



Foster Care FAQs

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

**NORTHERN
RIVERS**

Following are answers to some of the most common questions we hear. If you still have questions or just want to talk about foster care options, please reach out to one of the homefinders, who can provide more information. (The homefinders are listed to the left.)

What is a foster parent?

A foster parent is someone who officially takes a child into their home and temporarily acts as a parent for that child in place of the child's natural parents and birth family. The placement of a child is arranged by a social services agency through the family court system. There are a variety of ways to become involved as a foster parent. Some care for children full time, while others foster over various weekends.

Who can be a foster parent?

Foster parents must be at least age 21 and can be married, cohabitating, or single. They may have full-time jobs outside the home. Many foster parents already have children of their own, while others may not have children and still are foster parents despite not having experience as a parent.

What kind of screening is required?

Prospective foster parents must be screened through the NYS Central Registry Clearance Unit for child abuse as well as the Staff Exclusion List through the NYS Justice Center. Additionally, a criminal background check must be conducted locally through the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services and nationally through the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Applicants are also required to submit references for review.

What are the other requirements to become a foster parent?

Foster parents must submit records of a current physical examination, provide adequate room in the home for the child (it is acceptable for a foster child to share a bedroom with another child), and be able to provide transportation to medical appointments, meetings, and family visits. They also are required to complete the precertification training course.

What kind of training does Northern Rivers provide?

Foster parents will receive 30 hours of precertification training using a nationally recognized program that teaches foster families skills to successfully foster the children they will be welcoming into their home and the critical role they have in these children's lives. Each year foster parents are required to complete 12 hours of training postcertification, which we can assist in providing. We also provide weekly home consultations by therapeutic clinical staff for additional hands-on training to help meet the needs of the child in the home.

What issues do foster children face?

Most children in foster care exhibit behaviors related to trauma due to abuse or neglect. Many suffer from loss and attachment issues due to being removed from their homes. Our highly qualified and trained staff provides full therapeutic support and guidance to both foster children and foster parents.

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What if I need assistance outside of your regular work hours?

Our support staff is available to our foster parents and children 24/7/365—nights, weekends, holidays, whenever our foster parents need help. Staff is only a phone call away and will respond in a timely manner.

What financial responsibilities do foster parents have?

A stipend is provided for the care of each child. The individual amount varies depending on the child's age and needs. The stipend covers daily living expenses. In addition, each child is provided with full coverage for all medical expenses.

How are visits with the birth family handled?

In general, birth families receive weekly visits. The location of these visits and the participation of the foster parents vary depending on individual circumstances.

How long do children remain in foster care?

Each child's situation is different. Some foster children may only need a home for a few weeks, while some require longer term living situations. Every 3 months, a child's case is reviewed during which permanency is addressed.

Could I be a part-time foster parent?

Yes! Part-time foster parents who welcome children into their home on a temporary basis are a vital part of our program. They offer the breaks (respite) our foster children and parents may need in order to achieve success and prevent disruption. Respite care can involve one night, one weekend, or longer if necessary.

What are the ages of foster children?

Children in foster care can range from birth to age 21.

Can foster parents adopt their foster child?

In most cases when children enter foster care, their goal is to reunite with their birth families. There are cases, however, in which the permanency planning goal may be changed to adoption through the Family Court system. If this situation arises, the foster family with whom the child has been residing is given first consideration. We will partner with the foster parents and the county throughout the adoption process.

Some foster parents decide they only want to foster children. If a child's permanency plan changes to adoption in this situation, an appropriate match of another family will be made, and the foster parent(s) will assist in the transition to the pre-adoptive family.

What if I need a break?

The program maintains a list of respite foster families who are available to provide short-term care. Our team works with foster parents to ensure that their needs and the needs of the foster child are met.

Can I remain part of the child's life after he or she returns home?

The relationship between foster parents and foster children is special. Contact with a child after discharge from the foster care system is at the discretion of the child's permanent guardian and as such varies in each situation. It is the experience of the foster care team that the more the foster parents work in partnership with the birth families, contact with a child after discharge is more likely.

What support is available for my family?

A monthly family psychoeducation and support group helps families learn about the impact trauma can have on children, improve communication, and receive support from one another . . . and there is always pizza! We also meet regularly with individual foster families to engage in problem-solving, improve communication, and support one another through challenges and successes.

Ready to become a Northern Rivers foster parent?

Or do you still have doubts, concerns, or questions? We're always here to talk with you. Our job is to make sure you've got the answers. Our homefinders are ready to listen and answer your specific questions. Their contact info is on the left side of the front page. Reach out and let's talk!

