# Foster Care Church Matrix Support

Prepared for: A Door of Hope

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February 5, 2023

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Objective

The purpose of this document is to give communities of faith guidance on how to structure support around foster families and their homes.

### Goals

There are three concurrent goals in seeking support around homes.
1. Existing homes have support while they take on the extra effort of bringing a child (children) into their home.
2. Offer meaningful connections to the foster care system who are looking to help but can not accept a child or work in the traditional welfare systems.
3. Build long lasting connections with the children displaced from their home with as many safe adults as possible. This serves as a model and exposure to what healthy relationships look like.

### Solution

The proposed solution takes ideas from the Agile framework for software develop and scaled agile practices published by Spotify. Agile is the ability to create and respond to change. It is a way of dealing with, and ultimately succeeding in, an uncertain and turbulent environment. Like software development, the foster care system is a complex problem with changes to the previously understood plan as new information arises. As such, systems in place for support need to be accommodating of change and be capable or quick responses.

### Project Outline

Like the landowner in the parable of the workers, the goals are to overwhelmingly support homes to the point where the generosity is uncomfortable. The land owner replies with "…are you envious because I am generous?'" As you review the support structure recommended, I hope you see how a full team can provide an abundance of blessings. The encouragement is to lean into this so much that other people are envious of the lives foster families are favored with.

# TRIBES, AND SQUADS

### Teams of Support

In order for any organization to give structured support to a complex challenge like caring for foster homes, the solution must be scalable. The basic team of support is a squad. Squads scale horizontally as the number of homes in your organization increase.

**Tribe**

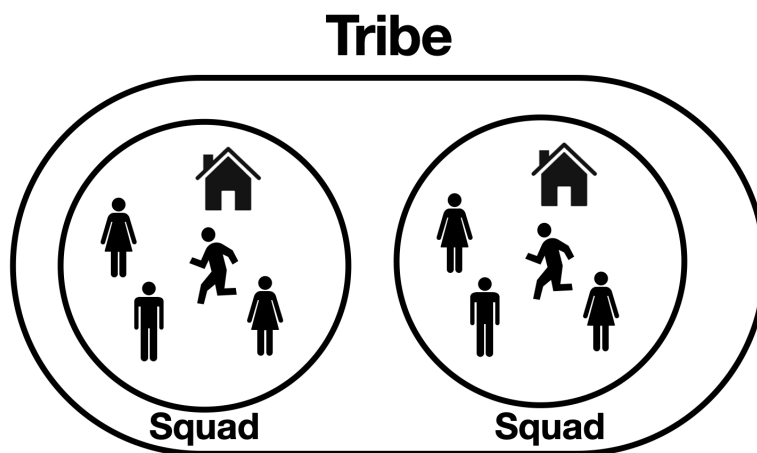**Squad**          **Squad**

### Squad

A squad is the group that surrounds a home with support. Ideally each member of this squad supports one home and one home only. Members of this squad may have skills that they bring to the group however, each member of the squad functions with the same goal - be present for the home. For example, if there is a new placement and diapers are needed for a home, any squad member can respond to this help needed. One squad member may have a primary purpose of providing a bi-weekly meal but they are not limited to this duty. It is advised to fill squads with people passionate about a specific role to keep accountability. All members should not see themselves as a single provider. The squad works together. As a case moves towards reunification, squads can be used to support the reunification home and continue to overwhelm the biological families with love and support.

### The Home

The foster home serves as the single place that assigns priority to what support is helpful. Homes can make specific requests for needs but the squad as a whole should bring ideas of ways support can be provided. The home simply prioritizes those requests. For example, the squad can suggest weekly Saturday babysitting, and help with installing some new beds. The home might reply saying beds are needed immediately but babysitting would be better every-other week on Fridays. The home informs what is helpful to the whole squad when negotiating support. We want to avoid people not in the trenches of care dictating what they think is helpful without input from actual foster homes.

