



MERRY Christmas!



Benchmark Family Services
Therapeutic Foster Care

"December is a month of invitation to forget ourselves in the service of others."

— Robert Louis Stevenson

Regardless of the holiday you observe, we extend warm wishes for a safe and joyful holiday season and a new year filled with peace and prosperity!

Reflecting on the past year, we express deep gratitude to our dedicated foster parents and staff who have been instrumental in enabling us to fulfill our mission. Looking forward to the coming year, we are excited about the opportunities for growth and positive impact as we work together to support youth in need alongside all of you.

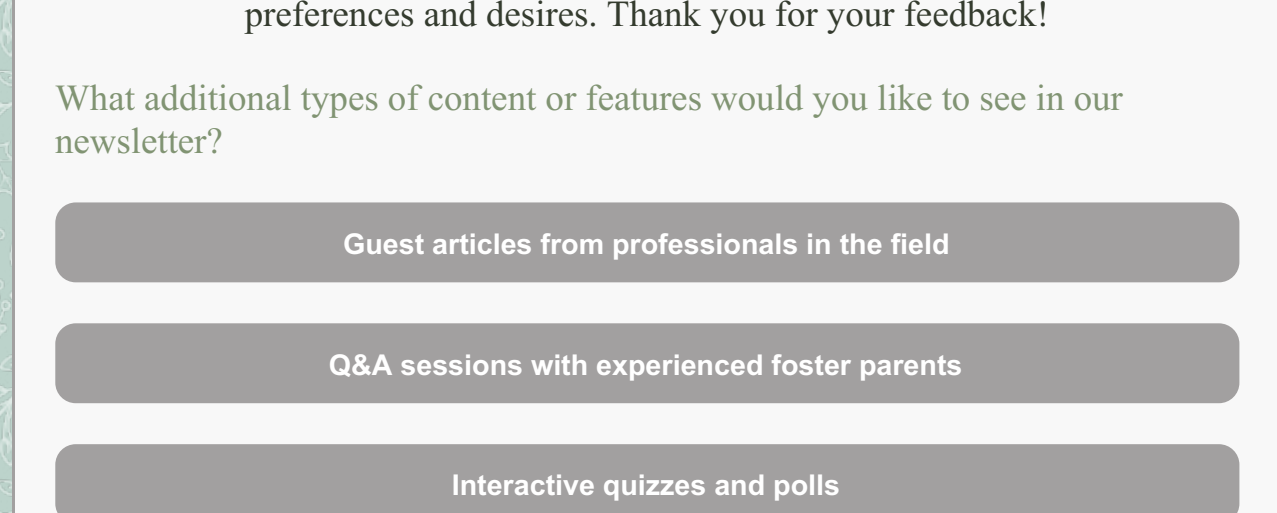
[Visit our Website](#)



Riddle Me This!

When does Christmas come before Thanksgiving?

(Find Answer In Next Month's Newsletter)



YOUR NEWSLETTER

Yes, this is a Benchmark Family Services newsletter, but it is not crafted solely for our benefit. It's designed with you in mind. Your feedback holds immense importance, and we strive to incorporate content that aligns with your preferences and desires. Thank you for your feedback!

What additional types of content or features would you like to see in our newsletter?

Guest articles from professionals in the field

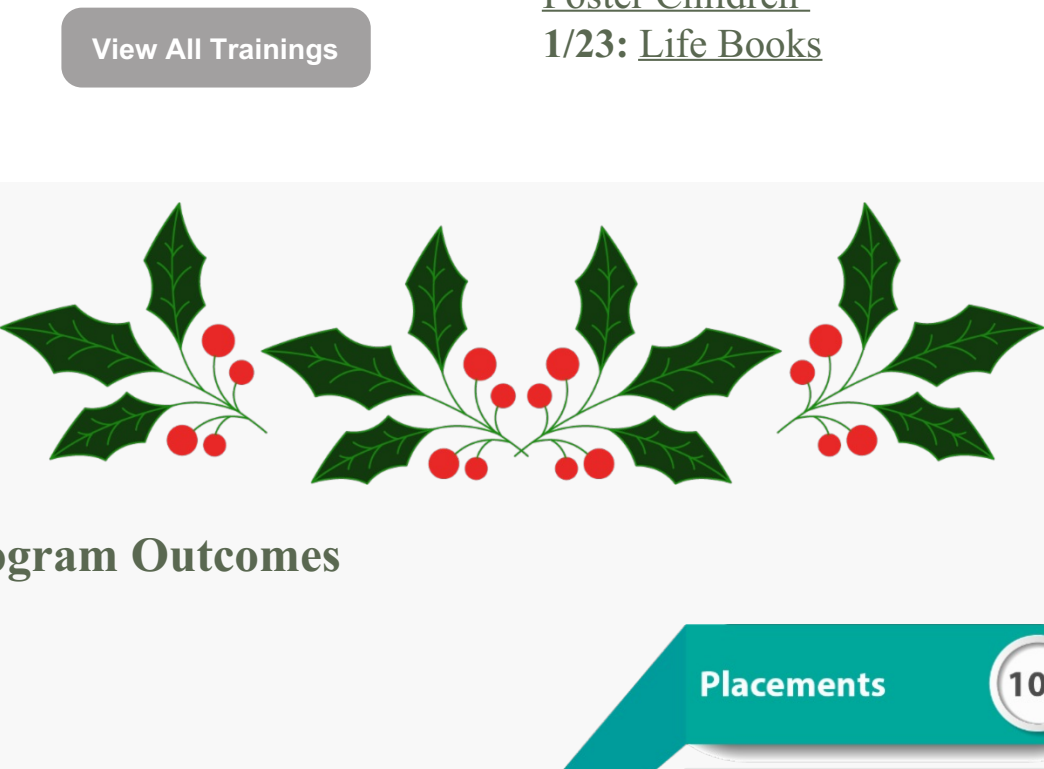
Q&A sessions with experienced foster parents

