

Transcript for Episode 14 - Understanding Placement in Foster Care

Cat 0:05

This is Cat, and I'm here with Jack and today we have a very special guest, Elyse, who has until very recently rocks child welfare as a placement supervisor, thank you for coming, Elyse.

Elyse 0:18

Thank you for having me.

Cat 0:19

So Elyse, let me ask you a very serious question. What is your favorite drink at Starbucks?

Elyse 0:24

That used to be a venti Starbucks double shot, but they've changed it now to the brown sugar oat milkshake and espresso, which took out like two espresso shots.

Jack 0:36

Oh my goodness. Well can you get that and then add the espresso and it's the same thing?

Elyse 0:45

You can so I just switched up my whole order. Okay, I just changed it up. I'm drinking chai tea lattes, adding extra espresso to it. We need to make it a dirty, clean like that to having topped it though with cold foam. Vanilla cold foam on top now this is like an \$8 drink so I only waited till I have rewards to get that.

Jack 1:02

So, you get an ice or hot iced?

Elyse 1:05

Always iced I am from Florida.

Jack 1:13

so you get an iced chai latte with extra two extra shots of espresso and cold foam on the top, yes how I get, we're gonna try that. Can we call it the Elise. Yeah, all right, done. We

have no bosses we do what we want, at least, can you tell me what your position was up until recently and what that entails,

Elyse 1:33

So I was the daytime placement supervisor, I was co supervising when I left. Prior to that I had just been singly supervising the day shift, I was over, which always sounds weird to me. Three to four placement coordinators did a little bit of everything, someone asked me what my job is I would say I really don't know, I just answer the emails continuously, and hopefully have the answers to that so we have to ensure that every kid has a bed, coming into care. So just kind of coordinating assisting my placement coordinators where they needed, You know, maybe did help if it was to write a waiver because they didn't have time I'd write a waiver, just for people who don't know what is a waiver. So, a waiver is

Jack 2:15

what we all live by Florida.

Elyse 2:19

Yes. Yes. I don't know a home that's not a waiver so waiver is when a licensed home is over capacity of some type. So it's either. We have three types of waivers. When it comes to licensed homes, it's either more than five children in the home. Over license capacity so they could only be licensed for two kids and we're putting a third child in, or the big one, which is the hardest one to get ever ever ever. We call it a 302 but it's technically an A two over two or two under 202 Yeah, we always call it three under two in the placement department, think about carrying like car seats. Yeah, and how do you carry three car seats. And when you put it that way, like if you have to get two kids out better in car seats.

Jack 3:01

I mean we usually end up just wearing multiple kids.

Elyse 3:05

So someone had to kind of explain it to me, and made a lot more sense, where are you putting this other car seat, you can't be putting a car seat on the ground. I mean, I always say I'm I give them all the babies if they want them but I understand the reasons behind it now

Cat 3:16

so yeah, that makes sense.

Elyse 3:18

At one point in time I was completing all the staffing, as of about a year ago, we've done a staffing coordinator so I had someone else kind of doing that, but I just filled in here, there, there was something open that wasn't done that's what I was doing.

Jack 3:31

So can you tell me what your first experience with foster care was?

Elyse 3:35

There was one foster home, that like I knew of, and they took siblings, that's where I'm from. Now, even to this day listening to people. I know people that I went to high school with their fostering now, that was the only one I knew it was it was one home, they had siblings, and those kids were pretty open and honest about it, which sounds so different to now people don't want them to know that they're in foster care but what drove your decision to go into social work, that was, that was an always calling, I knew it was going to do something with kids. I thought it was going to be a teacher forever. That never happened. I didn't go into that I kind of went back and forth in college, it took the very long way around for my a, trying to figure out what I was going to do. I finally decided on sociology, which is not exactly the route you go for child welfare, but it sounded interesting to me, so I did that, and I finished up my degree, I started volunteering for Guardian vitam knowing that I wanted to work with kids, they wanted you know again, they, they don't have a voice sometimes and they didn't do anything in SP more and they didn't ask for that kind of likes so I came over here from the, the east coast of Florida, and I had worked for DCF, nothing interesting I did welfare benefits. I met the above director at something we had done a DCF we had had people come in, and at that point I knew I wanted to work for my company. I met him he's extremely charismatic. He's passionate about what he does, I was like, I need to I need to work for him. No big company, I need to work for him, he seems like a great leader so that's what drove me to where I'm at now, can you tell me about the formal education that you completed, I have my bachelor's in sociology, which is, you can't do much with that unless you want to continue to learn on get your Masters get your doctorate, that's really the point of it. It's not exactly a stepping point to where I'm supposed to be but tell me where I am today people do all kinds of different things

Elyse 5:40

to feel like that prepared you for this job. Know exactly I mean it taught me like, they're really interesting courses in it. You know, it's about the social interactions of people,

Jack 5:50

when a child comes into care from CPI, they do something called an intake right. Yes, and

that's when it comes to you, can you kind of walk me through the steps of where it goes once you received that intake,

Elyse 6:03

the first thing after the intake comes through the intake supposed to be the basic information, parents names, you know where the child was living. If they have siblings. The siblings are coming in. It gives us the basics of, you know, medical behaviors personality traits. So then our next step is to kind of do our research, so we need to know things that CPI may have not caught and again sometimes CPI has only met these kids for a couple hours you know this is something that tragic that came right off you know sometimes they do follow the cases it'll have a little more information, but not all the time, so we start doing our research, and we have a system which is it's called FISMA and it's not the same everywhere. That's the Florida network so we go through that, we search the master database. Is it is it, it holds off. All in all information all the knowledge so we check that for all previous cases in takes to pull any information we can I mean sometimes you find, you know, things that even CPI didn't know oh there's previous siblings you know those siblings aren't here The siblings

Jack 7:10

are here. Does that sometimes give you guys information about like behaviors and medical needs that maybe CPI didn't catch, because one thing that we've talked about before, is that one of the struggles with foster homes is you'll get a placement call, and it'll say one thing and then you get the kid and it's something else, but one of the things that we've talked about that, that is, you know, how do you get that information, you would get that information maybe from the parents sometimes the parents are not conscious, sometimes the parents are not present, sometimes the parents are unwilling to provide that information because they think that like if I get that information they're going to take my cat, you know you have this time with this child, and if the parent isn't providing that image, or isn't able to provide that information, and it's not something you can visibly see, then you can't really like cast blame on policemen or CPI for not providing you that information. Because, you know, how would that information be obtained if it wasn't provided or visible right but so one of the ways that you guys sometimes find that information, I guess, is doing research insistent before moving to the next step.

