

Why It's Not Beneficial to Tell Churches How to Fix the Problems With Foster Care in America

Lynn Johnson, assistant secretary of the Administration for Children and Families at Health and Human Services, says our country has a foster care and adoption crisis. But the solution is not to tell the church exactly how fix it before having a thoughtful conversation, Johnson says.

"So many of us in social services, we just dump every problem that we're working on, on the churches and say, 'Here's what's going wrong, and how can you fix it,'" Johnson says. "And I've learned that that doesn't work. What we want to do, one, is always have prayer: We always need to pray for our staff, for our families, for our leadership, and then we move into dissecting the needs.

"Churches and the faith-based entities that I've met have their own passions. So we take that apart and say, 'What is the passion of this group? And how can they move to action so we actually get to true success? Can I actually count that there are 342 families better off because a church wrapped around them, to help them with their poverty?'"

Not only is primary prevention important, but it's key to helping ensure fewer children enter the foster care system, Johnson says on *The Influencers Podcast* on the Charisma Podcast Network. Congress passed the Families First Prevention Services Act to help get the ball rolling with that initiative, but a big chunk of the issue is that families are in poverty. Another issue is that seemingly most of the people looking to adopt don't want teenagers, evidenced by the fact

that the 125,000 children up for adoption are mostly over the age of 10.

“We look at the fact that 50% of children who are removed from homes for neglect, it’s because they are poor,” Johnson says. “That’s not OK. ... We have about 400,000 children or more in our current system. One hundred and twenty-five thousand of those children have already had their parental rights terminated, and an adoption plan. We are looking at that 125,000. So when people ask me, ‘What can we do?’ I say, ‘Let’s help find those forever homes for these 125,000 children; a majority of them are over the age of 10.’

“So we need to look at how we’re going to work with teens, how we’re going to work with children who may have been in our system and have had trauma for a long time. ... Nobody who loves their children should lose them because they’re poor. We have a lot to do. But that’s where our faith community can step up and do the primary prevention. Love a family that is adopting a child. ... So now let’s work harder on primary prevention, substance abuse, mental health, homelessness and those other issues.”

To listen to the entire episode on helping the children of America, [click here](#).