

The most frequently asked questions **about foster parenting**

1. What are the first steps to become a foster parent?

Call our hotline number at 1(866) 899-2649 and find out when our next training is for licensure. You can also request a packet of information and come to an Orientation Meeting.

2. Is the foster care licensing process difficult?

The process is not difficult. Foster parents are carefully screened through a process of interviews and home visits. Each adult 18 years old & older residing or working in the home must pass a criminal record check, which includes fingerprints prior to licensure. Foster parents are asked to get a physical & TB test. We require 20 hours of core training along with CPR & First Aid prior to placement of foster children.

3. Why must a foster home be licensed?

According to the law in the State of California, any person other than a guardian or a close relative who provides care and supervision for a child less than 18 years of age on a full-time basis must have a license. This law is for the protection of the child.

4. Who issues the license?

In Santa Barbara County, the Foster Care Licensing Unit of the Department of Social Services issues the license. Licensing regulations are established and monitored by the California State Department of Social Services.

5. Is there a charge for the license?

There are limited expenses that are involved in the process; fingerprint costs @ \$7, the physical exam, CPR and First Aid training if not offered by the County, and possible safety requirements, such as a smoke detector or fence around a pool or body of water.

6. How many children can a foster parent be licensed for?

Foster care regulations require that adequate space be provided for each child. The number of children you would be licensed for would be based on the size of your home, your own family size and the maximum license requirements in Santa Barbara County. We try to maintain a limit of 6 foster children, with the total number of children in the home (including birth, adopted, step, foster and guardianship) to be a maximum of 6.

7. What kind of person makes a good foster parent?

Adults who care deeply about children. Someone who can be consistent and understands that routines are what help children to feel secure. A caregiver that is flexible and able to adjust to unexpected events, for example nightmares or tantrums. A person willing to

learn new parenting techniques and someone who will take advantage of training opportunities to gain new skills. An understanding individual who can acknowledge the child's bond with their parent and has a willingness to work with birth parents to reunite families.

8. Do foster parents receive information on the past history of the child?

Yes. It is our policy to give as much information as possible about a child so that the foster parents may better understand the child's needs. It is important that a child is accepted in the foster home, and this can only happen if foster parents are aware and have an understanding of his problems. However, foster parents must keep this information confidential.

9. Must the foster parent accept any child referred to their home?

No. After receiving as much information as possible, the foster parents needs to decide whether or not they can work with the child. We appreciate a thoughtful decision, even if it is negative. Our goal is to keep children in as few placements as possible.

10. Do foster parents need to accept all ages of children?

No. The foster home license is issued for the specific number of children requested, provided there is adequate space and an ability to meet the children's needs. Foster parents then discuss with the social worker what age and sex they can work with best. Placements are made within this age range and foster parents have the right not to take any foster child whose placement they think would not work.

11. May the foster parent see the child before placement?

This would be the ideal arrangement; however, because of time and emergencies, it is not always possible.

12. Can the foster parents receive help if problems develop with the foster child?

Yes. A social worker is assigned to each child in the foster care system. It is the social workers responsibility to help in the supervision of a child. Foster care works best when foster parents and social workers work as a team to meet the children's needs. In addition, there are many community resources that may be available when problems arise.

13. How long does a foster child remain in the home?

There is no definite length of time. The goal of foster care is to reunite children with their parents when a suitable home environment can be reestablished. In most cases, this is the decision of the Juvenile Court. Reunification services to the parents can last anywhere from six to eighteen months.

14. How long must foster parents wait for placement?

The placement of a foster child is determined by the particular needs of the foster child, the abilities of the foster family, and the suitability of the child to the foster family. Many factors are considered in placement, including religion, age and sex, schools, relationships with others, etc. It is desirable to have many homes with varying compositions, attitudes and locations in order to select the most suitable one for a particular child. Placements are generally more rapid in homes that can accept a family of children or older children with problems. Homes for children aged 12 and over are especially needed.

15. Do foster children visit with their parents or relatives?

Visitation is arranged by the supervising social worker in consideration of the needs of the foster child, the birth parents, and the foster family (in that order). Visits take place in safe places like the CWS office or in a neutral setting. Willingness to work with birth parents is essential. The frequency of visits is ordered by the Court.

16. Can a foster child go on vacation or trips with the foster family?

Yes. Foster families are encouraged to accept a child as one of the family, and trips are excellent experiences for foster children. However, such plans need to be worked out in advance with the social worker or probation officer. Any travel out of state requires a Court Order.

17. Does a foster family receive money for the care of foster children?

Yes. This rate is set by the State and approved by the County Board of Supervisors. The amount of money provided monthly depends on the age of the foster child. The money received is for food, clothing, and maintenance of the foster child, not income for the foster family. There are also special care rates for children with more severe medical and emotional needs.

18. Is there a provision for medical care for foster children?

Yes. Almost every foster child will receive a MediCal card that covers most medical and dental expenses. This card is accepted by clinics, some local doctors and hospitals.

19. What about a child's clothing?

If the child does not have adequate clothes at the time of placement, an arrangement usually can be made for an initial clothing allowance. After this, clothing should be purchased from the monthly payment for the child's care. There is also an annual clothing allowance for each foster child.