Elyse 8:19

Yeah, I mean if you find a lot of good things again it's sometimes those get called in on those intakes and it's like you said previous medical, oh, you know the child's has this this hard D factor they have this and it's like, so then we can ask CBI. Hey, can you go back to Mom can you go back to caregiver, and can you ask these questions can you look for this

medication. Can you ask the child if they're old enough. What does this look like for you now.

Jack 8:42

Is this also where you find out, Oh, there's a sibling and care Let me place with them, or there this child was in care before and placed at this home. Let me see if that child can go there,

Elyse 8:54

is that where that's done, you can look in there. That's not like my exact favorite, The old we had an old system we've moved from our old, our old system. So, that's the one that I like because it gives that information, you're not able to the first before it's like right there yeah hopping up if you type in their name, it'll pop right up. But yeah, it's, I mean that that's the holder of all,

Jack 9:15

okay so you you do the research in this bin, what's the next step you take, I

Elyse 9:18

would be looking for placement availability. So that's depending on age and gender. Sibling sets not sibling sets kind of what kids needs are, so depending on that that's kind of where you go, it can, you know, maybe there's some medical issues. So if there's medical issues, we need to send the consents, for a medical evaluation. If there are therapeutic needs, we're going to reach out to our therapeutic team. Alright, you know, everyone's while we get that straight normal game we've got new issues. We've got nothing going on. So then we'll start calling down the line of our foster parents that they fit,

Jack 9:53

And what would make you make the decision of where to go on that list, but

Elyse 9:57

every Friday we do a meeting with our licensing team and our contracted licensing teams and we asked for available beds so they'll give us a list of what the available beds are and what the profile for that home is. So you start with that list, best case scenario would be if the kids coming out of one county, we place in that county, right. That's always where you want to go and make easier

Jack 10:20

rooms for data interpretation as far as man visits yep,

Elyse 10:24

that's where we would start, then after that, depending on how many calls it made you start moving around you start calling your go to foster parents, those ones who they will take kids a little out of profile. You know they have only one bed available but they'll take two kids because they can make the rooms, it's a game, it's it's a puzzle piece game I like puzzles so it's you know it's making the pieces connect,

Jack 10:48

When I get a call from placement. Sometimes I hear the kid in the background. I remember one kid in particular placement was talking to me asking me to take him, I could hear him in the background, telling her what to say. So, I kind of think that's kind of cute that like they're in there hanging out with you but that's also got to be very, it's gonna be a lot of anxiety to basically be trying to sell this kid do a family with the kids sitting right there, and then they're hearing the rejections, as you are.

Elyse 11:17

So prior to COVID. We were in office all the time, and we loved it, we loved having kids and now, especially when they brought the babies in and CPI was walking down the hallway, please bring this baby into our office, we like to all this levels, but we always welcomed kids in case management with kids CPI with kids mean getting to know your kids was really important to us, our teens, they were always welcome in, they come in they do homework they listen to music. You know when it comes down to time of competent, confidentiality, we ask them to leave we take them back we walk them back to case management.

Jack 11:48

So, generally they're not normally there when you're making calls is that,

Elyse 11:51

yeah, I mean it just it depending on what kind of information. We're sending out, you know, for we we were regulars. So when you're talking to, group homes and foster parents, they know the name they know the behaviors so you're not really giving out information, so we just try to make sure that we're not saying names like behavior slash medical in front of children, you know, because you have regulars. We have regulars unfortunately mostly with our teen population. Those are the ones though I would say as a police department, I have so much more of a bond with because they're in your office you know their names, you know their story from start to finish, that's, that's what I loved about the job I could not

that they were regulars, I didn't like that job. You know I learned it from my director, that these are all of our children,

Jack 12:35

we can bear it explains a lot about the place I get to tell you every time I go to the office placement is my favorite place to go. I just feel like some of my favorite people, that's where they are. I don't know I just feel like that's where magic happens. I mean that's the goal. It's a sad place to, you know, obviously because of what's going on, but it's also like the connections that are being made like kids being able to find places where they can go, while their families heal, this is the place where it's like, actively frontline happening.

Elyse 13:04

I mean it's the magic that I like. I like the magic of magic. It's nice. I mean even, you know, when you find that right placement, Especially for a team, a team who's been bouncing around a team that can't find stability, and you find a home that's willing to, you know, give it that extra shot, and it works and they'll either they're reunified from there or, you know they age out miss home but that is the support that they'll have, once they're 18, which is for most kids that age out of care, then there isn't a support there. So being able to make those connections for those kids is. That's the magic. That's the feeling that's why, that's why you stay for so long, because you come back and you're like, oh my success. I can do this a couple more months. You've made my day.

Jack 13:49

I had this now so I at least one of my adopted children was placed by Elise. That's why she's one of these special people in placement for me, and I always say like you know basically her and, you know, her friend that we're talking about previously like they could call me and ask me anything and I would probably take any delay. Oh, just not a JDC Oh Weapon charge cool so the amount of like I will do anything, like, I just, but also because both of them, I trust like I trust that they know my home they know me, they know our strength, they know you know what, our family is capable of. So, you know for me it's like wow, you care more about making sure that these kids are in the right place than just about, you know, checking off boxes so i don't know i love placement.

Elyse 14:44

We're always welcoming people. We always say someone should come sit in see what this mess is like every day. You are welcome to see it.

