



Help A Child In Need Become a Foster Parent



Foster care provides temporary, alternative care for children in a state certified home while the LCCS staff works with the birth family with the goal of reunification.



Thinking About Becoming A Foster Parent? Here's What You Need To Know:

Why Foster Care?

Foster care provides licensed, substitute caregivers for children whose birth parents or family of origin are unable, for any number of reasons, to provide a safe, stable, and nurturing environment in their own home. Foster care provides children with a temporary, family setting in order to preserve relationships, promote well being, and ensure permanency for children.

When a child cannot live safely at home, LCCS first looks to a suitable relative to provide care. Many children who are in substitute care live with relatives or with "kin," such as a close family friend, teacher, etc. When no relatives or kin are available, the child is placed with a foster family. Foster parents provide daily care for children until they return home or permanency is achieved. Not only are they surrogate caregivers; they often provide ongoing support to the child's birth family before and after reunification.

Foster parents become advocates for the child: at school, with healthcare professionals, and with the child's caseworker. Most importantly, foster parents provide care in a family setting. Children entering foster care are victims of abuse, neglect, and/or dependency. They need guidance, nurturing, and a stable environment where they can feel protected and safe. Children with more serious needs receive specialized care in one of our treatment foster homes.

All foster homes are licensed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, in cooperation with Lucas County Children Services. Foster homes are recertified every two years. Prospective foster parents must complete the free, pre-service training, have a completed home study, and agree to a criminal background check. In Lucas County, there is a continuous need for foster parents to care for children. LCCS also seeks out individuals with special skills – mental health, developmental disabilities, special education, law enforcement, and others – to become treatment caregivers.

Foster Parent Supports

Each foster family is assigned a foster care caseworker to support, advocate and offer resources to help stabilize the family and the children in the home. This is in addition to the child's caseworker.

- Foster parents receive a stipend to offset the cost of caring for the foster children in the home.
- Health care coverage is provided for each foster child.
- LCCS foster parents who work, but who are not eligible for JFS child care funding, can receive financial assistance.

What Is The Process?

- **Training** — 36 hours provided by the Agency
- **Application/Criminal Background Check**
- **Home Study**



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Foster Caregiver Training

Lucas County Children Services, in cooperation with the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program (OCWTP), provides free, in-service training to prospective licensed foster caregivers.

Courses are offered several times throughout the year in different configurations. Each course includes twelve, three-hour sessions. Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent is welcome. There is no up-front commitment, although you must attend each individual class (in any order) within a set period of time. The knowledge gained through this program will enable you to make an informed decision about whether becoming a foster parent is right for you.

Homestudy Process

You've decided that you want to learn more about becoming a foster and/or adoptive parent. You may have come to that decision on your own, or after speaking with a member of our recruiting team.

Your first step is to register for, and complete, the state-mandated pre-service orientation training. This 36-hour program will familiarize you with the rules you must follow as a foster parent, the needs of the children entering care, and other relevant information.

Once you have completed the training, you will be asked to complete an application to foster and/or adopt, along with other documents that collect information about you and your family. This may include, but is not limited to: physical exams and medical statements; financial statements; employment verification; background checks, and a safety audit of your home. An instruction guide accompanies these materials.

Once you have submitted all of the required documentation, LCCS will assign a state certified adoption assessor to guide you through the actual home study process. The worker assesses your family's readiness and appropriateness to care for children who have suffered maltreatment. It is not a single visit; rather, it is a series of activities that help you decide whether fostering and/or adopting is right for you. It will include information about the way family members in the home interact; historical information that may affect your ability to safely care for children placed in your home; information about any pets in the home; and the physical safety of the environment.

At that point, your home study worker will submit all of your documentation, and a conclusion is drawn as to whether your home study can be recommended to the State of Ohio for approval.

The home study process can take up to six months to complete, but many families complete the process more quickly.

Frequently Asked Questions About Foster Care

Who has to attend training?

If you are married or if you have a partner (living in your home), both of you will need to attend preservice training.

How long do I have to complete training?

The 36-hour preservice training, home study and licensing must be completed in 18 months or less.

How long does it take to get licensed?

It depends on how quickly you complete your paperwork, get your fingerprints done and get the appropriate references and letters. From there, we have a home study worker meet with you in your home for a site and safety inspection and to review the types and number of children you're interested in fostering or adopting. The entire process can take anywhere from two to six months. It must be completed within 18 months without starting the entire process over again.

What type of background checks do you do for foster parents?

