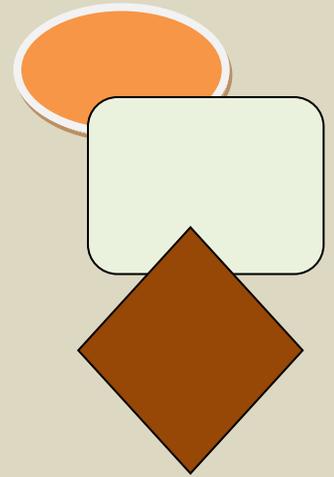


FAQs about Becoming a Foster Family

- ♥ What are the steps I need to take to become a foster parent?
- ♥ What are the qualifications I need to become a foster parent?
- ♥ What is a home study?
- ♥ What is the purpose of a criminal background check?
- ♥ What are the State of Wisconsin's licensing requirements?
- ♥ What if I work full time?
- ♥ Can I choose the gender, race, and age of children I would like to foster?
- ♥ How much contact will I have with the child's family?
- ♥ Do children in care need their own bedroom?
- ♥ How often do I need to be relicensed?
- ♥ What are the responsibilities of a foster parent?
- ♥ How are foster parents compensated for the care of the child?
- ♥ What type of support services are available to foster parents?



FAQs about Foster Care in General

- ♥ What are the ages of children who are in need of care?
- ♥ How long are children in foster care?
- ♥ What type of health care coverage is provided to children in care?
- ♥ What are the goals of foster care?
- ♥ Who are the children placed in foster care?
- ♥ Why are children placed in foster care?
- ♥ What types of foster care are needed?

What are the steps that I need to take in order to become a foster parent in Wisconsin?

- ♥ The first step to becoming a foster parent is to contact a county, tribal treatment foster care licensing agency in Wisconsin. The foster care worker will answer questions and provide further information.
- ♥ You and your family will need to fill out an extensive application form.
- ♥ The licensing agencies offer foster care orientations and pre-service trainings. All counties and private agencies have specific, structured training requirements.
- ♥ Prospective foster parents participate in an in-depth licensing study involving interviews of all household members.

What are the qualifications I need to become a foster parent?

Foster parents have many qualifications-some are objective qualifications set by various government agencies; some are subjective, such as what qualifies as good parenting.

Some of the objective qualifications include:

- ♥ You must be 21 years of age or older.
- ♥ You may be single, married, widowed, or be in a significant long term partnership.
- ♥ You must be in good health and be willing to provide documentation from your doctor's office.
- ♥ You need to work with your licensing agency staff while they complete a home study of your family.
- ♥ Foster parents provide proof of homeowner's or renter's insurance as well as automobile liability insurance.
- ♥ Foster parents undergo criminal background checks. They are also required to provide fingerprint based criminal background checks in accordance to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.
- ♥ The homes of foster parents must be in compliance with the safety checklists which are completed by the licensing workers, many of which are based on standard building codes.

Some of the subjective qualifications you should have include:

- ♥ You are loving and have a good sense of humor.
- ♥ You have a desire to team more and don't mind attending trainings.
- ♥ You are open-minded regarding children in foster care and their families.

- ♥ You can tolerate (or even like!) paperwork.
- ♥ You don't mind having many outside people involved in your life, and you like being part of a team.
- ♥ You like kids.
- ♥ You keep commitments.
- ♥ You're flexible.
- ♥ You are empathetic about the grief children and families go through when they've been separated.
- ♥ You like parenting, even though the ups and downs of the "terrible" twos and the equally "terrible" teens.
- ♥ You recognize your stress and manage it.
- ♥ Your family is as committed to fostering as you are.
- ♥ You're involved in the community and have good community support.
- ♥ You are able to keep information about the children confidential.

What is a home study?

- ♥ The home study is a process in which prospective foster parents complete an application and participate in a series of personal interviews in their home.
- ♥ Prospective foster parents are assigned to a licensing worker from their licensing agency.
- ♥ As part of the home study, the licensing workers complete thorough criminal background checks and reference checks.
- ♥ The licensing workers inspect residences to insure that they satisfy the State's requirements to meet the needs of children in foster care.
- ♥ The licensing worker gathers information about the applicants parenting skills and abilities.
- ♥ The workers discuss the reasons applicants are interested in fostering and assesses how fostering may potentially impact them and their family members.
- ♥ The home study insures that homes are in compliance with the agency's licensing requirements.
- ♥ The process of the home study provides an opportunity for prospective foster parents to ask questions and discuss concerns.

What is the purpose of a criminal background check?

Criminal background checks are required to ensure that potential foster homes are safe, and that no persons living in foster homes have criminal histories that will affect a child in the home. It's possible for people with felonies and misdemeanors to become licensed as foster parents, depending on what the crime was and how long ago it happened. There are

some crimes-based on the federal caregiver law-that prevent some people from ever becoming foster parents, Prospective foster parents and any child over the age of 10 that resides in the home must agree to undergo a criminal background check in order to become licensed.

What are the State of Wisconsin's Foster Parent Licensing Requirements?

The code that regulates foster care license is Chapter HFS 56, which can be a little daunting at times. But you're not alone - your licensing agency is responsible for helping you through the process. Many of the rules in HSF 56 are based on building codes and other codes.

What if I work full time?

It's possible to work full time, depending on your licensing agency. In order to do so, you need to have a good supervision plan for the kids in your care. The licensing requirements in HSF 56 mandate that there be a parent home, but sometimes a licensing agency worker is able to give written permission in order for you to be able to work outside the home.

Can I choose the gender, race, and age of children I would like to foster?