Jack 14:51

So, approximately, in a given day. How about how many placements does the department

handle

Elyse 14:57

that has fluctuated so much since I started when I started, I would say, including

Jack 15:05

no repeat kits not brand new placements, we would probably, I would say anywhere from 10 to 15 would be normal. So in a given day you would have 10 to 15 placements that you've got to figure out and that is new, plus existing placements that need a new placement. Okay, so 10 to 15, and in general when you start that day, and you know that you may have 10 to 15 maybe less, maybe more, how many beds, do you have open on a given day,

Elyse 15:33

depending on what we're looking at I mean again if you have Teasle group homes normally fluctuate with the open beds so that that kind of changes, we find ourselves in the ebb and flow though, sometimes when we're placing it's all teen teen girls on the board, you're like, I have one team Robin open in a group home, why don't we have 15 on this board, the needs never really match, never, never, never, never, no, always it always is some type of set regardless if it's gender, regardless if it's amount of kids, it'll be like siblings this but they're only coming in and sibling sets of four. Why is for the magic number right now,

Jack 16:09

I was seeing that recently actually, I had a sibling group of three going home, and there were like five sibling groups of three on the board that day, you know, and that's where

Elyse 16:18

I got my sibling group of three that came in, you'll save yourself there I don't feel like there's any beds I mean we've gotten that down to where our availability list, and you know one county versus the other is down to like three or four open beds in that county. And you're going, I don't know where this x amount of children are gonna go, but we're very lucky or creative, we're creative but I give a lot of credit to our foster homes,

Jack 16:44

what we know how to make space. We know how to put together a bed lickety split.

Elyse 16:49

Now I mean our foster homes are where the hearts that they, they make miracles happen

when we don't know what we're gonna do, they take like I said our homes will take kids that that is not their profile that's not what they expected, but that gives them a bed for the night that gets some, you know, gives a child with a place to sleep, that's where that's the magic right there.

Jack 17:08

Yeah, and I've also found that some of the biggest blessings that I've had and some of the most magical experiences of placements that I've had have happened because I said yes to a placement that I always said I would never take this age or, you know, they needed something in that moment and I'm like hey I've got a bad and we can make it work short term and then you know terms of long term care management too so I think Jack. I like that.

Cat 17:37

I'm, I came from Texas and I was in case management for two years, a long long time ago. And at the tail end of my time there, there was like a big event, and it was out of state, and tons of kids were removed, I don't have a number because I was, you know, I didn't get any of those kids but some of my colleagues are in case management got all these kids on their caseload. Have you ever had a day that you were like,

Elyse 18:01

Oh my gosh, there are so many kids or have you had any days like that or you know, they're like, Oh at least once a week. No one you say kids so that come from a state where we're located,

Elyse 18:10

is the visiting area for every state, so we live all the time we'll get kids in from people that are vacationing here. And like our golden rule is in the placement department so on So state needs to take their kids back, you need to come get your kids is what we say because now they're here and parents are going back to their home state, and you're leaving kids in the system here, so they're not going to be getting visitation, they're not going to be getting that normalcy of having their parents work a case plan in that, in our states and what ICPC like works against you in that situation, I mean I would say that I hope the state's gonna take back jurisdiction but you know sometimes they don't want to deal with the cost of taking that on so sometimes they do sit here and we have a lot. It just happened, then you're you, and you said the ICPC, which is the process of moving kids between the states that takes weeks upon months before that's approved so you've got kids that were left here because parents were vacationing when kids got removed all of their relatives or estate. So now they're going to they're going to be on our side of the system for a long

long time, very long time.

Jack 19:18

I've seen ICPCs.

Cat 19:20

I feel like when I CPC is involved, basically, you just kind of hold on for dear life and you forgotten about my CPC by the time it takes place.

Jack 19:28

So I think that you're probably dealing most with teams because you, they probably have the most moves, and then moves again and then moves again. But if you look at the full picture of intake. What do you think the biggest age group at least in our area that's coming into care.

Elyse 19:45

I can't say that there is one, because like I said we go in these Evans slow roll so I can't it's it's a little sometimes it's called Big I mean sometimes it'll just be like, via diagnosis so can we say, sometimes it's like every kid that enters, they have like an autism diagnosis and like what you can't do every intake is an awesome diagnosis we can't do it, but it'll be like, I mean just even the most random things like every kid is messing with every Hunkin spice latte season. It will be it'll be like every kid that comes in only has one leg, how does every child only have one leg. I'm telling you, Sometimes it's as simple as that. I can't do not if something, so my new,

Jack 20:29

so we're kind of looking at this, like, if there's somebody listening, who is considering being a foster parent, and their thought is what is the need really. So what you're telling me is there is a pretty great need for foster parents always a great need for foster for the only reason that we're finding beds every day for the kids that are coming into care is because people are taking more kids than they're playing to

Elyse 20:53

most the time. Yeah, so we're we unfortunately have a lot of homes on waivers so that's more than that five capacity. And then, mostly with that, it's over the license capacity because technically you're only allowed to have five kids in the home, regardless if they're fostering or biological five is the magic number, so anything over that.

Unknown Speaker 21:12

So if you come in with four or five kids biological or adopted, then you can only have

Elyse 21:18

a license for one child sometimes we've had homes that do have five biological children coming into it. So yes, their capacities for one but that always puts them on a waiver because

Jack 21:28

there's always going to be that sixth child. And I think what I have seen as a trend for foster parents is if you're doing it for a while, at some point you're most likely going to end up having a placement that turns adoptive if you're adopting placements, you have your family is growing. So, unless you want to stop fostering and while many have to do that because they don't have the space to expand. Most of us foster homes. When I started, do you think that I ever thought I would have a kid's head to the note, the trainer in my class had a family like that and I was like, nudging my husband like I am never going to be like that I am never going to drive that big old bus, and I'm telling you, like, I love that kid. I love that kid they're part of my family and I have space for them, and I've been there mom for this long like how could I not be their mom forever, they don't have like they're not able to go back to their mom like that's what I'm gonna do. When we first started fostering we're like, we'll take one, maybe two, and our first placement was two and but we never had a tension of having more than three kids in our home, but then later that year it was just like, I can do another. And that's when that one child came, and then it was just like, well, after you have three or four like it's all the same. So if I went to my house and I have time for them, and space in my car, then why am I gonna say no when placement calls, and they need a place for this kid to go, and I think that's what happens. I don't think any foster families getting here thinking,

Elyse 22:56

I'm gonna have a family of 10, you know, I mean nobody really wants to drive the economy van, like let's be honest. That's my. That is my favorite when I was doing waivers for these larger families, and I would say, as I look at the foster moms Date of Birth going.

