

Man: A healthy, happy childhood depends on developing good relationships with family and friends. This means having character-building life experiences and being supported and encouraged to succeed through challenging times. These basic building blocks are easy to come by for most youth in Oregon. While many people assume every child has access to these building blocks, that is far from true for thousands of foster youth across our state.

Woman: In order for a foster youth to participate in activity, a case worker would have to sign off on it. We'd also have to look for ways to get the youth there and money to get them in to activity. If the youth wants to spend the night at a friend's house, a lot of times we have to call the parents of the people who they want to spend the night with and do a background check and make sure that it's safe. Sometimes go to the house and see where they would be sleeping.

Woman: Being a foster parent is very restrictive. It's very difficult, and it's very daunting to try and coordinate all of the approvals and the various visits. But then what makes it worse is because you need approval at every step of the process and every decision you make, you don't feel like you're parenting.

Man: Ongoing extra curricular activities allow youth to build social connections with other youth and positive adult role models. The extracurricular enrichment, cultural and social activity opportunities readily available to youth

in traditional home settings are simply much more difficult to access for youth in care. Confusion about roles, responsibilities, liabilities, logistics and the authority to make approvals muddies the water and can often restrict youth from involvement in these essential opportunities.

Youth Girl: There were a lot of nos. I was going to a charter school and the regular high school was right next to it. And they offered to let me join their theater group, and my foster parents said, "No, we're not going to let you do that." I've dealt with a lot of things in life that aren't fair and you just have to roll with the punches, I guess.

Woman: With younger kids, they're not able to articulate a lot of times what they want to do or what they need to do. A lot of times it comes with ideas or suggestions or they see other kids in their class getting to do these fun things, but they don't know how to ask for it.

Man: Prudent Parenting is the standard by which a foster parent can make careful and sensible parental decisions to maintain the health, safety and best interests of a foster youth while encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the foster youth. The foster parent should use this standard when determining whether to allow a foster youth to participate in extra curricular enrichment, cultural and social activities.

Man: Any sort of activity for kids to get involved in outside of their academics is really important. It provides kids the opportunity to deal with adversity, deal with challenges,

deal with let-downs, and then also build this relationship with their teammates, with other adults, good role modeling.

Woman: That there's something out there that's going to show them a different side of themselves, whether it's art, music, martial arts, sports, volunteering at the Humane Society. That there's something that is out there that they would have never considered as an option. You just have to be creative in ways that maybe your parents weren't creative or you were never creative for yourself.

Woman: Because of the predominance of children of color in the system and the lack of foster parents of color, we like to be able to have that cultural bonding with them, that ethnically, racial-centered dialogue. White Barbie and Frozen are not the only beautiful people out there.

Youth: I lived with a few families who had a Jewish culture and I actually really liked that. And so I took that on as my personal culture. When I moved to other homes they didn't really understand that or, but they just didn't care to keep that in my life.

Woman: Teenagers is a hard time of life anyway, right? You want to have identity and you want to be able to express. So if you're in care and you're placed in a home, that's not your bio family and you're told you can't express yourself. You can't wear your hair that way. You can't get a piercing. You can't wear these types of clothes. It makes it tricky for them to actually be able to create an identity.

Woman: Kids benefit from participating in team sports and extracurricular activities, and it's no different for a child in foster care. Every child needs those outlets, needs to explore different parts of their personality, different parts of their physical and mental ability.

Youth Boy: From an early age I ended up having foster parents that were into sports and first got me off in to basketball, and football, and baseball. And that made me feel pretty good with my life. I got to be like a regular kid.

Youth Girl: Overcoming the obstacles, the financial need, and transportation, time management, it's always hard. When you ask and you're given the answer, "No," and there are those types of reasons behind it you have to take a step back and try to see if there is any way that you can solve those.

Youth Girl: Hi, mom, I have a question for you.

Woman: Hey, what's up?

Youth Girl: So I was wondering if it's okay with you if I audition for the school play?

Woman: Hmm, what's the time commitment on that?

Youth Girl: After school, rehearsal's for a couple hours and show night.

Woman: And how late would you get out on show nights?

Youth Girl: Midnight?

Woman: Oh, I'm not comfortable with you being out that late, and I don't even know how to get you home.

Youth Girl: But wait, just listen.

Woman: All right.

Youth Girl: I have friends and their parents who are willing to help with transportation if that's okay.

Woman: Well, seems like you've put some thought into it, so all right. You can sign up. But I want to meet parents and friends before you ride with them.

Youth Girl: Okay, cool. So, I can go?

