



## Parents Working Together for a Brighter Holiday Season

Many songs, books, and classic movies have been written about the quest to be home for the holidays. “Home” is universally understood to be where we feel a sense of belonging, comfort, familiarity, and connection. It can hit differently, however, for the child or young person who is in out-of-home care for the holidays.

The best gift you can give the child you care for is to share an open, respectful, cooperative relationship with their first family.

Below are suggestions for creating a happy ending for your child’s holiday story.

- Invite the first family to any holiday programs the child is participating in (pageants, school concerts, holiday recitals).
- Set aside any past disagreements and extend a sincere invitation to work together to make the holidays magical for the child(ren) you both love.
- Ask children/youth what would make them feel most “at home” during the holidays. Coordinate with the first family to make it happen.
- Carve out time to create a new combined family tradition– something both families will enjoy. This can be as simple as connecting by Zoom to read a classic holiday bedtime story together.
- Ask parents for ways to expand your family celebrations to include their traditions.
- Swap family recipes or baked goods.
- Be flexible and compassionate.
- Be extra sensitive to feelings. As lovely as holidays are, they can be painful reminders of loss for both kids and parents.

There may be situations where it simply isn’t possible for the child(ren) to spend time with parents/primary caregivers over the holidays. Just as important, however, is connecting with siblings, extended family, or other significant people in the child’s life. With some good communication and preplanning, you can help make this otherwise difficult time extra special.