



**The Department of Services  
for Children, Youth and  
Their Families**

*Division of  
Family Services*

Dear Potential Foster Parent:

Thank you for viewing Lieutenant Governor Matt Denn's Faith, Family & Foster Care video and your interest in learning about becoming a foster parent. If you have not already viewed the video, please take a moment to do so. The Faith, Family & Foster Care video is located on Lieutenant Governor Denn's State of Delaware webpage at: <http://ltgov.delaware.gov/default.shtml>.

Lieutenant Governor Denn is committed to improving the services that our state offers children who face special challenges, specifically children who are abused, neglected, living in foster care and we need your help. Each day there are over 850 children in Delaware who need foster families to keep them safe and nurture them during a very difficult time in their lives. In addition, there is a need for respite families. These are homes where foster children can go for very short periods of time to give the primary foster family a break or time to deal with family emergencies, for example. Respite families receive training and support similar to foster care families. There is also a need for Emergency Homes. These are homes that only take children first entering foster care for a period of two weeks to a month until an appropriate match can be made with a longer term foster home. We all work together to serve Delaware's children.

On the following pages you will find a description of our foster care program, frequently asked questions regarding foster care, myths & misconceptions regarding foster care and foster care provider programs and contact information. In addition, there is a page that lists ways you can help some of our most vulnerable citizens, the foster children of Delaware. Please feel free to call any of the private foster care agencies for more information on their programs.

Thank you for your inquiry about foster care and reaching out to support Delaware's children who have been abused and/or neglected.

Sincerely,

*John Bates*

John Bates  
Foster Care Program Manager  
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### WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

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Foster Care is temporary care in your home for a child who has been removed from his or her home due to abuse or neglect. Children in need of foster homes range in age from infants through teens, come from all racial/ethnic groups, and some children have special physical or educational needs. Many require special support to catch up educationally and socially with their peers. The goal for most foster children is to return to their parent(s) when the circumstances that led to foster placement have been resolved. However, sometimes children are not able to return home and need a permanent family. This is accomplished through adoption. If you would welcome a child into your home, the love and guidance you can give will benefit that child the rest of his or her life.

Whenever the agency is considering placing a child in your home, the child and the circumstances of placement will be described to you, and you will have the right to determine if you will open your home to that child.

#### Foster Parent:

- protect and nurture children;
- meet the children's developmental needs and address developmental delays;
- support relationships between children and their families;
- promote permanency planning leading to reunification with the child's family or other safe nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime;
- participate as essential and effective members of a professional team;

#### Foster Families care.....

- about children who have abused, neglected, abandoned, and who have gone through the pain of separation from their families. Foster parents give children the support they need to grow physically, emotionally, educationally, and socially.
- about the families of children in care whose parents are over burdened and may have problems with addictions, parenting skills, relationships or legal difficulties. Foster families respect the bonds between children and their parents and siblings. Often foster parents become role models and supports for birth parents while they struggle to make changes in their lives so they can be reunited with their children
- about the right of every child to belong to a family which loves them and keeps them safe. Foster parents participate as team members with social workers and counselors to plan for the child's return to his/her own family or when that is not possible to plan for the child to move onto adoption or another permanent living arrangement.

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### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FOSTER CARE

#### **What is the first step in becoming a foster parent?**

You will be invited to a two-hour orientation. An agency staff person will give you an overview of foster care and the process to become a foster parent. There will be time for your questions. You will get to hear the questions of other prospective foster parents. If you decide you want to continue after you have attended the orientation, you will be invited to sign up for the next class for foster parents. The class is 27 hours long---usually nine Monday evenings or Tuesday evenings, etc.

#### **What are the requirements to become a foster parent?**

- You must have a criminal background check and be fingerprinted.
- You can be of any race or religion.
- Your home will need to pass a home health and safety study.
- You need to be economically stable.
- You will need to provide references.
- You will need to complete an application process. You will receive an application packet when you begin the 27 hours of pre-service training.

