00;00;09;24 - 00;00;27;15
Amanda
There wa1s a little six month old baby boy who didn't have a family. He has beautiful blond hair and blue eyes. And when I saw you and your family, I went into his room and I prayed that one day he would find you. And at that moment, I knew that it was okay to just let go and to fall in love with him.

00;00;28;07 - 00;01;07;01
Amanda
And I knew that he was going to be okay. It still took a little bit of time, but it's totally worth it. It's worth it for them. It's worth it for you. And one of the hardest questions that I've learned as a foster parent is that you may not have your foster or adoptive child for as long as you need them, but you will be there for them as long as they need you.

00;01;10;05 - 00;01;21;27
Courtney
Welcome to Adjusting the Sales, a podcast for parents, caregivers and Service Providers for Children with Disabilities. I'm your host, Courtney Ring Staff, and this is my co-host, Melina Danko.

00;01;22;07 - 00;01;24;29
Melina
Hi, everyone. We are so glad you've joined us.

00;01;25;08 - 00;01;55;24
Courtney
Melina is the assistant director of communications and marketing at the Center for Excellence in Disabilities and the project director of the West Virginia Family two Family Health Information Center. I am a licensed social worker in Morgantown, West Virginia, and I've created this podcast to be a platform for parents, caregivers and service providers can come together, exchange information, educate one another, and find support and connection through the relatable topic discussions.

00;01;56;07 - 00;02;05;07
Courtney
We cannot change the direction of the wind or the strength of the storm, but together we can adjust the sails.

00;02;11;10 - 00;02;38;19
Amanda
My name is Amanda Sharp and I am a stay at home mom and I'm in Taylor County. My husband Justin is a coal miner and we have been married for 17 years. We have adopted four children total through Children's Home Society of West Virginia in Morgantown. Our oldest son, Mason, passed away when he was almost two. We have a son Willi, who is ten years old.

00;02;39;02 - 00;03;13;11
Amanda
We have a son, Alexander, who is nine years old and a daughter, Cassidy, who is six. Justin and I had been married for about six years, and during

that time we had several losses. And so I made the decision that I was done seeking infertility treatments. I brought up the topic of fostering or adoption to Justin, and he wasn't quite ready, so he asked for a little bit of time to think about it.

00;03;13;20 - 00;03;40;01
Amanda
And so we didn't really talk about the topic of children for about six months. And one day he just came to me and he said that he was ready to pursue those options. So we started calling around to different agencies and just talking to different people about their experiences. And one of my family members had recently adopted through Children's Home Society of Lewisburg, and they had wonderful things to say.

00;03;40;13 - 00;04;02;23
Amanda
And so they gave us the phone number for Morgantown, and we called and made an appointment and did an interview and everything just fell into place. And it just it was meant to be. So we started taking the pride training and doing all of our certificates, and it just felt like the right fit for our family.

00;04;03;01 - 00;04;10;02
Courtney
And how did you make decisions about what type of child you were going to accept into your home?

00;04;10;29 - 00;04;44;01
Amanda
So my husband and I are religious, so that helps make decisions for us. We had said that if we were blessed enough to have a pregnancy come to term, whatever child we were given is what we would accept. And that's how we went into the foster and adoption journey within reason. If we were approached with a child and it was within our means to take care of this child, we said yes.

00;04;45;03 - 00;05;14;04
Amanda
We did not care about race. We did not care about medical problems. We did not care about anything. We were approached with two sibling groups of five in the beginning, and we did say no to that just because we were first time parents. The first placement that we said yes to was a nine month old, medically fragile little boy, and we said yes to him.

00;05;14;22 - 00;05;38;13
Amanda
Justin was a coal miner. I was a stay at home mom at that time. I had the availability to go and learn about his medical equipment. I could take him to appointments. It just didn't seem intimidating. We had the ability to learn about him, and so we accepted that placement.

00;05;39;07 - 00;05;52;18
Melina

How did that go? I mean, if you don't have medical training, sometimes that can be scary. You know, to think about taking care of a little baby who's medically fragile. How was that experience?

