



Facts about Foster Care

Who are the children in foster care?

The Los Angeles Children and Family Services has children of all ages in foster care, from infants to older adolescents and from all ethnic and economic backgrounds.

Foster parents are especially needed for:

- Older children and teenagers
- Children with special needs. These special needs may be developmental, educational and/or emotional.
- Drug-affected infants
- Sibling groups
- Linguistic and ethnic minorities

Foster parents are needed for Caucasian, African American, Latino and Asian children and for children who speak Spanish.

Why do children need foster care?

Children need foster care for many reasons. Mostly, they come to the Department of Children and Family Services as a result of abuse and neglect.

There is an alarming increase in substance abuse and a dramatic increase in domestic violence. All of this affects parent's ability to adequately care for their children.

All children in foster care need stability, comfort and routine back in their lives. Our goal is to ensure safety, well-being and permanency for all children in foster care.

Is there any contact with the child's parents?

Yes. Children need to remain in touch with their families, since the goal in most cases is for the child to return home.

It is important for the foster parents to work with the child's parents with the support of Department staff.

However, your involvement with the child's family is determined on an individual case by case basis.

What are the requirements?

- In California, you need to be at least 21 years of age to become a foster parent.
- You may be single, married, partnered, divorced or widowed to become a foster parent.
- You may have up to six children residing in your home at any given time. This includes birth children, adopted children, foster children, relative's children, or day care children.
- You may either rent or own your own home.
- However, the living and sleeping quarters must be large enough to provide adequate space, privacy and safety for all household members, as well as comply with other state regulations.
- Your family must have a stable source of income to be able to adequately support all your current household members.
- You can be at home or work.
- Your home needs to meet safety requirements and standards.
- The Road Ahead Family Services will complete a Background Record Check as part of the licensing process.

How long do children stay in foster care?

The average stay is somewhere between three to eighteen months.

The Department of Children and Family Services feels very strongly that children should be with their parents whenever possible and works very hard with the child's parents to try to help this happen. When this isn't possible, the Department works to find an alternative, permanent family for the children.

Can I decide the age or gender of the child?

Yes. As part of the licensing process, you and your social worker will decide together which children placed in your home would be the best match for your family.

What is involved in the training to become a foster parent?

The type of training required to become a foster parent will vary.

The Road Ahead provides initial training for certification and ongoing annual training to maintain your foster care certification current.

The training is designed to help families understand the difficulty children in foster care face. It also helps families understand how foster parenting will affect your family..

The training includes in-home interviews that allow the Social Worker to gather family information and get to know you and your family.

Once the training is successfully completed and the interviewing is over, the decision is made to approve you as a certified foster parent.

What are some of the most important qualities for being a foster parent?

The Road Ahead Family Services is looking for people who feel ready to face the challenge of parenting.

You need to be a good communicator and problem solver; you must be able to express, accept and understand feelings – both yours and the child's. You need to have the ability to support the physical and emotional needs of a child in crisis. Having a sense of humor will also be helpful to you as a foster parent.

What about medical insurance and other expenses for foster children?

As a foster parent, you are reimbursed for taking a child into your home. This includes a stipend for daily expenses, a quarterly clothing allowance and coverage of the child's medical expenses.

What support services are available to foster parents?

You will be assigned a Foster Care Social Worker. There are also other supportive services available to assist you that your Foster Care Social Worker will discuss with you. This includes an after hours, toll free "Helpline".

