

Kids in Foster Care Don't Choose to be There
By Jessica Winokur-Applebaum

Nakia Venant was a girl who grew up and died all within the foster care system. She was placed in foster care after allegations that her mother beat her with a belt and left her alone at just four years old. She was placed in the system at just six, and took her own life at 14. Yes, Nakia had problems before entering foster care, but foster care didn't help her the way it is designed to. In the last two months of Nakia's life, she moved to three different foster homes.

Moving so many times prevents children from bonding families. The process of removing you from your family, home, and everything familiar is never easy and that is how foster care begins. According to the NYT, most foster children are 13 or older, and therefore remember more things about their previous family than a younger kid would. The last thing that one needs is more difficult events, but many children will get transferred every few months, and, in some states foster children even go through the "night-to-night" placement.

Night-to-night is when you get placed in a new foster home every single night. A car will pick up the child in the morning for school and then drop them off at a foster home that night, sometimes even too late for dinner. The child goes to bed just to wake up in the morning and repeat the process over again, with another new home that night. This schedule doesn't allow for any bonding with friends or a loving family. Night-to-night is not healthy and should not be allowed as part of foster care.

Additionally, there is no program for kids that are about to age out of the system at 18, and, as a result of minimal preparation for living on their own, 20% of the children who age out will become *instantly* homeless. Also, only 3% of kids who age out of foster care will earn a college degree. This is shockingly low.

You may not adopt a foster child, and there are still many ways to help. One of the main reasons the foster care system isn't serving kids well is that it's *severely* underfunded. Urge states to allocate more money to foster care to protect our children and ensure they can thrive. Write letters, and then write more letters to your elected officials. Donate to places like CASA who has a staff of trained volunteers to work with foster care kids and has a proven record of keeping them in school. The broken, underfunded foster-care system is not helping all of the kids in its care. We cannot, must not turn away from kids just like us.

Works Cited:

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