



WEEKEND MIRACLES LOS ANGELES WELCOME PACKET



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Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in the Kidsave Weekend Miracles Los Angeles program. Kidsave Weekend Miracles Los Angeles is a partnership between Kidsave and the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. The purpose of this unique program is to get older children and teens in foster care out of the child welfare system and into permanent families, or at the very least, connected to a caring, stable adult, called a “host.” Children participating in Weekend Miracles Los Angeles become visible to the community through Kidsave's monthly connections events where they meet potential hosts. Once in hosting, host families partner with Kidsave to continue championing their host child to help them find the permanent families they need.

There are many ways that you can be involved! Some of the volunteer opportunities include hosting a child, advocating for a child, helping recruit families, fundraising, and organizing weekend events.

We have included the following materials in this Welcome Packet to familiarize you with our program and share with you ways that you can get involved:

- Overview of Kidsave Los Angeles Weekend Miracles
- Diagram – How the Weekend Miracles Program Works
- Questions and Answers about the Los Angeles Weekend Miracles Program
- What does it take to be a Los Angeles Weekend Miracles host?

Please contact us if you have any questions at (310) 642-7283 or Kidsave's toll-free number 1-888-Kidsave (888-543-7283). Or you can email us at weekendmiracles@kidsave.org.

Please remember to regularly visit our website www.kidsave.org to visit our Weekend Miracles Los Angeles gallery and to obtain information on upcoming Weekend Miracles events.

Kidsave is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our culture, and especially in our work to help older kids in foster care. We are inclusive with our kids and our hosts are singles and couples, with or without children of any race, ethnicity, religion, or culture. We are LGBTQIA welcoming.

We look forward to your participation in the program.

Many thanks,



Lauren Reicher Gordon
SVP | Director of Family Visit Programs

Kidsave's Weekend Miracles program is a partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. Weekend Miracles provides children who have a plan for adoption with the opportunity to spend weekends with host families who help advocate for each child's adoption. The program's goal is to introduce children to families who might be interested in adopting them, and to find each child in the program a permanent, adoptive family or a connected relationship with at least one caring adult.

The mission of Kidsave is to create change so that older, forgotten kids in foster care grow up in families and connected to caring adults.

The physical and emotional toll that the lack of a permanent home places on a child is significant. These children are more likely to have delays in growth, learning disabilities, and psychological problems. Many do not graduate from high school but, instead, go on welfare or become homeless.

Despite considerable efforts, older children in foster care have little chance at finding an adoptive family. In Los Angeles County, most children hoping for adoptive families are older Latino and African American children.

Nationally as well as locally, African American children are over-represented in foster care and wait the longest for a permanent family. Moreover, and as a representation of the County's population, children from the Latino community are the most prominent ethnic group in Los Angeles County's Foster Care System.

