



Foster Care and Adoption at The Children's Aid Society

In the century and a half that have passed since the first Orphan Train, the concept of foster care at The Children's Aid Society (CAS) has evolved to include a significant range of services and programs. At any given time throughout the year, The Children's Aid Society provides approximately 550 children with foster homes and supportive services. While CAS ensures that these homes are safe and nurturing, we understand that children perceive these as temporary – that they will not truly feel stability and thrive until they are in a permanent home, that is, in an adoptive home or reunified with their birthparents. Therefore, the work of CAS encompasses tremendous support for the children, their foster parents and their birthparents. As children are awaiting court determinations, CAS sees to it that they have access to critical services and that both biological and foster care families receive the assistance needed to successfully care for their children. Here are a few highlights.

Family Foster Care: CAS provides community-based foster home placements, providing continuity with school, friends and familiar surroundings, and lessening the trauma of placements while also providing opportunities for frequent contact with family members. CAS staff employ a variety of methods to improve the success of children placed in foster care, including: team meetings with birth parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and children within days of placement; working closely with birth and foster parents to build and maintain relationships, focused on the needs of the child; ongoing training for both sets of parents; frequent family visits; working closely with community-based programs to refer families for services within their neighborhoods.

Therapeutic Foster Care: Children's Aid's Therapeutic Foster Care Program provides emotionally disturbed youngsters with specialized foster care and therapeutic services. A social worker and socio-therapist work closely with foster parents, training them to care for children with emotional problems and supervising the implementation of an appropriate service plan to deal with their behavior. Therapeutic foster parents demonstrate tremendous commitment to these special children – they are required to keep a log of daily events, undergo intense training and remain in regular contact with our staff in order to provide the best care possible to children with specific needs. Children's Aid has achieved a phenomenal adoption rate with these fragile children. Children's Aid provides therapeutic foster homes in Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island.

Medical Foster Care: Now in its 18th year, the Medical Foster Care Program at CAS successfully places children with chronic and multiple medical disabilities in appropriate foster, and often permanent, homes. This program also requires extensive training of foster parents so that they can provide the best possible care for these children. Foster parents receive generic medical training, CPR and specialized training for each child's specific medical condition. Each case is staffed with both a caseworker and a Registered Nurse. With a current census of 160 children, this program continues to provide families, often permanent adoptive families, for children who would once have been consigned to institutions.

Help for Youth Who "Age Out" of Foster Care: When youth "age out" of foster care, i.e., when they reach the age of majority and are no longer eligible to live with foster parents, some leave care without adequate skills and supports needed to make a successful transition to independence. Each year, hundreds of young adults age out of New York's foster care programs. The Children's Aid Society's new teen center in the Bronx was conceived to help these youth complete their educations, gain employment, find housing, get health and mental health care, and learn life skills of all types. A dynamic team of social workers, education and employment specialists and legal experts ensure that these vulnerable youth have the skills and supports they need for successful futures.