### Tribe

Tribes are a collection of homes and their respective squares. Tribes create community between homes and their supporting teams. Squads should be organized by geographical location to catalyze engagement with each other. Tribes serve as a community of people with shared understanding. Foster care is trying on multiple fronts. Tribes build a network of people who understand. Tribes are recommended to have social events once a quarter. In addition, it is encouraged that tribes create communication channels (social media groups, church groups, email updates, etc.) where they can keep in touch with each other between social events.
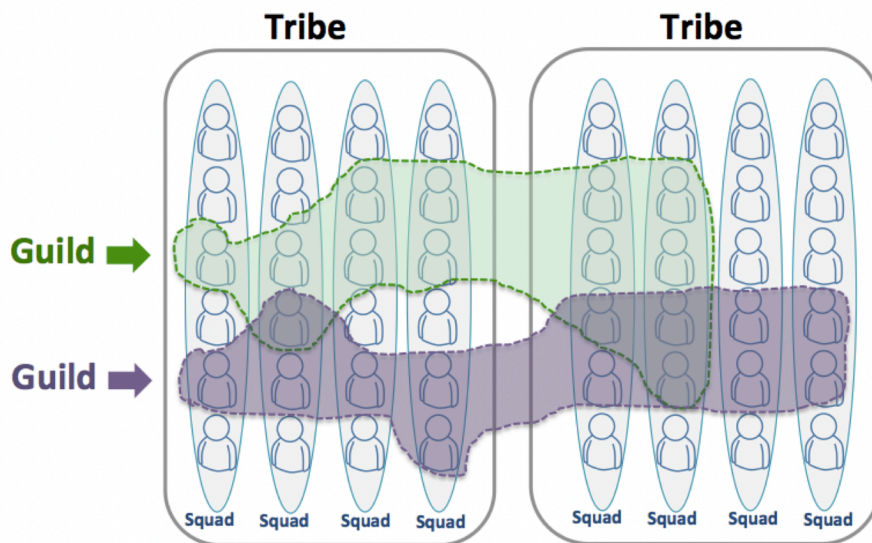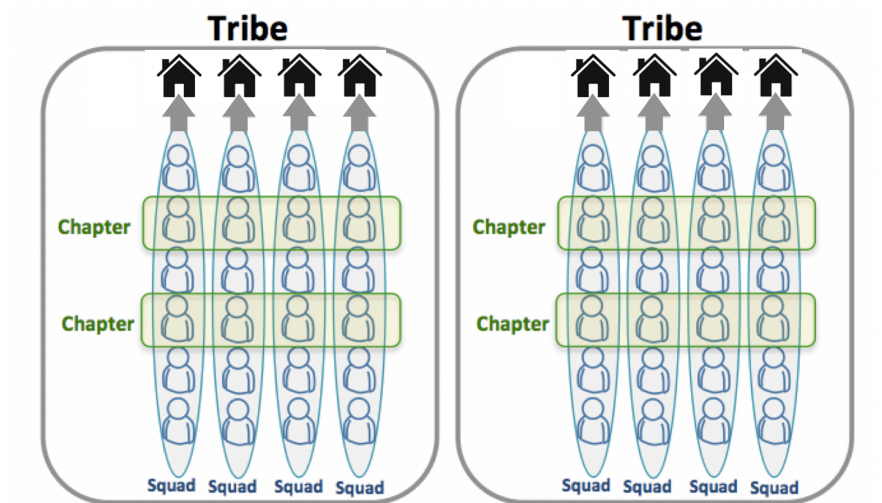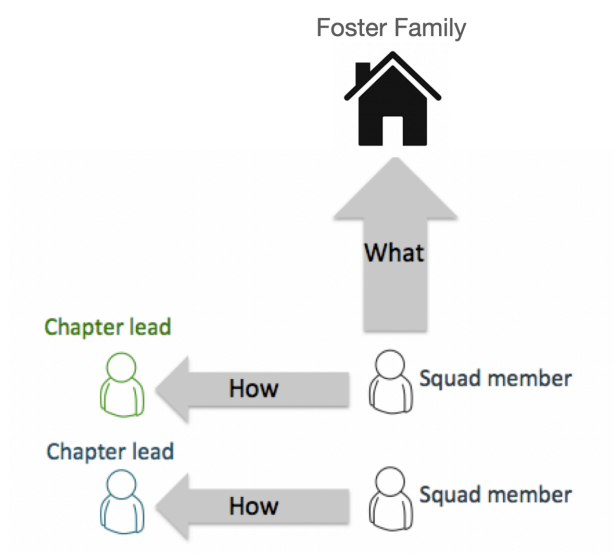
# CHAPTERS AND GUILDS

