

WELCOME

TO THE
2026



**ADOPTION & FOSTER
CARE CONFERENCE**

MARCH 21

encouragement • education • community

**Fellowship North Church
Knoxville, TN**

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WELCOME

We are thrilled to have you join us today for the 11th Annual KAFCAM Adoption and Foster Care Conference. We have gathered today to ENCOURAGE you and educate you about caring for vulnerable children, EQUIP you to take the next steps in your journey, and CONNECT you to a community of experts and fellow laborers to journey alongside you. People pursue adoption and foster care for many different reasons, and we hope that today you find guidance, support, and encouragement.

We are grateful for your time and believe this day will help you whether you are already deeply involved in the adoption and foster care community, or if this is your first exploratory step.

Knox Area Foster Care and Adoption Ministries (KAFCAM) is a regional alliance composed of local churches, agencies, ministries, and community advocates that exists to encourage, equip, and connect to serve foster and adoptive children and families in the Knoxville area.

KAFCAM began in 2014 as a group of local church leaders meeting to help each other launch and grow their adoption, foster care, and orphan care ministries. We were tired of duplicating efforts across the city. From this group sprang associations with other churches, agencies, ministries, and advocates who wanted to share in this partnership.

2026 SPONSORS



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sessions approved for Foster Parent Training Hours are marked with an asterisk (*).

Keynote/Main Session (9:15 am - 10:15 am)

Auditorium

*The Paradox of Parenting

Wes Mills (Foster Adoptive Parent)

As we consider parenting, there is one thing we know for sure: no one is struggling with too much encouragement! And that may be especially true for foster and adoptive parents. "Do that. Try this. Start here." These are the messages we typically get. But what if there is a paradox to our parenting? What if it's not actually in everything we contribute in our roles, but more in what we receive that frees us to be the kind of parents, the kind of people, we want to be? That's my aim at the KAFCAM conference - to help us lean into being people who receive love just as quickly as we give it.

First Breakout Sessions (10:45 am - 11:45 am)

*Former Foster Youth Panel

Room # 100

Moderator - Tracy Taplin (Tennessee Kids Belong)

Panelists - Marquiel Baker, Destiny Crabtree, Samantha Korniyenko, Leonard Staab

Hear from a panel of former foster youth as they share their stories. They seek to support those who find themselves in foster care and advocate for the foster care community.

Adoption 101

Room # 101

Moderator - Chris Graves (International Adoptive Parent)

Panelists - Heather Butcher (Harmony Family Center), Hillary Dewhirst (Adoption Attorney),

Chasity Galyon (A Loving Option Adoption CCETN)

Adoption can seem rather overwhelming. Do we choose domestic, international, adoption through foster care, or another route? How much does it cost? What does the process look like? Hear from local agencies and attorneys to learn the basics, the lingo, and where to begin.

*Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Across the Lifespan

Room # 106

Drew Burkley (UTHSCC OM-Knoxville Center of Excellence for Children in State Custody),

Molly Marks (RN, CPNP, Foster Parent), Cameron Peterson (RN, Foster Parent)

This breakout session explores how to support and care for children affected by neonatal abstinence syndrome from infancy through adolescence. Participants will learn about the long-term developmental, emotional, and behavioral impacts of NAS and gain awareness of resources and tools that can help reduce disruptive behaviors in the school, home and community. The session emphasizes trauma-informed care and provides caregivers knowledge to advocate for and nurture their children as they grow. At the end of the presentation, a panel, including caregivers of children with NAS, will be available to field questions.

Lunch Chats (11:45-12:45)

Lunch Chat - Pre- and Post-Adoption Funding

Auditorium

Jared DeLong (Both Hands), Justin Myers (Show Hope)

Join us for an informal lunch chat exploring pre- and post-adoption funding opportunities through Show Hope and Both Hands. We'll share practical insights, real examples, and accessible resources to help families navigate financial support before and after adoption. Bring your questions and connect with others on a similar journey.