Interactive quizzes and polls

Other (please specify by responding to this email)



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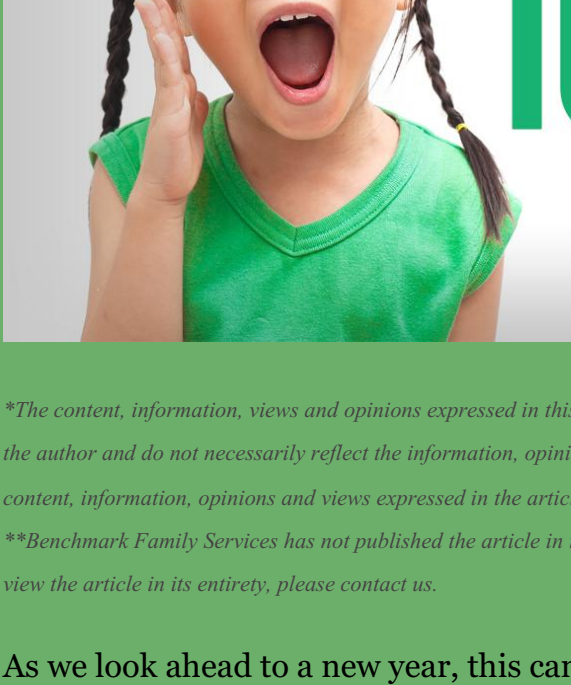


Facebook.com/BenchmarkFamilyServices

Click the above photo to join our vibrant foster care community on Facebook! We're not just a page; we're a place for foster parents to connect, share insights, and uplift one another. Dive into a mix of fun, information, and heartfelt discussions. Let's make a difference together! Follow us on Facebook for a supportive space where your voice matters.



Training Time!



Virtual Training

Our virtual training sessions are live webinars, and count toward your face-to-face training hours for the year. We added all virtual training opportunities for the year to our website. [Click here](#) to easily find and sign up for the courses that are most convenient for you!

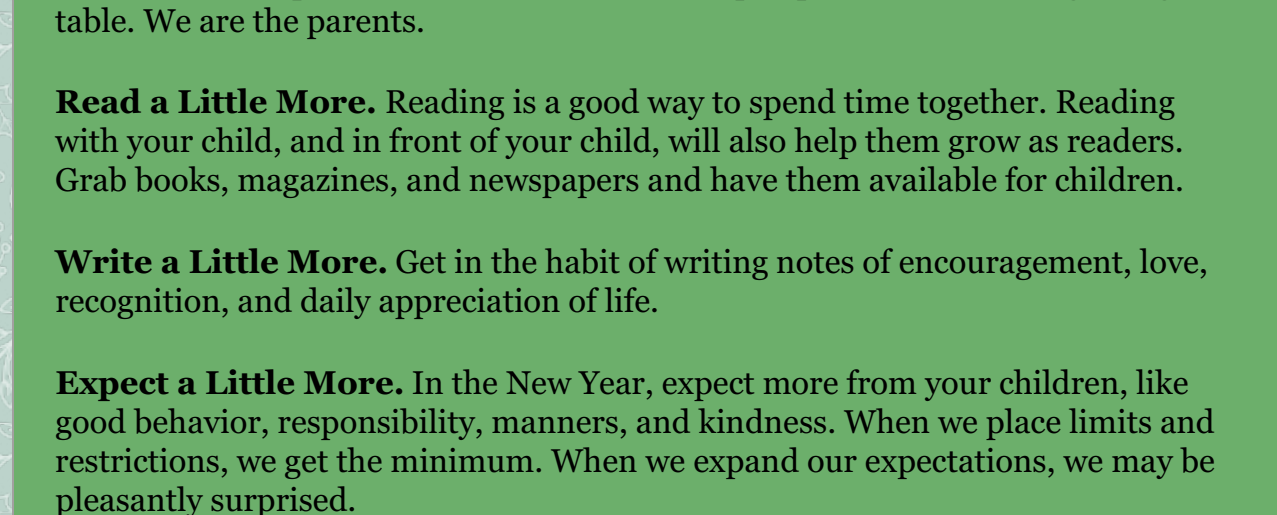
(Click on a training below to register.)