00;05;53;06 - 00;06;17;13
Amanda
We had support from the hospital. We had support from our caseworkers at Children's Home Society, and we had support from the caseworkers at the DHS, H.R., if there was ever anything that we had questions about. We had a lot of people that we could reach out to for clarification if we needed help with any of the medical supplies.

00;06;17;25 - 00;06;21;11
Amanda
You know, there were always people willing to help us get that.

00;06;23;13 - 00;06;51;04
Amanda
When you actually meet the child and you feel like you're helping care for the child, it kind of eases some of that scariness. And when you feel like you're making a difference in that child's life, it just kind of feels like it's worth it 100%.

00;06;51;11 - 00;06;56;08
Courtney
Was he given a specific diagnosis or did he just have some like a medical fragility?

00;06;56;19 - 00;07;37;01
Amanda
So his blanket diagnosis was chronic diarrhea of infancy, and it's where his food passed through his body too quickly for him to absorb the nutrients. They tried to do feeds through his intestines, through like a mickey button tube, but it still passed through him too quickly. And so they had to do a central line into his heart. And he was fed TPN and nutrients kind of through like an I.V. And it was suspected that was due to prenatal drug use.

00;07;39;14 - 00;08;16;11
Amanda
His birth parents signed over. Right. So Justin and I could adopt him. And then we went into his bedroom and found him unresponsive. He was rushed to WVU Children's Hospital, where he was having seizures and his blood sugar levels were very low. His guardian ad litem and the judge in the county where he was born helped us push the adoption through quickly so we can make end of life decisions.

00;08;19;23 - 00;08;20;20
Melina
I'm really sorry.

00;08;21;22 - 00;09;01;03
Amanda

Thank you. One thing that was really important for Justin and I, when we found out that our son was really close to the end of his life, we were interested in donating any of the organs that we could. We got to donate some of his heart valves and his corneas. What we were not able to donate, we actually could send to the Children's Research Center so they could research his disease.

00;09;04;12 - 00;09;07;17
Courtney
That's such a sad story of loss. I'm so sorry.

00;09;08;18 - 00;09;33;01
Melina
I am. But I think it it's amazing and it speaks volumes to you and your husband that even going through that, you were still trying to think like, how can I help someone? Like, how can I make this not for nothing. So, you know, that's that's really special. Thank you for sharing that.

00;09;34;27 - 00;09;54;22
Courtney
You know, positive things are coming to other families because of those decisions you made in that sacrifice. And so after that really traumatic experience, how long did you wait? How long, you know, when did you get your next call and what kind of it came next?

00;09;55;12 - 00;10;46;19
Amanda
We waited five months. We went back and forth. And Justin was the one that was ultimately ready to become a parent again. And he was honest with me. And he said that he was afraid that if we didn't just jump right in, that we would never be parents again. He reminded me that he didn't know he could love a child that wasn't his in the beginning, and that he trusted me and he asked me to trust him this time.

00;10;48;04 - 00;11;45;24
Amanda
And I did. We opened our home again. We made the same promise to each other. And we said, Whatever we're approached with, we will accept. We talked to everybody at Children's Home Society. They said that they understood our situation and so they were not going to be aggressive, but they would definitely be on the lookout. And so it was a couple of weeks later that we got a call for a little ten month old baby boy who was typically developing up until age five months.

00;11;45;24 - 00;12;12;13
Amanda
And he was basically at the age of like a two or three month old. He had the physical body of like a ten month old, but cognitively he was like eight two or three month old. He was babbling. He could roll, he could not sit up. He could not tolerate even pureed baby food. Cute as a button and happy.

00;12;13;14 - 00;12;20;15
Courtney

Amanda, what is Willie's diagnosis? Because you said typically developing up to five months. Did something then with something onset at that point.

