



Case Study: Foster Family

The Situation

Ivan and Inga always wanted a large family, but they are only able to have two children over the course of six years. When it becomes clear they won't be able to have any more biological children, they start to consider other options. Foster care has become extremely popular in their city over the past few years, so they attend a 15-hour preparation course and then take home four-year old Mikhail (Misha).

Misha is a beautiful child, and Ivan and Inga are initially very attracted to him, as are their daughters, six-year-old Lena and two-year-old Tanya. However, Misha quickly exhibits many problematic behaviors such as hoarding food, lying, rocking in his bed for hours at night instead of sleeping, masturbation, and difficulties at preschool. His teachers constantly complain about his aggression, use of bad words, and his delays in reaching cognitive and social developmental milestones.

Realistic Outcome WITHOUT Firefly

Although Ivan and Inga heard about these problems in their preparation course, they had no idea the problems could be so severe and disruptive. They have no idea about how to manage these behaviors and nowhere to turn for help. Eventually Misha's aggression and masturbation increase so much that they start to worry about their daughters' safety, especially the two-year-old. In addition, Misha is kicked out of his preschool and the family can't afford for Inga to quit her job to care for Misha at home.

Ivan and Inga return Misha to the orphanage after four months in their home. The employees are convinced that he is too problematic to be placed in another home and don't try to find another foster family for him. He ages out of the institution at age 18 and immediately gets involved with street crime. Misha commits suicide at age 25 after fathering seven kids with seven different girls who are also orphanage graduates. The cycle continues...

Realistic Outcome WITH Firefly

Fortunately, the employees at Misha's baby home have received training on how to support foster families. A Firefly-trained case worker named Julia visits their home once a week from the moment of Misha's placement, and when he starts to manifest negative behaviors Julia immediately refers the family to the City Consultation-Diagnostic Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health. This center was one of Firefly's pilot sites and the employees are well trained. Misha and his parents meet weekly with a child psychologist for the next nine months. Ivan and Inga learn how to manage Misha's behaviors and how to help him develop an attachment to them. Ivan and Inga also attend a

two-hour parent support group for foster parents. At the end of the nine months, Misha shows significant improvement. He and his parents continue to meet with the child psychologist once a month for the next 18 months. During this period, Ivan and Inga also continue to attend the foster parent support group once a month. By the time Misha turns six, the family no longer needs the counseling or support group. Although Misha continues to struggle with cognitive and emotional delays, his parents are now well-equipped to help him. He graduates from high school and attends a trade school to become a carpenter. He becomes quite skilled and is able to earn a good income. Misha eventually marries and he and his wife raise two healthy children. The cycle continues...

Cost Comparison of Scenarios:

WITHOUT FIREFLY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to raise Misha in institution after being returned by his foster family until 18 years of age: \$238,000¹ • Cost to raise Misha's seven children in an institution until 18 years of age: \$2,142,000 • Cost of mental suffering endured by all family members: incalculable • Cost of damage caused by Misha's criminal activities: incalculable • Potential cost of raising Misha's grandchildren and great-grandchildren in institutions: incalculable • Economic loss of potentially productive members of society: incalculable
TOTAL COST: over \$2,380,000
WITH FIREFLY
<p>Firefly's three-year training program costs \$15,000 per person practitioner. A conservative estimate is that each practitioner will add one new child/family per week to his or her caseload. Assuming a 40-week work year and a 15-year practice², that is 600 children/families served per practitioner. Thus, the training cost for each practitioner is \$25 per child/family. Service provision is \$10/hour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefly's training of three practitioners: \$75 • Four home visits: \$120 • One hour weekly of family counseling for 36 weeks: \$360 • Two hours weekly of foster parent support group for 36 weeks: \$720 • Ongoing support for 18 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One hour monthly for counseling: \$180 ○ Two hours monthly for foster parent support group: \$360
TOTAL COST: \$1,815

¹ Data is from personal conversation in 2010 with a baby orphanage director in Nizhny Novgorod Region. The cost is up to double this amount in Moscow (see <http://www.newsland.ru/news/detail/id/712735/>).

² Due to Russia's vacation schedule and trainees being several years into their careers when they participate in Firefly programs.