# Every Child in Focus

## How PTAs Can Better Support Foster Families

National PTA’s Every Child in Focus is centered on strengthening family engagement in schools by celebrating important cultural distinctions and achievements, while highlighting solutions to potential educational issues.

This March, we turn our focus to families of foster children and the unique challenges they face in supporting student success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Recognize that children in foster families are often difficult to identify due to privacy concerns. It is often a matter of self-disclosure after joining the PTA.</td>
<td>• Survey foster parents to determine their educational support needs and how the PTA can help address those needs.</td>
<td>• Children in foster care may miss many days of school or enter school mid-term. Encourage teachers to provide a syllabus to identify learning content, establish expectations, and help a foster parent understand what content has been covered to date.</td>
<td>• Form a committee to keep all families informed about proposed child welfare legislation and encourage them to advocate for the foster care/child welfare bills they support.</td>
<td>• Recruit foster parents to represent the PTA on the School Improvement Committee.</td>
<td>• Form a partnership with the local department of social services or child welfare agencies. Invite them to PTA meetings and ask them to invite the PTA to their parent meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visit [PTA.org/ECIF](http://PTA.org/ECIF) for more information about **Every Child in Focus**.

© 2015 PTA All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. (2/15)

[PTA](http://www.pta.org) and [everychild.everyvoice.®](http://everychild.everyvoice.®) are registered service marks of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.
How Identity Theft Affects Our Nation’s Foster Children

The following is an excerpt from *Stolen Identity: What Anyone with a Name, Birthdate and Social Security Number Needs to Know Now*, by Kate Morrell*

The minute a child enters the foster system, his or her personal information passes through the hands of a variety of people, from caseworkers to court clerks to school counselors and guardian families. This personal information usually includes everything from the child’s birthdate and name to the SSN.

According to some estimates, **identity theft disproportionately affects foster children because of the large number of people who have access to their personal information.** As with other child identity theft, statistics are difficult to capture. The American Bar Association says that some estimates are that **as many as 50% of foster youth are affected.**

Experts say that many cases of identity theft involving foster youth are perpetrated by their biological or foster families. Sometimes it’s the biological parents trying to better their financial situation so they can get their kids back…

**Washington’s Response to the Problem**

The effects of identity theft on foster children gained the attention of lawmakers and, in 2011, President Barack Obama signed into law the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act. **The law requires foster care agencies to check the credit of children every year, starting at age sixteen, and gives the child access to a guardian or attorney that will help resolve any problems in the report.**

Advocates have been promoting legislation that was first introduced in 2011 that would do the following:

- End the use of SSNs as an identifier for foster children.
- Give kids leaving the foster care system a state-issued identity card or teach them to drive so that they can get a driver’s license.
- Require foster care agencies to monitor credit reports for all children (not just children sixteen years of older, per the 2011 act) and provide help for children with inaccurate credit histories.
- Require foster care agencies to give children a copy of their birth certificates and/or immigration papers when they leave the system. This is especially important to determine the validity of their identity, should a problem arise later on.
- Entitle children aging out of foster care to counseling on health insurance benefits.

For more information on identity theft and foster children, visit the [Every Child in Focus table](https://www.pta.org/ECIF) or visit [PTA.org/ECIF](https://www.pta.org/ECIF).

*National PTA does not represent nor endorse the book, *Stolen Identity: What Anyone with a Name, Birthdate and Social Security Number Needs to Know Now*, by Kate Morrell*