

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BEING A FOSTER PARENT

How big does my house/apartment have to be to foster?

There has to be enough space so the children can have their own sleeping area, room for a dresser, and space for personal belongings. One bedroom apartments are not desirable. Children cannot sleep in common areas such as the hallway or living room.

Do I have to be married to foster?

No. We have single people who foster and do very well. You must be 21 years of age and have a stable home life. If you are married or have two adults residing together, both adults are viewed as equally responsible for parenting and must attend all of the required trainings.

If I have a disability, am I still eligible to foster?

Yes. Each candidate must pass a medical evaluation by a licensed physician. You must have energy, be able to perform the core duties of parenting, and demonstrate stable mental and emotional adjustment. The primary caregiver must have a valid Pennsylvania driver's license and be readily able to transport the children.

What types of children are in the greatest need of foster homes?

Monroe County needs foster homes for every age group. We particularly have a need for homes that can take teenagers and sibling groups.

Will I be told pertinent information about the kids before they are placed in my home?

Yes. When the agency calls and asks you to take a placement, you will be told what we know about the child. We will also tell you why the child is coming into care. All information you receive must be kept confidential.

What type of training do I need?

The agency requires that each family attend pre-service training. Each year following approval, you are required to attend classes; however, you will have the option of scheduling and selecting your own trainings. Many interesting trainings are offered that you will enjoy and benefit from. Up to six (6) hours of training can be fulfilled by checking out agency approved videos and/or internet classes.

How many children can be in my home at one time?

The primary concern is that there is enough space, supervision, and time for each child. PA Regulations state that there can be no more than six children under the age of 18 (including natural, adopted, and foster children) living in the home.

What do I need to be approved as a licensed foster family?

- An open mind
- Bedroom space for each child, including an individual crib/bed for every child. Children of opposite sex five years old and above may not share a bedroom.
- Sufficient income to support the family.
- FBI clearances, Child Abuse clearances, and Pennsylvania State Police checks are required for each adult resident in the home. Generally, we will not consider anyone with a child abuse or criminal history within the past 10 years, including serious driving offenses. Minor infractions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Pre-service training

Other requirements will be reviewed with you at your initial visit.

Will the children placed in my home have medical insurance?

Yes. An ACCESS or similar medical card will be provided to the foster parents in the name of the foster child. The child's caseworker will provide you with information about which doctors/dentists accept ACCESS or the child's insurance. Infants and toddlers up to five years old and pregnant teens are eligible for the WIC Food Program.

Will I receive money for my time and living expenses/clothes for the children?

Yes. You will receive financial reimbursement for the children's needs. Financial compensation for your work in fostering is based on the level of care system. The daily per diem rate for foster parenting will vary with placements (average \$19-\$24) a day. In addition, you receive a standard weekly allowance for the foster parent to provide to each child. Clothing purchases (\$600/yr.); birthday/holiday presents; some registration fees for sports/camp; long distance calls; haircuts; school pictures/trips and some other miscellaneous items will be reimbursed as well.

Can children share bedrooms?

Yes. Children of the opposite sex who are 5 years old and under can share a bedroom. Children of the same sex can share a bedroom, and bunk-beds are allowed. Children need their own bed, dresser, and personal space.

What kind of income do I need to be approved as a foster parent?

We have specific guidelines, and foster parents must have an income sufficient to meet their regular expenses. We require proof of the income that is reported by potential parents. The foster family's home should be kept within the general standards of the community in which it is located.

Can both parents work and still foster?

Yes. It is necessary for at least one parent to maintain a flexible schedule. We prefer that both foster parents do not commute outside of the area to New York or New Jersey for full-time employment. Children cannot be placed in childcare for long hours every weekday. Single foster parents that work must have a local job and flexible hours.

What is MCC&Y's policy on pets?

It is not a problem for foster parents to have pets. You must inform us about all pets, and they must be friendly and vaccinated. Foster parents assume responsibility for their pets and must inform us if new pets enter the house.

Who is responsible for transportation of the children?

Foster parents are responsible for all transportation of the children in their home. Parents are reimbursed (current reimbursement is \$.54 per mile) for agency-related travel and children's appointments. Transportation needs will be frequent, and you must have a dependable car.

What happens if a placement is not working out?

Foster parents have the obligation of communicating with the agency and letting us know if a problem is arising. We ask that you give us sufficient prior warning if a placement is not working out so we can find another appropriate home for the child. This notice should be 30 days unless an absolute emergency arises. The job of fostering, not unlike any parenting, requires hard work and strong commitment to create solutions. Every child will have unique strengths and needs; foster parents must establish loyalty and show consistency to children who so desperately need these qualities. Caseworkers and your foster parent coordinators are available to assist you.

Will the agency support me when problems arise?

Yes. We are willing to help you; each family will have a foster parent coordinator from our unit to rely on. Every child will have their own caseworker who will make home visits, answer questions, and be of assistance to you. The Pennsylvania State Foster Parent Association offers services to "just listen", help you identify options, clarify laws, and assist you in finding resources. Prior planning prevents problems.

Do I have the option of saying "no" to a placement?

Yes. You inform us of the gender, age, and other relevant characteristics of children you wish to foster. We will ask foster parents to be flexible and consider taking a child that is outside of what they typically desire. We do respect our foster parents have preferences.

What is the agency's policy on mixing teens of the opposite sex?

Children of the opposite sex ages 13 and above will not be placed in the same home unless they are biological siblings. For example, if you have your own teen daughter we will not call you for placements of teen boys.

What happens if my family goes away?

Occasionally foster parents may want to go away for the weekend or take a brief vacation by themselves. Respite care is a method by which foster children may be cared for by another family for a brief period of time. We ask that if a child has been in your home for 6 months that you will include them on family vacations.

What is the discipline policy?

We believe discipline teaches a child that there are limits and is very important in a healthy family. State regulations prohibit any form of punishment (physical, mental, or verbal) to a foster child which may be considered abusive, degrading or vindictive. This agency strictly endorses and enforces this regulation. Physical punishment, including slapping and spanking, is prohibited.

Are child care services available?

Foster parents can qualify for subsidized childcare services if they meet the work requirement. Foster parents may use child care services for hours they are at work but are responsible for payment if they do not qualify for subsidy or if there is a waiting list for subsidy. We cannot guarantee that you will always receive funding and there may be a waiting list. Child Care Information Services (next door to foster care, 1-866-284-6859) can offer free resource and referral services that can assist you in selecting quality child care.

What are the pros and cons of being a foster parent?

Some positive points include providing a stable home environment for a child in need. A foster parent can be a mentor to a teenager. A foster parent can help a child develop positive behaviors. A foster parent can assist a child to do better in school or learn to trust.

Some tough parts:

- Unfortunately it is not always known when a child will require foster care so a negative point may be getting an occasional emergency phone call at 3:00 a.m. for a new placement;
- A hard part of fostering is the separation and loss when a child returns home;
- A lack of control over decision making.

Current foster parents say the positives greatly outweigh the negatives. We are told that making a difference matters.

How long will a foster child live in my home?

That varies. The agency's primary intention is to reunify a child with their parents whenever possible. The agency may also look into family members to be resources for the child. This process can be time consuming. Children's placements can vary from 1-2 days to a lifetime.

What kind of training will I receive?

Initially the foster parent will take trainings such as First Aid and CPR, Child Growth & Development and Behavior Management. Agency Policy and Procedure is taught as well. Every subsequent year a foster parent is able to take trainings in various topics such as: psychotropic medication, sexual abuse, family fun, etc. They would need to complete 6 hours minimally per year.