

Fostering Forward

A monthly tip sheet to navigate through foster care

Sometimes when fostering, you may end up caring for a child of a different culture than your own. It's in the child's best interest to incorporate their culture as well as helping them to experience new and different cultural traditions.

Caring for Kids with Cultural Differences

Culture (n.):

Cul-ture | \ 'kəl-çər \

- the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time
- the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization
- the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic
- the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

(www.merriam-webster.com)

Why Is It Important to Incorporate a Child's Culture?

A child's culture helps establish a sense of self and identity as they grow and develop. A child's culture includes things like favorite foods, holidays, religious beliefs, language and the way they dress. Keeping a child connected with their culture also helps them to feel connected with their family and community. Below are some specific examples of why a child should remain connected with their culture of origin.

- Learning about a child's culture will help you better understand how to meet the child's specific needs, such as hair care, skin care and nutrition.
- Helping a child establish their own cultural identity will provide them with a better sense of self.
- A child's thoughts, beliefs and attitudes are all influenced by their culture.
- A child may feel displaced if surrounded by a culture different than their own.
- Children deserve to have a sense of pride about where they came from.



What Can You Do To Incorporate Children's Culture?

Celebrate: Ask the child and birth family how they recognize birthdays, holidays and other important occasions.

Learn: Educate yourself about the child's culture by reading books, watching movies and researching podcasts to learn more about religion, culturally acceptable and unacceptable foods and hygiene habits.

Participate: Look up different events that focus on your child's culture, such as cooking classes, festivals, religious holidays and taking foreign language lessons.

How Do You Know If A Child Is Feeling Disconnected?

As children grow and develop they may begin to recognize that their culture of origin differs from those around them. This may cause a child to feel anxious or out of place. When this happens, it is important to take extra steps to ensure the child is being exposed to their culture of origin. Here are some things to watch for that may signal that a child is feeling culturally out of place.

- Asking frequent questions about their birth family, relatives, the community that they were removed from or past traditions.
- Rejecting their culture of origin and/or making statements that they want to be like someone of a different culture than their own, such as a member of their foster or adoptive family.
- Being bullied or teased at school because they're "different."
- Exhibiting low self-esteem or feeling like they don't belong.

**Share our similarities,
celebrate our differences.**

M. Scott Peck

Resources

- The best place to start when learning about a child's culture is their birth family and community of origin. Ask the family about ways they incorporate their culture within their home.
- Be sure to ask your Licensing Specialist about Caregivers Connections, which can connect you with other foster parents who may be more familiar with different cultures.
- Visit: <https://www.visitmilwaukee.org/about-mke/diversity-and-inclusion/> to see the different events from different cultures that are happening in Milwaukee.