

# Thinking About Becoming a Foster Parent?

## Here are Some Things You Should Know



### What is a foster parent's role?

A foster parent helps care for children until they are able to safely return home. Keep in mind:

- Every child who comes into foster care is unique and has different needs
- The largest need for foster homes is for preteens and teenagers
- Most children who come into care will return to their biological parents

### What will my responsibilities be?

Foster parents are responsible for:

- Providing a safe, nurturing environment
- Making a plan for the child with the Children's Division, court, and biological parents
- Updating the Children's Division about the child's progress
- Ensuring the child goes to school regularly
- Providing transportation for appointments (doctor, counseling, visits, etc.)
- Making sure the child takes part in normal, everyday activities to develop their interests and skills
- Maintaining a Life Book for the child

### Is fostering right for me?

Before you become a foster parent, you may consider how you feel about:

- Working with biological family members
- Saying goodbye to a child when they leave your care
- Opening your home and your family to others involved in the care of the child (ex. courts, Children's Division, biological families, etc.)
- The impact a child moving in or out of your home may have on your other children or family members

### How much does it cost to become a foster parent?

There is little to no cost to you. The home assessment and training is provided by the state free of charge. In fact, even if you choose to adopt from foster care the majority of adoption expenses are covered by the state.

## Who can become a foster parent?

Many people believe you have to have children, be married, or own your home to become a foster parent. **This is not true.** To become a foster parent, you must:

- Be at least 21 years of age
- Complete a child abuse/neglect check and criminal record check (including fingerprints)
- Be in good health, both physically and mentally
- Have a stable income
- Complete free training and assessments
- Be part of a professional team willing to voice perspectives and concerns
- Partner with the child's biological family



## How do I become a foster parent?

To become a foster parent, you must:

- Call 800-554-2222 or email [MoHeartGallery@raisethefuture.org](mailto:MoHeartGallery@raisethefuture.org)
- Complete a free child abuse and criminal background screening
- Complete a health screening, home assessment, and financial discussion
- Completing our state-approved, specialized training program, MO C.A.R.E. at <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/foster-care/preservice-training.htm>

## What happens after I get my license?

Once you receive your foster parent license, your name will be placed into a confidential database that will allow us to find you as a resource to temporarily care for a child in need. Even if you are a licensed foster parent, you can choose not to take a child into your home if the time is not right for you. What is important is that we have families who are licensed and ready so that if the timing is right, we can place a child in a safe, nurturing environment.

## What other ways can I help?

If you are unable to become a foster parent, there are many ways you can still help children living with foster families in your community. Some ideas include:

- Provide respite care
- Provide special holiday help
- Make a monetary donation to help with costs of child care and the things they want and need to live a normal and happy childhood



Missouri Department of  
**Social Services**

## Questions?

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