Woman: You can go.

Youth Girl: I was really secluded when I was first put in foster care. The first one I was only for a few months and they were good people, but I didn't really get to do much, or go anywhere. They had two daughters of their own, so I played with them. But mostly I just sat in my room.

Youth Boy: I knew from a young age that I wasn't like other kids because I tried to go to friend's houses or do sports or just do average day kid stuff and a lot of times I

was said, "No." And I was like, "Why? I don't understand why I can't go to friend's houses, or stay the night, or do this sport, or just go skateboarding, or biking."

Man: Parenting is hard in general and historically, foster parents have been afraid to make parenting decisions for foster youth. This fear often results in conflicts that strain the relationships between foster youth and foster parents.

Woman: Any time a kid comes to me and says, "I want to do something," I'm just like every parent in the world, which is like, "Oh, God, how is this going to impact me? What's my responsibility to provide organization or supplies? Or martial arts are significantly more expensive than school sports or whatever." So I automatically am like, "Oh, God, what's my job in this?"

Drew: Hey, Summer?

Summer: Hey, Drew.

Drew: I actually got this pamphlet from school, and I wanted to play football.

Summer: Let me take a look at this. I don't know if this is going to work out. It says that Tuesdays and Thursdays are the days that you have practice and those are the days that you meet with your siblings in DHS.

Drew: Okay. I really wanted to play football with my friends, and this is a big thing for me, so...

Summer: I don't know. How are we going to pay for your registration fees? Your uniform? How are we going to get you there? I just don't think it's something that we can do, Drew.

Drew: Okay.

Woman: That's like any other parent. So that's no different if you're a foster parent. And what do you do as any other parent? You talk to other parents. You ask for help. If you have an extended family or you have a community. Facebook these days. There's a ton of services that we don't even utilize 100%.

Youth Boy: Hey, mom.

Woman: Hi, what's up?

Youth Boy: I have a question for you.

Woman: Yes?

Youth Boy: Is it okay if I spend the night at Tyler's again?

Woman: No. Last time you were there, there were girls invited.

Youth Boy: What the heck? It wasn't me. It was Tyler's idea.

Woman: I understand, but you had the choice of staying or leaving.

Youth Boy: Well, there won't be any girls this time. I promise.

Woman: I understand, but not this time. I'll talk to Tyler's parents and I will see when they're going to be home, and we can work it out when they're going to actually be home.

Youth Boy: Okay, I understand.

Woman: Before the kids even get involved in activity, you should sit down and do some talking with them on what the expectations are for being involved in the activity. So with my guys it's, "Okay, well, grades can't drop. You can't be missing curfew, or doing these things." And they know what the consequences are before we even start.

Man: Our vision is for all of Oregon's foster youth to have stability, feel supported, and empowered to develop their sense of identity in confidence. Although the barriers are high, the resources to overcome roadblocks are available. To the youth activity leaders, foster parents, and foster youth, these resources tied in to the new flexibility of the Prudent Parenting standards enable more access to extra activities than ever before. Cooperation, troubleshooting, and perseverance are critical in these circumstances.

Woman: Just getting in the batter's box and saying, "I'm going to have a good at-bat." That might be the success

for the day for one of the youth participating in our program.

Woman: It's an open door for them to have another adult in their life that they can trust. And for these kids, that is huge.

Youth Boy: Yeah, I felt like I belonged on the teams. I felt like there was actually a reason for me to be on the team and I actually, that people needed me.

Woman: With the Prudent Parent standard it will empower the youth more to speak up for what they want. It'll be easier for them to ask their foster parents to be involved and feel more like they are their parent because they can give permission for that.

Man: Schools, communities, case workers, foster parents, and attorneys must all work together to support foster youth's success in their lives. It takes a village to raise a child and to contribute to their success as adults. This means busting through barriers and shifting the culture to strengthen youth.

Man: It's been pretty remarkable and seeing where some of our kids are coming, and how far they're going because they've had opportunities early on to learn things like leadership, and public speaking. And we've got kids that testified to legislature, do all kinds of stuff. It's because of the opportunities they've been afforded. So for me one of the most gratifying things that I've seen with children in

foster care being able to do some of this is really when they're able to step back and say, "I didn't think I could do that." And so they're proud of themselves for the accomplishment they made.

Woman: So if the kids come home one day and say, "There's a play at school I want to try out for and practice is three nights a week," or, "There's a church my friend goes to and I'd like to try it," or anything. It's just going to be nice to be able to have more of a parent-child relationship and to make those decisions that you think as a foster parent are in the best interest of those kids.