Elyse 23:13

So at 30 You thought you would be driving a 15 passenger van, and they go, No, that wasn't my dream I said all right, but 15 passenger van I will write this down the waiver because that's one of the questions Yes, how many seats are in a vehicle, so I mean it happens, I mean you guys I think you guys become a little, you've got a cult up here if you guys got the big van, I think Jack does love her rain though.

Jack 23:35

I do like my class, we have some fun I mean, we put like Christmas lights up. Yeah, please. We're grabbing like Less and More they're like what I need emergency childcare, this is who I call your kids coming back as extra hands. I'm sorry she's like no it's easier. No, that's for your kids. It's definitely, I don't think most people go into fostering expecting to have that many kids, but I feel like it's just something that happens naturally if you have the space, why not make more room. Well, yeah, when kids are,

Elyse 24:11

I mean to hear from, I hear from the foster parents who do have these larger amount of kids in their homes, that once those kids start going home, especially when they're in sibling groups meal so they'll go home in excess of 234 Random going home, they're like, my house is empty. Please give me kids because I'm bored. Yeah, I ordered I would like to have more kids back in my home. My home feels empty. I

Jack 24:31

know I've definitely had that I remember if we've had that. I only, there's no waiver, I don't know what to do with myself right now. Me and my kids are all sitting here staring at each other like,

Jack 24:43

what are we gonna do well we're not against pain because the, the sibling group that was in the home before when they would go on weekend visits, we'd come over before it felt like a bunch of people were riding around with it was like, what are they called like there's like lawnmower toys with like the ballpark. And then that's what like the house got like and then then they were gone, and I mean this is the best way because they were just for like, you know,

Jack 25:10

and especially when you guys came over because I love their stuff to, like I have, I had the fourth. And then when we would come over, it was just like, like quiet, and I'd be like there's something missing.

Jack 25:23

I think there was a Christmas where we had like zero foster kids it was just my adopted kids and everybody was like, This is so worried like normally there's like so many kids, and especially like one of the really cool things about being a foster parent is getting to like experience things with kids that they haven't experienced before. And actually that one child with that ICPC. This time, you could give her like a pet rock, and she wouldn't make

this face like you just brought her to Disney World,

Jack 25:52

I have these pictures of her where she's like, and it's like, it's like simple toys you know that like, you know it's not a big deal but like to her it was the world, these kids that haven't experienced certain things that like maybe my kids have experienced, getting to experience that with them. It's just so exciting for me and for my kids and for my husband. Yeah, like sometimes when when there aren't as many kids in the house, it's like, well, what are we going to do.

Jack 26:18

Well, I read everybody go,

Cat 26:19

I can totally so I can feel that way because I know that you got a call I think from placement that you told me about in the same day. And I've been thinking about those kids for weeks now, like, like, two kids and I'm like, if I were a foster mom, I wouldn't be able to, yeah, I wouldn't be able to second out, I'd like hot like,

Jack 26:37

I gotta tell you the kids that I've said no to, and there aren't that many because you know, especially when you know these to call me like whenever sure I could do that. But the few that I have literally said no to haunt me. And I'm always like chicken. What if they went somewhere by I'm home, they weren't. Yeah, or what if they went to a group of what if they were separated because I said no, and the the placements that I have said no to always have been paid, and the placements that I especially there's this one that I took for the weekend because I was like, I'm never gonna take kids older than my son. And then this boy came and, you know, we've talked about it even on the podcast before, How he was anxious when he came, my kids made a circle around him and hugged him, and they were all like the ones that were foster kids were like we're foster kids, too. You're okay. You're safe here, nobody's gonna hurt you. You don't have to be scared and by the end of the weekend he was crying begging not to leave, but I just felt like I had made a promise to my son that he wouldn't have brothers or sisters that were older than him and I had to, you know honor that request from him, especially because he gives so much as, yeah, as a brother, and as a soccer like honesty is stability for kids, right. Yeah, but that's it leaving tore my heart up and I still like I wonder all the time like, did he reunify. Is he in a group home somewhere, I wondered about that too. I was like, what if I could have just said, yeah, so I don't know, maybe that's not the best thing to tell people because you know you don't want to be haunted but we really do need foster parents, and

Cat 28:14

if you have this space like well it's hard though because all we have. All we can do is operate within our role, and we desperately need people to operate in this role, and we all have our own roles, and we'll burn out, if we, if we move out of our role, but it's really hard, like, I obviously cannot be a foster parent then continue to do my job. But, like, on days like a few weeks ago you told me about this to kids I wanted to, you know, like,

Jack 28:42

it's hard. It's hard. What are some of the reasons that you wouldn't, that would stop you from calling someone to take a placement, like we know there's do not call us and sometimes that's because, you know, maybe there's an ongoing investigation, or maybe there's something going on in the home that the license like, hey, they need to be on hold now, but are there other reasons that that you don't call someone that you're planning to,

Elyse 29:07

I don't think that we ever really would not call a home, unless there's a reason not to place, if there's a concern, like you said by licensing or something like that, and not a concern is in the foster home but maybe putting a child with these needs and behaviors where that could jeopardize the home later down the road, they did get to a point, you know when I've been to a point when I was there where we're going to call every home. I don't care if this is in your profile, not in your profile, if you've got 100 Kids, you don't have 100 kids are calling you. Children need a bed at the end of the day, and hopefully that will work out it will be long term. And we will go for saying can you keep this good for the weekend. And then it's like, just a couple more days just coming, and we're always, always hoping Yeah, I played that game. I can get to just a couple more days so where you go, you know what long term doesn't sound so bad,

Jack 29:58

though it but that's worked with me a couple of times a thankful for the experiences that I had with those kids so it's always my go to, you know, just see us in that sweet voice on that Monday morning. But how did that weekend really sounded like you had.

