



BRIGHTENING DARK SPACES

BLESS CHILDREN

What does it mean to bless and advocate for children in the child welfare system?

BLESS CPS/DFPS

How can we support the individuals who advocate for the well-being of foster children in our community?

ADVOCATE FOR
CHANGE & LEAD
THAT CHANGE TO
HAPPEN.

Assisting in & supporting
the refurbishment of
Child Protective Services
(CPS/DFPS) office
visitation spaces as we
bless the child welfare
system.

Visit Us At:

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BRIGHTENING
DARK SPACES

Written November 2022

By Brightening Dark Spaces 501(c)3



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Letter From The Director

Hello **ADVOCATES** for change,

Thank you for considering brightening your dark spaces. I can assure you that your efforts will be multiplied. Before beginning *Brightening Dark Spaces*, my concern was that I wouldn't meet my goal. I wondered if my goal was too high or unrealistic, but God clearly told me: "Helen, this is not your idea; it's My idea that I put on your heart to pursue. And I hold all power and authority over hearts, money, and resources. Do you not trust that I can turn my idea into reality?" So, by faith, I launched. And over the next few weeks, God did immeasurably more than I could ask, think, or imagine. The Brazos County CPS office visitation rooms saw much change. Any space with the presence of God is always subject to change. *Brightening Dark Spaces* wants to create opportunities for others to emulate Jesus by bringing light, advocating for change, blessing the child welfare system, changing atmospheres, and building the Kingdom.

Will you consider partnering with us to lead this type of effort in your local CPS/DFPS office?

Bless you, Helen Hindman

Founder and Director of *Brightening Dark Spaces*



THE PROCESS

We hope that by providing you with a step-by-step process, you will see the manageability of a *Brightening Dark Spaces* project. At first, the process may seem overwhelming and intimidating, but by taking these simple steps, profound change of atmosphere will be brought to your local CPS visitation spaces.

1. Identify Your CPS Office

This is the first step. Find your local Child Protective Service office, often titled the **Department of Family and Protective Services**. Stop by the office and talk to the manager or a caseworker about seeing the current condition of the visitation spaces. Ask about the possibility to refurbish them.

2. Receive Approval

3. Create Vision for Each Space



4. Set Up an Amazon Registry

5. Raise Funds

Contact *Brightening Dark Spaces* in order to raise funds through our non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Raising funds through a non-profit will provide a tax deduction for your donors!