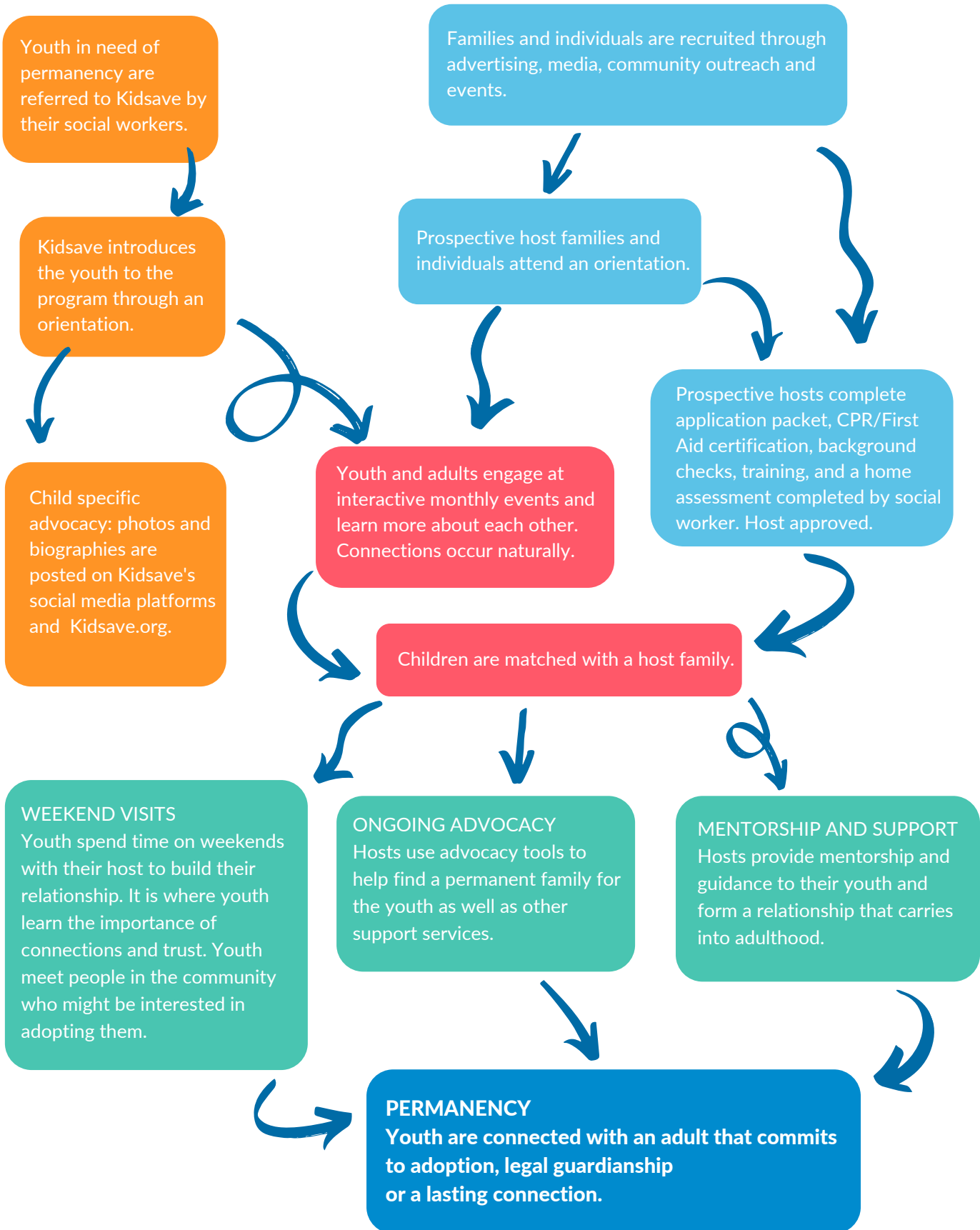
Weekend Miracles offers a unique model for finding adoptive families and lasting connections for older children and teens, predominately Latino and African American between the ages of 9-17.

Kidsave's innovative approach allows families to meet and get to know kids in person through fun weekend connection events that organically lead to hosting relationships. This exposure allows for bonds to be created naturally without the pressure of committing to adopting a child before becoming better acquainted.

The connection events help children and teens and families get to know each other before deciding on next steps. Another unique aspect of Kidsave's program is children and teens have a voice and a choice in who they would like to get to know better, who becomes their host, and who may become their forever family.



How it Works



WHAT IS KIDSAVE
LOS ANGELES WEEKEND
MIRACLES?

Kidsave Los Angeles Weekend Miracles®, a partnership between Kidsave® and the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, provides a unique way to find adoptive families and long-lasting connections for older children and teens in foster care. This program aims to find waiting children adoptive families by increasing the children's visibility and accessibility to people who can help them find permanent homes.

HOW DOES THE
WEEKEND MIRACLES
PROGRAM WORK?

