

we see you

# WE SEE YOU!

Social Services Staff from the Department of Family and Children's Services (called DFCS in GA) are tasked with maintaining the safety and well-being of children and families. On a daily basis, they're faced with unfathomable, quick decisions based on what little knowledge they have in the moment and often with the livelihood of children and families at stake. They juggle multiple crises at once, can find themselves in dangerous situations, and are often not acknowledged or recognized for their invaluable efforts in our communities.

As the Church, we seek to come alongside these staff and, together, advocate for these front-line workers. We believe that this work is to be rooted in prayer and hinges on relationships. So we are asking churches, businesses, and organizations across the country to join us in celebrating our county Child Welfare staff, ensuring they feel seen, known, and appreciated this year.

We are asking YOU - a church, business, or organization strategically placed in the county you call home, to acknowledge your Child Welfare staff and the work they do in a meaningful way. Others across our country will do the same as every county hears the message "We see you! And we appreciate the invaluable work you do in our community on behalf of children and families!"

## HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

First, set up a conversation with any Child Welfare connections you may know to determine what their needs are and how they feel appreciated. Choose one of the three methods of appreciation below, combine them, or come up with your own to best match their needs! We've also included a fun handout to share a variety of easy ways churches can serve. Helpful guides are available for each of the options below. We do ask that no matter what you do, you cover your county's Child Welfare office in prayer.

### **Option 1: Notes of Encouragement with a Small Gift**

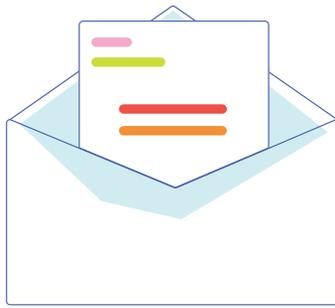
Encourage your DFCS staff through handwritten notes of appreciation. Consider including gift cards to Chick-fil-A or Starbucks, snacks, lip balm, candy bars, or any other small token of appreciation. You may also choose to host a drive to collect the small gift items.

### **Option 2: Catered Breakfast or Lunch**

Ask a Social Services Supervisor how you can provide a meal at their next scheduled meeting.

### **Option 3: Drive-through Parade**

Host a drive or walk-through celebration at the DFCS office. These celebrations often include volunteers, hand-made signs, balloons, and multiple small gifts. Consider hosting a drive to collect items and partner with other local churches, businesses, or organizations to make the event special!



## NOTES OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CHILD WELFARE STAFF

Local Child Welfare agency staff often carry the weight of the welfare of vulnerable children and families. Showing your appreciation by acknowledging their important work is a great way to build rapport and strong relationships. Additionally, this helps make the church congregation aware of the reality of Child Welfare staff and the work that they do in the community. It provides an opportunity to change what can be a negative narrative around their role and inform the church of how they care for the most vulnerable children and families in our communities. This guide provides information on how to host a note card event for your local child welfare staff.

**Step 1:** Reach out to an agency director or supervisor and ensure that the agency is open to this type of support and encouragement from the church.

If they are open to support and encouragement in this way, ask for the number of employees on staff. If possible, ask if they can provide a list of names so that notes can be personalized. If you do address cards individually, be sure to create a few cards without names in the case all names are not included or new staff hires occur. During this conversation, coordinate with the staff to find out how and when the notes should be delivered (hand-delivered to the office or mailed, in which case you will need a list of staff addresses). Including a small gift card for coffee or a quick meal would also be greatly appreciated, if this is permissible by the agency. Consider hosting a drive (see guide) to collect items prior to your letter writing event.

**Step 2:** Secure the event location and time, and invite volunteers.

This event may take place at a church, someone's home, or another available space. Invite volunteers to participate by creating an event in Promise Serves, Sign-up Genius, or Eventbrite, distributing the RSVP link to your intended volunteer audience. Send a second invite and reminder five days prior to the event. Additionally, send an email reminder the day before the event and ensure volunteers have all necessary information like location address, parking information, and time.

**Step 3:** Host a Drive for Special Items

Follow the steps outlined in [Hosting a Drive | A Guide](#) if you want to include any small gift items with the notes of encouragement. Even a small token of appreciation with a note of encouragement can go a long way!