#### **Can I choose the age of the foster child?**

Yes. Before you become a foster parent, we will discuss at length with you the kinds of children and the ages that will fit best into your family. It is usually best to take only children younger than your own children. When we ask you to take a child, we will tell you as much as we know about the child. You will decide then if this is a child you can care for. It is better to tell us “no” if you don’t think you can care for the child than for the child to be moved from foster home to foster home.

#### **How long will foster children remain in my home?**

It is difficult to say. Sometime a grandparent, aunt or other relative comes forward and wants to care for the child, so the child may stay only a few days until the agency can determine if that relative home is a safe and good place for the child. Sometimes having their children placed in foster care is a “wake up” call for parents who then exert every effort to resolve their problems and to have their children returned home in just a few weeks or months. At other times, the parents’ problems are more serious or the parents do not do the things required by their case plan--to get substance abuse treatment, for example. If parents do not resolve their problems, Family Court may terminate the parents’ parental rights and free the child for adoption.



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### Do foster families ever adopt the foster children in their homes?

Yes. Every year several children in foster care in Delaware who become legally free for adoption are adopted by their foster parents. Foster parents must recognize that the best place for most children is with their own families. Most children want above all else to be with their own families. Foster parents must truly commit themselves to working with the agency to support and encourage birth parents to resolve their problems so the children can be reunified with their families. When birth parents do not resolve their problems and Family Court terminates the parents' parental rights, foster parents often ask to be considered to become the child's adoptive parents. If foster parents do not adopt the child, foster parents help the child make a successful transition to an adoptive family.

### I am a single person. Can I become a foster parent?

Yes.

### I live in an apartment. Can I become a foster parent?

Yes. Foster parents can own their own homes or rent an apartment or home.

### As a foster parent, can I work outside the home?

Yes. Today most foster parents must work outside the home. The agency will assist you in finding a day care arrangement. Payment for day care is made by the Department of Health and Social Services. Foster parents, just like all parents, are responsible for making sure they have a safe babysitting arrangement at other times when they must be away.

### What supports does the agency provide to the foster family and to the child?

The agency provides monthly board payments that include money for clothes and incidentals. If children come into placement without adequate clothing, an initial clothing allowance is provided at the time of placement. Medicaid is provided to cover a child's medical and dental care. Medicaid also pays for the child's counseling. A needs assessment is done for every child within 30 days of placement. Services are then planned to meet those needs that often include counseling, tutoring, vision/hearing screening, etc.

Each child has the support of a caseworker that works with the birth family, the foster family and the child. A Foster Home Coordinator is assigned to each foster family to support and supervise the foster home. In addition, in-service training is regularly provided for foster families.



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**Are respite services available for emergencies or if foster parents just need a break?**

Yes. Children in foster care are eligible for up to 30 days of respite care each year. However, respite providers are limited, so, unless it is an emergency, foster parents need to give the agency plenty of notice so that respite can be arranged.

**Who provides respite care for children in foster care?**

All foster parents are dually approved as a foster parent and as a respite provider. So, many times foster parents provide respite care for each other. Some foster parents who cannot or who choose not to care for a child all the time decide to provide respite care only. The agency has a great need for more respite providers. In some instances, a foster parent's relative or friend may become a respite provider for that foster family only...and in that case they can go through an abbreviated approval process. Respite providers are paid \$20 a day to cover their expenses.

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**Myths and Misconceptions Regarding Foster Care**

**True or False?**

1. People must be married to be foster parents.
2. Only rich people can afford to become foster parents.
3. People who work full time cannot become foster parents.
4. Foster parents provide a permanent home for children.
5. The children in foster care are mostly younger.
6. Only home owners can become foster parents.
7. The state of Delaware has a lot of foster parents.