- Children are referred by their social worker and prepared for participation in the program.
- Families who are prospective hosts complete all requirements and are then approved for participation in the program by DCFS.
- Children and prospective hosts meet at monthly connection events and get to know each other organically in a fun, interactive environment.
- After an approved host family and child spend time together at Kidsave connection events and decide they want to be matched for hosting, an official hosting match meeting is held.
- Host families commit to spending a minimum of 2 days a month with the child for one year, developing a relationship of trust and support with the child.
- Host families champion their host child to help them find a permanent family by introducing them to their networks and community. Host families may become an adoptive family or long-lasting connection.

HOW ARE CHILDREN
MATCHED WITH HOST
FAMILIES?

The opinions of the children in the program are always considered and, as such, are a key factor to the program's success. Matches with host families are encouraged based on interests, mutual goals, and the ages and genders of any children living in the host family's home.

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN
PARTICIPATING IN
WEEKEND MIRACLES LOS
ANGELES?

- Ages 9-17, single children and sibling groups.
- Children living with foster families, in group homes, or residential centers throughout Los Angeles County.
- Children who might have educational, emotional, and/or medical needs



HOW ARE CHILDREN SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE?

Children are referred to the program by their social worker. They must be open to a connection with a host to achieve legal or relational permanency, and capable of actively and independently participating at in-person and virtual events. All children in the program must have family reunification services terminated at the time of referral.

WHO CAN HOST?

- Hosts must be at least 25 years old and can be single, married, divorced, or separated, any sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Hosts must be in good health; able to actively support, champion, and mentor their host child.
- No member of the host household can have a conviction for any violent crime or a crime against a child. Other types of prior convictions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- The host family's home must provide a safe environment and include adequate space.
- Hosts must be licensed drivers in good standing.

WHAT IF I DECIDE THAT I WANT TO ADOPT THE CHILD I AM HOSTING?

Some host parents may decide they want to adopt their host child. We are delighted when host parents and children develop such a strong connection. As soon as you think you might be interested in adoption, please let us know. You should not, however, say anything directly to the child.

To be considered a prospective adoptive family, hosts must be Resource Family Approved through LA County DCFS or a Foster Family Agency. While you will undoubtedly be considered as an adoptive parent as you have built a relationship with the child, there is no guarantee that you will be able to adopt the child you host. The child's social worker has a number of factors to consider when assessing an adoptive family.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT WILL HOST FAMILIES RECEIVE?

Host families must complete Kidsave's proprietary 12-hour trauma-based training and 2-hour program and advocacy training facilitated by Kidsave. Hosts receive training materials and resources such as the Host Family Handbook, which includes a suggested reading list.

Kidsave staff supports families through the entire approval process and during hosting. We are here for you!

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES?

- Identification of children who participate in the program
- Child preparation and individual support
- Background checks and clearances
- Approval of host families
- Social work support to children and families
- Matching and placement services
- Pre- and post-adoption support and financial assistance

WHAT DOES KIDSAVE PROVIDE?

- Information and outreach to the community and partnerships with civic, social, fraternal, and faith-based organizations
- Planning and implementation of monthly advocacy events to introduce the children to the community
- Publicity about older child adoption
- Recruitment of host families and advocates, and facilitation of host family and advocate training
- Website (www.kidsave.org) featuring Kidsave Los Angeles Weekend Miracles and the participating children
- Fundraising to sustain the program

