

111 project

Foster Care 101: to express interest in foster care or adoption:

<http://www.111project.org/commitmyfamily/>

What is foster care?

Foster care is temporary living arrangements for minors who have been placed in state custody. Foster care is a part of a system called Child Welfare.

When is foster care necessary?

Foster care is needed when children are living in impoverished, abusive or neglectful homes. Over 85% of cases in Oklahoma are due to some type of "Neglect". Substance abuse is the greatest common factor.

General Description of Different types of foster homes:

1. Foster Family Home: This is where a child is placed in a private home with a family. If possible, the child will be placed in the home of a relative or someone who knew the child before they entered care, which is called kinship care. A kinship family where siblings can stay together is the most preferred placement.
2. Group Home: This is a facility that can house a larger number of children, who are cared for 24 hours a day by staff.
3. Shelter: Shelters are intended for a short term basis, and are available to house children who are in an immediate crisis. Often time's kids will be placed in a shelter as soon as they are removed from their home due to no available family placement.

Not all foster children, will stay in foster care.

The goal of Child Welfare is to keep families together; while protecting the children within the home, many children will only be removed from their parents for a short time while their parents work to meet the states requirements to raise their children. During this time, many children will still be allowed to have contact with their parents, and even be able to have supervised visits with them. The most common goal of foster care is reunification when it is safe to do so.

However, sometimes the state will determine, or even the parents themselves will decide, that the home will never be healthy and safe enough for the child's development. When this happens, a judge will terminate the parents guardianship, at that time, that child is considered a ward of the state and often the hope is for that child to be adopted.

Requirements to become a foster parent (provided by OKDHS)

- Are at least 21 years of age
- Are responsible, mature, healthy adults capable of meeting the needs of the children in DHS custody.
- Have a stable living arrangement and relationships, whether married, single, separated, or divorced.
- Complete and pass all required background checks, these are required for all adult household members.
- Have sufficient income to meet their needs and ensure the security and stability of the household without relying on the foster care maintenance payment.

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Different Types of Foster Care:

Kinship Foster Care: Kinship care is when a child is placed in the home of a relative or someone who knew the child before they entered care. This is potentially the most ideal setting for children. The reason being, if the child is placed in an environment that is already familiar and comfortable to them, than it will help minimize the trauma they may sustain during the whole process. Although kinship care is most commonly viewed as the child being with biological family, that isn't always what it is. The child being placed with a close family friend, teacher, or sports coach would often be considered kinship care.

Emergency Foster Care: providing short term foster care for children that have been brought into the system because of neglect, abuse, or family tragedy. EFC families have varying commitments depending on the licensing agency.

Traditional Foster Care: The average age of the child in your care can vary, anywhere from infancy to 18 years old. You can specify which age group you are open to and don't worry – you are never under any obligation to accept a placement. There is currently a shortage of foster families willing to accept teenagers, and a shortage of families willing to accept sibling sets of 2 or more children.

Therapeutic Foster Care: The Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) program provides treatment for children aged 4-18 who have unique life experiences that require enhanced patience, structure and an understanding of each child's individual needs. Children in this level of care require more specialized therapeutic services to enhance their well-being.

Specialized Foster Care: Specialized Foster Care (SFC) serves children and adults aged three years and older who have a primary diagnosis of intellectual disabilities and qualify for Developmental Disabilities Services. Persons served may also have other developmental disabilities in addition to intellectual disabilities such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, etc. Increased training and resources provided to foster families who choose this route.

Other Significant Roles:

Respite (Contact Agencies or Find Specific Foster Family then Contact their Agency): Temporary relief for families or Care Givers that are overnight require individuals that have completed the foster care training. If you are assisting a foster family you have an existing relationship with you maybe able to provide overnight care for up to 7 days. Contact the foster families agency to find out more.

Alternative Care Giver (Contact Agencies or Find Specific Foster Family then Contact their Agency): Typically during the day "respite" that has less requirements but needs to be a trusted family member or relationship in which you would feel comfortable leaving your biological children.

Safe Families: Oklahoma has a family hosting program that provides a voluntary placement option for families in crisis and in need of support. This program operates outside of an active child welfare investigation or case and is a great family strengthening and support option.