## Chapter

Chapters are responsible for areas of service. For example, a chapter could be weekend respite relief or meal providers. Chapters should have a chapter leader identified that organizes across squares to ensure each squad has access to the resources they provide. Chapters should communicate with each other to share tips, tricks, and encouragement in their specific skill.  In a later section, recommended chapter types are given as examples.



## Guilds

A Guild is a more organic and wide-reaching "community of interest", a group of people that want to share knowledge, tools, practices, and successes. Chapters are always local to a Tribe, while a Guild usually cuts across the whole organization. Some examples are: meal providers, adults working with X age group, trauma informed education, fun play activities, etc.
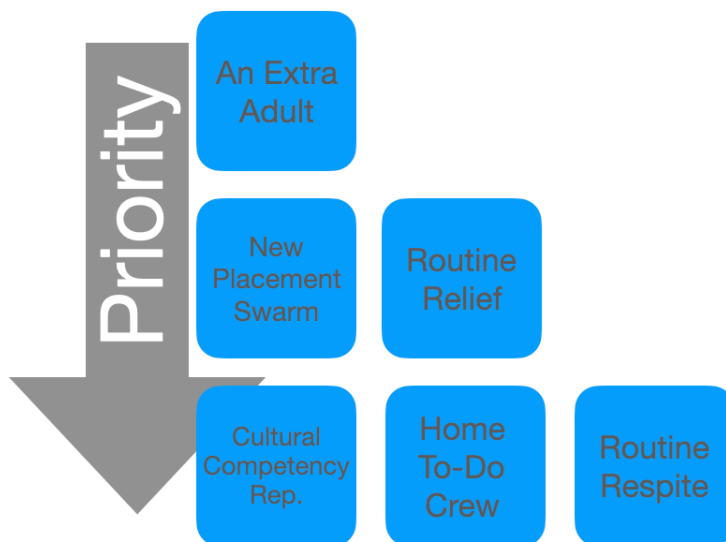
# SQUAD DIMENSIONS

Foster Family

What

Chapter lead

How ← Squad member

Chapter lead

How ← Squad member

### A Focus on Helping

In matrix terms, think of the vertical dimension as "what" and the horizontal dimension as "how". The matrix structure ensures that each squad member can get guidance on "what" they are serving (foster families) as well as "how" to serve effectively.

# SQUAD ROLES, CHAPTER TYPES AND PRIORITIES

### What to Do First

Ideally every home is embellished with all types of support. For all communities this does not make sense or is simply not feasible. The following section gives guidance as to what chapter types are recommended and which to implement first. Start at the top priority and move down the pyramid. Of course, take into consideration your community and families and do what makes the most sense in your setting.

Priority

An Extra Adult

New Placement Swarm

Routine Relief

Cultural Competency Rep.

Home To-Do Crew

Routine Respite

### Priority #1

### An Extra Adult

In our home, her name is Susan. Susan is the consistent extra adult pulling a seat up to the dinner table. Susans are people who model another healthy adult relationship and build positive connections with the children in the home. They provide companionship with the adults in the home and a break from the norm for the kids.  They might help read stories, provide snuggles, or be a listening ear to the children and family.

