

PRT Team's Creativity Pays Off for a Special Foster Child: Andres' Story



Born drug exposed, Andres spent most of his early years in the hospital due to a host of serious physical and developmental issues. Even now, he requires 24-hour care and will never live independently. Andres' parents' rights were terminated when he was two. At age four, due to a lack of suitable medical foster homes in Miami-Dade, Andres went to live with a special medical care foster parent in another county.

He could barely walk or talk at the time. However, after five years of specialized care,

Andres was able to run on the beach, jump on a trampoline and swim like a fish. He learned to communicate with his foster mother thanks to software on his iPad. Nonetheless, despite years of trying to find an adoptive family, Andres turned nine without a forever home.

Then Andres' case manager referred him to FFCR's Permanency Roundtable (PRT) Program. At the initial roundtable, the case manager explained that Andres' foster mom was a perfect fit: she loved Andres dearly, had fully integrated him into her family, took excellent care of him, and provided him with all sorts of enriching activities, such as swimming with dolphins and trips to Disney World. However, despite being deeply concerned for his well-being, she did not want to adopt him.

Often, the system excludes or ostracizes foster parents who do not wish to adopt, but the PRT process favors the inclusion of all potential resources. Thus, the PRT team urged Andres' foster mother to participate in the roundtable process, recognizing that she knew him better than anyone and wanted the best for him.

The PRT team created a comprehensive action plan that included increasing the number of adoption websites on which Andres was featured, requesting that the central Florida case manager also initiate adoption recruitment efforts and placing a photo write-up of Andres in medical supply stores all over Miami-Dade. At one point in the process, an adoptive family was secured. However, as had happened too many times before, the reality of caring for such a medically needy child was too overwhelming and the family withdrew from consideration.

Andres' foster mother, supporting Andres through yet another heartbreak, acknowledged the reality of the situation – no one could take her place in Andres' life. Andres was "her child" and she did not want him to ever go through this again. Having witnessed the PRT team's robust recruitment efforts, she realized that unless she stepped forward, Andres would likely never have a forever family. Thanks to her heroism and the PRT team's foresight in keeping her engaged, Andres has a parent who will be there for him – always.