GETTING STARTED
Your Foster Care Journey
What is foster care?

• Temporary placement for children who cannot stay at home due to abuse or neglect

• Foster parent provides a safe & nurturing temporary home

• Biological parents get support services to help their child come home safely
Who are the children in foster care?

- Ages birth - 21 years
- Victims of Abuse or Neglect
- Trauma Survivors
**Common Foster Parent Myths**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Fact</th>
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<td>&quot;I have to own my home to become a foster parent.&quot;</td>
<td>You do not have to own your home. In fact, many foster parents rent their residence.</td>
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Common Foster Parent Myths

**Myth**

"I have to be married to be a foster parent."

**Fact**

You do not have to be married or in a relationship, to be a foster parent.
## Common Foster Parent Myths

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What is required to become a foster parent?

- Be at least 21 years of age
- Complete a criminal background check
- Be in good health both mentally and physically
- Have a stable income
- Be willing to complete a free training and assessment process
- Be part of a professional team willing to voice perspectives and concerns
- Be willing to partner with the child's family
How do I get started?

If you meet the qualifications for becoming a foster parent, contact the Children's Division to set up a meeting with a team member who will go over:

- Rewards and challenges of being a foster parent
- Services available to foster parents and children

573-522-1191
fostercare@dss.mo.gov
Do I have to take in every child?

The assessment and licensing process is ongoing, and enables agencies to place children based on:

- Your specific parenting skills
- The capacity of your home
- The information you provide
- The child's unique needs

Even if your home is selected for a foster child, you always have the option to decline the placement.
What type of support is available?

You will be assigned a Children's Division team member who will support and guide you in:

• Finding and completing the required training

• Learning more about support and respite care
What type of support is available?

Foster parents also receive:

• A monthly maintenance payment to help cover the costs of care

• Healthcare coverage through Missouri Medicaid for the child’s medical, psychological, and dental needs

• Help paying for child care services if they work or go to school full time
What is Reunification?

3 out of every 5 children in foster care return home to their parents or other family members.

- **Reunification** - getting the family safely back together - is almost always the first goal in foster care

- Federal law requires States to establish a “permanency plan” for each child in foster care

**Permanency Plan** – a plan for where the child will live when they leave foster care

Permanency plans may include:

1. returning home to their family [reunification]
2. living permanently with a relative [kinship care]
3. placed for adoption
Are there other ways I can help?

Provide **Respite Care**
Respite Care provides temporary care for children in foster care.

**Donate**
Donate
- money
- gift cards

**Host a backpack or luggage drive**

**Become a Volunteer**
Donate your professional services to youth in foster care

**Tutor or Mentor**
Tutor or mentor youth in foster care

For a more comprehensive list of donation items, visit: tinyurl.com/DSS-MO-FosterSupport
Questions?

fostercare@dss.mo.gov
dss.mo.gov/cd/foster-care