Don't miss out on training opportunities or any of your office's upcoming events! Just click the link below to go to our website and find your local office!

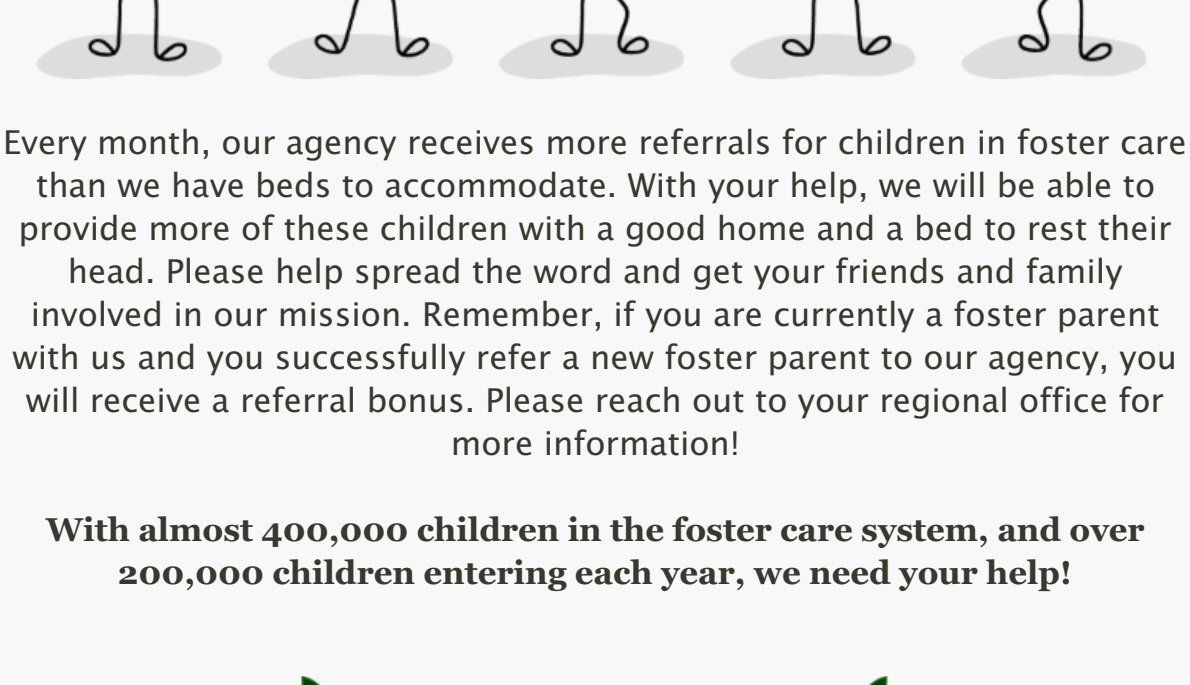
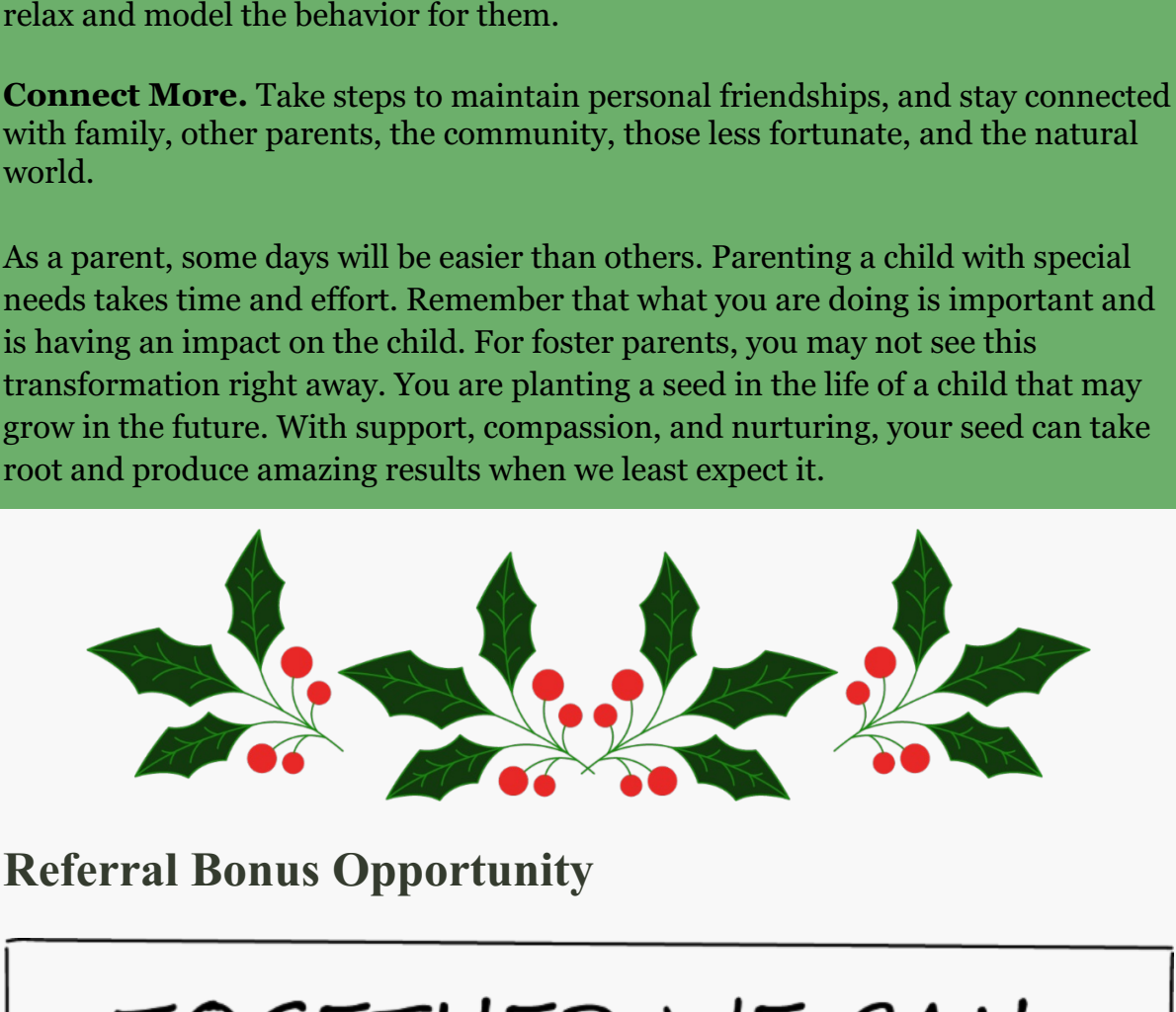
[View All Trainings](#)