6. Hire a Contractor for Painting, Drywall, or Other Minor Renovation

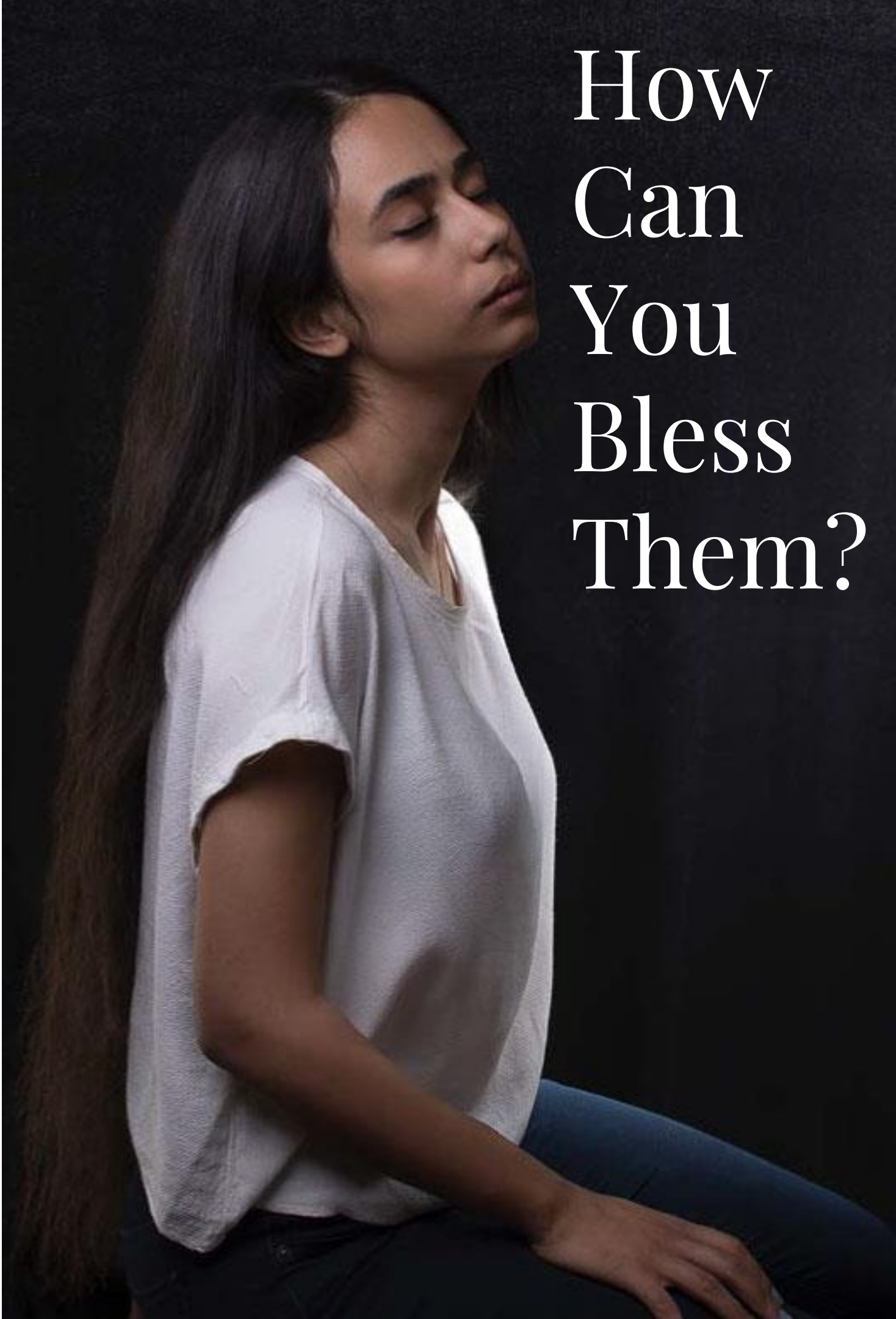
7. Buy Furniture, Toys, Rugs, Decorations, and Other Needed Items

8. Set a Refurbishment Day

This is the BIG day when you get to see your vision become reality! Often this will have to be a Saturday considering that visitations happen Monday through Friday.

More information in the following pages with more details concerning each step of the process given above.





How Can You Bless Them?

November 2022 | Brightening Dark Spaces

RECEIVING APPROVAL

We want to give guidance on this step specifically, because this was the most difficult and challenging part of the process for us when refurbishing our local Child Protective Services visitation rooms. Depending on which county you are in, your CPS/DFPS office will have a different landlord/owner/manager. The building could be owned directly by the State of Texas (or whichever state you are in), or the building could have a separate landlord/owner/manager.

CPS/DFPS employees could simply give you approval themselves if they are not concerned about the owner being strict or concerned about the changes being made. Especially if you are merely doing minor renovations (no painting or drywall work), you might be able to simply get the necessary approval from CPS employees themselves.

In Brazos County, we had to go up the chain of authorities and get approval from multiple individuals, including CPS/DFPS, the manager of the building, the owner of the building, and the State of Texas. Now that this project has been completed successfully in one county, I am hopeful that it will become easier to get approval considering that *Brightening Dark Spaces* is a non-profit organization and there are examples of its positive impact.



BRIGHTENING DARK SPACES

**BRAZOS COUNTY CPS VISITATION
ROOM REFURBISHMENT**

*Give
Today!*

ROOM INSPIRATION

These rooms hold much heaviness, trauma, differences, and backgrounds. Children of all ages come into these spaces to visit with their birth family, therefore we need to be thoughtful about creating spaces where children of all ages, races, sizes, genders, backgrounds, and behaviours can feel comfortable. We need to consider that these rooms need to be safe, especially for children with behavioural issues following past trauma. Be thoughtful about the small details in order to create a space where everyone feels comfortable and welcome.



Let's **create** spaces
where everyone feels
welcome!

**And the
darkness will
not overcome
it**

[ITEMS WE RECOMMEND]

- A toddler play tent
- Children's play-table
- Stand-up fake plants
- New crayons and paper rolls
- Books that represent all races, sizes, and circumstances
- Bright decorations that represent different races and lines of truth that will encourage children
- Huge, soft rugs for children to play on that will cover the entire floor



Start Thinking.