Lunch Chat - Buddy Tables

Auditorium

KAFCAM Team Members

Feeling overwhelmed by all you've learned so far? Don't have anyone to sit with at lunch? KAFCAM Team members will be on hand to answer questions, provide encouragement, and be a friendly face to enjoy a meal with you.

Second Breakout Sessions (1:00 pm - 2:00 pm)

*Foster Care 101

Room # 100

Moderator - April Mathews (DCS)

*Marquiel Baker (Foster and Kinship Parent), Matthew Hensley (Foster Parent),
Veronica Jackson-Patrick (Foster Parent), Stephani Welch-Harris (DCS)*

This session will discuss the goals and process of fostering in Tennessee. Discover the requirements to be a foster parent, how foster parents are trained, and the policies and supports in place to help foster families succeed.

Adult Adoptee Panel

Room # 101

Moderator - Chris Graves (Adoptive Parent)

Panelists - Hillary Dewhirst, Tyler Hays, Ryan McMichael, Leonard Staab

A panel of adult adoptees will share their adoption stories and answer your questions. Their voices are so valuable, and we can learn so much from adoptees.

*Beyond the Behavior:

Responding to Lying, Stealing, and Survival Strategies with Connection

Room # 106

Laura Mitchell (Harmony Family Center)

Parenting children from hard places can bring unique challenges like lying, stealing, and other confusing behaviors. This trauma-informed webinar is designed specifically for foster and adoptive parents and will help you understand why these behaviors happen and how to respond in ways that build trust, safety, and connection. We'll reframe behavior as communication and share practical, relationship-based strategies you can use right away. You'll leave feeling more confident, less alone, and better equipped to support your child's healing without relying on shame or punishment.

Third Breakout Sessions (2:30 pm - 3:30 pm)

*Navigating Relationships with Biological Parents

Room # 100

Moderator - Veronica Jackson-Patrick (Foster Adoptive Parent)

Panelists - Zerita Brockman, Meg Chalmers, Chante Hensley

This session equips foster parents with practical, relationship-centered strategies for engaging respectfully and effectively with birth parents. Participants will explore the importance of collaboration, communication, and boundaries through a structured framework called a N.E.W. Approach—Neutrality, Empathy/Encouragement, and Wisdom. The session integrates real-life scenarios and facilitated group discussion to support skill-building and reflective learning. In addition, experienced foster parents will share testimonies highlighting both challenges and successful approaches to navigating various dynamics with birth parents. Participants will leave with increased confidence, insight, and practical tools to foster healthier relationships that ultimately support child well-being and reunification efforts when appropriate.

*Discipline Through Relationship: Correcting Without Losing Connection

Room # 106

Justin Myers (Show Hope)

Why do moments of correction seem like such sensitive and fragile interactions? How do we correct our children's behavior without losing connection? Join us for this session to talk about the heart behind correction and how we can make some of the most intense interactions with our children opportunities to prove the strength of our relationship, maintain felt safety, and, yes, try again when we don't get it right.

*Handling Grief

Room # 105

Matt Scheuneman (Licensed Professional Counselor and Clinical Supervisor)

Parents deal with many different emotions in the care of children, but one often missed or unrecognized is grief. Unmet expectations, sudden change, and loss stir this emotion to the surface. As we look to understand and navigate the nature of grief, we will also look at ways to respond to it in healthy ways.

*Kinship Adoption

Room # 101

Marquiel Baker (Foster and Kinship Parent), Alisha Dyer (DCS)

The meaning of "Kinship" has changed. You may be eligible. Come learn all about the adoption process and benefits to Kinship adoption. Kinship adoption offers many benefits such as subsidy, insurance, childcare, tax credit, paid legal fees, and most importantly permanency. A DCS specialist will guide you throughout the entire process. Your questions will be answered during this training by a former foster child/adoptive parent and a DCS permanency specialist.

