

Georgia foster care system in crisis due to shortage of foster homes



CATOOSA COUNTY, Ga. — In Catoosa County, 116 children are in need of state care, but there are only 14 foster families. Several counties in both Georgia and Tennessee are facing a similar reality. Children already traumatized from being taken from their families have few foster families to give them a temporary home.

Only a small fraction of the children who come into state custody in Catoosa County are placed into a home in a nearby neighborhood.

DFACS workers say sometimes it's hard to hide from children that there is nowhere for them to go.

When Angela and Dustin Talley realized they could not have children of their own, they began to think and pray about fostering. A couple months later they were operating as a family of five.

"Our first three kids came from a hotel and they were terrified," she said. "They were dirty and came with literally underwear on."

The Talleys parented those siblings for four months, shortly after they chose to adopt Noah and Natalie.

They are not currently fostering, but now they have taken on a different role in the system.

"We stay involved with foster and adoptive families in northwest Georgia and in Chattanooga," Talley said.

They do that through [a new ministry called B3 Thrive](#), started by Adam Slaven and members of Burning Bush Baptist Church.

"It could be simple donations, items, time. or cooking family a meal," Slaven said.

Talley's son Noah has special needs, and it wasn't until the organization set up a room with calming swing, busy board and other toys that she felt comfortable bringing him to places like church.

"These children can come in and feel loved and still learn the gospel," she explained.

She's hoping the support Thrive offers will encourage more people to foster, or give people an avenue to help those already fostering.

It's something DFACS director Johnathan Sloan says is desperately needed.

"Because we have this gap, we are not able to place children in our county," he said.

A map of the state shows that only 20 to 40 percent of Catoosa County children are placed with a family in the county.

The surrounding areas are having the same problem.

"Just to be quite honest, if there is not a home, these children have to stay in a hotel or a group home and that's reality," Talley said.