Elyse

Just a couple more days so where you go, you know what, long term doesn't sound so

Jack

bad, but that's where quit me a couple of times a day, I'm thankful for the experiences that I have with those tabs. That's always my go to,

Elyse

you know, just see us in that sweet voice on that Monday morning. But how did that weekend really sounded like you had fun. Let's try a couple more days. We don't ever really not try to place in a home, I mean again if you have an open bed and you're willing, and it makes sense and it fits in your profile, you know, there's no picking and choosing. We always want a child to find stability and if you're always going to be that stable place warm. We're going to go with that, like I said it's kind of like a, like, that's kind of what I was gonna ask like, do you ever have a home, they're like, they seem to be going through a stressful time right now we're like oh they're, You know maybe they were just in the hospital or maybe their mom decided we're going to give them a little break or. So normally we get those types of that type of information from licensing because licensing talks to their homes on a regular basis, like a home has recently reunified. And it may be something that's a struggle or the reapplication wasn't what you thought was going to happen but we've had happened recently were court ordered, same day, kids going foster parents didn't know that was gonna happen, their dog didn't even pack bags. So again, what we'll do is ask the licensing team. Hey, what do you think we should do going from here, because we don't want to put pressure on because again, a lot of our homes are so open that they will take a kid, even if maybe they're not quite ready, just because they think that's you know, they're always ready to help. How

Jack

do you determine how much information to give during a placement screening call or is that just depending on the placement coordinator, I'm an open book. Yeah,

Elyse

I'm going to give it to you. I'm going to sit on the phone, my conversations take forever. I'm going to turn on the phone and you're going to say you got a, do you have any questions for me because I'll start looking this stuff up being the counterpart, the one that you like so much. We, we enjoyed the research part of it, and finding that stuff out. So, what I have is what I'm going to give you down to what a kid likes to eat with their favorite colors if I've heard that. I'm going to throw it out because some of that's the sweet spot that does help a person decide to take a trial to hearing that. Oh, their favorite food is great so I love grapes to look at. I think my biggest flaw, and I'll say this, you know, up until i i quit working there. I would always forget to tell foster the child's name. I'm

Jack

the only one. I can't tell you, like, nine times out of 10, the kid gets there and I find out the name because I looked at the buck, it was nine times out of 10 You're not the only one

Elyse

but when I went to supervisor, it was my personal line that they would call you that trades My God as where we have a place in line that goes to anyone that's answering the place that line. So once it became my personal and they call it back. So yeah, did you want to give me the name. Absolutely while on that I have up I get you the name, so funny. Is there a mechanism in place to make sure that the new placement is placed with any potential siblings. Always that that's the first thing we go looking for that's one of the things we got to search as if they do have siblings so the two big things we look for are either to place with siblings or to place in a previous foster home if that child's been there, or calling or contacting, even if you say, you know maybe it's not for you, I'm going to I'm going to work it in there we're going

Jack

to get that suddenly placed or like even invisible like even if it's a sibling or a previous placement that may not have availability, you're still going to try because it's, there's a connection there,

Elyse

right, but that continuity of care and that's what we always go for. So the biggest thing we strive for in placement, or do you see a person either is a foster parent or someone who works for the agency and you just think you are not cutting for this, I would say, when it comes to working, if you don't love what you're doing and maybe it's not the job for you. This takes a certain kind of person, certain kind of passion, I wanted to do it 24 Seven. So, when I see people that I don't feel like want to be on 24 Seven, it always bothers me but I'm not here to make this decision for them. Yeah, when it comes to fostering. I'm telling you, the community within our county. I've never had that issue. I mean, they really rally around the kids that they have, It's a joy to work with our foster parents, I really do i i I've always enjoyed it I really do enjoy the community everyone's in it for the most part for the right reasons and we all want to see these kids succeed, so that's been really nice. Again, it's for my department in general, I came from great leadership, leadership that just always wanted us to do better wanted us to do, you know, make an impact make a difference. My, my boss works 24 seven so that gave me a passion to do it, wanting to do it, and then that was me teaching that next generation of placement coordinators like have a passion, if you don't have a passion, then don't do it this job isn't for, like I said isn't for everybody. I take special kind of crazy to want to do it. That's crazy. We say that all the time.

Jack

That's a theme that we've talked to pretty much everybody about is that we're all a little bit crazy. Can you tell us about your worst day at the agency.

Elyse

I think any worst day would be when we have to settle on have kids sleeping in the office. That's just, you never want a kid to sleep in the office and, especially, you know when it comes down to behaviors, and just not having a bed due to those behaviors. We've had kids that have told us like because of me, this is where I'm sleeping. You never want to hear that from my kid you know and it's just unfortunate circumstances, at one point time I was working like an overnight shift as a supervisor and I had to be the one to kind of make that call with my director that this guy was gonna stick in the office and that right there it just sticks with you. These are children, when and if we get to do it, which is our plan, and in the future, I'll always have a bed. You know sometimes it comes down to a couch, a something, I'll put an air mattress anywhere, but I don't want to have a kid I mean what's the worst they can do. I mean, you can get a kid so they have somewhere to sleep.

Jack

Yeah, and that's one of the things that a lot of us say all the time you can do anything for a night you know you can go outside your profile for a night like if we need to get this kid somewhere to go, so they're not sleeping in the office and not feeling like that's their own fault, because none of these kids are in care for their own fault. Then you do anything for night,

Elyse

so can I mean, can I just ask what that looks like when the child is asleep in the office, I mean, if you go to our office, you know, in my home county, it's, it's an office building with cubicles and fluorescent lights, and those are on all the time we go through, we have all protocol, every available bed that's open. We're calling, regardless of your profile or also outside of profile. On top of that, you know when it becomes a team, it's every single group home in County added County, as far down from top of the State Department state, we're calling everyone we call every circuit to see if they have beds, you will go through all night you're not calling that, and as a supervisor, and as our coordinator for you're working till one to 3am to find a bed, because you have have to

Jack

exhausted all efforts for framing I've gotten calls at three, four o'clock in the morning so I know how late you guys are working. So at that point, like the nights already halfway God,

it's like at this point they're pretty much resolved, wherever there is left. So, where are they sleep like are they something like a mattress or a sleeping bag.

