

INTRO TO FOSTER PARENTING

Are you interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent? If you are interested or would like to learn more, here is some basic information about foster and adoptive parenting to get you started.

Foster parents are the foundation of our agency. They play a special role in the life of a child who because of abuse, neglect or sexual victimization has had to leave their family. Many times the child must go to the home of a stranger for foster care. In many ways, **foster parents are just like birth parents** in that they provide for the daily needs and care of the child. The foster parents have contact with the typical circle of people that the child comes in contact with such as school personnel, doctors, dentists, babysitters, peers, etc. The foster family creates a family-like environment for the child and offers supervision, discipline, guidance and nurturance....just like any family.

However, being a **foster family is also very different** than being the biological parents of the child. The child has experienced a history different from the foster family and is likely to have a different culture, perhaps be of a different race than the foster family. The child may come and go quickly from the family unit. The foster parents do not possess all of the parenting rights and responsibilities that the birth parent holds. The foster family does not make decisions alone; they must work cooperatively with the birth parents and the agency to care for the child. The foster family must open their home to agency staff and share personal information with the social worker, even reporting changes in the family's circumstances.

In some ways, **foster parenting is like a job**. For examples, there are specific responsibilities and duties that the foster parent is held accountable for by the agency. The foster parent must keep records and maintain the child and family's confidentiality. However, **foster parenting is VERY different from a job**. Foster parents are on duty for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are not paid, just reimbursed towards the expenses of the child. The entire family is involved as foster parenting is done in their home. Everyday is different and foster parents must make on the spot decisions.

Foster Parenting Roles and Responsibilities

Foster Parents have many different roles and responsibilities when caring for the child, working with the agency and supporting the child's birth family. These include:

- **Provides for the daily care of the child**
 - Includes the provision of food, clothing(adequate, clean and in good repair), shelter, personal care, hygiene
 - Ensures safety, security of the child
 - Encourages the child to participate in recreational and community activities and provides transportation to such activities
 - Ensures that the child attends school, if age appropriate

- **Ensures the continued growth and development of the child**
 - Provides nurturance, discipline, moral instruction, tender loving care
 - Transports and accompanies the child to all health, dental, mental health appointments and school meetings.
 - Gives the child respect as an individual and respects the child's race, culture, and religion
 - Instructs the child in good health and hygiene habits
 - Investigates and encourages the development of the child's special talents and skills
 - Assists the child in attending religious services (as agreed upon by the child's parent)
 - Identifies and works towards assisting the child in overcoming his/her special needs

- **Builds a positive, supportive relationship with the child's family**
 - Respects the child's feelings about his/her family
 - Engages the child's family in a relationship and offers the family support, encouragement and assistance
 - Serves as a teacher and mentor to the child's family
 - Transports the child to and supports the visitation plan as determined by the court/agency
 - Shares relevant information about the child to his/her family
 - When possible, includes the child's family in the child's activities

- **Works in collaboration with the social worker, other professionals and agency as part of the team**
 - Informs social worker of any special needs of the child including education, mental health treatment, health needs, physical needs, etc.
 - Notifies the social worker and obtains permission before taking the foster child on trips of extended time or distance
 - Maintains a "running" record of notes and/or questions of important matters to have the most productive discussions with the social worker
 - Closely observes and documents the foster child's behavior so that these can be clearly and specifically communicated to the child's social worker
 - Requests regular consultations with the social worker to discuss all issues regarding the child and his family and implement the suggestions resulting from the meeting
 - Attends all official case conferences, administrative case reviews, and court hearings to offer input regarding the child
 - Encourages and supports the social worker's relationship with the child
 - Informs the child that information the child shares with you may need to be shared with the social worker especially if the information could lead to harm to the child or others
 - Respects and supports the final decisions made by the agency or court if they can be substantiated as in the best interests of the child
 - Meets with the child's social worker monthly to get and give information

- **Follows all of the DSS and OCS guidelines for family foster homes**
 - Keeps accurate records on the child including medical, dental, mental health, education, monthly progress notes/reports, life book, visitation, and any written material necessary to case planning

- Gives the agency adequate notice (at least 10 days) when requesting removal of a child from the home
- Reports any changes to the living arrangements or family circumstances to the agency immediately
- Notifies the social worker regarding extended child care arrangements
- Maintains the home environment in safe and sanitary manner
- Fulfills all training/education requirements
- Meets with foster care worker monthly