

Make a Difference

BECOME A FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT

At any given time in the state of Georgia there are thousands of children in need of foster families. More than 250 of these children are waiting for an adoptive family. The Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services needs your help!

We're looking for folks like you! Foster parents may be married, single, or legally divorced.

If you are a married couple not living together and you are not legally separated, please allow us to discuss your status with you.

Married and non-married couples may foster.

For couples not legally married and living together in a significant relationship, both partners must attend training for approval as foster parents.

Single adults must be age 25 or older to foster and adopt.

Foster parents must demonstrate citizenship or legal status.

Foster parents live everywhere--in apartments, condos, can be renters or home owners.

Foster parents must live in Chatham County to be Chatham County foster parents. If you live in another county outside of Chatham, please inquire at your local Department of Family and Children Services agency.

Applicants must have an additional bedroom to their own bedroom to foster.

Foster parents must be able to support themselves financially. You don't have to be wealthy.

Foster parents should be in good health. Foster care and adoption applicants who are medically disabled must meet the same requirement that all applicants must meet. Health circumstances of each applicant is evaluated on an individual basis and a physician must grant approval for fostering or adoption.

Foster parents must have daily and reliable means of transportation.

Foster care is about *special people doing special things for children*. There's a need for people from every city and county in Georgia to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children in state custody. Foster parenting is a challenging yet rewarding experience!

Why Children Enter Foster Care

Children enter foster care because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Foster families provide a home away from home during the time children are in foster care. Most children will eventually return to their birth families or their permanency plan is achieved by placement with relative family members. A limited number of children may not be able to be reunited with birth parents or with relatives and are freed for adoption. Some teens in foster care may eventually emancipate from foster care. All teens are eligible for and receive Independent Living Services while in foster care to prepare for adulthood.

More information on adoption of special needs children is included below.

All Ages/Foster Homes for Sibling Groups

Our agency has a significant need for foster homes for all ages (newborn infants to teenagers). There is a also a critical need for foster parents who can foster teens, medically fragile infants or children, or a sibling group of two or a sibling group of three or more children.

For fostering a sibling group of three or more ,there is an additional financial incentive of \$100 per child in addition to daily reimbursement rate.

We are willing, however, to work with you around your own needs whether you can provide for only one child or more children.

Role of Partnerships in Foster Care

Foster parents are an important part of a team in making a significant difference in the life of a child and receive support and assistance from other team members. Other team partners include law enforcement, juvenile court judges, school counselors, therapists, doctors, other medical specialists, school teachers, as well as agency case managers. Birth parents and their extended families are also essential members of the team experience. While children are in foster care, they have visitation with birth parents and family members normally outside of the foster home. From the moment a child is removed from his or her parent(s), a case plan is developed between the birth family, the agency, and with the Juvenile court to determine the conditions and possible time frame for uniting the birth family and achieving permanency for the child.

Case Manager/Support for Foster Parents

While placed in a foster family, each child has a case manager who is responsible for management of services and the case plan for that child and the child's birth parents. The child's case manager also provides support for the foster family. Foster parents have caseworker access through a confidential work and after hours listing. Foster parents also receive support through the child's case manager with monthly visits.

Each foster family itself has its own case manager for support through the Resource Development Unit.

Financial Support

Foster parents receive financial support services in many forms. They receive a monthly reimbursement based upon the child's age and needs to assist in meeting the child's needs.

Special rates beyond the basic daily reimbursement rate may apply for a child who has special physical, medical, or emotional needs. Examples include newborn infants who may have been born premature, are low birth weight, and may have been exposed to illegal substances. Children with special medical needs may include --but is not limited to --children diagnosed with Downs Syndrome; mild, moderate or severe mental retardation, autism, epilepsy, diabetes, significant asthma, or other developmental delays, or significant underlying emotional problems or mental health problems.

Less critical needs include infants who are delayed developmentally in walking timely or young children with speech delays.

Many children entering foster care may not have more special needs as indicated above.

Foster parents who work outside of the home receive daycare assistance while they work. Children who enter foster care are eligible for medical coverage and also are eligible for an initial clothing allotment within the first six months and a yearly clothing allotment. Children are eligible for and may receive other supportive services such as dental and physical medical care, counseling, tutorial services, visits from case managers. Foster parents are eligible for other financial reimbursements for car seats or limited reimbursement for diapers, car mileage for medical visits, hair care, school photographs, school graduation, child vacations costs. Infants are eligible through WIC services for formula and nutritional support.

Annual training

Foster parents are mandated to receive up to 10 hours of in-service training per year as well as are reimbursed for Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation and First Aid. In-Service training is normally provided free of charge. And, there is a Foster and Adoptive Parent of Georgia annual conference for foster parents and adoptive parents to receive in-service training.

Limited financial reimbursement is available for attending the annual convention.

Foster Parent Association

Foster parents have access to the Chatham County Foster Parent Association that meets monthly for support and training. The foster parent association is independent of the agency but works closely with the agency in its care for children.

Adoption

Adoption is a *love* thing. It's about making a lasting commitment to a child. There are approximately 250 children in Georgia who need an adoptive family. Most of these children are 8 years and older, African American, and/or part of a sibling group. Each child is currently in the foster care program. These children have faced many challenges, but shouldn't have to grow up without a family. Financial assistance is available to assist families in meeting the needs of these children.

Applicants can also view children freed for adoption on www.myturnnow.com. There is also assistance with legal fees for adoption of a child with special needs as well as post adoption services for the child and adoptive family. You can also visit the adoptions web site at www.adoptions.dhr.state.ga.us.

Requirements to be a Foster Parent/Adoptive Parent

*Attend an Orientation meeting. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 6:00 P. M. at our agency location of 761 Wheaton Street. The Orientation lasts approximately 1 and one half hours.

*Attend and successfully complete a 20 hours pre-service training program which includes a home safety assessment, criminal background check, an illegal drug screen, and medical examination, other documentation requirements, and a home assessment study of you.

Special Regulations:

Special regulations apply to applicants who are in-home daycare providers and special safety regulations apply to applicants who have in-ground or above-ground swimming pools or live on bodies of water (lagoons, rivers), or applicants with homes with burglar bars. Be sure to ask when inquiring.

First Step:

The first step is simple. Call the toll-free Adoption and Foster Care Inquiry Line at 1-877-210-KIDS which is available Monday-Friday, 9 A. M. to 10 P. M. We'll answer your questions and give you all the information you need to begin the process. If you're interested we'll mail you an information packet.