### Priority #2

### New Placement Swarm

A new placement always comes with unknowns. While the foster family worries about creating an emotionally safe space, the new placement swarm is on standby to retrieve necessary items for the new placement. This role actively steps into the inconvenience of a new placement with the foster family to make it more convenient for the family. This most commonly will look like a quick Walmart or foster closet trip with a list of necessary items needed to get through the first week or so of placement.

### Routine Relief

Relief comes in many facets. Help may look like meals, babysitting, planned outings for the kids in the house for the parents to get work done around the house. The important value of this role is consistency. Work with the home to consider what is best. As placements change, effective relief may change and that is ok. Again, the significance of this support is the routine assistance that a family can anticipate.

### Priority #3

### Cultural Competency Representative

Placements come in all shapes and sizes and creates beautiful blended homes. It is important for the children and parents to maintain space for cultural representation. To fill this role, cultural representatives should match the ethnicity of the placement so that the foster parents can have a safe person to work with in creating a cultural competent home.
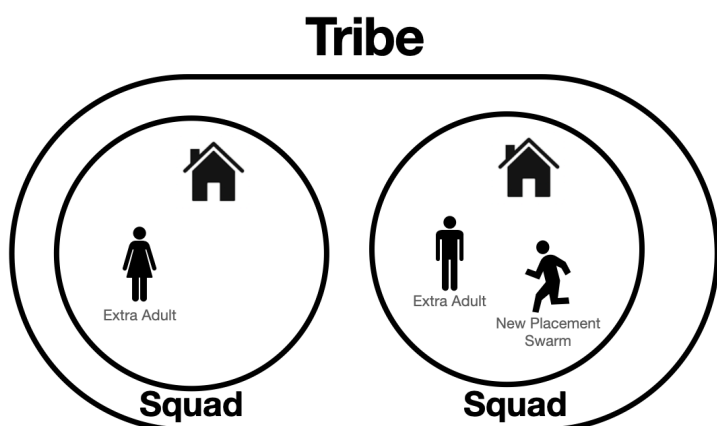
### Home To-Do Crew

Taking placements often comes with upgrades to a homes safety and or furniture. Giving homes able bodied people who can move furniture and install locks on cabinets makes being a foster home more accessible to people who are not able to perform these tasks.

### Routine Respite

Leaning into the lives of people who are often hurting can be very taxing. To give time for rest, build teams of people who are screened, qualified, and able to provide respite relief more frequent than required by the foster parents.

