

Starting the "Dignity Bag" Program in your area

The easiest way to explain it would be plan for an overnight trip. Most of the time when the children are removed, they do not have anything with them or their items are in trash bags. The Dignity bags are intended so the foster parents have time to go to the store to get the items they need while also providing the child with something of their own instead of carrying a trash bag full of stuff.

The first step would be to contact your local CPS office (ours is connected with the DCBS-Dept of Community Based Services). Find a contact person you can work with. We have a checklist of the items for the bags. Check with the contact person to see if the list needs to be adjusted for your area.

Look for clothes on the clearance rack. Stock up on items such as school supplies when they are on sale. Ask stores for donations or discounts. The major department stores such as Target, Walmart, Meijers will donate gifts cards of \$25-\$50 if you take in a letterhead explaining the program. If anyone would like the list I have or a copy of the donation letter we use (or any other questions) feel free to email, text or call me.

We suggest backpacks because the school aged children can use them for school. We have infant/toddler bags & school age bags. They need one complete outfit of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) personal hygiene items, school supplies based on age (Most can be purchased at a Dollar Tree where everything is \$1). Infants need diapers, wipes (small can or jug of formula for infants) bottle or sippy cup, pacifiers, diaper rash cream. They **ALL** need a soothing toy (stuffed animals are fine as long as they do not have button eyes or noses that can be removed). This is a comfort item.

Our area uses McDonald and Wendy's \$5 gift cards to take the children out to eat before they are taken to the foster home. If you can get someone to donate these, they can be included in the bags.

Make sure to make or have made a sign that shows you are with the American Legion & Auxiliary and your state. You can order emblems from Emblemsales if you want to hand-make your sign (like in the pictures of dropping of the Dignity Bags). You can order a yard sign (18x27) from Vista Print for \$20 unless they are on sale. These signs can be used for other programs so you may want to purchase multiple (which is cheaper). When you take the pictures, make sure that your contact gets a copy so they can report to their supervisors.