



Foster Care Services

Because everyone needs a family

Kim Cummins, LMSW

Chief Officer
Foster Care & Residential Services
518.470.7427
Kim.Cummins@nrfs.org

Colleen Vogel, MSW

Senior Program Director
Foster Care Services
518.857.8027
Colleen.Vogel@nrfs.org

Star Gregory, MS

Director of Recruitment & Retention
518.337.3789
Star-Lynne.Gregory@nrfs.org

Andrea Lamkins, LMHC

Program Director
Foster Care Services
518.701.9051
Andrea.Lamkins@nrfs.org

David Martinkovic, MSW

Program Director
Foster Care Services
607.267.6978
David.Martinkovic@nrfs.org

Homefinders

Albany & Rensselaer Counties

Stephanie Klein
518.223.3828
Stephanie.Klein@nrfs.org

Schenectady County

Jenny McMillen, MS
518.257.2919
Jenny.McMillen@nrfs.org

Columbia, Dutchess, Greene & Ulster Counties

Alexandra Edwards
518.281.0760
Alexandra.Edwards@nrfs.org

Fulton, Montgomery & Schoharie Counties

Jolene Olsen
518.545.6345
Jolene.Olsen@nrfs.org

Herkimer, Madison & Oneida Counties

Kari Judd
315.414.9855
Kari.Judd@nrfs.org

Saratoga, Warren & Washington Counties

Lauren O'Connor
518.769.0404
Lauren.OConnor@nrfs.org

Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Otsego & Tompkins Counties

Mary Lobdell
607.201.3588
Mary.Lobdell@nrfs.org

These services are provided by Northern Rivers Family of Services and member agencies.

NORTHERN RIVERS

At times children are unable to remain with their families and require the intervention of local child welfare. This occurs for several reasons, and when it does, children may need to leave their home and live with foster families, relatives, or fictive kin (individuals who are unrelated by either birth or marriage, but who have an emotionally significant relationship with the child) while their families address issues that resulted in their entry into care. Northern Rivers offers several family foster care programs for families while they work toward permanency for their children.

Family foster care is a level of care for children who are able to function in a home environment. The need for diverse foster families is ever-increasing as the needs of children increase. Northern Rivers understands that one of the most important aspects of a placement is matching a child with a home that fully understands and can support the child and family in their journey to permanency.

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) licenses each program, and every home is certified as a foster family. Northern Rivers recruits and prepares applicants to provide foster care, adoptive care, and overnight respite care and ensures that applicants meet state regulatory requirements for certification. Additionally, Northern Rivers offers foster parents extensive training, as well as a supportive network of other foster families and child-care professionals dedicated to their success.

Individuals and families interested in becoming foster parents to foster or adopt children can contact Northern Rivers at 844.855.CARE (2273) or fostercare@northernrivers.org. Families may also find us on Facebook [@NorthernRiversFosterCare](https://www.facebook.com/NorthernRiversFosterCare).

Specialized Foster Care

Specialized foster care is similar to therapeutic foster care, although the children's needs are fewer, and foster parents receive less program contact and support. Children in therapeutic foster care and specialized foster care are usually in the process of returning home to their birth parents or relatives. The goal of our foster care programs is reunification, but occasionally, when children do not have a resource for permanency, their foster parents may adopt them. Adolescents in this situation, however, may choose not to be adopted, but they may remain in foster care to improve their independent living skills.

Kinship Foster Care

Relatives or adults with close ties to a child can be a resource for children through kinship foster care. Kinship care is often used when families are unable to care for their children and must be taken into county care. Children can be placed with family or close friends pending assessments, clearances, and certification. Kinship care allows families with limited resources to receive financial stipends and supports from an agency to aid in their success. This arrangement must be approved by the local county Department of Social Services office responsible for the child as well as the county's Family Court judge. Although the kinship foster parents can be granted an emergency certification so placement can happen quickly, they must agree to complete all requirements for foster parenting in New York state within 90 days.

Therapeutic Foster Care

The Therapeutic Foster Family Program (TFFP) serves children who need an out-of-home placement. These children have been removed from their caregivers because of abuse, neglect, or PINS petitions and placed with certified foster families. These children usually have a high level of behavioral and emotional needs and require well-trained, supportive foster parents. Foster parents with children in therapeutic foster

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care have weekly home visits with the Permanency Care Manager (PCM) assigned to each child as well as respite when needed to maintain placements.

In addition to case management services, our therapeutic foster care program consists of a clinical department comprising licensed clinicians, who can provide individual, family, and group therapy, as well as licensed practical nurses (LPNs). Our LPNs perform basic nursing functions, which include assisting a foster youth's physician by updating the youth's health records, providing medication management, and monitoring the youth's overall health and wellness. The LPNs are supervised by a registered nurse (RN).

Overnight Respite Care

Foster parents provide overnight respite services when children need overnight respite. These children may be in the foster care program or home with their birth families. This respite is offered on a recurring weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis.

Potential for Adoption

Sometimes, regardless of the dedicated work of all involved, situations are such that children cannot find permanency with their biological families. When these children become freed for adoption deemed by Family Court while living in one of our foster homes, our staff will work with the foster parents on the journey to adoption if the foster parents so desire.

Additional Supportive Services

Family Finding: Northern Rivers builds a package of tasks and services to support children placed in the system who do not have permanency in their lives, which offers a robust, customizable suite of family-finding services to find and develop relatives and nonfictive kin for children without existing permanency options. We use traditional and new resources to search databases to locate connections and work with prospective placement resources to help prepare and certify them to provide care.

Northern Rivers offers flexible options for family finding services including:

- Record mining to look for relatives and nonfictive kin who may be interested in caring for the child
- Phone calls and meetings with prospective family members to see if they are able to care for the child
- Genograms that identify the many connections that children have had in their past
- Access and use of national databases to locate family members
- Emergency certifications when family is found

Wendy's Wonderful Kids: As a contracted partner of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and their Wendy's Wonderful Kids program, Northern Rivers employs child-focused adoption recruiters in Albany, Columbia, Orange, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. These trained, supported, and funded professionals are dedicated to finding permanent families for youth in foster care who may be hard to place, including teenagers, children with special needs, and sibling groups.

Additional Services

- Psychiatric and psychological consultation
- Health care coordination
- Skill-building for parents
- Supervised visitation
- Individual and family counseling

Benefits

Northern Rivers' foster care team is available 24/7/365 and:

- Works with children who have a wide range of behaviors and places them with trained foster parents, rather than have them placed in institutions
- Is highly trained with years of experience providing support for children in foster care as well as foster families
- Works with children and families toward permanency for the child, ameliorating those issues that led to placement
- Strives to provide permanency in the form of reunification, adoption, or independent living
- Promotes ongoing training for foster parents after initial certification to ensure successful placements with minimal disruptions

How to Get Started

Local Department of Social Services can refer children and youth in crisis situations, those with special needs who are unable to live with their birth families, those who have been referred for out-of-home placements or who are in need of a "step-down" from a more intensive level of care, and those with problems with chronic antisocial behaviors and delinquency. The local Department of Social Services makes referrals by contacting the local Northern Rivers offices that serve their area.

