

Foster Care and Development

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Foster care has a large effect on child development overall and no one can imagine how it feels to be without biological parents. There are more than 400,000 kids in foster care and for the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, DCF completed 519 adoptions and transferred guardianship for 352 children”(Department of Children and Families, 2018). Children in foster care have issues with development, social and emotional wellbeing, and mental and physical health. There are a variety of reasons a child may enter into foster care, but they all have at least one thing in common and that is they were not getting the proper care in their actual homes.

Development issues are a big problem when growing up in foster care because the things you see and the way you may be treated can impact the development of the brain. According to pediatrics, “It is known that emotional and cognitive disruptions in the early lives of children have the potential to impair brain development (Pediatrics, 2000)”. This is letting us know that neglect and abuse can slow down brain development. Also, the effect of being put in foster care can cause brain impairment and just make more issues for kids in the future. Foster care does not really help with the development of children and gives them a hard time with learning and socializing. “Children in foster care have disproportionately high rates of development problems” (pediatrics,2000). Research is showing us that kids in foster care have a higher number of developmental problems than kids who are at home with their parents. This means that kids who do have to be in foster care have a disadvantage growing up because their brain does not function like the rest.

Behavioral problems and emotional problems also come from the development of the child.” The journal estimates that 30-80% of foster care youth experience emotional and behavioral problems as an effect of their foster care or pre- foster care experiences” (pediatrics,2000). This tells us that these kids need help and emotional support and just someone to be there with them while their going through these things. The juvenile law center has done research and found out that “ by the age of 17, over half of youth in foster care experienced an arrest, conviction, or overnight stay in a correctional facility”(Juvenile Law Center, 2018). This is a result of being in foster care and how the lack of love, emotion, and one on one attention can affect behavior.

Emotional well-being goes down hill when they go through foster care. These children do not handle and go through emotion the same way kids who have both parents in the home they just hide everything inside.”The more time an adolescent is in foster care or is bouncing from home to home creates more risk for him emotionally. The child is more likely to have fewer social skills and become awkward when talking to others. Also, the child will have a harder time handling their emotions and a difficult time expressing them.

Trauma can also cause a disrupt in emotional well- being and make the child less open in expressing his or her feelings. “It is estimated that 90% of children in foster care have been exposed to trauma... A growing body of research reveals negative long-term consequences of traumatic stress” (Willams-Mbengue, N.D). Kids in foster care have dealt with violence, death, and abuse this can cause prolonged trauma in the child. Some consequences that can come out of these types of situations are things like anxiety and depression. Many kids who have these types

of trauma do not even know how to feel or even show it because they have mixed emotions about the situation. Not only do kids experience abuse and violence themselves but they may witness it happen to others they know or love. “In addition to abuse and neglect, children who enter foster care may have been exposed to parental substance abuse, domestic, community violence, and poverty” (Williams-Mbengue). Before kids enter foster care and its sometimes not good conditions they may have been exposed to other things that lead to having trouble trusting and building bonds, which will have lasting effects like seclusion and keeping in emotions. “In federal fiscal year (FY) 2017, the rate of children entering foster care due to parental drug abuse rose for the sixth consecutive year to 131 per 100,000 children nationally” (Sepulveda & Williams, 2019). Substance abuse is one of the main leading causes of why children enter foster care and in the year 2017 one in three kids were taken away from their parents because of drugs or alcohol.

Foster care adds on extra pressure on a child mentally and physically, “Children in foster care experience more depression, anxiety, and ADHD than kids who live with biological parents” (Turney & Wildeman). Pediatrics is telling us that foster children have more medical and diagnosed problems because they do not have the biological support that kids who aren't in foster care have or it may be due to the trauma they endured in their original home. Not only do they have anxiety and depression but is worse than the regular type it is more advanced and harder to live with.

Drugs and alcohol have an enormous impact in foster children, also studies have shown that most drug abusers are people who once were or are still in these homes. “... Children in

foster care abuse drugs and alcohol in adolescents and early adulthood” (Turney & Wildeman). This is making me believe that in reality teens who were or are in foster care are more likely to use drugs more frequently which leads to the mental and health problems because “Forty-five percent of foster care youth reported using alcohol or illicit drugs within the last six months; 49% had tried drugs sometime during their lifetime and 35% met criteria for a substance use disorder” (Vaughn et al, 2009). Mental or physical health does not always have to be from depression or physical abuse it can be from the abuse of narcotics and alcohol and some people do not understand that.

Foster care may have some benefits to it like free college and insurance but as you can see there are more negatives than positives. Most of these children will have a hard time all their life because of the mental and physical neglect they have encountered when younger. Foster care adds on much more pressure on a person especially a kid and the outcome of it is not healthy most of the time. The development of a foster kid is not the same as a kid who lives with biological parents and it includes much more aspects than just development. Many of these kids have never experienced true love and care so they think the hurt and pain is normal. Foster care sets back their learning, social life and overall them, they never really get that one on one attention that children are supposed to get and it just changes them as people.

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