

# Recruitment Connection



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**A MARE  
NEWSLETTER  
FOR ADOPTION  
PROFESSIONALS**

*Winter 2025*

# CAPTURING POTENTIAL:

## Best Practices for MARE Photolistings

By: Adriana Cazzell



Too much filter and an unnatural pose should be avoided.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF A STRONG FIRST IMPRESSION

When prospective adoptive families visit the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) website, the first thing they notice is a child's photo. This image serves as a crucial introduction, shaping the family's initial perception and interest. A high-quality, engaging photograph can significantly enhance a child's recruitment prospects, while a poorly chosen image may inadvertently hinder opportunities for connection.

As adoption professionals, you play a vital role in ensuring that the photos representing foster youth are not only appropriate but also showcase each child in their best light.

Beyond photolistings, these images are used in child specific recruitment on social media and printed materials (when consented to), further underscoring the importance of a compelling, well-crafted picture.

This guide provides best practices for selecting and submitting photos that elevate a child's profile while avoiding common pitfalls. By taking a few extra steps, we can enhance the impact of these images and improve the chances of finding a loving home for each youth.



A natural look, no filters or silly poses make for an appropriate photo.

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### BEST PRACTICES FOR PHOTOLISTINGS

#### 1) Encouraging Natural, Authentic Expressions

While selfies can be a viable option, especially for teens hesitant to participate in a photo session, certain types of selfies should be avoided. Photos with excessive filters, exaggerated expressions, or playful gestures (such as peace signs or "duck lips") may detract from a child's personality rather than highlight it. Instead, encourage natural smiles and relaxed, confident expressions.

#### 2) Presenting a Polished Appearance

A child's appearance in their photolisting should be neat and well-groomed. Clothing should be clean and free of stains or wrinkles.



Hair is groomed, the clothes are neat and smile on her face! Perfect!



Stained shirt, messy hair, and bad lighting will not help recruitment.

While individuality and self-expression are important, ensuring that the youth looks their best in their photo can make a meaningful difference in how they are perceived by prospective families. A good rule of thumb: If you wouldn't want your own photo posted online in a particular outfit or hairstyle, it's best to opt for another choice.

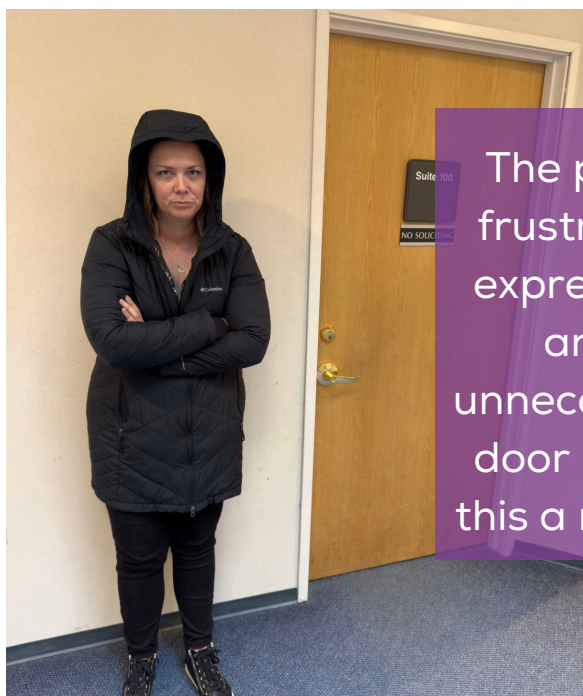
#### 3) Avoiding Identifiable Clothing and Backgrounds

Safety is paramount when selecting photos for MARE. Avoid images featuring school logos, sports team uniforms, or any other identifiers that could reveal a child's location. While school portraits may seem like a convenient option, they pose security risks due to the potential for reverse image searches online. Whenever possible, opt for a casual, natural setting that keeps the focus on the child without compromising their privacy.

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The pose, frustrated expression and unnecessary door make this a no-go.

### 4) *Choosing the Right Setting and Composition*

A well-composed photograph can make all the difference. Avoid images with distracting or unnecessary background elements, such as cluttered rooms or random objects (e.g., an open door in the background). Instead, aim for simple, well-lit settings where the child is the focal point. Proper lighting, a clear resolution, and a relaxed posture help create an inviting and engaging photo.

## PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Selecting the right photo can be a collaborative effort. If you are unsure whether a particular image is appropriate or need guidance taking a better photo, the MARE team is always available to assist.

Thoughtfully curated images ensure that foster youth are presented in a way that maximizes their recruitment potential, ultimately increasing their chances of finding permanent, loving families.

By prioritizing quality, professionalism, and authenticity in photolistings, we can better advocate for the youth we serve and help them put their best foot forward in their adoption journey.



Decent lighting, a natural pose and a good resolution are all good indicators.

**HEY**  
*there*

# HEART GALLERY 2025 IS UNDERWAY!

Have you registered a MARE foster youth for Heart Gallery 2025? Check your emails this month for a photographer match notification from Jessie Thompson. Once you have the email, it's important that you reach out to the photographer within a week to schedule your MARE youth's photoshoot. You or another staff member your MARE youth is comfortable with will need to be present on the day of the photoshoot. You can always cc Jessie on the scheduling email. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Jessie Thompson at [Jessica\\_Thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:Jessica_Thompson@judsoncenter.org). Heart Gallery 2025 will be on Saturday, September 13th. Be on the lookout for more details!

## DID YOU KNOW?

The current Heart Gallery 2024 Display is available for use. If you'd like to use the display for an upcoming event or for a recruitment opportunity, contact Jessie Thompson at [Jessica\\_Thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:Jessica_Thompson@judsoncenter.org).



# JORDEN'S *IDP*

Jorden just completed an In-Depth Profile and you should check it out! Jorden hopes to be a rapper one day and chose to share some of his skills with potential families. He has an impressive catalog of raps that he has written exploring topics from his history, love, and loss.

Jorden's In-Depth Profile and many more are live on [indepthprofiles.mare.org](http://indepthprofiles.mare.org) now! In-Depth Profiles are a personalized way for MARE youth to share their story in their own way with potential families. If you think your MARE youth would be interested in working with us on an In-Depth Profile, contact Jennifer Brooks at [jennifer\\_brooks@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org).



**Amalie Montano**

## MARE STAFF *Shoutout*

MARE Staff, Paul Rains, Jennifer Brooks, Jessie Thompson, and Gabrielle Werkheiser would like to shout out a few people for exemplifying what a great team for foster youth should look like. Jorden's adoption worker, Arissa Schut, was encouraging in his In-Depth Profile project and provided vital connections to MARE staff. His ARC worker, Amalie Montano was able to transport Jorden to the recording site and was creative in ways to get him to open up. Lastly, the clinician, Kasi Nadler, was invaluable by making sure Jorden attended video calls, helping him organize his lyrics, and getting those lyrics back to MARE staff for review in a timely manner. Thank you for being such a great team and for everything you do for MARE foster youth.

# Family Directory

Do you have a MARE youth on your caseload? Be sure to search the MARE Family Directory for potential matches.



For a complete list of events and resources, visit [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org)

### Mailing Address

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Ann Arbor, MI

Toll Free | Fax  
800-589-6273 | 734-528-1695

Email Address  
[mare@judsoncenter.org](mailto:mare@judsoncenter.org)

# MARE Events



MEET & GREET  
HOLLAND

April 26th

MEET & GREET  
DETROIT

May 17th

MEET & GREET  
HOLLAND

June 21st

For more information, contact [jessica\\_thompson@judsoncenter.org](mailto:jessica_thompson@judsoncenter.org) or call 734-528-2070.



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