

Social Workers Deliver Gifts and Holiday Cheer to Young Adults Leaving Foster Care Behind

Social workers during the holidays delivered bags loaded with goodies and gifts to Anahi Reyes and 160 young adults who are preparing to leave foster care for independent living.



Anahi Reyes, 20, with her social worker Jaqueline Pintado in the background.

Outside her apartment, Anahi, 20, said youth in foster care can experience feelings of isolation during the holidays when celebrations center on family gatherings. This year, she said she thinks the pandemic has increased those feelings of isolation and loneliness even more. Anahi’s brother, Gerardo Reyes, 19, also felt the same way when he received his bag of gifts and said that it helped to brighten his mood.

“These gifts make us feel special,” said Anahi, who entered foster care at age 10, and who has been in care for a decade. She brightened at the gift bag brimming with cookies, a knitted beanie, soft blanket, personal care products,

gift cards and kits to decorate holiday items delivered by her social worker, Jacqueline Pintado. “These gifts show us the community cares.”

Anahi and Gerardo are two among hundreds of Riverside County youth who have chosen to participate in Extended Foster Care. Foster youth can choose to exit at 18, however the extended program helps young adults between age 18 and 21 learn life skills, including budgeting, job assistance and finding community resources. Reyes will be 21 early next year.

“She’s learning important life skills she can use and is going into the real world knowing what’s expected of her as an adult,” said Jaqueline Pintado, Anahi and Gerardo’s social worker.

Church groups and community organizations through Faith in Motion contributed to the gift bags, which traditionally have been shared at a sit-down holiday dinner.

Older youth and young adults in foster care overcome significant obstacles to successfully transition to adulthood, said Charity Douglas, assistant director of Children’s Services.

“Support from our community and faith-based partners has helped our youth develop resiliency and know that they are loved and valued,” Douglas said.



Children’s Services social worker, Jaqueline Pintado, delivers gifts Monday in Riverside to young adults preparing to leave foster care for independent living.