



## Movie Discussion Guide

### Summary of the Movie

This is the story of a group of young Polish women, some barely out of their teens, who outwitted the Nazis during World War II. When 29-year-old social worker Irena Sendler saw the suffering of Warsaw's Jews, she reached out to her most trusted colleagues for help. Together, they rescued over 2,500 Jewish children by forging identification papers and placing them in Catholic safe houses.

Documentary containing graphic images from WWII, and interviews with Sendler, other workers and "hidden children"

### Themes relating to foster care:

Permanence, Abandonment, Feelings of self-worth, Resilience, importance of culture/heritage, connections/continuity

1. Striking examples of how removal from family, even in unimaginable conditions, causes the trauma of separation from family and the issues that accompany that trauma.
2. From an international view, these were extraordinary situations – certain abuse and neglect and nearly certain death for an entire population; the scope and magnitude is beyond what we can imagine. But the view of a "hidden child" is remarkably similar to that of a "child in foster care".
3. Likewise, the danger to self and family, the violent opposition of the government and many of the citizens is in sharp contrast to what Foster Families experience today – we have legal, financial, and moral support from all government institutions, many church and community organizations, and the vast majority of our fellow citizens. But many comments from the "hidden children" and the families who rescued them will be very familiar to any family who has fostered.
4. As a Foster Parent or Social Worker, how have the people in the story inspired you? Do you feel pride that in some ways, your values of service to children and families are related to their values? And that your role in foster care is related to their roles? The obstacles we face are much smaller. But this idea is expressed in the movie: "if even a stranger is drowning, you reach out your hand", and that idea is central in the motivations of our Foster Parents and Social Workers.

**Fact:** In 2005 there were 513,000 youth in foster care. Despite all the advantages of being here and now instead of Warsaw in wartime, we are still challenged by many individual tragedies. Those on the Foster Care Team should still be commended for meeting those challenges. In 2005 18 percent of foster youth who left the system were adopted. 54 Percent were reunited with at least one of their biological parents. (about 9% were emancipated, and about 19% aged out) That represents "success" (permanent relationships intended to last a lifetime) for 72% of children in care, and that should be recognized in any honest assessment of our foster care system. It is also a partial measure of the lives changed for the better by our Foster Families and Social Workers.