Closing Session (3:30 pm - 4:00 pm)

Auditorium

BUILDING MAP



BUILDING MAP

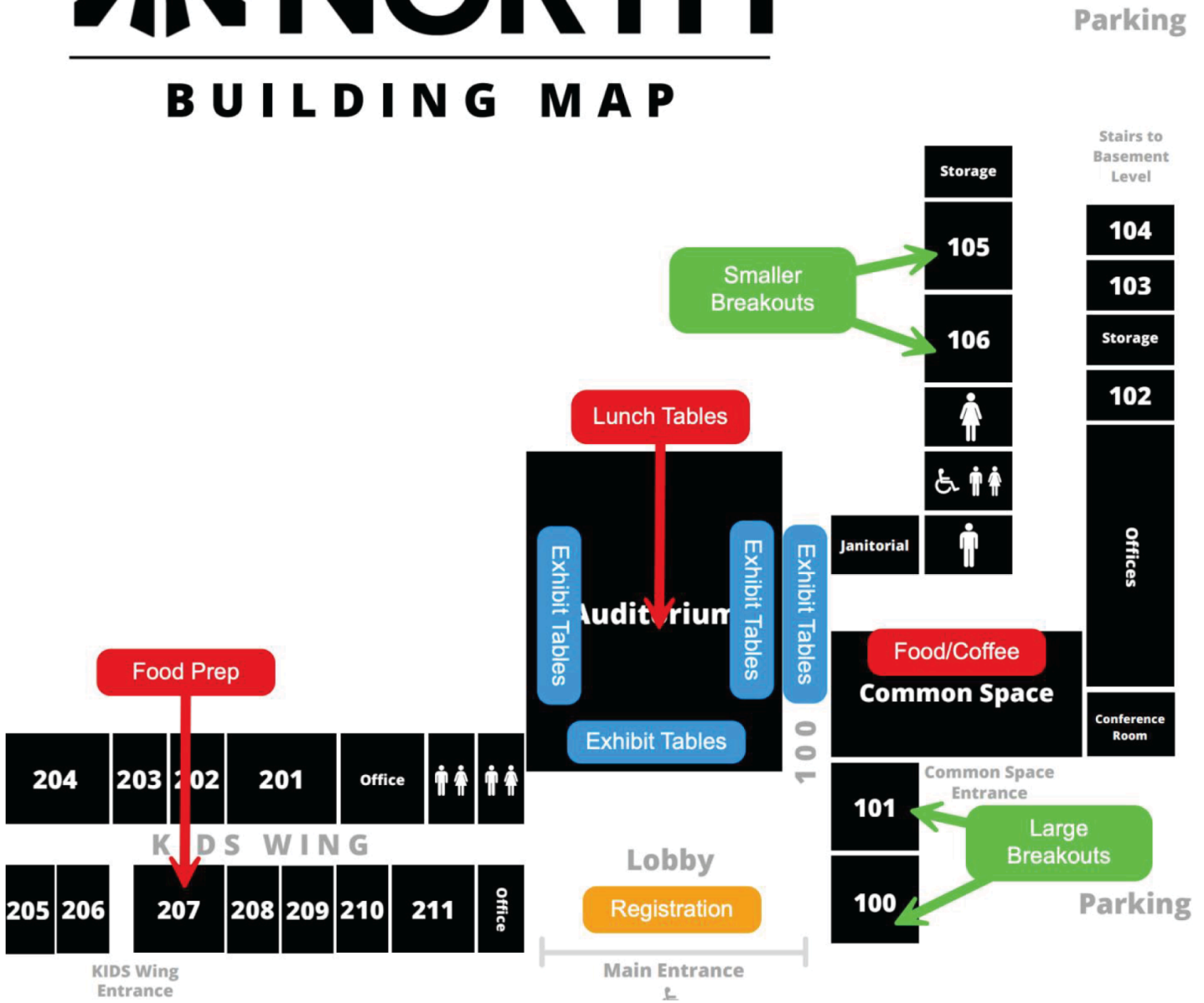


EXHIBIT TABLES

FOSTER CARE

Bair Foundation
ChildHelp
DCS
Holston Home
McNabb
MillerRich
Omni Visions
Tennessee Baptist Children's Home
Youth Villages