**Answers:**

1. False. You may be single, married, in a civil union, in a domestic partnership, divorced, widowed, with or without children, and still be eligible to be a foster parent.
2. False. You do not have to be rich to become a foster parent nor will fostering make you rich. You need to be financially stable. You will receive a monthly stipend to help with expenses.
3. False. You may work outside the home and still be a foster parent. Child care is an available support for children in care.
4. False. Foster Care is usually a temporary service to help families through a difficult time. Occasionally, foster parents will be asked to consider adopting a child who cannot safely return home. People may provide care for one day to a life time.
5. False. Children in foster care range in age from birth to over 18. The majority of kids needing foster homes are teens, emotionally disturbed younger children, and sibling groups
6. False. You may rent a home or apartment and still be a foster parent. You need to have adequate bedroom space to accommodate a child and your home will need to pass a safety inspection.
7. False. There is a serious need for foster homes in the state of Delaware.

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# Family Foster Care Programs in Delaware

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Specialized Programs</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<p><b>*Child, Inc.</b></p> 	Youth 10-17 yrs Occasionally mother and baby together	Delinquent youth who have family and behavioral problems	<b>Wilmington</b> 472-4710 <b>Dover</b> 531-0265
<p><b>*Children and Families First</b></p> 	Newborn to 17 yrs.	General foster care, pre- adoptive infants, medical/developmental disabilities, Hispanic Foster Care	<b>Wilmington</b> 658-5177 <b>Milford</b> 422-8013
<p><b>*Children's Choice, Inc.</b></p> 	Newborn to 17 yrs.	General and specialized foster care for children and adolescents with physical and emotional disabilities, teen mothers, and babies.	<b>Newark</b> 731-9512 <b>Dover</b> 678-0404
<p><b>*NET</b></p> 	Youth 14 to 17 yrs.	Challenging youth who have family and behavioral problems	<b>Christiana</b> 325-6501
<p><b>Division of Developmental Disabilities Services</b></p> 	All Ages	Individuals with developmental disabilities	<b>Wilmington</b> 369-2186 ext. 249 <b>Georgetown</b> 934-8031 ext.336
<p><b>*Progressive Life Inc.</b></p> 	Ages 12 – 17	Challenging youth with family and behavioral issues	<b>Wilmington</b> 778-6502

All agencies furnish monthly payments to cover the child's basic needs. Additional compensation is provided based on difficulty of care. Medical and dental care is provided to children in foster care. Foster parents receive training, consultation, supervision and assistance from agency professionals.

\* Contracted by the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families.

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***Here are ways you can help some of our most vulnerable citizens – the foster children of Delaware.***

### FACTS

- ❖ Foster families provide youth with safe, secure and stable homes when their parents or guardians cannot.
- ❖ There are approximately 900 children in 280 foster homes throughout our state.
- ❖ The median age for a foster child is 13 years.
- ❖ Foster care stipends range from \$13 a day to \$55 a day.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ❖ Sponsor a child's summer camp experience
- ❖ Sponsor recreational activities i.e. sports teams, cultural events, etc
- ❖ Provide or pay for tutoring
- ❖ Provide gift certificates to book stores, toy stores, etc.
- ❖ Write a check payable to the State of Delaware for those "nice to have" supports, i.e. trip to national wrestling events, school sponsored trips, cheerleading camp.
- ❖ Purchase tickets to a local circus or festival
- ❖ Adopt-A-Foster Care Cluster (geographical grouping of foster parent homes)
- ❖ Host a barbeque for foster families
- ❖ Support the cost of Orthodontia
- ❖ Help with graduation and prom expenses (i.e. pictures, cap and gown, tickets)
- ❖ Purchase a computer
- ❖ Sponsor a child's visit to a hair salon/barber

The list is long as your imagination. Think of something you would provide your own children or grandchildren, and add it to this list! Please help us think of a child in foster care and provide him or her with the little things to ensure safety, stability, self-esteem and a sense of hope!

For more information, please call 302-633-2657.

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