Elyse

Yeah, for the most part I mean again, this, this is kind of a new phenomenon for us where we're at, we used to pride ourselves that we had said, We never had a kid sleep in the office, we always found a way we always had a foster home that could open open their doors just for the night, we finally you know at one point they came to it. They did sit in the office so we do now have air mattresses, and the open air mattress so get a blanket. And there's an adult there with them. Always they're always with the case management team so they, they rotate off, on and off on shifts to get them through the night so they have an on call 24 Seven book case management, placement, our licensing team. Yeah. Someone's always working. Someone's always gonna answer that phone so yeah, so like at 730 in the morning, though, I took him in on, people are cutting into work. Yep, and they are getting up and being transported to school, they're being transported to a daycare treatment program safe schools out so it's like a daycare program for our older kids, you know, transported to appointments wherever but yeah.

Jack

Can you tell us what your best day with the agency would be.

Elyse

I can say I don't know that I would have been it was my best days the day it happened, but it was placing a team in a home that didn't take teams. Just knowing they had an opening, and that they had stretched a little bit before, and I placed the shot and we were just every group home, they had been through and just you know doo doo. Being in care for so long, kind of how to name just more as a, as a difficult child wanting, certain things for themselves and that's not a bad thing self advocating is,

Jack

yeah, it's important for them to be able to self advocate,

Elyse

but really stuck to her guns about wanting to be in a foster home, and we had to keep telling her, we just, we don't have any for teens unfortunately to still have anything right now. So finally, it hit came up in my head. I talked to the licensing team I'm like I think we can make this work, they're like, give him a call. I'll be in your corner, if you think need some for me because you know I've got that relationship with them, so we talked the child into it the child at that time. How 1516 And that's where the child ended up aging out and

having that connection, past 18 So I still that's my day is my favorite is making those placements were that weren't going to that's what I always strive for was, I make these connections that you don't think are going to happen. It was one of the millions,

Jack

that's so cool that that's like your best day that's really mean and it also speaks a lot to you.

Elyse

Oh, if you're in the second best day. Yeah, which actually now that I think about it might be my best day, we had a child also same thing would run, do what he wanted. And what made it the best day was he at one point was in and out sleeping in the office used to go to his placement. Let's say I'm not going to we're bomb I'm going to refuse. We gotta get used to it at one weekend that could maybe for like 48 hours straight, kind of make connection with him we talked to him the officers in there trying to work something out, maybe even get into a group Huami which is, let's work with me, work with me. So, while talking to the office, he told me about his laundry. All of his laundry was dirty, because he had basically living in suitcases in the office. So I asked him, I said, Can I take your laundry home, I have a washer and dryer, being used every day, there's only two of us in my house. So he said, Can I bring some clothes. Can you do it and I said, Absolutely. He brought me his clothes, I brought them home he thanked me at that point, which was great. And it was the next day when I brought the clothes back and he was just like a lady that I'd washed in one day, like I went home that night from work in Washington, I mean I'm not gonna lie there. So I watched it. Got the bag cleaned, you know, at that point I wasn't married so I was at this point it was still a boyfriend that I've been living with and he's like, who socks are you folding, whose boy underwear is that I'm like listen, you knew this came with the territory. I was a child welfare prior to being with you so this is what happened. And he's like okay so I'm one folding it all up, and I brought it back to him the next day, and he literally hugged me, and this is a teen boy I mean we are in 17 or not and he was like, thank you so much, and that was it like I wash everybody's laundry, but I have an open washer dryer like bringing you the clothes on when I said that you know everyday sense if you need me to wash laundry, let me do that so yeah that just look clean there. That was probably a really big deal for him. Yeah, just to have, I mean again he said everything was dirty, he would just give it a smell to make sure it wasn't too dirty before he wore it so to be able to wash everything for him, felt really great, I said load me up I got this.

Jack

What realistic solutions. Do you think could be implemented that could resolve some of these placement struggles, if you had like an infinite amount of money, resources, have more access to recruiting, but I don't know the blank check would do that.

Elyse

I mean we recruit now, but being able to just recruit more, I mean we always need foster parents, and we need those parents that are able to stay the long run but again it's with the overload of the system we're putting extra kids in these homes and it does it burns people out and burns them out quickly. That's really the only thing that I feel like we can do at this point is we just have more homes more homes available

Jack

so us, if we had additional funding, we would use it to get more foster homes. Let me tell you this crazy idea I had that one day I'm gonna make it happen. I need to find a politician that will listen to me though. I feel like, you know how in the state of Florida. Teachers have their college tuition reimbursed after teaching for a certain number of years. I feel like they should offer that to foster parents because that is going to not only entice more people to be foster parents, but it's going to entice more foster parents who are professionals to become foster parents, people who, you know, if you if you have a college degree, statistically you're going to have a better job, And it's going to give you more resources to take care of that child, and also give more children, examples of people who've been through college, and you know have succeeded in careers, financially, I just, I always think that that would be a really cool benefit to offer foster parents like really, if you're a foster parent for, let's say five years, we're gonna forgive your college tuition in the state of India,

Elyse

I would like that that I mean if that's yeah, that's what it takes to get more foster homes, I mean I wouldn't even say like with infinite amount of money, and not that they're not trained well, but more training. Yeah, because I think that the biggest thing that we kind of see on ours is not that there's not a lot of trauma training but giving more trauma training and what those, there's no

