



Choosing a Foster Care Agency

Choosing to be a foster parent is a big decision. The process can be emotional and complex, and you want to be sure that the agency you choose to work with is a good match for you and your family.

The licensing portion of working with a foster care agency is quite similar across the board. No matter what agency you decide to work with, you must complete background checks, training, interviews, home visits, and lots and lots of paperwork.

Many parents looking into foster care start by contacting the Foster Care Coordinator in their county. Those who are part of a Native or Tribal community can connect with their Tribal Foster Care Coordinator. Other parents—typically those with more parenting experience and specialized skills to work with children and youth with more significant mental, emotional, or behavioral needs—choose to work with a private foster care agency. The Wisconsin Family Connections Center [has contact lists for all of these agencies on its website](#).

But how do you know which agency option is best for you?

Ask Questions

First, you are invited to take the time you need to consider your options. Ask questions as you connect with different agencies. Prepare a list of questions you and your family have about foster care, the agency, and the foster parenting licensing process. Some of these questions might include:

- What training is required? How much training will be needed before we are licensed?
- How long will it take to complete the licensing process?
- What support services do you offer for your foster parents?
- How often will case workers come to my home?
- How many youth are placed through your agency?
- What age are children or youth most in need of a foster care placement?
- How do you determine which family to reach out to when you are preparing to transition a child into foster care?
- What are the responsibilities my partner and I, if applicable, will have in coparenting with the child's birth parents?
- What community resources do you provide for the families who foster with your agency?
- How do you handle emergency situations?
- What types of support and services will be provided for foster parents who welcome children into their home who have been abused or neglected? What kind of support and resources will be

provided to the child who has been the victim of abuse or neglect?

- Does your agency have respite options in place?

Seek Input from Current Foster Families

Talk with currently licensed foster parents and ask them for input and feedback. Ask questions such as:

- Why did you choose this agency?
- How long have you been licensed with this agency?
- Have you worked with any other foster care agency?
- Do you feel supported by the agency?
- Does the agency provide or connect you with training that is helpful and accessible?
- How long do children in care typically remain in your care?
- Is the agency responsive to calls, questions, and concerns?

As you talk with and hear from other foster parents, one tip to remember is that everyone's journey and experiences are unique. While it can be valuable to learn from others, remember that no two families will have the same experience.

Ask for Information

Another step you can take is to read the agency's official policies to learn about the roles and expectations of foster parents, the case worker, and the agency. [The Wisconsin Foster Family Handbook](#) (Chapters 1 and 2) offers an overview of foster care guidelines and expectations of foster parents and other team members.

Please know that the Wisconsin Family Connections Center is here to support you on your journey! Call us at 1-800-762-8063 or email our resource team at info@wifamilyconnectionscenter.org.