#### **Step 4:** Gather supplies and host your letter-writing event.

*Items needed for the event are listed below:*

- Notecards with envelopes
- Pens
- Printed copies of text prompts - encourage volunteers to personalize the text, but have prompts and encouraging Bible verses available for ideas and guidance. See the bottom of this document for ideas and examples.
- Stamps, if the cards will be mailed
- List of names and mailing addresses, if applicable
- Light snacks and beverages (optional)

#### **Step 5:** At the Event

- Arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of the event to set up the room and prepare all the supplies.
- Open the event in prayer. Then, spend the first 10-15 minutes teaching volunteers about your FAM (if applicable), the why behind writing these encouraging notes, and opportunities for additional volunteer involvement within your FAM (if applicable). Kind words and an empathetic understanding of their difficult working circumstances can have a positive effect on everyone's posture toward child welfare staff.
- Finish the event by thanking volunteers and having them fill out a virtual response card from Promise Serves (the QR code is the easiest to use) to assess interest in additional service opportunities.
- Deliver or mail items to the child welfare staff. One option may be delivering the notes during one of their scheduled staff meetings. If this option is available, you may ask to bring breakfast, snacks, and drinks to the meeting in addition to the handwritten notes.
- Send a thank you email from Promise Serves to volunteers who attended the event.

#### **Text Examples:**

*"Thank you for the incredible work you do serving children and families. Our community is a better place because of who you are and what you do! You are seen, known, and loved!"*

*"We appreciate the amazing work you do in our community! Thank you for the invaluable service you provide to keep children and families safe and healthy. You are seen, loved, and appreciated!"*

#### **Supporting Scriptures:**

*"May the Lord bless you and keep you." - Numbers 6:24*

*"I do not cease to give thanks for you..." - Ephesians 1:16*

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him..." - Romans 15:13*

*"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." - Psalm 46:1*

*"We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield." - Psalm 33:20*



## CATERED BREAKFAST OR LUNCH | A GUIDE

Offering to cater a breakfast or lunch for local Child Welfare staff lets them know that they are seen and appreciated! Pairing this event with handwritten notes of encouragement (see additional guide) is also a great option. Use the information below to help make your event successful.

### Prior to the event:

- Confirm that the staff are meeting in the office. If not, additional plans will need to be made. You may need to facilitate a hybrid event that combines a catered breakfast or lunch with a celebration parade type of event (see appropriate guides).
- Consider partnering with other churches or community partners to share costs and/or responsibilities.
- Communicate with the County Director and ask to cater a meal during a scheduled meeting. This ensures you don't add any extra planning or responsibility to the staff's already full schedules.
  - Also find out if you can have 5 minutes of the meeting time to communicate your appreciation. If this is not possible, or if you are uncomfortable doing so, please write a note and ask that it be read to the full staff.
  - Often, in the state of Georgia, asking to cater at a "Social Services" meeting will include all staff pertinent to family preservation, foster care, and permanency.
- Be sure to confirm the date, time, and number of staff expected to be present.
- Inquire about food allergies or plan to provide a meal that accommodates things like gluten or dairy allergies.
- Contact a local restaurant and coordinate the meal. Be sure to address:
  - Meal
  - Beverages
  - Ice (if applicable)
  - Who will provide all paper products (plates, cups, napkins, flatware, items to serve the meal) – will the restaurant provide those or do you need to plan to purchase those separately?
  - Consider having a carryout option for staff who are unable to stay for the entire meeting.
  - You may also explain the heart behind this project and ask if the restaurant would be willing to provide a donated meal or discount. Often, it's wise to ask if they have a donation request form or specific contact on their team who handles community relations.

### At the event:

- Arrive early to ensure the meal is set up prior to the meeting start time.
- Assist in serving the meal, if needed.
- Thank the staff for their work in your community. Briefly share about any services your FAM (Family Advocacy Ministry) offers if they are applicable to children and families these staff serve.

### After the event:

- Send a thank you note to the County Director and team thanking them for their assistance in coordinating the event.



## CELEBRATION PARADE | A GUIDE

A celebration parade consists of Child Welfare staff driving through or walking through while volunteers pass out multiple small gift items with encouraging messages attached. Items could include things like small gift cards, lip balm, snacks, candy bars, gum, and more.

There are three key aspects to planning the event. Communicating and inviting staff, recruiting and coordinating volunteers, and obtaining and personalizing small gifts. It's possible that you will need to host a drive to obtain small gifts and host a separate event with volunteers to personalize the items and/or write notes (see guides provided).