00;12;21;03 - 00;13;10;03
Amanda
So when he came into the hospital, they were told that he fell off the diaper changer. But from X-rays and further examination, it showed that he was violently shaken. The older term was baby shaken syndrome. But I think they have just now changed it to non-accidental head trauma. He was typically developing up until five months old, but now as a result of that, he has cortical vision impairment, cerebral palsy, speech delays, cognitive delays, mobility issues could have the potential for seizures.

00;13;11;04 - 00;13;17;14
Amanda
He was currently out of the hospital, but in a long term care facility.

00;13;18;03 - 00;13;27;06
Courtney
When you got called by your caseworkers, what were the questions that you needed to ask for that you were prepared to ask that had to do with that child's care?

00;13;27;17 - 00;13;48;10
Amanda
So I think he had a lot more questions when we when we asked about Willie than we did with Mason. So I think we just asked if we needed to have any special training. We asked about, like, equipment. We asked about if we would have anybody coming into the house to help us. We asked if it was life threatening.

00;13;49;02 - 00;14;12;03
Amanda
We asked about, like, where the appointments would take place. So like with Mason, we had to take him to Pittsburgh a lot, which was fine. We asked about how to administer medication. Like with Mason. We had to put things like in his central lines where Willy took everything by now. So we asked Mike for clarification with that. We asked about therapy and any special equipment.

00;14;12;07 - 00;14;15;06
Amanda
If we needed to modify our house for any reason.

00;14;15;29 - 00;14;21;20
Courtney
And just thought that might be helpful for a family who might consider but they don't really know where to start or what to ask. If they get called.

00;14;22;02 - 00;14;52;03
Amanda
Here just and took the day off from work and we went in and saw him and within 10 minutes of meeting this child, Justin was shirtless, doing skin

to skin, doing all of the things. And I was giving myself a pep talk saying, okay, we can do this. He's okay, we can do this. Needless to say, Justin was very, very, very much in love.

00;14;52;22 - 00;15;20;16
Amanda
Within 10 minutes of meeting Lily and I was like, You can take care of this kid and take care of this kid. So for the first couple of weeks, it was learn about him, meet his therapist, meet his doctors, get his routine down. And Justin, Justin was doing all of the things that he needed to do. He kind of pulled me aside one day and he's like, Are you okay?

00;15;20;28 - 00;15;27;02
Amanda
And I said, I'm okay. And he's like, Are you sure? Because I can tell something's wrong.

00;15;29;20 - 00;15;55;17
Amanda
He knew what was going on. He knew that I could be a mom to Lily and I could take care of him. But I was scared to death to fall in love with him. Not that Willy and Mason were sick in the same way. But my heart didn't understand that. He called one of our friends that we had met.

00;15;56;00 - 00;16;24;18
Amanda
She was a nurse in the picture unit at Ruby, and she had worked with us a lot with Mason, and she was there very close to the time that we said goodbye to him. She talked to me and said, I need to tell you something. There was a little six month old baby boy down the hallway who didn't have a family.

00;16;25;16 - 00;16;45;04
Amanda
He has beautiful blond hair and blue eyes. And when I saw you and your family with Mason, I went into his room and I prayed that one day he would find you. And she said, his name is Lily. And at that moment, I knew that it was okay to just let go and to fall in love with him.

00;16;45;26 - 00;17;22;26
Amanda
And I knew that he was going to be okay. It still took a little bit of time, but I could relax and I could love him. And I knew that everything was going to be okay. Starting that day, Willy and I started to bond before we brought Willy home. He was in health cell and we got to stay with him there for a week and a half, learning about his daily schedule, going to different therapies with him.

00;17;23;21 - 00;17;53;21
Amanda
And they let us continue to take him back there until we got him home and got birth to three established. They let us take him back for like outpatient therapies. We got birth to three set up. We got established

with all of his doctors through WVU Children's. They taught us about how to stretch him to keep his muscles flexible.

