



Foster Care FAQs

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HOMEFINDERS

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

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 listed to the left, who can provide more information.

What is a foster parent?

A foster parent is a person who acts as parent and guardian for a child in place of the child's natural parents but without legally adopting the child. Some foster parents become involved to have children for a couple weekends a month. Others care for children full-time. There are a variety of ways to be involved as a foster parent.

Who can be a foster parent?

Foster parents must be at least 21 years old, married or single. They may have full-time jobs outside the home. Many foster parents already have children of their own, while others may be interested in starting a family through foster care.

What kind of screening is necessary?

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

What are the 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 visitations. They also are required to complete the precertification training course.

What kind of training does Northern Rivers provide?

Foster parents receive 30 hours of precertification training using a nationally recognized program that teaches foster families about the children they will be welcoming into their home and their critical role in these children's lives. Each year foster parents receive 12 hours of training relevant and convenient for them. We also provide weekly in-home training tailored to each child and family, crisis support, and foster care conferences.

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.

What if I need assistance outside of regular work hours?

Our support staff is only a phone call away any time, day or night, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to help foster parents and children.

What are my financial responsibilities?

We provide a stipend for the care of each child. The individual amount varies depending on the child's age and needs. The stipend covers daily living expenses also with clothing, diapers, daycare, and other costs. In addition, each child is provided with full coverage for all medical and therapeutic expenses.

How is visitation with the birth family handled?

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

Could I be a part-time foster parent?

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

How old are foster children?

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

Can foster parents adopt their foster child?

If a child becomes available for adoption, the foster family is given first consideration, and we then partner with the foster parents and the county throughout the adoption process.

What if I need a break?

We maintain a list of respite foster families who are available to provide short-term care. Our team works with foster parents to ensure that both 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.

What support is available for my family?

Our team offers a monthly family psychoeducation and support group, which helps families learn about symptoms, improve communication, and receive support from one another . . . and there is always pizza! We also meet regularly with individual families to help with problem-solving, improving communication, and supporting one another through challenges as well as successes.

Ready to become a 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 (their contact info is on the left side of the front page). Reach out, and let's talk.

