

Helping Families Seek Resolution and Restoration

Hello, my name is _____, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to talk with you today about a ministry that is both life-saving and life-changing.

Embrace Florida Kids has provided homes, healing and hope to hundreds of children and vulnerable families right here in Northwest Florida for decades. Foster care and group homes are important parts of the ministry, but they are parts that we wish were not necessary.

In a perfect world, all children would be able to live with their own families in safe, loving homes that are healthy, happy and full of respect. Our world is far from perfect, though, and that's why Embrace Florida Kids' Family Preservation program is so important. It provides families who are at-risk of losing their children the skills and supportive services they need to stay together.

Before I tell you more about that, though, I want you to think back to when you were learning to read. Chances are, when you were really little, the letters looked like a bunch of scribbles on a page. But then your teachers, your parents and your older siblings clued you in on the sounds the letters make and the words they formed. You learned how to read because someone – or several people – taught you how. When you stumbled over a word, no one took the book away from you. Instead, they helped you and encouraged you. And before you knew it, reading had become second nature.

That's how it is with parenting. Most of the parents Embrace Florida Kids work with don't know how to parent because they didn't have positive role models themselves. No one ever taught them, encouraged them, or helped them learn the rules. Most of the parents they work with love their children and want what's best for them, but chances are, they grew up in an abusive home themselves. Poverty may be all they've ever known. No one told them that a candy bar is not a nutritious breakfast or why it's important that their children get enough sleep.



They may stumble – some more than others – but that doesn't mean that they're not capable of learning or that their children should automatically be taken away. Sometimes all it takes is for someone to teach them the rules and to help them figure out ways to deal with their stress and to discipline and guide their children in a healthy loving way.

One father was raising his teenage daughter by himself because her mother was in jail. He struggled financially and had health issues that made finding a job difficult. The Embrace Florida Kids team helped them find stable housing with a landlord who was willing to work him. They connected him to community services and resources and taught him to listen to his daughter and how to communicate effectively with her. Just like a beginning reader, he stumbled, but with a little help and encouragement, he began to figure it out himself.

In another family, a mother had temporarily lost custody of her children because of abuse. She loved her kids dearly, but when they acted out, she reacted the same way her own mother had. The Embrace Florida Kids staff gave her positive parenting techniques and taught her to set goals, provide structure and use time outs. She began to focus on the positive strengths she and her children have, and on teaching instead of punishing. She learned how to reduce stress, manage her anger and use coping techniques for difficult situations.

It's no exaggeration to say that the family preservation workers see families at their lowest and most difficult points. But with some positive reinforcement and guidance, their family can grow stronger, happier, and healthier. Thanks to your generosity, hurting families are able to turn the page and start a new chapter of their lives. I can't think of a greater gift you can provide this year.

Thank you for supporting families through Embrace Florida Kids.

