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On Behalf Of:
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Adopting out daughter from Oregon Foster Care was a long-planned and, we believed, well-thought-out dream come true. We were older, had another daughter at home and believed we could give E a good family foundation. She came to us with huge eyes, a shy smile and dimples so deep you could poke your finger into them.

She also had a history that no one disclosed before she moved into our home. She was about to turn five years old, and I became her fifth mother figure.

Within a month, we believed we were in over our heads, but she had already had one disrupted placement after a year-and-a-half, and we didn't want to give her another. By the time our daughter was ten, her behaviors forced us to change from the neighborhood school to a day treatment program, and we had exhausted every resource for play dates or child care. For nine and a half months, I contacted ODHS repeatedly, begging for help, for respite, for any support that would help us take better care of ourselves so we could continue to take care of E.

Either we received no call-backs at all, or we were told there was nothing but a waitlist with a possible chance that we would get respite spontaneously at some point. With no relief from the situation at home, our older daughter began to ask if she could move out at sixteen to preserve her mental health.

E did not act out at other people's homes.

At one point, I paid an adult familiar to E \$150.00, which we couldn't afford, to take her overnight. Child care was cost prohibitive for us. When E was eleven years old, with the family exhausted and unable to find a break from the intense stress, we resorted to foster care while we waited...and waited...for residential care. That was five years ago. While I continue to have a close relationship with E, she no longer considers us "parents" and cites the move out of our/her home back into foster care as the reason. Her once very close relationship with her sister has not been repaired. The years of unrelieved stress sent our older daughter to therapy as well. She recalls making desperate phone calls, begging for someone to take E out of the house for a while.

Respite care might have saved us.

If we had been able to count on regular or even semi-regular breaks to reset, to find our footing, to go to work, we might have had the wherewithal to work on her issues

at home, saving her from additional trauma and preserving the family foundation.

It's also critical for parents like us to learn an entirely new parenting paradigm. When our own stress is high and unrelieved, however, and we, too, are experiencing trauma, the capacity to learn something new is diminished, if present at all. It was only after our daughter moved out that I was able to learn how to parent her.

For parents/caregivers, for siblings, for the people trying to support us, and most especially for the children, we don't just want respite, we need it. We need it now.

Thank you.