# CASE STUDIES



### Case #1 (Small Church)

Here the work is just getting started because the work is needed even though resources are thin. One home only has an extra adult role while the other has the extra adult and a new placement swarm.
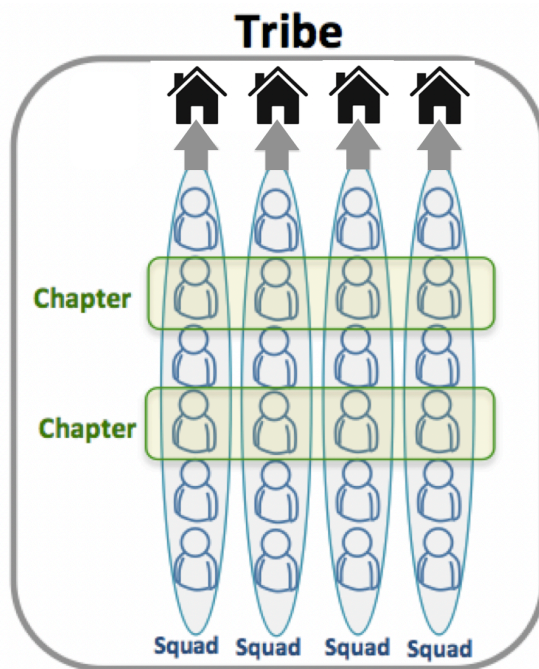
At this level, work on adding a new placement swarm so that support is balanced across homes. Before increasing to a new home, make sure the existing homes are sustainable. If they are getting burned out, work on giving them the support they need before increasing home count.
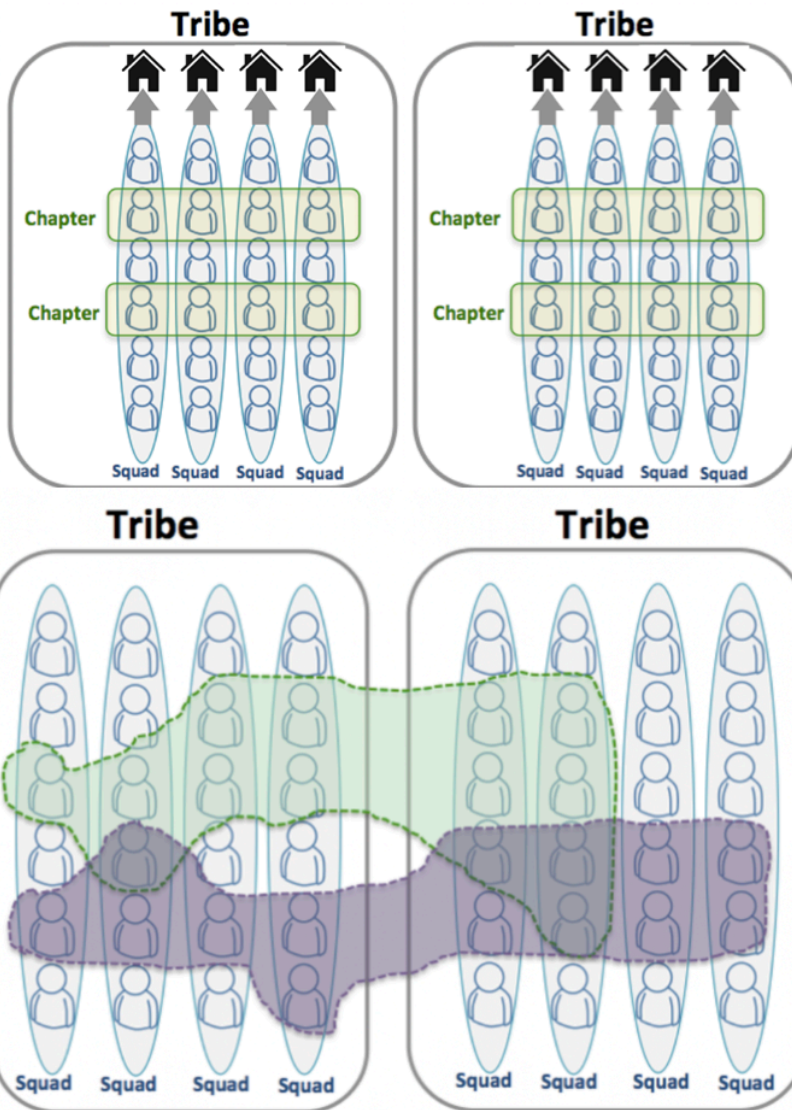
Here there are no Chapters or Guilds organized.

### Case #2 (Medium Church)

At this level there are resources for full squads supporting homes. There is value in adding chapters to further give support and develop squad members. Guilds may be of value if they cross into other service areas of the community  (student ministries, widow care, etc.).

Growth here looks like training other squads on how to support a home. Once another squad is ready, new homes are ready to be filled with squad members already prepared to be effective.

### Case #3 (Large Church)

At this level there are resources for multiple tribes. There is value in including Guilds to further give support and develop squad members.

Growth here looks like targeted development of people into Chapter and Guild Leaders. There are huge gains to take advantage of from cross collaboration and continuing growth. Intentional development of seeking, training, and mentoring homes towards fostering.