### Planning the event:

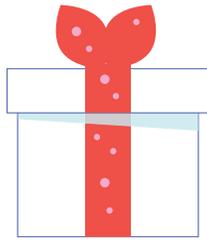
- Contact the local County Director to coordinate a date and time for the event. Also, clarify how information will be communicated to staff.
  - We suggest using Eventbrite or an Evite platform to create an event and emailing this to all Social Services staff.
  - You will need to obtain an email list from the County Director or confirm that he/she will send the Evite to staff by a certain date and time. If the County Director will be responsible for inviting guests, ask him/her to send a reminder a day before the event.
- Now, you will need to recruit volunteers for the day of the parade. Create an event in Promise Serves or use Sign-up Genius. Advertise the event via social media, word of mouth, or personal invitations and ensure all volunteers RSVP. Be sure to send reminders prior to the event with all relevant information including location and the time the volunteers need to arrive and how long they are expected to serve.
- Purchase items or host a drive to collect items. You can also plan a separate event to have volunteers attach fun, encouraging messages to snacks, drinks, Chapstick, chewing gum, etc. A quick Google or Pinterest search will generate some ideas.
- Consider what items you may need to create a fun parade environment (fun signs, balloons, a speaker to broadcast music, etc.).
- Create stations for cars to drive by or people to stop at as they walk through. Stations can include, but are not limited to those listed below:
  - Welcome area
  - Gifts (small gift cards, Chapstick, hand lotion, etc.)
  - Snacks
  - Drinks
  - Meals (potentially sponsored by a local business)
  - Prayer/encouragement for those who are comfortable

### At the event:

- Have volunteers placed at the entrance with fun signs and balloons, at each gift station to hand out items, and at the end of the parade location.

### After the event:

- Clean up all items
- Send a thank you note to the County Director and team thanking them for their assistance in facilitating the event.



## HOSTING A DRIVE | A GUIDE

Hosting a drive will allow you to collect small gifts to be given to Child Welfare staff along with notes of encouragement or to be given at a celebration parade for staff. Drives can be done on a small scale (limited to a Sunday school class, youth group, etc.) or on a large scale (potentially advertised to the entire church). The ideas and instructions in this document simply serve as a guide. Your process may be a bit different along the way, and that's okay!

**Step 1:** Consider what items you would like to collect and confirm how many of each item are needed.

If you would like to attach an appreciative message to the item, review the ideas on this page for inspiration. Many more ideas as well as printable templates can be found online. You can also create a cute template using Canva. Ask the County Director at the local office how many Social Services staff are on the team (this usually includes case managers, resource staff and CPS workers and any corresponding supervisors). Collect a few extra of each item to ensure you have enough of each item. Ideas for items to be collected include:

- Small gift cards
- Lip balms
- Scented candles
- Gum/mints/candy
- Snacks

**Step 2:** Advertise the drive.

Be specific in your messaging about the items needed, drop-off location, and drop-off deadline. Include brief messaging that explains why you are hosting the drive and the impact it will have. If you are collecting multiple items, thoughtfully plan a way to ensure that all items necessary are collected. For example, have one small group collect candy while another collects small gift cards.

**Step 3:** Organize items and consider attaching fun messages.

Fun messaging ideas:

Extra chewing gum: "You are EXTRA special to our community!"

Lip balm: "You're the balm!"

Hand cream: "Thank you for your helping hands!"

Snack bar: "Your hard work raises the bar!"

Coffee gift card: "Thanks a latte for all you do!"

M&Ms: "Many & Many thanks for all you do!"

# FUN IDEAS TO DO AT THE LOCAL CHILD WELFARE OFFICE



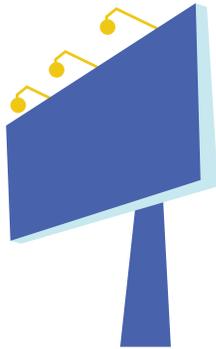
Host a coffee bar or food truck



Clean, restock, and/or renovate the visitation room



Hire a company to offer chair massages



Hire a billboard to advertise your church's appreciation for local agency staff



Host a flower cart to make your own bouquet



Cater a Breakfast or Lunch



Host a Drive-through Parade



Hire a car wash company to wash employee's cars

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