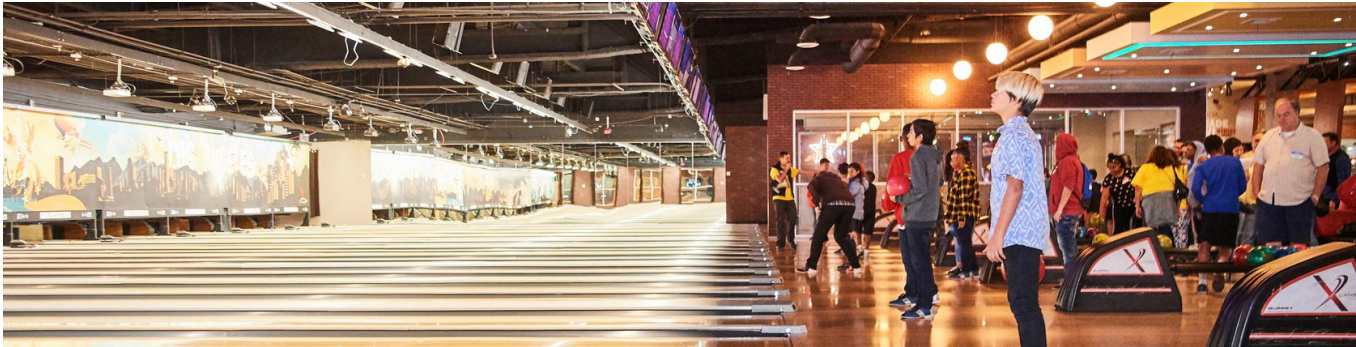
I'M NOT SURE I AM READY TO HOST. IS THERE SOME OTHER WAY I CAN HELP?

Most definitely! Weekend Miracles depends on the efforts of many volunteers. Some volunteer opportunities include:

- Champion children by reaching out to your circle of friends, family, and members of your community and co-workers about kids who need a forever family.
- Volunteer at weekend events and community presentations; help us recruit host and adoptive families, and other volunteers.
- Follow us on social media and help us spread the word about the kids who are in need of an adoptive family.
- Create or join a committee for fundraising, event planning, or outreach
- **Donate! Every dollar will go towards programs that help children reach permanency.**



We hope you decide to host! We are sure you will find hosting to be a rewarding experience. The following is an overview to familiarize you with the hosting process and next steps. We understand that there are many steps to complete before hosting a child. This is because each child is a dependent of the court, and the State of California requires that specific standards be met for the safety and best interest of the child. Please do not feel overwhelmed...Kidsave will help you through this process!



HOST FAMILIES AGREE TO:

1. Spend time with the child for a minimum of two times a month for one year.
2. Be a stable, caring, and consistent connection for the child or teen you host.
3. Advocate for the child to find an adoptive family by:
 - Introducing the child to individuals in the host family's network
 - Taking the child to monthly Weekend Miracles advocacy events and working with Kidsave to plan additional activities/gatherings where the child can meet adults who are interested in adoption.
4. Work with members of the child's team to help advocate and support the child.
5. Submit a Host Family Report after each visit.
6. Stay in regular contact with the Kidsave staff.
7. Transport the child during weekend visits and to monthly advocacy events.
8. Respect the child's boundaries and maintain the child's confidentiality by sharing only information that has been approved for release.
9. Be patient with the child and understand that, for many children, being in foster care is a traumatic experience. This experience will affect how they interact with new people; they will likely need additional time to trust others.
10. Create a photo album of the time spent together with the host child.

HOSTS WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Attend a Weekend Miracles Los Angeles Orientation.
2. Complete and submit the Weekend Miracles Los Angeles Host Application.
3. Submit current copies of your valid driver's license, vehicle registration, and auto insurance.
4. Provide a current photo.
5. Complete CPR/First Aid training and certification.
6. Complete a live scan (background fingerprint clearances) at a Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services office location.
7. Attend Kidsave Los Angeles Weekend Miracles 12-hour trauma-informed training, focused on older children. If you have already completed training as part of RFA, you are encouraged to attend the training, but it is not a requirement. You will be asked to submit a copy of your RFA certificate.
8. Attend the two-hour Program and Advocacy Training. This training covers program protocols, the roles and responsibilities of a host, and provides tools and resources to assist host families in their advocacy efforts.
9. Meet with a DCFS social worker for a face-to-face home visit to address your suitability to host and confirm your home meets DCFS safety requirements.