And tailor according to your own spaces



Steps For Fundraising (because that obvi needs to happen)

1. Contact Us

Contact us, so that we can provide details you will need about fundraising through our non-profit, *Brightening Dark Spaces*. We will gladly partner with you as an organization you can raise funds through! We will help you set things up so that your donors will receive a receipt following their tax-deductible donation to use for tax purposes. We want to give incentive and motivation for generosity.

2. Amazon Registry

We highly recommend that you set up an Amazon Registry for your project. When we refurbished the Brazos County CPS office, nearly \$2,000 worth of items were bought off the registry and directly shipped to our home! Boxes and boxes came in. The Amazon Registry is a win because the donor gets to see what item they are contributing to the project. As they shop, they are getting a glimpse of what the rooms will soon look like, having vision for their purchased items in the spaces! Additionally, YOU get to create the registry, so you can add whatever items you think would belong best in the space.

3. Get the Word Out with Our Help

Now it's time to spread the word! Whether that's on social media or face-to-face, the more ears that hear and eyes that see, the better. When doing our project, we mainly spread the word through Facebook. This was a simple way to post and ask people to re-post, share, and add to their stories. We had a large following and over 2,000 people saw our fundraiser post. Go see our Facebook and Instagram pages for inspiration! We'd LOVE to post your project on our page to help spread the word as well!

4. Wait as the money registry items role in and pray perseveringly that God would put a pull on hearts to give out of the **generosity** of His own heart!



Ask Them.

One thing that we did was ask Child Protective Services what THEY needed. We want to serve those who advocate for foster children by modifying our vision to what is needed in the spaces.

Bless Them.

Bless CPS/DFPS with what they need. They are the ones who know best what needs to be in the rooms. I asked multiple local caseworkers what items are at utmost necessity to be in the spaces, and they happily gave me insight into what was best for the spaces and how I could bless the foster children who they see come in and out of the visitation rooms.

Child Protective Service Office Visitation Spaces

How God Made You

Written by Matthew Paul Turner

Illustrated by David Catrow

Black, White Just Right

Written by Marguerite W. Davol

Illustrated by Irene Trivas

Gritty and Graceful

Written by Caryn Rivadeneira

Maybe Something Beautiful

Written by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell

Illustrated by Rafael López

Where Are You From?

Written by Yamile Saied Méndez

Illustrated by Jaime Kim

Dreamers

Written by Yuyi Morales

¡Me Gusta Como Soy!

Written by Karen Beaumont

Illustrated by David Catrow

Eyes That Kiss in the Corners

Written by Joanna Ho

Illustrated by Dung Ho

The Proudest Blue

Written by Ibtihaj Muhammad with S. K. Ali

Illustrated by Hatem Aly

Drum Dream Girl

Written by Margarita Engle

Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut

Written by Derrick Barnes

Illustrated by Gordon C. James

The Invisible Boy

Written by Trudy Ludwig

Illustrated by Patrice Barton

Last Stop on Market Street

Written by Matt de la Peña and
illustrated by Christian Robinson

Little Dreamers (and the whole collection)

Written by Vashti Harrison

Visionary Women Around the World

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History

Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History

Dream Big, Little One

DIVERSE BOOKS

Because we care that everyone is represented.



Representation MATTERS,
So let's diversify our collection!

So, PAINT?

Most likely, you will need to paint the rooms. We recommend that you paint the rooms bright white. We used a color called Light Reflective White because we wanted the rooms to be as bright and light reflecting as possible. You could hire a contractor to paint or do it yourself depending on if you receive approval to do so. You will need to consider the price of painting the rooms when thinking about your budget and how much money you are setting out to raise. Consider hiring a contractor to repair drywall. Consider investing in some Magic Erasers to clean any marks off the walls.



I am hopeful that the pictures of our project provided both here and on our website (see Featured Projects) would be inspiration for those leading similar projects in their counties.

Details matter, so pay attention to what you buy and place in these spaces. Of course, price also matters.

We found most of our items at Amazon, HomeGoods Target, Marshalls, Home Depot, Hobby Lobby and TJ Maxx.

We also found some great used furniture on Facebook Marketplace, which saved us a lot of money! Contact us for more inspiration.



