



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FOSTER CARE

WiFamilyConnectionsCenter.org

What is Foster Care?

Foster care is temporary care for children who cannot live with their families because of safety concerns. Children in foster care may live with relatives, like kin, or with unrelated foster parents. Public, private, and tribal child welfare agencies license foster families and manage the safety and well-being of the children placed in foster care. The primary goal of foster care is reunification.



WHO ARE THE KIDS IN FOSTER CARE?

Children in Wisconsin's foster care system are between the ages of 0 and 18. However, most often the children in need of homes are not babies or toddlers; they are teenagers, sibling groups, or children with varying mental, behavioral, emotional, or physical health needs.

Some children have been significantly impacted by traumatic experiences and very much need stability and attention.



WHY ARE FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED IN WISCONSIN?

It can be difficult to think about, but every day, there are children who have to be removed from their family homes because of abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Right now there are more than 6,000 children in foster care across Wisconsin.

IS IT HARD TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT?

No, but it will take a little time. First you need to contact a licensing agency (county, private, or tribal). The licensing professional will need to get to know you better through interviews and through assessing paperwork that you fill out. You will also be required to attend training. To learn more about the agencies that license parents, visit the following websites:

WiFamilyConnectionsCenter.org or dcf.wisconsin.gov OR call 1-800-762-8063.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR FOSTER PARENTS?

As a foster parent, you will have a social worker available to you to offer support throughout your journey. You will receive monthly payments to help cover the costs of food, clothing, personal care, and any kind of special assistance a child in your care may need. There may be other supports or services that your licensing agency provides for foster parents, such as assistance with day care costs or respite services. Talk to the licensing professional about what is available.



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How Do I Know if I'm Ready?

Foster is 24-hour care provided by licensed foster parents for children who cannot live with their parents because it is unsafe, because they have special care or treatment needs, or because other circumstances exist that result in their parents or family being unable to care for them.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A FOSTER PARENT.

- Provide a safe and nurturing environment.
- Promote normalcy and personal growth and improve well-being by including children in the family's daily activities and allowing them to participate in everyday activities without agency barriers.
- Support contact between children and their birth families/caregivers; establish working relationships with birth families/caregivers to co-parent children, facilitate connection, and provide transportation to and from visits when possible.
- Advocate for the children in all applicable domains (identity formation, maintaining connections, school, medical/developmental/behavioral health, etc.)
- Communicate and work closely with your licensing professional and the family's child welfare professional and team regarding progress and concerns.
- Arrange and take the children to medical and dental appointments.

These are the basic responsibilities of a foster parent. There are more responsibilities you may take on as you parent/care for this child, as there would be with any parenting role.

FOSTER PARENTS ARE REGULAR PEOPLE WHO CARE A LOT ABOUT SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Here's what foster parents say they value about what they do:

- Working collaboratively with parents and helping families stay together.
- Helping children stay connected to their families.
- An adventure—an opportunity to make a difference.
- An opportunity to give and receive love, even if only briefly.
- I enjoy the hubbub.
- Supporting parents and helping families stay together.
- I love the feeling that we made a difference in the lives of kids.
- Feeling we are making a difference in the lives of these kids adds meaning to our own lives.



I HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS.

That's good! Deciding to be a foster parent is a big decision. Ask as many questions as you need to until you feel ready to take the next step. The Wisconsin Family Connections Center is available to help you find the answers to your questions.

Go to WiFamilyConnectionsCenter.org for more information
Or send an email to info@wifamilyconnectionscenter.org.

If you prefer, you can call **1-800-762-8063** to talk with a Resource Specialist. They will be happy to talk with you and send you an informational packet.

If you have a desire to nurture a child who needs a safe place to live, if you feel called to care for children who have lived through difficult experiences, if you think it's the right time to open your home, then you're ready to consider being a foster parent.

