

MICHIGAN FOSTER CARE/FOST-ADOPT BASICS

Do you have an abundance of love, patience, stability and attention to share with a child whose life is in crisis? Children in foster programs have been removed from their biological families by Family Independence Agency and Family Courts because of neglect or abuse and typically need foster care for one to eighteen months. Children from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds ranging in age from infants to teenagers need foster homes. The majority of children needing foster care range in age from 10 to 17.

The goal of foster care is to return the children to their parents when problems in the home have been resolved through counseling, parenting classes, substance abuse services, and other services outlined in their treatment plan. Every attempt is made to place brothers and sisters together in the same foster home. Foster families for teenagers and sibling groups of three and minority children are always in demand.

Becoming A Foster Parent

Who qualifies as a foster parent?

Couples or single adults committed to providing a loving home for children, a willingness to learn how to positively parent, and provide children ample space to grow. Foster parents demonstrate stability and maturity, and represent all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

What are the basics?

All members of the foster care family must be committed to taking on the extra responsibility of foster children. They must be willing to participate in a home study, become licensed through the State of Michigan, and follow the licensing rules of the state. Ongoing educational training is a required part of being part of this professional team.

Foster families need to be flexible enough to accommodate weekly counseling and visitation appointments for the children and their parents, as well as other commitments expected in caring for a child. Since foster care is a shared experience between the biological parents and the foster parents, a working relationship between the biological and foster parents may be necessary.

How is foster care funded?

Medical and dental costs are paid through Medicaid. The State of Michigan has a per day payment schedule to reimburse foster parents for the food and clothing costs of the foster child.

Older/Special Needs Adoption

Older Special Needs Adoption provides services to children who become available for adoption via the child welfare system. When children cannot be returned safely home from foster care, courts terminate parental rights. Relatives or foster parents may apply to adopt these children, but when no family is available, local agencies look to recruit families for these children prior to their photolisting with the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (www.mare.org).

Description of Waiting Children

Children are usually older, often between 10 and 15 years old, siblings needing placement together, and racial minorities. Characteristics often include emotional and behavior impairments, physical and mental challenges, and removal from biological families due to severe neglect and abuse.

Qualities Sought in Adoptive Families

- Experience with special needs children

- Ability to delay gratification and work openly with agency and community resources because parenting these children can be very challenging
- Mature adults, single or married, with or without other children
- Stable family life with a capacity to offer acceptance, love, affection, and guidance

Adoption Costs

In Michigan, the cost to adopt an older special needs child is payment of a minimal county court filing fee. Almost all children are eligible for support and medical subsidies, which are designed to actively assist families adopt special needs children.

Adoption Process

You must attend an orientation, which is followed up by a multi-week education and preparation group series. Subsequent to the completion of the group series, families will be seen for pre-adoptive assessments. Upon approval, families may begin the matching process for specific children and be placed in our family resource pool, which seeks matches for specific children. After placement, a variety of educational, supportive events and activities are available through the agency and community resources.

Source: Bethany Christian Services (www.bethany.org)