

QUESTIONS ABOUT FOSTER CARE

1. Who are the children in foster care?

Children in foster care are like all other children in many ways. There are boys and girls, single children and siblings. They range in age from infants to teenagers. Children in foster care come from varied backgrounds and different family situations, but all are in foster care because, for some reason, their parents are unable to care for them.

2. How long do children stay in foster care?

Most children eventually return home to their birth parents. When the children are not able to reunite with their birth parents, adoption by the foster family or another family is the goal.

3. What is foster parenting?

Foster parenting provides a safe, loving, and nurturing temporary home for children in foster care. As a foster parent, you will become a member of a team that is working to assure the well-being of the child. The team consists of the child, the child's family, the agency caseworker, the foster family, and the Family Court.

4. What does it take to become a foster parent?

During your home-study and training, you will learn a lot about whether or not foster parenting is right for you. In general, you can be a foster parent if you are in good health and at least 21 years old. You can be married or single. All adults in your household will be subject to a criminal background check and a clearance by the State Central Registry for Abuse and Neglect, and some findings might disqualify you from foster parenting. You must have your own income and a large enough home, free from health and safety hazards, to comfortably accommodate a child. Most important, you must be able and willing to provide care and guidance on a daily basis to a child in need. If you have questions about your qualifications, attend an orientation to discuss your particular issues.

5. What kind of financial support is available to help me care for the child?

Every month, you will receive a check to cover the costs of raising a child. This includes additional funds for clothing and, for infants, diapers. Medicaid covers the children's medical expenses.

6. I've never done this before - will I have other support?

A caseworker will be assigned to work with you throughout the child's stay in your home. Depending on the agency you choose, there will be opportunities to attend special training sessions throughout the year. Day care, counseling and therapy, and summer camp may be available. Joining a foster parent support group is a good way to get advice and assistance from experienced foster parents.