

Foster Care

When courts order children to be removed from their birth families because of abuse or neglect, the Children's Services division of Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS) provides a temporary but nurturing home. Through foster care, children often find the guidance and care they need. But foster care is not the final answer. Our goal is to establish a safe, permanent home for every child, whether it is with the birth family, relatives or an adopted family.

This fact sheet should answer some of the most common questions regarding foster care. **For more information, or to learn more about becoming a foster parent, call (513) 632-6366 or visit www.hcfoster.org.**

Who are Hamilton County's foster children?

At any given time, about 40 percent of all children involved with HCJFS Children's Services are living in some form of substitute care. This may be in a foster home or with relatives.

Most are school age and have been victims of abuse and/or neglect ranging in severity from mild to severe. As a result, they require care takers who are understanding, patient, skilled, and involved with services such as counseling and tutoring.

Who can become a foster parent?

Any Ohio resident over 21 years old is eligible. Foster parents represent a wide variety of ages, races, and incomes. They may be single or married, but they all share a strong desire and calling to help children.

What do foster families do for children?

Quite simply, foster families are a source of strength and stability for a child. They provide a consistent and supportive environment where it may not have existed. However, foster care is meant to be temporary. The goal is to place the child in a permanent home.

What is the process to become a foster parent?

The process involves police and credit checks, fingerprinting, home inspections, extensive training, and family interviews with a homestudy assessor. Pre-service training for prospective

adoptive and foster parents involves 33 hours of classes that include discussions, speakers, case studies, and videos, as well as application of the material to life situations. Once approved, foster parents must complete 40 hours of training in each 2-year license period.

Classes teach foster parents about the child protection system, help them understand child development and maltreatment effects, and show them how to deal with children's emotional and behavioral problems.

How do children get placed in a foster home?

Once potential foster parents are approved, the foster home placement facilitator is notified. The placement facilitator coordinates the process of matching children with foster homes.

How long are children in foster care?

Most children in foster care stay in the system for less than one year; however, but the length could be shorter or longer. Though it's an undesirable alternative, some children do stay in foster care long term – a status called Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA). Most times these are older children, perhaps teenagers, who are not available for adoption. For a variety of reasons, Juvenile Court does not permanently terminate birth parents' rights, yet the children cannot live with those parents.

Children's Services works to limit the number foster care moves and lengths of stays because children often suffer when they don't have a permanent home. Laws require Children's Services to try to reunite children with birth

parents within a specified time frame if the children will be safe.

Is there support for foster parents?

Yes. Foster parents are assigned a support worker who makes regular telephone calls and in-person visits to share information, discuss concerns, and provide on-going support. The support worker keeps in touch with the child's caseworker to ensure coordination of services and share of information. In addition, newly licensed foster parents can be matched with an experienced foster parent to help them through the first six months of foster parenting. Foster parent mentors have received specific training to provide information, parenting tips, and support to new foster parents.

HCJFS offers a wide variety of training, education and support groups at various locations in Hamilton County and at varying

times to accommodate the needs of foster and adoptive parents.

Do foster parents receive payments to help with care?

HCJFS Children's Services pays a daily rate to cover room and board for foster children. Medical and dental care is also covered. The payments will vary depending on a child's age and needs. You can get the most current information by calling (513) 632-6366.

Need more information?

While this fact sheet may answer several questions, you may still have more specific information needs. We're here to help. Just call (513) 632-6366, or visit www.hcfoster.org. You can also find general information about foster care through the Child Welfare League of America at (202) 638-2952, or on its Web site at www.cwla.org.