with your noisemakers, cover your craft sticks on all sides with a coat of gold paint (or the color of your choice). Tie one end of your ribbon to the stick about two-thirds of the way down. String the bells on the ribbon, tightly wrap it around the stick and then tie off the ribbon securely. Put in your earplugs, and hand the jingle stick to a soon-to-be happy child!



Found On: projectnursery.com

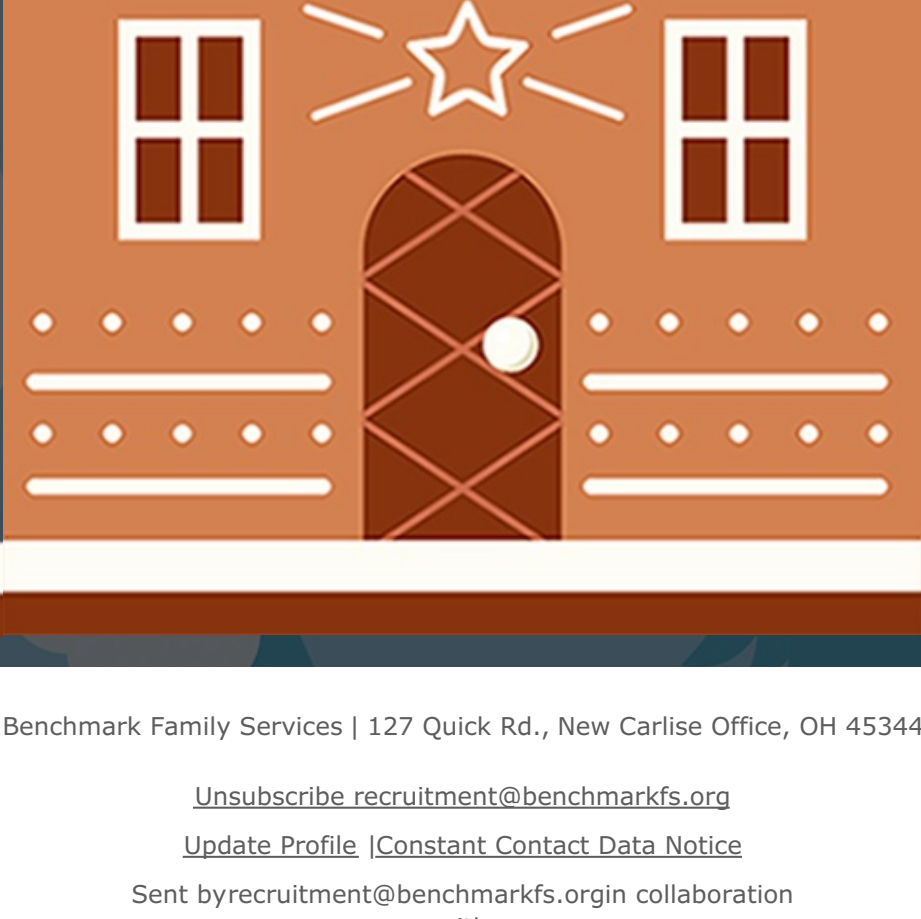
Employee of the Month

Kentucky: Tiffany Thompson, Therapist, Louisville Office

Tiffany Thompson has been employed at Benchmark Louisville Ky for over 5 years. Starting in Benchmark she transitioned to become the office Therapist. Her insight helps enhance not only the being of our youth, but she is also a huge resource to our parents. Each week Tiffany sends emails to all staff to share knowledge that she has gained as well as local educational events. She arrives to work early to see clients and leaves the office late. Her flexibility allows our busy families more choices and has led to more compliance. We are proud to have Tiffany as a valuable lead. She is a fighter who is a voice for those who have none.

Indiana: Lydia Townsend, Therapeutic Support Specialist, Crawfordsville Office

Lydia has been a dedicated and hard-working employee since day one. She is self-motivated and always takes initiative when she sees that something needs done. Lydia never hesitates to go the extra mile for the families on her caseload, and she is always willing to help out with visits and placements when needed. She has done a fantastic job helping teach new TSS's and is always professional and kind toward everyone she meets. Our office is so blessed to have Lydia and we are so thankful for all that she does!



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