Jack

amount of training that can prepare you for some of the behaviors you're going to see until you're experiencing it in person. So one of the things we talked about is like in the foster training classes, they have to interview foster parents, but what if they had to like actually like come to your house for a couple hours and hang out with your kids, like, I mean, I don't know. You know what that looks like and obviously with COVID going on that definitely makes things more complicated but I think it's important. Being around other foster parents and normalize those behaviors, because, you know, these behaviors are the ways that the children are communicating what they need, and their hurts,

Elyse

I mean I use this analogy I'd heard it once and I don't even know where I heard it, but what it feels like you know probably for phosphate a child that's never felt love is the same feeling as when you're cold, and you get in a hot shower, yeah you know that hot shower feels good but the first thing that water does is it burns you, you don't want to be and you want to react when you get out, and that's what kids, and I, I say that to them, like that's what that looks like and that's what trauma looks like they, they don't know what it the first time it's like to get a hug, just to get a hug. They don't know what it feels like to be congratulated for doing a good job they've never had that so they're going to react differently in every situation and sometimes just being open

Jack

to that. It's scary for someone who hasn't experienced that before they're like, oh my gosh this is scary. What's this kid going to do next, but in reality if they're just breaking things in the house like that can be replaced. And sometimes, you know, we as adults don't know what to do with our emotions, it's easy to say this, not in the moment when the child is not like, you know, having their reaction and then you're like, Yeah, but you know when you look back, you're like, gosh, you know they they punched a hole in the wall, you know, if I knew everything that happened to them, I want to punch a hole in the wall to like let's punch the wall together, you know, that might not be a great financial plan. But, but, you know, in reality, like if they're not hurting other people. These can be small things that can be dealt with, they can, And honestly, you do really similar things to, like,

Elyse

I mean, I can recognize it myself, when I have no control of my own environment and I'm seeking out control in the same way that like a small child is like I believe only for size. Watch right make your life.

Elyse

Really good though. And if I could only eat french fries I would only say they are they are and I can recognize the same thing if you're in muscle, is it, adults, and you know I would say that a child who needs your life miserable for 48 hours probably without like the warm water, they probably enjoyed it a lot, I mean I still, I still talk to that child and that child has changed since then. And so I tell those he can call me if he needs anything and that's, that's important to me was to know that the audition was made, I don't need it to be a forever everyday thing but still reached out when he didn't need something. Yeah, yeah, I mean, typical kids do these things to a kid without trauma, thank you yeah and it's so they say, especially when it comes down to seems like all these behaviors, but that child's probably been in trauma, a lot longer than we ever caught up to, and so they were just

managing it, and now we're seeing the effects of prolonged trauma, yeah what that looks like and that's going to come out. Once they're comfortable, to get used to the shower. Looks like they can like reach down for the shampoo bottle or

Jack

whatever. Here we go, yeah, here we go, you're ready for it to kind of get an overview of the spiderweb of how everybody works together. The partners the place networks with our CPI, because they said you intakes Right, correct.

Elyse

When we take an intake, we have from the time the intake is completed until four hours later to place a child that is there is a timeframe. That is not everywhere. That is just what we've contracted in our county with our CBI agency. So we have four hours to place a child. So that's when those calls are getting desperate between our three and four. So if you've received several messages from us. We're trying to get that placement and at that point, the CBI team will transport to our on call agency depending on the counties, one county has two agencies one as one So regarding, you know, if it's from county a, They'll go to that just kind of be we have one of our own calls, so they'll fit and so we have placement, and then also contractor between us is that there's a three day rule and CPI transport for the first three days,

Jack

so you interact with CPI, yes, keys management when is an open case, correct, licensing, to determine whether a placement is going to be approved

Unknown Speaker

crime.

Jack

Am I missing anybody is there anybody else you interact with,

Elyse

um, so we have connected with us our therapeutic team. So if a child has therapeutic needs, we'll contact our therapeutic team, and they'll start working on those needs for their homes. We also contact our medical team. If there are medical needs. So if kids come in, you know that have medical needs that are long lasting, they'll go under our medical side, we have contact with reports, or sometimes we don't even will we can bypass licensing if a child, or if a home thought waiver will directly contact our foster parents. We also have contracted agencies for licensing so sometimes we can contact our contracting

people and they contact their homes.

Jack

Is there something that determines whether you go to someone who's licensed directly or like a contracted agency,

Elyse

whoever has the opening for that child. We'll start on that list and then we'll kind of backtrack between the two.

Jack

Okay, so what do you think are some basic things that foster parents can do to work better with placement so

Elyse

I think the biggest thing is, if a foster home thinks they're going to disappoint us. Just let us know that the answer's no, and it doesn't fit for your home, because we'll we'll move on. We don't want you to be thinking that we need you to say yes to every placement, because there are homes that at that time it might fit in their home, and we haven't thought of them, puts us into thinking outside the box that's the best thing that we can do so. Other than that, like I said are also don't worry about disappointing

Jack

placement, just let them know as soon as you've made a decision so that they can move forward with finding placement, and security policy, you don't have like a blacklist of people that you're mad at right now.

Elyse

I would never say never to secret that we told me later. I can't tell you. No, I do I love it, one of our best friends are really great. I know who my go twos are like we say if I'm if I'm in a pinch, I knew what to call and still I'll reach out, like I said I've reached out to those homes that I've talked to forever and I still have those great relationships with them, so. Okay, can you give me a word that you think people would use to describe someone in placements. I would like to say hope that they were dedicated, that they know that we're always trying the best I think sometimes you might not understand the reasoning, and I've had to kind of explain the reasoning on the backhand why we do what we do. We always want. We want siblings together we want kids together but sometimes it's not the possibility so we're trying to find the best placement for a kid, and if that's splitting them up it's trying to keep them in the same county or putting them with foster parents that are friends so that

we know that they're going to see each other they're going to have that visitation. I don't know that it's always comes off that way from us but we promise that's what we're doing, but I hope that our foster parents know that we do care about these kids, these kids are our kids hopefully people can see that.

Jack

I think I've said that before is that when I talk to placement I can tell that they really care about these kids. Do you see yourself that way.