December 2023
12/7: [Learning Disabilities](#)
12/12: [Working with the State](#)

January 2024
1/4: [Trauma and the Brain](#)
1/13: [Sibling Rivalry among Foster Children](#)
1/23: [Life Books](#)



Program Outcomes



*The content, information, views and opinions expressed in this article by Bryan Hoffstetter found on fostercare.com are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the information, opinions and views of Benchmark Family Services. Responsibility for the content, information, opinions and views expressed in the article lies entirely with the authors.
**Benchmark Family Services has not published the article in its entirety, and this article may have been modified. If you wish to view the article in its entirety, please contact us.

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 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 parents.

Read a Little More. Reading is a good way to help them grow as readers. 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, love, 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 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 support, compassion, and nurturing, your seed can take root and produce amazing results when we least expect it.

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 successfully refer a new foster parent to our agency, you will receive a referral bonus. Please reach out to your regional office for more information!

With almost 400,000 children in the foster care system, and over 200,000 children entering each year, we need your help!

Employee of the Month

Kentucky: Walter Linke
Home Developer,
Berea Office

Walter has been with Benchmark Berea since May 2018, holding multiple positions within the agency. He started as a TSS before moving into STSS and now the Home Developer position. Walter embraces everything that BFS is. He is truly one of the best team players and is willing to help when he sees a need. Walter is very passionate about licensing quality, therapeutic foster homes and works day in and day out to complete his job duties. Recently, he has jumped in to help other offices license new homes as well! He is a vital part of our Berea team and cannot thank him enough for all that he does!

Indiana: Laura Reffrey
TSS Supervisor,
Mishawaka/South Bend Office

Laura Reffrey is a supervisor in the South Bend office. Laura has a passion for working with foster youth and foster families. This shows in her everyday work as a TSS supervisor. Laura guides the TSS staff with positivity and enthusiasm. She manages crises well and provides calm guidance to staff and foster parents. Laura has great customer service and works well with service providers. Laura is always concerned with ensuring that our youth and homes have the best support to be successful. She provides positive encouragement to our staff and foster parents daily. Laura is a team player and jumps in to help others when needed. Laura implements training to help our entire staff grow in their knowledge and ultimately serve our youth effectively. We are very fortunate to have Laura in the South Bend office.