ADOPTION

Catholic Charities of East TN
Destiny Adoption
Harmony Family Center

ADOPTION ATTORNEY

Ankrom Advocacy
Dewhirst Law
Held Law Firm

ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE SUPPORT

ABA Centers of TN
AimHiTN
Bakeroos
Both Hands
Care Portal
CASA of East TN
Compassion Closet
Evergreen Life Services
Fostering Hope
Generation O
Isaiah 117 House
Show Hope
Street Hope
Tennessee Community Service Agency
Tennessee Kids Belong
Young Life One

SPEAKERS/PANELISTS BIOS

Marquiel Baker is a former foster youth and a foster and adoptive dad and is the Family Ministry Pastor at Rio Revolution Church. He and his wife Rachel have 5 amazing kids, ranging from 18 years of age to 9 years, with two headed to college this year.

Zerita Brockman and her husband, Brian, have adopted two children domestically. They navigate open adoptions with each birth mom.

Dr. Andrew Burkley is a licensed Clinical Psychologist with the University of Tennessee Center of Excellence for Children in State Custody and a nationally certified Parent-Child Interaction Therapy Regional trainer. In addition, he is a nationally rostered Trauma-Focused CBT and Child-Parent Psychotherapy therapist. Dr. Burkley excels at “Dad humor” and is always ready with a terrible pun; eye-rolls to said puns are highly encouraged.

Heather Butcher is the FOCUS Program Director serving children in full guardianship who need a forever family. She and her husband are both proud University of Tennessee graduates, and enjoy cheering on the Vols with their children (who are also VFL's!).

Meg Chalmers and her husband have 4 children: 2 biological and 2 that they adopted into their family. They have the unique experience of having adopted privately through an agency and also through DCS and foster care. They have an open adoption with their girls' biological father, which has been a challenging but rich experience.

Destiny Crabtree is an adult adoptee and former foster youth. She is enjoying being a newlywed; having married her husband Josh in December 2025. She enjoys writing, DIY projects, and singing with her husband at their church.

Jared DeLong is the Executive Director at Both Hands, a faith-based nonprofit serving orphans and widows while simultaneously helping fund adoptions.

Hillary Dewhirst has been practicing law in East Tennessee since 2003. Hillary primarily practices in the areas of adoption law and child advocacy. Hillary attributes her passion for adoptions to her own story of being adopted at a young age. As an adoptee who has also met her biological family, she has a unique understanding of the complexities of open adoptions.

Alisha Dyer is a permanency specialist with DCS.

Chasity Galyon is with Catholic Charities of East Tennessee and is an adoptive mom. She has a professional background in education, foster care, and private adoption, and she is a proud parent of three adult children and two precious grandchildren.

Chris Graves is a parent of three boys--two biological and one adopted. After watching several family members and close friends adopt, he and his wife, Anne, began the adoption process in 2010, and adopted Judd in 2011 from northern China. They have a love for adoption and walking alongside those in various stages of the adoption process.

Tyler Hays was adopted to Knoxville from South Korea at 3 months old. His parents also adopted his sister from the Philippines 4 years later. Tyler now lives in Fountain City with his wife, Amanda, and two children, Evie and Crew. In 2015, he and Amanda searched for, found, and got to meet his birth father in South Korea.

Chante Hensley is a TN-KEY Trainer as well as a certified TFCBT Practitioner. She is the founder of Fostering Hope TN and also works for the Bair Foundation as a homestudy writer. She and her husband were foster parents with Knox DCS for 13 years, had 180 children pass through their home, and have adopted nine children, who range from 8-26 years old.

Matthew Hensley is a foster parent and adoptive father. He and his wife Chante have fostered over 180 kids and have adopted 9 children.