More Things to Think About:

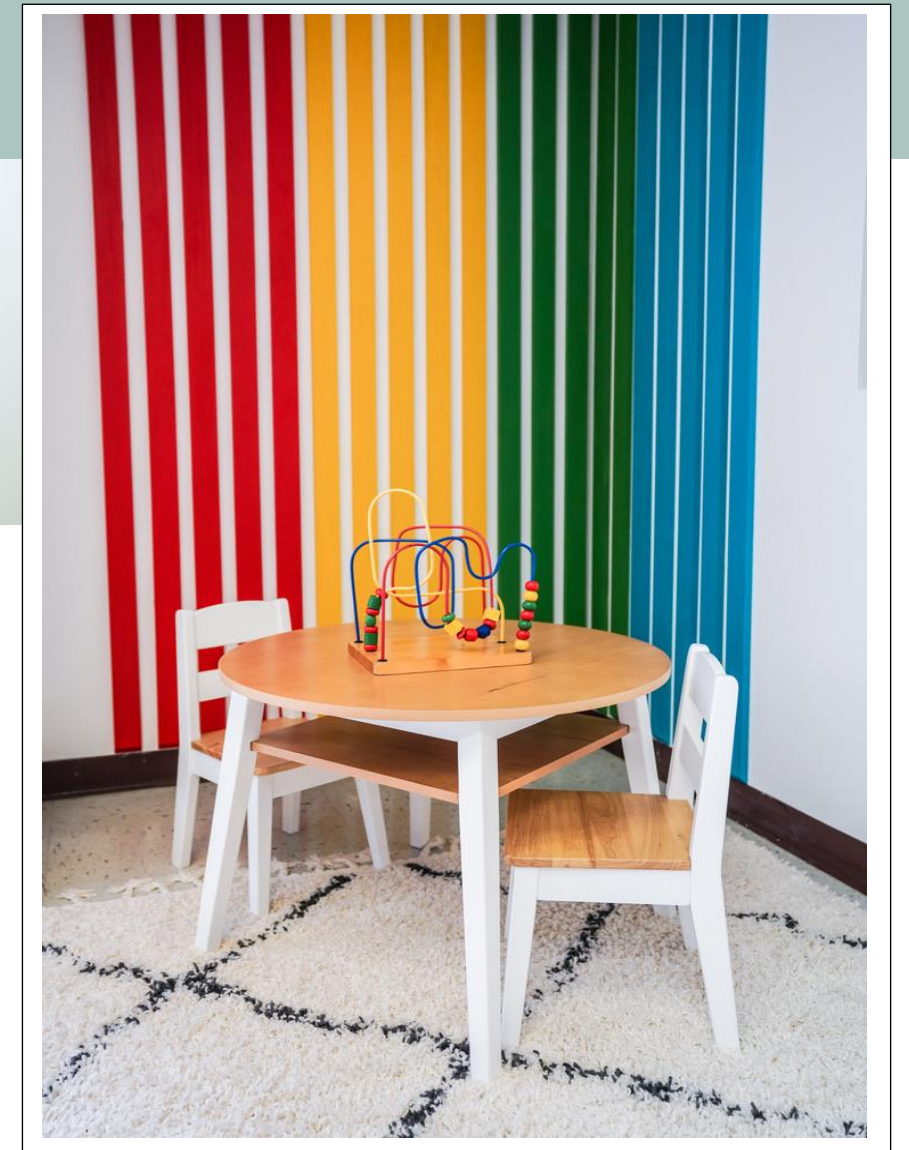
- Baby dolls of all races
- Cube storage with cute baskets (some toy storage is low quality so be careful about what you buy)
- Melissa and Doug furniture and toys are AMAZING
- Wooden play table for train tracks and building
- Lots of wooden toys. Many plastic toys are low quality. We recommend investing in what will last
- Provide paper rolls and crayons for older children to have a creative activity to do
- Wooden puzzles of shapes, animals, letters, numbers
- Wooden dollhouse
- Large play cube for toddlers
- Rocking horse (or in our case elephant)
- Wooden play kitchen with fruits, veggies, and play food!
- A PLAY TENT for sure!