Elyse

Oh yeah, this is 100% of passion, slash obsession for me, I mean I'm very dedicated to finding those kids that I like making relationships not only my close friends but the group homes, and our room directors, and, you know, singing to my word is a big thing. So I always try never make a promise to a kid that I'm not willing to make sure will come true, or say I tell the kids I'm never gonna make a promise in general, because I can't promise everything so, but yeah, the team that I worked with was the same way. Every day we wake up, and we're looking for those placements and not just to be temporary, we're looking for long term. What would surprise most people to learn about how placement works that we're always working ahead, you know, we hear a lot. Why have you waited till the last minute. And that's not always the truth. Again when we get noticed that a kid has to move or that it gives him a respite.

Jack

Listen.

Elyse

Sometimes you're working in the negative of just trying to find those long term loans, not find them temporary homes, we're always working towards. What a long term goal is. So, our brains are moving a million miles a minute. And again, it's a lot of conversation so we go back and forth and it's, it's great, but just to have that conversation because it does help. And some people are better talking to some foster parents and others so you're like, hey you make that call because you know the sweet spot for that foster parent. And you can get those placements. But yeah, at least you call him, he'll say yes to you. Yeah, we're always we're always moving. That's always a moving piece we're always trying something so

Jack

what do you want, foster parents to know about placement.

Elyse

We're doing our best. I mean, it doesn't always seem seem like that but I mean, again, this is our teams 24 seven so there's always someone working. We care about them as just as much as we care about our kids, be patient with us because sometimes we're a little tired too. We're a little grumpy, I made it three o'clock

Jack

in the morning, when you're trying to find a placement,

Elyse

especially when you're working that overnight and you have to be up again at 8am, and being an I and I understand that that's those calls when people would answer. I was working overnight and I'd be like, I am so sorry,

Jack

but you think a kid, I always think it's funny when foster parents get mad, like they call me at like midnight, it's like, you mean when you were laying in your bed, comfortable and cozy and they were sitting in a desk like trying to find a place for a kid to sleep that night, like, I'm so sorry you had that, like, Hey, turn your phone off if it's that big of a deal but what do you want the public to know about placement, I don't

Elyse

know the public understands what placement is again because it's different in every county, every state, different situations, um, kind of how it works sometimes I've heard that case management does all the places themselves so I don't know that the public who doesn't work directly with our system is gonna even know what the placement is or what our department does, we don't want a child to sleep in the office, so I know that we get a bad rap about that sometimes, and people do think that that's kind of, that we don't care if someone sleeps in the office I promise we do. We all go to bed with a heavy heart. A night we have to, you know, tell a kid, here's your air mattress here's a blanket, we'll see at eight o'clock. So just know that there's a lot of people caring about these kids.

Jack

Speaking of how much you care about the kids the secondary trauma that you guys receive in placement from, you know, being around this trauma all the time, you know causes trauma 30 What do you personally do for self care so that you don't get burnt out,

Elyse

being in the community. I like going out doing stuff I travel. It's a big thing. So, I have a free

weekend off, I am somewhere not my home state, but yeah we I live in a really cool area and there's always something to do here, other than like a bit, what are the biggest struggles you face. I'd always say, the amount of kids, which is unfortunate but that then turns into lack of beds and lack of resources. Yeah, like I said the trauma informed parenting, I feel like I wish there were more courses on that, more things to offer, and to support, I don't know that our foster parents always I know that they get mentors I know that they have a big community, they speak to each other, but I don't always think that there's enough support I

Jack

need foster parents sometimes we don't have a community of foster parents and I'm like how are you still doing this because if I didn't have my people like there's no way I would still be doing this,

Elyse

I think it's been big in our, like I said our circuit, they started the Mentor Program, the mentorship program and I know that's really helped we're getting our veteran foster parents who have done this for years and years and years have had many kids you know seen it all, so they're getting those new foster parents and that's elongating the, you know how long these foster parents are staying on board, because again that's the biggest thing is the burnout, the turnaround within one year. And I know that our team has really worked hard for that to be eliminated,

Jack

you're kind of on the front lines there you know you're one of the first parts of the puzzle when a kid is removed. You know you have interactions with the kids you have interactions with CPI, like you guys know what these kids are coming in for what's going on with them. I feel like you've kind of got like a little insight on to, you know, what's going on in our community in that sense, what can our community do to prevent more kids coming into care,

Elyse

being a mentor option, being a support to families prior to these kids coming into care. I know there's a lot of options out there for mentoring I say it all the time when we're struggling with kids, have you reached out to a mentor service, but I feel like if there was more mentoring programs, you know, The Big Brothers Big Sisters, or something like that, when you ask about kids that are in that age range, and you're asking, case manager, they're always saying these applications are backed up, there's not enough of them. So just having a support in the community that would help these parents who are feeling

overwhelmed in their situation may stop that because again, a lot of these some, sometimes it's the reasons that just, you know moms overworked moms are tired and she's doing. You're sleeping I'll say well, moms are being protected in that capacity because she's sleeping well, our kids are awake but if mom had a support. Maybe we could keep more kids from coming into care. You know some of the issues, you're not gonna be able to fix, right, obviously,

Jack

that's an interesting idea, I hadn't thought about that. So a lot of kids that come into care. There have been multiple CPI reports before they actually do come into care. So maybe on the earlier reports, even if there's something unfounded, that there's more of an effort to provide them with resources that would be of a mentorship, kind of service. Yeah.

Elyse

What are your goals to make positive change in our community. My goals. Personally, I mean I would like to foster if that's my future. Yep, I wish

Elyse

that wasn't gonna join my little crew. I mean you're gonna have to take your crew out to where I live, which is I Vianna far away, definitely by far side. Oh, I'm down with that. I mean come on.

Elyse

Thanks so much for joining us.

Jack

I'm so glad you were here. Thank you so much for coming all the way over here, I really appreciate it. And you've always been one of my favorite people, but now I like you even more because

Elyse

I had so much fun idea. I'm gonna write that part down in my diary and really enjoy that. But thank you for having me.