

## What A Difference A Family Makes!



**T**housands of Illinois families have opened their hearts and their homes to abused and neglected children by becoming licensed foster families. They provide secure and loving homes for children in need of a temporary home. Children come into foster care frightened and feeling alone. They've been separated from their families, and moving into a foster home is scary.

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Illinois Department of  
Children & Family Services

*Pat Quinn, Governor*

# Help A Child Into A Home

## What is foster care?

Foster care is the opportunity to provide a temporary home to children who are under the guardianship of the state

and cannot live with their birth parents. These children are in the care of the state because they have been abused, neglected or abandoned.

Every child wants and deserves a

permanent home and family. In foster care we try to help foster children return to their birth families. When children cannot go home we find them an adoptive family. Many foster families adopt the children for whom they have been caring.

## Foster parents are people just like you. They are:

- Married or single
- Parents of little children, teens or adults, or adults with no children
- Working outside the home or in the home
- At least 21 years of age
- From various cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds



- Financially stable (Foster parents will receive reimbursements for food, shelter, clothing and an allowance for each foster child. Medical costs are paid by the state.)
- Homeowners or renters
- Able to pass a criminal background check

## What do foster parents do?

### Foster Parents:

- Protect and nurture children
- Connect children to safe, nurturing relationships
- Meet children's individual, educational, medical and developmental needs
- Support children's relationships with their birth families



- Work as members of a professional team

Foster parenting requires a strong commitment and a lot of hard work. Children who are suddenly uprooted from their

homes are often upset and need extra understanding and patience. Your role as a foster parent is to provide stability, and a loving and safe environment for each child in your care.

Can you do these things and more? If so, you may be ready to be a foster parent! Take a closer look.

## What types of foster families are needed most? We need the kind of foster families who can parent:

- Teenagers
- African American males of all ages
- Teenage mothers and their babies
- Children with special medical and behavioral needs
- Brothers and sisters who need to stay together
- Babies born with HIV infection or with cocaine or alcohol in their systems

## What kind of services will you receive as a foster parent?

*Personal Support:* The private child welfare agency or DCFS, whichever licenses your home, has developed services that include foster parent support groups, newsletters, after-hours telephone numbers, and community resources.

*Training:* You will receive training before being licensed.

Training continues while children are placed in your home. Sometimes you will receive additional

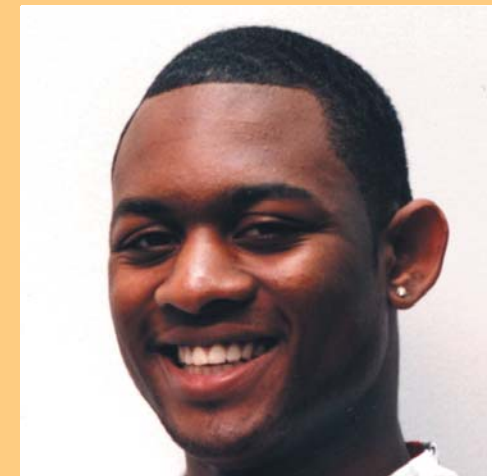
training to care for children with special needs.

*Financial Support:* Foster parents receive a monthly payment to cover the child's food, shelter, clothing, and person-



al allowance. The amount of the payment is based on the child's age and any special needs. DCFS and private agencies also provide additional payments for daycare services, after-school care, and extracurricular activities for foster children such as music lessons, ballet or scouting.

*Medical Support:* Each foster child receives a medical card that pays for most necessary medical care and prescriptions. Other medical support services may include physical therapy, counseling and medical equipment.



## How long does it take to become a foster parent?

As soon as your completed application is submitted, it takes about three to six months to complete the

licensing and training process. After training and receiving your foster parent license, children can be placed in your home. Although the type of families needed differs in every geographical setting, the more flexible you are about the type of child you are able and willing to care for, the sooner a child can be matched to your home.

**To become a licensed foster parent, call 1-800-572-2390**