BIG KID BOXES:

We provided the CPS caseworkers with “big kid boxes” for each room. These contained craft supplies and older kid activities that can be pulled out when an older child comes for visitation. That way, the younger children do not have access to things that they should not play with. We want to make older kids feel welcome by providing activities for them too!

Advocate for change. And lead that change to happen.



You can change atmospheres.

Prior to their journey in the system, children in the child welfare system experience trauma, abuse (either physical, emotional, or sexual) neglect, domestic violence, unstable families and parental units, insecurity, fear, and separation. These children suffer enough trauma without having to spend some of their most traumatic and challenging moments in dark spaces. Visitation spaces already hold many unsettling hours for those spending time in them. *Brightening Dark Spaces'* role is to transform experiences in these rooms. As Christ-followers, we are called to follow Christ. Christ was the LIGHT in the DARKNESS. He turns "the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground." He is "the light (that) shines in the darkness, and the darkness has NOT overcome it." He says, "I am the light of the world." When we look at Jesus's role and begin to emulate him in our world today, we *must* bring light.

As the older sister of two former foster children, I developed a huge heart for the child welfare system and all those involved. Each week, my family and I would attend my sisters' visitations with their birth family, spending time in the Brazos County Child Protective Service office visitation rooms. Seeing the condition of the rooms (bad atmosphere, dark, gloomy, and in need of new books and toys), I aimed to change the atmosphere. I began to realize that atmosphere matters, especially for traumatized children. Atmosphere is what we see; it's what surrounds us. Often, atmosphere dictates our experiences in spaces and the memories left behind us. Additionally, atmosphere can create feelings, either positive or negative. My longing was for each child in the child welfare system to be in spaces where they feel loved, safe, and comfortable. Each child is more precious, unique, and more loved by God than we can imagine, and it is a privilege to create spaces where love surrounds them.





DÉCOR TIPS

ALL. THE. IDEAS.

- Creative projects: wooden vertical slat design (as pictured), raw wooden book and picture shelves
- High curtains for the windows to make the ceilings feel taller
- Painting the rooms bright white in order to brighten the space and reflect any light, whether natural or overhead
- Simple, yet fun decorations on the wall
- Decorations that include pictures of diverse children, representing all races, ethnicities, backgrounds, sizes, and genders
- Large, soft rugs in order to cover the entire floor and give littles a place to play on the ground
- Use books as decorations by putting them on wall shelves
- If you have the space, larger furniture such as couches or comfy fabric or leather chairs will help the space to feel more like a living room, rather than an office space
- Fun, light-coloured throw pillows for the couches, chairs, and/or benches
- Large fake plants that will bring a natural look into the spaces
- Simple, lots of black and white, wood, and neutral colours
- Add in colour with colourful toys
- Lots of baskets for toys. You can put these on the ground, in bookcases, or in cube storage
- POUFS for the ground. These can be for footrests, chairs, or just looking cute! You can get them woven or knit, fabric or jute! We. Got. Them. All.



A Note from Angela.

Hello friends,

It has been a joy to watch God take an idea planted in my daughter's heart and bless each step along the way, so that the fruit produced in the end has been so so good. It has also been a joy for this project to be a family endeavour—to watch all my kids and my husband and even my parents get involved and work hard to bless others. These kinds of service opportunities are rare, and I'm excited that Helen has the vision to encourage other families to do similar projects to support their own local CPS offices. She now has not only the vision, but the experience to help you along the way if God puts this on your heart too.

For me, these visitations rooms are sacred spaces. In those rooms I first met my daughters' birth family members, and began establishing relationships with them. In those rooms I left pieces of my heart each and every week. And I learned to be open-handed with my daughters' futures, as I entrusted them again and again to others.

It has been healing in a way to help change those rooms for the better, and to watch my girls play there again. To pray for all the children still regularly coming to those rooms as we cleaned them out. To work alongside my family to bring restoration and joy to those spaces. I hope that other families will be blessed in the same way as we were by partnering with *Brightening Dark Spaces* to affect change.

Much love, Angela Hindman

Thank you for considering partnering with us.

Contact us:

brighteningdarkspaces@gmail.com

(979)-446-3202

Visit us at brighteningdarkspaces.com

And check us out on

Instagram @[brighteningdarkspaces](https://www.instagram.com/brighteningdarkspaces)

Or our Facebook Page, Brightening Dark Spaces