Veronica Jackson-Patrick has a Master of Arts in Human Service Counseling and has over six years of lived experience as a foster parent to over 30 children for the Department of Children Services. Veronica's professional education and firsthand experience uniquely position her to mentor and guide foster parents with knowledge, transparency, and grace. Veronica lives in North Knoxville with her husband of 33 years, Terrell Patrick. They have four biological adult children and recently adopted three siblings from foster care. They are active in their local church and in the foster and adoptive community.

Molly Marks, RN, CPNP, has 25 years of experience as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner in primary care and the NICU at UT. A foster mom for 7 years, she has cared for 20+ NAS newborns. She is the mother of a 17-year-old adopted daughter from Haiti.

April Mathews has worked with DCS for 12 years and is currently a Foster Care Support Program Specialist. She is married with 2 children, ages 13 and 10. You can find her on most weekends as a golf caddy for her kids or renovating her husband's childhood home.

Ryan McMichael and his wife Jessica are adoptive parents of a daughter and twin sons. In addition to having the best job in the world as a campus minister, Ryan loves any chance he can get to share about the love of Jesus through his own adoption experience. In addition to being an adoptive dad and an adoptee himself, Ryan has three sisters, all of whom are adopted.

Wesley Mills and his wife fostered three siblings for three years with their adoption being complete in May 2025. When he's not chauffeuring kids to after-school activities, he enjoys reading, cooking, and is a recent pickleball aficionado.

Laura Mitchell is the Resource Center Coordinator at Harmony Family Center, and an adoptive mother of seven wonderful children. She loves traveling, supporting her kids in various activities and sports, and serving in Student Ministry at her church.

Justin Myers is a TBRI Practitioner and the Director of Programs for Show Hope. He and his wife Bonnie are the adoptive parents of two teenagers and reside in Nashville. Justin grew up in Arkansas, but has lived in China, Kentucky, and Tennessee over the years. Justin has many passions—the local church, international missions, refugees—but is most excited about investing his working hours in others navigating adoption.

Samantha Korniyenko was a child raised by the foster care system, living in many foster and group homes until aging out at age 18. She and her husband Valentin have 4 boys. Their youngest son was adopted from foster care.

Cameron Peterson is a registered nurse and has worked in maternal and newborn medicine for 18 years. She has been involved in interim care/foster care since 2014, and she and her husband have had 37 infants placed in our home, the majority of which have had the diagnosis of NAS.

Matt Scheuneman is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Clinical Supervisor, and lives in Alcoa with his wife and two children. He enjoys music, art, hiking, and doing anything in God's creation.

Leonard Staab came into foster care at the age of 10 with his biological half sister. He moved into his adoptive home at 11 and was adopted at 12. As he looks back on his story, he wants to communicate the value of good foster/adoptive families.

Tracy Taplin is the Community Engagement Manager (East TN/Knox Region) for Tennessee Kids Belong and is a bio and adoptive parent and former licensed foster parent. She has served vulnerable children and families over the last two decades in various roles. Tracy loves life with her husband Dru, four adult children, and one mostly well-behaved pup.

Stephani Welch-Harris has been with DCS for 6 years as both a Family Services Worker and also a Foster Care Support worker. She teaches classes at the YMCA weekly, and she loves being anywhere near water, especially the beach!

SPECIAL THANKS

Chick-fil-A - Fountain City, Einstein Bros. Bagels - Farragut, Mansour Hasan of State Farm, KAFCAM Leadership Team & Volunteers

CONFERENCE SURVEY

Go to kafcam.org/links to access the Conference Survey!

OTHER INFO

- Please sign in at each session to receive Foster Parent training hours. For questions regarding Foster Parent training hours, please contact Joye Duvall at Joye.G.Duvall@tn.gov.
- KAFCAM does not necessarily endorse any of the above resources/information. In addition, this program content is not intended to constitute, nor does it represent, legal or tax advice of any kind. For questions about any of the above listed resources, please contact us at info@kafcam.org and for more information and resources, visit www.kafcam.org.

