

What is Foster Care?

Foster Care is temporary. Foster parents provide a nurturing, stable home for a child until they can return to their birth family or are placed in a permanent adoptive home. Children services places a child in foster care while they work to stabilize the family. Foster parents assume physical custody and provide for the child's day-to-day care.

What Types of Children Need Foster Homes?

Children in foster care range in age from infant to 18 years. Most have been abused, neglected or abandoned, and some have special medical needs. Many may be struggling with emotional, behavioral or mental health issues. Some are siblings who need to be placed together. Foster parents have the final say in determining whether a particular child is appropriate for their family.

How many children are currently in foster care?

In Butler County, there are over 400 children placed in foster care because of abuse or neglect. Children range in age from newborn to 18 but more than half of the children are seven years-of-age and older. Many foster children struggle with emotional, behavioral or mental health issues. Often times they are part of a sibling group that wants to stay together.

Who can become a foster parent?

You must be at least 21 years of age. You can be single, married or divorced. You can live in an apartment or a house. You must be in good health and be able to meet your basic financial needs.

How do I become a foster parent?

Foster parents are licensed by the State of Ohio. To be licensed, you must complete 36 hours of specialized training and complete a home study. A home study includes in-depth interviews with all adults and children living in the home; local, state and federal criminal background checks; a medical exam to ensure that you are in good physical health and a physical inspection of your home. The entire process can take up to six months. Once you are a licensed foster parent you must complete 40 hours of ongoing training every two years to maintain your license.

I have a criminal history. Will this prevent me from becoming a foster parent?

It depends on the type of crime. There are specific criminal offenses that prevent Butler County Children Services from approving you as a foster parent.

What kind of support system is available for foster parents?

Butler County Children Services pays a monthly reimbursement to foster parents to cover the cost of food and shelter for each child. An allowance for clothing is provided when the child is initially placed in foster care. Hope's Closet has clothing and other items which can help provide for a child at no cost. Medical and dental costs are covered by the agency. Foster families are also assigned a foster care worker who ensures that any ongoing needs are met

What is Kinship Care?

Kinship Caregivers are grandparents, siblings, relatives, godparents, stepparents and other adults who provide care to children they know whose parents can no longer care for them. Because of the growing number of Kinship Caregivers, BCCS has instituted kinship support services, which help kinship families identify recreational, respite, training, financial, crisis intervention and other services whenever the need arises.

What is Adoption?

Adoption is the process by which adults become legal parents of a child not born to them. Adoptive parents become legally responsible for all their adoptive child's basic needs.

Who can be an adoptive parent?

You must be at least 18 years of age and able to provide a nurturing, stable and permanent home for a child. Adoptive parents come from all walks of life—they can be married or single; homeowners or renters; with or without biological children and can work outside the home.

Who are the children available for adoption?

At any given time, Butler County Children Services has up to 80 children waiting for an adoptive home. The children available for adoption through children services have been abused or neglected or at risk of abuse or neglect. Most of these children are over the age of ten, part of a sibling group and have some form of emotional, behavioral or learning disability.

How do I become an adoptive parent?

You must complete 36 hours of specialized training and complete an adoption home study. A home study includes in-depth interviews with all adults and children living in the home; in good physical health, complete a local, state and federal background check and physical inspection of your home.

How long does the process take?

The process can take up to 6-12 months.

How much does it cost?

Butler County Children Services does not charge any fees for the adoption process. However, you may want to retain an attorney to help you finalize your adoption. Funds are available to reimburse you for attorney fees and court costs.

What type of financial assistance is available for adoptive families?

Financial assistance from the state and federal government may be available based on the individual needs of the child and the adoptive family. Ask your adoption worker about the financial assistance available for each child.

Commonly Asked Questions

How much will it cost me to become a foster parent? There is no charge to the applicant for the licensing process to become a foster caregiver. After a child is placed in your home, House of New Hope will pay you a monthly subsidy to help cover the expenses incurred for room and board, clothing and supplies. Additional amounts are paid for your participation in House of New Hope training, child care and day care. All of the child's medical and dental expenses are paid by Medicaid. Counseling and other therapy needs are also covered by Medicaid.

How long will it take me to get a foster child? The licensing process usually takes from 4-6 months. You will have to be fingerprinted, your credit history checked, and the completion of a home study in which all of your immediate family members and/or other household members are interviewed during 2-3 home visits in order to get to know you better. Your home will need both a safety and fire inspection completed, and any adult to be placed on the license will have to complete 36 hours of pre-service training. After your license is issued, the time it takes for a placement will depend on the ages, gender and characteristics of children you would be willing to care for and the availability of children that match your preferences.

What is Hope's Closet's role in this process? We are a license recommending agency for Butler County Children Services. We will walk you through the process, provide you with information about all necessary training, and be a constant resource for encouragement and support even after licensing.

Can I specify what child I take into my home? During the licensing process you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the age, gender, number of children you are interested in considering. You will also be asked about the emotional and physical challenges that you would be willing to tackle.

Where do the children come from? Our foster children come from Butler County, Ohio. Most children will be reunified with their parents or other family member while about 25% may be or become eligible for adoption.

What are the ages of children who need foster homes? About 7% of children in foster care are infants under the age of 1; about 30% are between the ages of 1 and 5, there are around 27% between the ages of 6 and 12. Approximately 32% are over 12 years old. Due to federal and state budget priorities, each year sees the average age of children in foster care inching upwards. The majority of children come into care with their siblings. Our greatest need is for homes to take a sibling group of 2 or more school age children and teens.

Is there any way to gradually work up to accepting a child full-time? Absolutely! Periodically either foster parents or foster children need a break. This break is called a "respite." Whether overnight, a weekend or for a few weeks, a licensed foster caregiver provides alternative care and assists in preventing a disruption, self-care or a well-needed break.

What if I only want infants? We periodically have a need for families to foster infants. However, many of these infants are part of a larger sibling group. Many of the infants coming into care are drug exposed. Many of them need lots of attention and holding, or may have medical needs or

complications. You will need to be prepared with a crib, infant car seat, swing, etc. You should be open to receive the placement 24/7.

How long to children usually stay in the foster home? The length of placement varies from a few days to many years. The average placement lasts 6-12 months.

What happens to foster children when they leave my home? While children are in foster care, the custodial county children service agency is working with the family to rectify the problems that caused the children to come into care to begin with. There are services offered to the parents such as alcohol and other drug rehabilitation, anger management counseling, and parenting classes. If the parent shows progress in getting their life under control, the children will be returned to the parent after many supervised and unsupervised home visits. The county will continue to monitor the family to insure the child's safety. If the parent cannot overcome the barriers to parenting, the county seeks out close and distant family members in order to provide kinship care. However many of our foster families adopt their foster children if the case plan changes to adoption.

Isn't it hard to let a child go after having them become a part of your family? YES! It is hard. Foster care is a ministry to assisting in the healing of a traumatized child. Sometimes ministry is hard! However, the rewards are huge. To take a child into your home, giving soothing, reassurance of safety and demonstrating your commitment to them time and time again can have a life changing effect on these children. In James 1:27 God has asked us "to care for the orphans and widows in their time of need." He will give us the strength to care for them and the courage to let them go when the time comes.