00;17;53;23 - 00;18;31;12
Amanda
They taught us about how to watch for seizures. They taught us about what toys to avoid, things that could potentially set off seizures. He's ten years old now. He is thriving. He is more than we could ever imagine. He took some time. He learns in his own way. He grows and develops in his own way. But everything that they said that he cannot do or that he might not be able to do, he has shown us that he can do it and he will do it, and he does it his own way.

00;18;32;08 - 00;19;12;22
Amanda
He has a bilateral shunt, so we have to be very careful about magnets and magnet play as far as activities of daily living. He can help some. A lot of his care is hand over, hand. We try to give him as much independence as possible, but it's guided, independent. We help him to be independent the way that is safe because he does have the shunts in his head.

00;19;13;02 - 00;19;45;06
Amanda
We need to protect his head. He is a boy. He is rough and tumble. So we kind of have to alter activities that are a little more aggressive than his mommy. Like sometimes. But that's okay because he is a boy and he is ten years old and he still deserves to be ornery and rough and tumble. He is in fourth grade.

00;19;46;05 - 00;20;27;27
Amanda
His school day is structured to where he is in his severe and profound classroom about 75% of the day. And then he's with his typical developing peers, the other 25%. And that 25% includes math and English and as well as recess. And then his specialists. So Jim library are those times of the day. We hadn't even got Willie home from HealthSouth yet.

00;20;28;23 - 00;21;07;12
Amanda
And a caseworker called my husband and said, hey, we have a newborn baby boy. Do you want him to? And Dustin just said, Sure. And I was like, What? So I'm like, Sure. So we actually brought the boys home kind of together and raised them kind of together. They're very close now. Alexander is the best big little brother ever because of where his birth date falls.

00;21;07;12 - 00;21;33;10
Amanda
He is in a grade younger than Willy. They understand that there will be a day when we hold Willy back and that they will be in the same grade. We ask that Willy and Alex not be in the same general ed class just to give Alexander his own class, his own friends. Little brother has some big feelings for his big brother.

00;21;33;26 - 00;22;00;11
Amanda
He is a big support and a big fighter for Willy. So we will always try to give Alexander some space. It was very nice having both of the boys so close in age and growing up together. I can remember having Willy in birth to three and having Alex a model of showing Willy what to do. And I honestly think that Willy picked up on a lot of things because of Alex.

00;22;01;17 - 00;22;14;06
Courtney
Did you discuss as a as a couple how many children you were going to take? Like, is that why he was like, Yeah, we want a big family, so let's just jump right in with the second baby or was he just like gung ho and high on like, we have a family, let's take another.

00;22;14;27 - 00;22;42;08
Amanda
I don't remember the time, but like we always said, no more than five. And I was like, I always thought that we would like one at a time and then, like, get settled and do the adoption and then like add another, but he must've just been feeling really peppy. Life happens. I mean. I mean. And then like, whenever we talked about, like, not saying no, I was like, we can't say no.

00;22;43;10 - 00;22;45;10
Amanda
Like, I had that talk with him very soon after.

00;22;45;19 - 00;22;51;14
Melina
Maybe not saying no. We can just say not right now. You don't have to say no. Or we can just say not right now.

00;22;52;02 - 00;22;53;07
Amanda
Yeah, exactly.

00;22;54;28 - 00;22;58;10
Courtney
And so when did your when did your daughter come along?

00;22;58;24 - 00;23;28;16
Amanda
Alex actually had no rights from like the day that he was placed in our house, so we actually postponed Alex's adoption by two or three months. Just so when Willy's rights were terminated, we could adopt the boys together. And then we were good. And then Alex turned three years old, and it was Christmas time, and everybody was thriving.

00;23;28;16 - 00;23;56;14
Amanda
And we went to see Santa Claus. And then Alex asked for two things. He asked for something to drive Willy around the yard, and he asked for baby sister. And Justin's parents got him a Batmobile so he could drive his

brother around the yard. And they looked right at us and they're like, Give that boy a sister. And so we started talking about it.

