



Capacity Building  
CENTER FOR STATES

## Perspectives on Normalcy Handout: DNA Doesn't Define Family, Love Does

This handout is part of the series, "Perspectives on Normalcy: Videos and Discussion Questions." It is designed to facilitate discussion about the issues raised in the video, "Adoptive Family: DNA Doesn't Define Family, Love Does."

### About the Interviewees:

Melinda and her wife became foster parents in 2002 to provide respite to a young boy in residential care. They now have four children, including Frankie. All of their children have been, or are in the process of, being adopted through the foster care system.

Frankie is 14 years old and lives with his sister, brothers, and moms. He and his sister were adopted when they were 2 years old and 4 years old, respectively. He loves spending time with his aunts, uncles, and cousins and loves being part of a big family.

### Quote From the Interviewee:

"As foster parents, we were faced with helping children make the best of a very difficult situation—we tried to help bring normalcy to a situation that was anything but normal. [...] It was not always easy to find a 'new normal' with field trips, school activities, Little League, school picture, birthday parties, and sleepovers, etc. Each of these 'everyday' things took a great deal of planning, permission seeking, parental releases, and, sometimes, court orders—it was anything but normal." – *Melinda*

We were fortunate to work with some child welfare staff that understood the challenges and helped us to make our kids' everyday lives as easy as possible. The reasonable and prudent parenting standard goes a long way toward making these kinds of decisions easier for foster parents and, most importantly, easier for children in care." – *Melinda*

### Questions for Discussion:

- ▶ How does foster care impede normal development?
- ▶ How does this impact children and youth?
- ▶ Frankie talks about belonging. What does it mean to him?
- ▶ Despite system impediments, what can families do to create normal experiences?
- ▶ How can the system support the healthy development of children of all ages whose care is its responsibility?

To access the video, please visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/foster-care-permanency/perspectives-normalcy/adoptive-family-video>.