Everyone in the household over the age of 18 must do a BCI criminal record check and be fingerprinted. JIS checks are also done for any children over the age of 10.

Do foster children need to have their own bedrooms?

No, but they need their own bed. Same-gender children may share a bedroom with other foster children or your own children. Bunk beds are acceptable for children over 6. Children cannot share sleeping quarters with you if they are over 12 months old.

How soon will I have children in my home?

Once you are licensed, it could be at any time. When a child needs a foster family, we go through the list of available homes and try to match the family to the child's needs as closely as possible.

Suppose I am taking a vacation or are not available?

Let your caseworker know. Each foster family needs a backup plan or an alternative care plan that has been pre-approved by LCCS.

Do I have a choice about the children that I foster?

Yes. You will fill out a child characteristic inventory form about the types of children and behaviors you are willing to accept. Then when the caseworker calls about a child (or children), he/she will provide you with information about the child and you can make your decision.

Frequently Asked Questions About Foster Care – cont'd

What is the greatest need?

Right now, the agency's greatest need is for families willing to take babies and groups of brothers and sisters, but we need families to care for children and teens of all ages.

Does it matter that I'm not married or don't make a lot of money?

You can be married or single, a homeowner or a renter. The only financial requirement is that you have enough of an income to support yourself and your family aside from the stipend you will receive to care for your foster children.

Do foster parents have to stay at home with the children or can they work full-time?

Many foster children attend daycare – paid for by ODJFS, or LCCS when funds are available – which allows foster parents to work outside the home. Foster parents just need to apply through ODJFS.

My children are grown and out of the house. Am I too old to be a foster parent?

There is no age requirement (other than you must be at least 21 years of age to foster and 18 to adopt). You must also have a doctor certify that you are physically able to care for a child. Many "empty nesters" find foster parenting to be a rewarding experience.

I don't have any children. Does that rule me out?

No. You just need to be a responsible person who will make a commitment to children through the training provided by LCCS.

Once I take in a foster child, am I on my own?

No. Children need stability, and LCCS offers foster parents plenty of support to maintain children in their home. Before you even take in your first child, the LCCS staff works with you to develop a profile of the type of child best suited to the experience and capabilities of your family. Caseworkers – one for you and one for the child – visit your home monthly to talk through any concerns you have. We provide free, ongoing training so you are constantly learning new tips and strategies for caring for children. Counseling is provided for children who need help understanding and processing their trauma.

What other supports do I receive?

Foster parents receive a monthly stipend to care for the child based on his/her age and needs. The child will also receive periodic clothing vouchers. We provide some assistance for childcare and help you apply for child care support through ODJFS. The Lucas County Foster Parent Association provides an opportunity to network with other foster parents. The agency provides recreational opportunities, such as vouchers for sporting events and local performances, as they are made available.

Is there ongoing training for foster parents?

Yes, there is additional training each year. We provide the training at no charge. A calendar of training opportunities is made available each month, and you can register online. Your caseworker will recommend specific training classes for you based on your strengths and the needs of the children in your home.

Do I have to provide medical insurance for a foster child in my home?

No. Foster parents do not pay any of a child's medical expenses, other than over-the-counter medicines and supplies. You are reimbursed for all prescriptions covered by Medicaid.

What kind of situations do the children come from?

Thirty-nine percent of the children we see have suffered physical abuse. Thirty-one percent have suffered neglect. Ten percent have been victims of sexual abuse. Twenty percent are victims of emotional abuse.

Do children in foster care see their parents?

We arrange for children in foster care to see their parents in supervised settings, usually here at the agency or at one of a handful of community centers. These visits take place while parents work their case plan, and continue as long as the family's goal is reunification.

Haven't foster children been abused so much that they're beyond repair?

No. Children are amazingly resilient. Foster parents can make the difference by providing a structured, nurturing environment. Also, along with the supports from LCCS and other community resources these children can grow up to be productive adults in our society. How we respond to their needs now will largely determine what kind of citizens they will be in the future.

How long do foster children stay with me?

Children placed in your home for foster care can stay anywhere from a few days to a couple of years. Generally, the stay is from 9 to 18 months. The Juvenile Court usually wants to make a permanency plan for the child after about a year.

What if the child isn't able to return home?

Sometimes, this happens...birth parents have problems that they aren't able to fix. The Juvenile Court decides whether to sever parental rights. If the judge makes this decision, the child comes into the permanent custody of the agency. From that point, we begin the process of finding a new, adoptive family. If possible, we try to identify a relative to adopt the child. Very often, foster parents adopt the foster children that they've cared for, since they've become part of the family.