

Frequently Asked Questions

by Prospective Foster Parents

1. How great is the need for foster parents?

Each year in Colorado there are 50,000 suspected child abuse cases reported to the authorities. More than 7,000 children are in foster care, and there is a never-ending need for caring foster parents who can provide safe, nurturing homes for children.

2. What support services does Lutheran Family Services provide?

When a child is placed in foster care through Lutheran Family Services, a clinician is assigned to arrange placement and coordinate all aspects of the child's case. The clinician sees the child regularly, usually in the home. LFS staff are available to foster families 24 hours a day, seven days a week for emergency consultation and services.

Foster children will continue to have County Department of Human Services caseworkers who are legally responsible for monitoring their placement. This worker will track the delivery of services by Lutheran Family Services as well as the legal progress of the case with birth families and the courts.

3. How long will it take to get our foster home license/certification?

It depends! Before a family can be certified, the adults must complete 30 hours of precertification training provided by our staff. Also, prior to certification, foster families must complete a significant amount of paperwork – including an application, medical forms, fingerprints, background checks and an in-depth self-study.

Only after all of the above steps are completed satisfactorily is a foster home certificate issued. Potential foster parents who are clear about their goals and motivation and who can complete the paperwork and training as quickly as possible could possibly be licensed within three months of their inquiry.

4. How long will it take to have a child(ren) placed with me/us?

After you receive your foster home certification you may be anxious for a child to be placed quickly. You have already committed much time and energy toward this end. First, it is very important to understand that the placement process is not on a "first come, first serve basis." Matches between a foster child's needs and a foster family's strengths are carefully made. The hope and expectation is that this will prevent having to move the child to a different foster home. The wider the age range of children you are able to effectively parent, especially the range of 10 to 18 years, the more quickly a placement can be made. Also, placements can occur more quickly if your family can parent a sibling group of two or more children.

5. Will I get paid for my work as a foster parent?

Yes. The rate of reimbursement varies, depending on the child's individual needs. Typically, the reimbursement rate is determined prior to the child being placed in the foster home. The referring county caseworker and the LFS staff review the child's special needs and the payment amount is determined.

6. Am I allowed to discipline a foster child?

Lutheran Family Services is committed to providing loving, constructive home environments for children in need of foster care. Discipline, by definition, means "to teach." The approach to disciplining, or teaching, children may include talking with the child about the situation, positive reinforcement, giving choices, guiding the child to solve his or her own problem, diversion, separation from the problem situation and withholding of privileges. Disciplinary measure shall not deny the basic rights of a child. Physical hitting or physical punishment of any form is not allowed.

7. Can we choose the age or gender of the foster child placed in our home?

Yes. Through the extensive questionnaires and paperwork that you complete and through personal interviews with our staff, you are encouraged to evaluate the type of child that will best fit into your family structure and physical setting. Throughout this process you may select an age range, gender and types of behaviors that you will feel best prepared to parent. In addition, our agency will provide ongoing training that may expand your confidence in dealing with challenging behaviors of some children. After you are certified, when one of our staff calls to discuss a possible child placement with you, we encourage you to ask any questions. We will provide you with all of the information we have about the child and work with you in creating the best possible fit for a child in your home.

8. How long might a foster child stay in our home?

An "average" stay of a child through Lutheran Family Services' foster care program could be six months to one year. A child's stay in your home could also range from one year to a lifetime, depending on the child's needs and your family's goals and capacities. Again, throughout the training, screening and assessment process that takes place between you and our staff, we ask you to give serious thought to your goals in providing foster care.

9. Is it possible to adopt foster children?

In some cases. A permanent, loving home is our goal for each and every child. If a child becomes eligible for adoption, the foster parents are the first people to be considered.

10. Who pays for the child's medical costs?

Foster children who enter our program are covered by Medicaid insurance. This covers their basic medical costs. It does not cover such items as orthodontics (braces). You will receive information from the assigned clinician at the time a child is placed with you on how to access Medicaid coverage for this child.

11. Does a foster child need a separate bedroom all to himself/herself?

No. A foster child must have at least 40 square feet of bedroom space, so a bedroom that measures 8ft. by 10ft., not counting closet space, can accommodate two children. However, each foster child must have his or her own separate bed or crib, with sheets and coverings. Children cannot share beds. Also, bedroom space must be planned so that children over four years of age are not sharing bedrooms with children of the opposite gender over four years of age. Children ages 5 years and younger need to be on the same floor as foster parents.

12. May the foster child go to the school near our home?

Yes. It is most common for foster families to enroll their children in their neighborhood school. There may be occasional exceptions if it is very close to the end of a semester and the caseworker, clinician and the foster parents can arrange to allow the child to finish the semester in his/her current school. The other exception would be if a child were receiving special education services that requires the school to transport the child to and from another school where those special services would be provided.

13. Will we see or meet the birth parents of the child placed in our home?

Children are placed in foster care for a variety of reasons, ranging from abandonment, neglect, and abuse from their parents, to institutionalization, or death of their primary caregiver. Obviously, the situation is different for each child and foster family. Many birth parents do have a desire to see that their children are in a safe home, and a schedule of visits may be arranged for the child and birth family. Foster families will receive all necessary information prior to these visits and are generally expected to transport children to and from a neutral visitation site.

14. Is there an opportunity to take a break from caring for a foster child?

Yes. We have a group of certified foster parents who can provide "respite care" for foster children. This allows the foster parents to take an evening or a weekend off, knowing that their foster child is in good hands.

15. Can we take a foster child with us on vacation?

Yes. Foster families are encouraged to make the foster child a part of regular family activities, and vacations are a very enriching experience for the children. When a foster child is taken out of the state of Colorado, however, the foster family must first get a written travel authorization form signed by the county department caseworker.