During the licensing process, workers ask about the age, race, gender and special needs of children which prospective foster parents are interested in fostering. Prior to a child being placed in your home, a worker from the agency calls to describe the child or children needing a foster home.

Making a good match between the prospective child and the prospective family is a crucial part of success for you, the child, and everyone involved. When you first start out fostering, it's sometimes difficult to know what kind of child might be a good fit for you and your family. It helps to keep a list of questions you might want to ask the worker. In some cases, you are able to meet or talk to the child and his or her family before the child comes to your home. Foster parents always have the option of declining a foster care placement.

How much contact will I have with the child's family?

This varies greatly with each case. The foster care system) however, is designed to be a temporary solution until children can reunite with their family or if that's not possible, until there is a permanent home found for the child. To this end, it's important to have as much contact with the child's family and extended family as possible.

Do children in care need their own bedroom?

No, children in care can share a bedroom with other children, as long as the ages and behaviors are appropriate together. Each child in the home needs to have his or her own personal space (as specified in Chapter 56).

How often do I need to be relicensed?

Foster home licenses are issued for time periods up to two years. Before the end of the two year period, licensing workers return to homes to work with foster parents who must complete the required paper work for re-licensing.

What are the responsibilities of a foster parent?

- ♥ Provide nurturing, limits, and have children participate and routine family life.
- ♥ Provide day-to-day care and supervision of children.
- ♥ Arrange and take children to medical, dental, psychiatric appointments.
- ♥ Support a family interaction plan for the children and their birth/natural families.
- ♥ Communicate with school and keep abreast of child's progress.

How are foster parents compensated for the care of the child?

The State of Wisconsin has a Uniform Foster Care Rate for reimbursement to foster parents.

Rates of compensation are based upon the needs of children. Payments to foster parents are considered reimbursements for expenses to meet the needs of the children and are not considered income in most instances.

What type of support services are available to foster parents?

Wisconsin has a state-wide foster and adoptive parent association, the Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (WFAPA). Their website is: <http://www.wfapa.org>. Many counties also have local foster and adoptive parent associations-check with WFAPA for associations in your area.

Licensing agencies provide foster parents with ongoing support, guidance and training opportunities.

In addition, the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center (FCARC) provides additional resources such as a lending library, a newsletter, and online resources for

family and youth including links to other resources and telephone support. Our website is: <http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org>, and our toll-free telephone number is (800) 947-8074.

What are the ages of children who are in need of care?

Children in need of foster care placements in Wisconsin are between the ages of 0-18.

How long are children in foster care?

Children may be in foster care for one day or longer. The goal of foster care is to provide safe and permanent homes for children while support and assistance is given to parents to make their homes safe places to which the children can return.

The goal of the child welfare system is to provide safe and permanent homes for all children. While most children find that with their birth families, others are placed in adoptive, kinship, or guardianship homes.

Most children who are placed in foster care are successfully reunited with their families.

What type of health care coverage is provided to children in care?

All foster children are eligible for the Title XIX Medical Program (Medical Assistance). Title XIX covers medical, mental health, prescription, and drug care expenses as well as dental care. In some cases, children are covered by their own family's private insurance.

What are the goals of foster care?

- ♥ Protect the child from further abuse or neglect.
- ♥ Provide a safe and nurturing home.
- ♥ Provide consistent care and supervision that meets the child's needs.
- ♥ Help the family make positive changes to work toward reunification.

Who are the children placed in foster care?

The children in the child welfare system are as varied as children everywhere. As a society, these are our children. They are all ages, all economic levels, all races, religions and colors. Some children have some significant emotional, behavioral, and/or physically developmental needs. All children who are placed in foster care

also have significant strengths and gifts. All of us have a part to play in helping to focus on these strengths, even when we're sometimes frustrated or confused by some children's behaviors.

Why are children placed in foster care?

Children usually enter the foster care system with a CHIPS or JIPS petition or a delinquency petition.

CHIPS (or JIPS) petition stands for a Child (or Juvenile) In Need of Protection or Services. Some examples of CHIPS cases include: children being neglected or abandoned, parents being unavailable due to being hospitalized or incarcerated, children being physically or sexually abused, children who have significant special needs (behavioral, emotional, physical) and who have parents who are unable to care for the child without help from the system.

A delinquency petition happens when a child has broken the law. Examples of delinquencies include: stealing, physically or sexually assaulting someone, fire setting, disorderly conduct, etc.

Social workers first try to find appropriate family members who might be able to care for a child before they look to place the child in a foster home.

What types of foster care are needed?

In Wisconsin, each county licenses its own foster homes and each county has different needs. Many counties routinely need homes for teenagers, but recently, some of the bigger counties have had a shortage of homes for infants and younger children. Any family who gets licensed has to follow the guidelines that the State of Wisconsin has for foster parents. There are no distinctions in licensing for the following homes, although your county might have its own policy. In general, the types of homes that are needed include:

- ♥ General/regular foster homes--court ordered care for children that can last from a few days to several years.
- ♥ Concurrent foster homes-a foster family that works on reuniting a child with his or her birth family, but is also open to the idea of adopting the child who is placed with them if the reunification efforts don't work out.
- ♥ Foster homes of color-there are a disproportionate number of children of color who are in residential care, rather than in foster care. There are many reasons for this, but having more foster homes of color would help.

- ♥ Bi lingual foster homes.
- ♥ Crisis homes-emergency care of children needed when a crisis occurs.
- ♥ Respite care-planned relief care for children currently in foster care, usually for a weekend or several days.
- ♥ Foster homes for children who are considered medically fragile and other children who have physical needs.
- ♥ Foster homes whose parents are deaf or whose family members know sign language.
- ♥ Foster homes in particular school districts or particular areas in the state.