





## What is Foster Care?

Foster care is a temporary placement for children whose parents cannot adequately care for them. The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is the state agency charged with making decisions to place children in foster care. These placements are formalized by an order from the Juvenile Division of Chancery Court.

## DCFS's Commitment to Foster Care

DCFS is committed to child protection and family preservation. Every child is entitled to grow up in a permanent family. The primary and preferred way of achieving this goal is to provide families experiencing turmoil with services to prevent the need to place children outside their homes. DCFS recognizes that there are a limited number of situations when children cannot safely remain at home and must be separated from their birth/legal families. When children must be separated from the family, DCFS will provide a healthy and safe living environment and will make appropriate and timely efforts to provide services to reunite the family. DCFS will provide appropriate homes for children who cannot be reunited with their families.

## About the Foster Family Program

Family foster care is a program designed to provide a substitute family life experience. The purpose is to provide a healthy home and community experience for the child while the conditions that caused the placement away from the birth/legal family are being resolved. Foster care is intended to be temporary. Children are placed in foster homes because they have been removed from their own birth/legal families due to abuse, neglect, or other family problems that endanger their safety. The children may range from infancy through 18 years of age, and may have special medical, physical, or emotional needs. The children may belong to any ethnic group, race, and be a sibling group who should be placed together.



## Why Become a Foster Family?

Foster parenting is a serious commitment. It requires giving the gift of unconditional love to children and youth who may never have experienced love of any kind and who may not know how to accept it. It also requires the foster parent to be able to bond and attach to children quickly, but still be able to separate from those children when they are returned to their birth/legal family or moved to a more permanent family situation. Foster parents are selected from applicants: (1) who are single or who have been married for at least two years, (2) who range in age from 21 to 65, (3) who maintain standards acceptable to DCFS, and (4) who pass safety, health and background checks.



## Family Foster Home Approval Process

The process of recruiting, training, and evaluating a prospective foster family and that family's home is called a Family Foster Home Assessment. An assessment is conducted prior to the placement of a child in the home. The purpose of the Family Foster Home Assessment is threefold:

- to educate the prospective foster parents,
- to assess the family's character, suitability, and qualifications, and
- to determine if the physical environment meets the standards for approval of a Family Foster Home.



## Training

DCFS recognizes the child's right to be placed with a family who is able to deal with the special problems and traumas of out-of-home care. Foster parenting involves specialized training. The prospective foster parent must participate in and complete 30 hours of pre-service training and have current CPR and First Aid training before a child is placed in the home.

## Some of the Responsibilities of a Foster Family

- Provides a nurturing family life experience to the child including guidance, stimulation, affection and appropriate discipline.
- Assists the child and DCFS in planning and achieving the child's return to his birth/legal parents' home or to a permanent placement.
- Prepares the child for enrollment and regular school attendance when age appropriate in an accredited school and to encourage the expression of the child strengths and talents.
- Maintains open communication with all team members; and, this includes communication with the child's birth/legal family when contact with the birth family is part of the case plan.
- Transports the child to doctor visits, court, and family visits.
- Trains and teaches each child using techniques that stress praise, encouragement and help children learn life skills.

