

Frequently Asked Questions: Foster Care

What is foster care?

Foster care is a temporary placement for children without parental care due to abuse or neglect. Foster families provide a safe and nurturing home while the biological parents receive support services to regain custody of their children.

Who are the children in foster care?

Children in foster care range in age from birth to 21. Children enter foster care for a variety of reasons related to abuse or neglect. Most have experienced significant trauma, including the trauma of being separated from their families. Providing patience, understanding and unconditional love is paramount in assisting the child in the healing process.

Do I have to be married to become a foster parent?

You do not have to be married.

Do I have to own my own home to become a foster parent?

You do not have to own your own home; in fact, many foster parents rent their residence.

Do I have a choice in which foster children are placed in my home?

Your individual parenting skills and the capacity of your home will be matched with the information you provide in regard to child preferences. This allows the agency to identify when you, as a parent, are most likely to meet the unique needs of a child in the state's care. The assessment process is on-going and part of the continuing licensure process. It is crucial that homes be identified that will best meet the parenting needs of children in care. Even if your home is identified as suitable for a specific child, foster parents have the option to decline the placement.

What type of support services are provided after a child is placed in my home?

Foster parents are assigned a licensing child service worker to support the foster parent. The licensing worker will work with the foster parent to obtain needed training, supports and respite care for the family.

Foster parents also receive a monthly maintenance payment to help cover the costs of caring for the foster child. Medicaid is provided by the state for the child's medical, psychological and dental needs. Additionally, foster parents who are employed or enrolled in school full time may be able to receive childcare services.

Visitation plans for children and their families are also part of the supportive services offered to maintain and preserve those essential relationships and connections that are vital to a child's development and reunification.

What are the age requirements to become a foster parent?

The minimum age is 21. There is no maximum age limit.

What are the training requirements for becoming foster parents?

Foster parents are required to complete a 27 hour pre-service program provided by the Children's Division or contracted agency. Foster parents are also required to complete 30 hours of in-service training during their two-year licensure period. In two-parent homes, both parents must complete the required number of training hours.

Do I have to foster before I can adopt?

No, you do not have to become a foster parent before you are able to become an adoptive parent.