00;23;56;14 - 00;24;20;27
Amanda
We're like, okay, are we going to expand our family? Are we going to be done? We decided that, okay, if we're going to expand our family, we guess it's going to be a girl and if it's going to happen, it's going to happen when the time is right. So we opened our house. I think she was the fifth call that we got about a little girl.

00;24;20;29 - 00;24;42;26
Amanda
The only thing we said this time is that we wanted a little girl. Some of the calls that we called about the placement went to other people and we're like, okay, no big deal. It wasn't the time. And this time, like, we were in no hurry. Like we had a room, we had a crib, and our caseworker was like, You guys need to go shopping.

00;24;42;26 - 00;25;06;15
Amanda
And we're like, Sure, okay. You know, just making sure this was actually going to happen. And she's like, I'm an hour from your house, go shopping. And we're like, Sure. And she's like, Amanda, I'm 15 minutes from your house. Go shopping. And we're like, okay, we'll go shopping now. And Alex, he's biracial. And both Willie and Cassidy are Caucasian.

00;25;07;08 - 00;25;31;02
Amanda
And I can remember our caseworker walked into our house and Alex saw this baby, and he goes, That's not my sister. That's Willie sister. He said, I wanted a brown one. And I said, No, sir, she's both of your sisters. We share sisters. And he's like, But I want a brown one. And I'm like, Oh, no, we don't do that in this family.

00;25;31;02 - 00;25;48;01
Amanda
Like, she's our sister and he's still not over it. Like he's nine. And like, when he gets mad at her, he still reminds me that he wanted a brown sister. And I remind him I'm like, I'm sorry, but this is the sister you have and this is it.

00;25;49;06 - 00;25;52;09
Courtney
Is there any potential for future sisters? Brown Sisters.

00;25;52;19 - 00;26;03;19
Amanda
I think we're finished. I think our and honestly, I think if Cassidy would have been our first placement, we would have been done. She is she's the spice to our family.

00;26;04;29 - 00;26;08;20
Melina

They say that third child always is. That's always the case.

00;26;09;18 - 00;26;26;23
Amanda
And like she just I don't even know how to describe her. Like, my boys are sweet and she is just hellfire. Like, she has no fear. She just. I don't know. I don't know.

00;26;31;18 - 00;27;14;28
Amanda
We have a team set up through WVU. We have neurologist doctors that help either track her seizures, which we're on preventative medicine and he is not currently having seizures. They check his potential for any any potential for seizures. And then we have behavior specialist that help us with the seizure medicine sometimes come behavior issues. We have an orthopedic doctor who helps us with his muscles and his tone gets yearly Botox injections.

00;27;14;28 - 00;27;43;12
Amanda
That helps with his spasticity and his muscles. They also make him Afro braces that help correct his feet to walk better. And they also give him his prescriptions for his wheelchair and his standard and his day trainer that help him walk. And then also on that team is an optimal allergist that makes sure that his eyes are not turning in or drooping or anything like that.

00;27;43;25 - 00;28;11;07
Amanda
They all work very closely with his school team, which is a physical therapist and occupational therapist. His speech therapist and his vision therapist. We do some fun activities in the outside therapy world. We he loves horseback riding and that is very good for his muscles. It helps him, you know, correct his posture and also helps him relax. So we love the hypnotherapy.

00;28;12;10 - 00;28;44;13
Amanda
A lot of the physical therapist student during the summer time will give swim lessons to special needs children. And it's actually a way for the students to get practice stretching children. So it's kind of like therapy for your child while it's still in the water and it actually gives the students some experience also. And actually for a lot of our kiddos with muscular tightness, it feels really good to be in the water.

00;28;44;13 - 00;29;15;20
Amanda
It helps them relax. So we do things like that. We have a handicapped accessible van that we can use with the wheelchair that allows us to get him places easier. Like I said, he's got specialized equipment, he has a specialized bike, so we can pretty much take him anywhere that our other children can go. The only difference is we help push and steer him like when we go for family outings, like the other two can ride their bike.

