



## Is Fostering a Good Fit? Things to Consider

Perhaps a billboard caught your eye while on the road. Or maybe you heard a radio announcement or saw a commercial on TV or online. However the idea of becoming a foster parent presented itself, you are considering the possibility.

You are likely to have a lot of questions about foster care and are looking for answers. To get started, please check out our [Foster Care Information Packet](#). It answers some frequently asked questions and is one of the first steps you can take to learn more about becoming a foster parent.

Perhaps the most crucial step in deciding on family foster care is discussing the idea with any children who currently live in your home. Like you, they may have many questions about what foster care means and how it will impact their lives. It is critical that you involve them in making the decision. For more information about those conversations, see [Preparing the Kids in Your Home for Fostering](#).

### Things to Think About as You Make Your Decision

*The purpose of foster care.* Foster care is temporary care for children who cannot live with their families because of safety concerns. The primary goal of foster care is reunification, meaning children return to their homes and families of origin. Foster parents and birth parents are expected to engage in a co-parenting relationship to help make this happen.

Most children in foster care return home to their families. When that is not possible, they might find permanence through guardianship or adoption by a relative or their identified foster or adoptive family.

*The children in foster care.* Children are placed in foster care for different reasons. Some examples include a child who has been abandoned, a child who is the victim of abuse or neglect, a child who is at high risk of harm (such as a sibling of a child who was abused or neglected), a child whose parent is incarcerated or hospitalized, a child who has significant medical or mental health needs, or a child who has committed a juvenile offense.

*The length of time a child may need foster care.* Some children are in care for one day, others for many years; each child's case is different.

*The ages of children in foster care.* Children in foster care range between 0 and 18 (this can be voluntarily extended to 21 for those who qualify).



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*Emotional and behavioral challenges.* Children in foster care might struggle with issues of trust, attachment, and anxiety. Some will present mild emotional and behavioral challenges. In contrast, others may exhibit more moderate to severe emotional and behavioral challenges as a result of the trauma they have experienced. Often, this is coupled with one or more mental health diagnoses and can show up very differently in each child. Mild emotional and behavioral challenges might include being extra quiet, shy, withdrawn, immature, having occasional tantrums, having difficulty expressing feelings or distinguishing between feelings of anger, sadness, or fear. Moderate to severe emotional and behavioral challenges might look like aggressive behaviors, depression, impulsiveness, significant mental health concerns that may sometimes pose a danger to themselves or others, hoarding food, difficulty sleeping, delinquent behaviors, running away, sexually acting out, or substance abuse.

Despite the many challenges and traumas children in foster care may encounter, remember that every situation and each child is different.

*Demographics.* Children in foster care may or may not share the same age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability status as your family. It is important to acknowledge any biases you may have and take steps to eliminate these biases.

*Adults in charge.* If there are other children in your home, assure them that you are responsible for the supervision of any children who are in your care. Let them know that you will establish guidelines that will be fair to and considerate of all.

*Expect good days and challenging days.* Remember that there will be days when the household runs smoothly, and there may be days with chaos and stress. Know that with support, you can manage the stressful days and celebrate the good days together.

*Sharing with others.* Remind your children that becoming a foster family means sharing their parents, house, bedrooms, toys, yard, time, family, and friends. Talk about the rewards of sharing with others and discuss ideas to ensure everyone has their own space.

*Supervision.* Sometimes, the children joining your home will need to be closely supervised to ensure safety. It can be a different type of parenting where the care you provide may be more hands-on than expected. There may be modifications of house rules depending on factors such as age, needs, and challenges of the child you would be caring for. Think about possible rules for showers, bedtime, computer and phone use, and other basic activities. For more information, see our [Establishing Household Rules](#) tip sheet.

*Confidentiality.* Because of rules and laws, private information about children in foster care cannot be shared with others. You will need to guide your children on what can and cannot be shared outside of the family and with whom. Be open to practicing situations with them so they know how to respond.

There is a lot to learn about foster care, and every situation is unique. As you gather more information to make this decision, we encourage you to consult resources and experts to help you get clarification when needed. For example:

- Contact local and statewide agencies like the Wisconsin Family Connections Center to talk to a Resource Specialist
- Ask the licensing agency professional you may be working with to meet with your family to talk about foster care and ask questions
- Connect with a seasoned foster family to learn more about each member's unique foster experience

Please remember that the Wisconsin Family Connections Center team is here to talk with you, answer your questions, provide resources or referrals, and support you and your family every step of the way. You can reach us at 1-800-762-8063 or [info@wifamilyconnectionscenter.org](mailto:info@wifamilyconnectionscenter.org).

# Resources

## From [the Resource Library](#)

- *How Micah Helped Build a Family: A Story for Foster & Adopted Children*, by Deirdre O'Gorman Goldsmith
- *Another Place at The Table*, by Kathy Harrison
- *Finding Our Place—A Guide for Young People Entering Foster Care*, by Christy Barich and youth writers
- *Keeping It Secret: Teens Write About Foster Care Stigma*, by Youth Communication
- *Fostering Across Wisconsin Newsletter: [How Fostering Affects the Whole Family](#)*
- Virtual Resource Kit: [Welcoming a Child to Your Family with Open Arms and Loving Hearts](#)

## Tip Sheets

- [Preparing the Kids in Your Home for Fostering](#)
- [Setting Up for Success: Establishing Household Rules](#)

## Training From [the Champion Classrooms](#)

- [Conversations About Foster Care and Adoption: A Mom and Her Biological Daughter](#)
- [Let's Talk: Preparing Your Home to Welcome a Child](#)
- [Creating Felt Safety Recorded Webinar](#)
- [Relational Permanency: The Role of Foster Parents in Supporting Child Relationships](#)

## Find Hope and Inspiration from [No Matter What Families](#)

- [Ask "What Happened To You" Not "What's Wrong With You"](#)
- [Stronger Together: Foster Parents on the Value of Birth Family Connections](#)
- [Everyone Needs Support: A Birth Mom's Story](#)

## Additional Resources

- [Wisconsin Foster Parent Handbook](#)
- [Becoming a Foster Parent](#)
- [10 Things I Wish I'd Known Before Becoming a Foster Parent](#)