RESOURCES

LOCAL PRIVATE ADOPTION AGENCIES

- ❖ Adoption Assistance, Inc
- ❖ American World Adoption
- ❖ Catholic Charities of East TN
- ❖ Destiny Adoption Services
- ❖ Lifeline Children's Services
- ❖ National Embryo Donation Center

ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

- ❖ Adopt US Kids
- ❖ Parent A Child (Harmony)
- ❖ Tennessee Kids Belong (TKB)

LOCAL FOSTER CARE AGENCIES

- ❖ Bair Foundation Child & Family Ministries
- ❖ Clarivida
- ❖ Child Help
- ❖ Counseling and Consultation Services
- ❖ Evergreen Life Services
- ❖ Free Will Baptist Family Ministries
- ❖ Helen Ross McNabb Center
- ❖ Holston Homes For Children
- ❖ MillarRich
- ❖ Omni Visions
- ❖ Smoky Mountain Children's Home
- ❖ Therapeutic Interventions
- ❖ TN Baptist Children's Homes
- ❖ TN Department of Children's Services

❖ Youth Villages

SUPPORT/SERVICES

- ❖ ABA Centers of Tennessee
- ❖ ASAP Program (Harmony)
- ❖ AimHiTN
- ❖ Bakeroos
- ❖ Blount County Foster Parent Association
- ❖ Bluecare Tennessee
- ❖ Both Hands
- ❖ Care Portal
- ❖ Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- ❖ Compassion Closet
- ❖ FUSE with Harmony Family Center
- ❖ Foster Friendly App & Communities (TKB)
- ❖ Fostering Hope TN
- ❖ Generation O
- ❖ Isaiah 117 House
- ❖ Knox Foster Care Support Group (Facebook)
- ❖ Knox Co. Health Department
- ❖ Lily's Story Foundation
- ❖ McCloud Life
- ❖ Safe Babies Court
- ❖ Show Hope
- ❖ Street Hope TN
- ❖ TN Community Service Agency (Foster Parent Advocate and Mentors)
- ❖ TN Voices for Children
- ❖ UT Center of Excellence

- ❖ Young Life One
- ❖ YWCA Knoxville

VOLUNTEER

- ❖ Bakeroos
- ❖ Care Portal
- ❖ Compassion Closet
- ❖ CASA
- ❖ The Empty Cup
- ❖ Fostering Hope TN
- ❖ Isaiah 117 House
- ❖ Safe Families for Children
- ❖ TN Department of Children's Services
- ❖ Tennessee Kids Belong

COUNSELORS

- ❖ 4C Therapeutics
- ❖ A New Hope Counseling Center
- ❖ All Ages Counseling
- ❖ Built2Bond- Leighanne Goldsteine
- ❖ Covenant Counseling
- ❖ Harmony Family Center
- ❖ Helen Ross McNabb Center
- ❖ Legacy Counseling Knoxville
- ❖ The Middle Path
- ❖ Omni Visions
- ❖ Restoration Counseling Associates

ADOPTION ATTORNEYS

- ❖ Ankrom Advocacy
- ❖ Stuart Crane
- ❖ Dewhirst Law
- ❖ Held Law Firm
- ❖ Channing Miller
- ❖ Katie Ogle

LOCAL BIRTH FAMILY PRESERVATION

- ❖ Community Action Committee Knox Co.
- ❖ Compassion Coalition
- ❖ Comprehensive Child & Family Treatment (McNabb)
- ❖ Family Promise of Knoxville
- ❖ Family Justice Center Knoxville
- ❖ Hands of Hope
- ❖ Helen Ross Mcnabb Center
- ❖ Intercept by Youth Villages
- ❖ Relative Caregiver Program
- ❖ Renaissance Recovery Group
- ❖ Restoration House
- ❖ Safe Families for Children
- ❖ Serenity Women's Center
- ❖ Smart Steps Child Care Payment Assistance
- ❖ Susannah's House
- ❖ TN Voices for Children