00;29;15;20 - 00;29;42;14
Amanda
And either Justin or myself just help Willy. It doesn't keep him from going places. It just looks different. And really, it's not that much of a bother. A lot of places are very handicapped, accessible. It just takes a little bit more preparing and it's totally worth it when you see how happy he is to be doing something the same as his siblings, and they're very happy to.

00;29;42;14 - 00;29;54;10
Amanda
They I mean, they're nine and six and they understand when their brother can't do something that they do and they get upset. So they're happy when we all get to do something as a family and include their brother.

00;29;54;15 - 00;29;59;16
Courtney
And so what conversations have you had to have with the other two about Willie and his needs?

00;30;00;10 - 00;30;37;17
Amanda
Sometimes they get a little upset because they definitely feel like Willie's being excluded. Sometimes that happens at school. Sometimes that happens out in public. We went to Storybook Forest last year and there were some of the rides that Willie just was not able to ride. Alex and Cassidy decided that they did not want to ride those rides, and we had to explain to them that they were not being rude when they said that Willie could not right.

00;30;37;17 - 00;31;07;09
Amanda
Those rides that they were saying no because they were unsafe for Willie. There are times when, especially out in public, somebody will look differently at Willie or a small child will say, why is he in that chair? And they'll just go up and they'll tell him. They will say, My brother's legs don't work like your legs or my brother can't walk like you can, and they will just flat out say things.

00;31;07;09 - 00;31;32;16
Amanda
And sometimes that's not always a good thing, but I understand why they think that they need to do that. They are very big advocates for their brother. I think that they just want everybody to know how much they love him and how amazing that they think that their brother is. Sometimes we have to have conversations with Alex and Cassidy about standing up for Willie in a nice way.

00;31;32;26 - 00;31;40;06
Amanda
Sometimes they can be a bit aggressive with their words, so we just have to remind them of that to know.

00;31;40;12 - 00;32;06;06

Melina
Amanda, you mentioned a lot of different therapies and resources that maybe people aren't aware of. Are there particular services and supports that allow you to access those or that allow Billy to be able to get some of those different treatments like the hypnotherapy and the adapted bike? How do you get those kinds of things?

00;32;06;25 - 00;32;34;20
Amanda
When Willie was three years old, we applied for the waiver program and then he came off the waitlist. Two or three years later. And so we have a case manager through waiver and she finds a lot of resources and she helps get us a lot of like she gives us a community calendar and she gets us in, gets through case.

00;32;34;20 - 00;32;56;10
Amanda
There's like a community calendar through there and then we also through that budget and we get to have some extra money there for some of the extra fun therapies. Now, when we lived in Fairmont, the physical therapist students would advertise there for swim lessons in their pool there on the campus.

00;32;56;22 - 00;33;05;13
Courtney
Do you use on Eagles wings for your hypnotherapy? Okay. We just actually interviewed Carole and that episode went out at the beginning of the month.

00;33;05;13 - 00;33;17;04
Amanda
Great agency. They are wonderful. And then the Disability Action Center, they are in Fairmont. They have a lot of resources and stuff there too.

00;33;17;21 - 00;33;22;04
Courtney
Did he qualify for ID waiver or was it the traumatic brain injury waiver?

00;33;22;25 - 00;33;56;17
Amanda
So the I.D. waiver. But then because of the nature of his injury, we went through the Crime Victims Fund and they helped with the van. They paid for the accessible van. And then we can do two vans in his lifetime or two vehicles in his lifetime. What we did is we did the van when he was smaller. Whenever he becomes older, we wanted to do a different vehicle to where he could sit in the front seat.

00;33;56;17 - 00;34;10;05
Amanda
Like whenever he's a teenager or older. We want that to be his vehicle and then whoever takes care of him, we want him to be able to sit in the front seat. We want him to be able to have that view that will be later on in his life.

00;34;10;17 - 00;34;14;16
Melina
That's a great resource. I wasn't aware. You said it's the crime victims.

00;34;14;16 - 00;34;24;19
Amanda
It's the crime victims fund and all you have to have the court information for where his birth mother was like her court information.

