

Foster Parents

What is foster care?

Foster care is the temporary care of children whose families are having problems and the child can not safely remain in the home. Children, in the legal custody of the Department of social Services, are placed in a licensed foster home or group care facility that can best meet their needs while their parents work with the Department to resolve their problems.

During this separation period, the department works first toward returning the children to a safe home environment. If reuniting with their biological family is not possible, then permanency is sought through termination of parental rights and adoption. Youths remaining in foster care receive assistance to make a successful transition into adulthood.

Who are the children?

Children enter foster care because they can not remain in their homes and be safe. The children have unique strengths and needs. Some are experiencing a variety of social, emotional, and behavioral or physical difficulties because of abuse and/or neglect. The children range in age from birth to 18 years old.

Most children are in foster care temporarily. They need nurturing family homes for the duration of their stay in foster care.

Some children in foster care are waiting for adoption and are in foster homes, group homes and treatment facilities. They need families who will give them a home lasting into adulthood.

Who are foster parents?

Foster parents are special people who recognize the special needs of children living in a troubled family.

With an investment of time, energy, love and guidance, foster parents can make a difference in the lives of the children and families in need.

Individuals or couples can be licensed as foster parents. Foster parents receive financial reimbursement to meet the basic needs of the children. Children in the legal custody of the department may also be placed with relatives that can provide full-time care (kinship foster care), protection and nurture. Relatives who become foster parents may access the same services for children as non-relative foster parents.

What do Foster parents do?

- *Provide daily care, guidance, and acceptance.*
- *Experience a child's first tooth, first steps, first day of school, first date, driving.*
- *Model a healthy family lifestyle.*
- *Assist with educational and medical needs.*
- *Provide transportation to and from school and appointments.*
- *Share information about the child's progress and needs with the department.*
- *Promote and provide structure and appropriate and reasonable discipline.*

What is required to become a foster parent?

- *Complete 14 hours of training through the department. Additional training is required for specialized foster parents.*
- *Complete application with a foster home licensing specialist.*
- *Undergo criminal background check, finger printing and check of the Central Registries of Abuse and Neglect for all household member 18 years and older.*
- *Provide three references from those who have known the prospective foster parent for at least three years.*
- *Submit current medical reports for all family members in the home.*
- *Pass fire and health department inspections of the home.*
- *Demonstrate financial and emotional stability, responsibility and a willingness to work closely with the agency.*
- *Not use corporal punishment.*
- *May be licensed to care for up to 5 children at a time (total of all children under age 18 not to exceed 5 including their own children); no more than 2 under age 1.*
- *Agree to keep all information shared confidential.*

The South Carolina Department of Social Services cannot and will not deny prospective foster/adoptive parents the opportunity to foster/adopt on the basis of race, color, or national origin, nor delay or deny the placement of children on the basis of race, color or national origin.

What supports are there for Foster Parents?

- *Monthly board payments to help offset the cost of caring for the foster child.*
- *Quarterly allowance for foster children's clothing.*
- *Monthly visits from an agency caseworker.*
- *Training to meet licensing requirements.*

What are the rewards of foster parenting?

- *Be a positive influence in the life of a child.*
- *Make a difference in families and communities.*
- *Share in the growth of a child.*
- *Help a child build a foundation on which to be successful in the community. Contribute to the lives of children and families with a pay off for years to come.*
- *Tell bed time stories.*

What if I can not be a foster or adoptive parent right now?

You can:

- *Volunteer to be a Guardian Ad Litem*
- *Volunteer to mentor a child*
- *Volunteer to tutor a child*
- *Donate School supplies*
- *Sponsor a child's Christmas presents*
- *Sponsor a child's birthday*
- *Sponsor a child for camp*
- *Sponsor child's care packets*

For more information, contact Keith Frazier, Pickens County DSS Director, at (864) 898-5810, ext. 217, or by e-mail at keith.frazier@dss.sc.gov.