00;34;24;29 - 00;34;30;27
Courtney
What type of support system do you have for for your family and specifically for Willie? And what does that look like for you?

00;34;31;03 - 00;35;05;28
Amanda
With the help of waiver, we have some respite providers, but then we also have a very, very loving family that includes two sets of grandparents and aunts, uncles, and then our best friends. Anybody involved in our life knows all about Willie, all about all of our kids. As soon as you walk in our front door, your family, I don't think that there's ever been anybody that we've ever met that has shied away from learning about any of our kids.

00;35;06;18 - 00;35;33;01
Amanda
It may be a little bit scary in the beginning, but if you just take a few minutes and ask a few questions like these kids are not intimidating, they are not scary, and they're just like other kids, you may have to be a little bit more flexible. You may have to do things just a little bit differently. But there's there is not a big difference.

00;35;33;17 - 00;35;58;06
Melina
One thing that I have heard and I don't know if this is true or not, so I wanted to ask you, is that sometimes parents who have a foster child with a disability don't want to adopt them because they're afraid that they might lose some services that they would be eligible for. Do you have a perspective on that?

00;35;58;06 - 00;36;04;16
Melina
Is that I don't even know if that's true, but it's something that I've heard before. So I feel like people may be wondering.

00;36;05;03 - 00;36;39;14
Amanda
Whenever we started talking about adoption with both of our special needs guys, were you were able to transfer everything? We had the option to ask for things in or adoption subsidy. We got to request the medical cards and we got to ask for certain things. It doesn't necessarily mean that they're automatically granted, but nothing that we requested I don't think was taken away.

00;36;40;03 - 00;36;49;18
Courtney
I think I think when you have a specialized agency to advocate for you and advocate that to the state and the county, when families don't know that or when agencies don't know that or they don't have workers who will advocate.

00;36;50;06 - 00;37;04;28
Amanda
I think it was just an extra little narrative that we had to put in the adoption and put in the adoption request and sign. I don't I don't think it was anything major.

00;37;05;22 - 00;37;32;16
Melina
But I think that's a valuable piece of information for people to know because I don't want somebody to not adopt because they're afraid that their child is not going to get the medical services and supports that they need, especially if it's possible. Right. I think that that's a big misnomer maybe that we can can help dispel through this podcast as well.

00;37;35;07 - 00;37;46;04
Amanda
Yes. And I can even request like the medical card for my non special needs children like. We requested that adoption subsidy for them as well.

00;37;46;25 - 00;38;01;27
Courtney
Yeah. Because other things other than just disability would qualify them for that. And the nature of being a foster child does because it's if you've ever been a victim of abuse or neglect and then also for you specifically, Alex qualified for being a minority. So those are factors that would qualify them.

00;38;03;02 - 00;38;12;23
Melina
Also, the children with special health care needs. Does Willie receive services from that program? Because that's also disability and foster care.

00;38;13;18 - 00;38;22;18
Amanda
So he did in the beginning. But then whenever he switched to waiver, we discontinued.

00;38;23;17 - 00;38;39;16
Melina
I did want to ask you if there's one thing or even a couple of things that you would want parents to know who are considering fostering a child with a disability or some kind of chronic health condition. What would some of those things be that you would want to share with them.

00;38;40;18 - 00;39;16;19
Amanda

With any situation? Of course there's good and there's bad. It can feel lonely at times, but you need to remember that you're never truly alone. You have a bigger support system than you realize. You have other foster parents, you have your caseworkers, you have your staff at your agency. So just never feel like you're alone. It is overwhelming and it's hard work, but when you realize the impact that you're having on a child's life.

00;39;17;20 - 00;39;44;17
Amanda
It's totally worth it. It's worth it for them. It's worth it for you. And one of the hardest lessons that I've learned as a foster parent is that you may not have your foster or adoptive child for as long as you need them, but you will be there for them as long as they need you.

00;39;46;25 - 00;40;02;13
Melina
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