

Welcome!

May is National Foster Care Month, and we hope you will take a few moments to learn about foster parenting and about some of the families who step forward to care for the most vulnerable children and youth in our communities.

There is no service more noble or more important than opening your heart and your home to a child in need. There are many ways to support foster care: you can become a foster parent, mentor young people who have been separated from their biological parents, or volunteer in a variety of other ways.

Meet the Links



Christine and Michael Link are two amazing, inspiring foster and adoptive parents – two of several hundred resource parents licensed by RI DCYF. Actually, the Links make fostering a family experience! Their daughter Abigail writes, “One of our favorite family movies used to be *Cheaper by the Dozen*. A family with five kids could appreciate the idea of a huge family working together to do life. Then we started living it. Eight foster kids later, who have resulted in three adoptions, we're hitting the dozen in the house mark! A lot of people look at us and see a great family, a great story, or a great bunch of crazy people running rampant, but all of those images are just a fraction of the family that God has knit together in our home.”

In Christine’s words, “Volunteering for foster care has expanded our family and our hearts. We moved into a 255 year-old house with enough bedrooms and bathrooms for all of us, and now it will hold the memories of our many children as they grow up. The impact on our family has been great. We love more openly and hug more regularly; we sing a lot, play outside, and sacrifice because we want to and know that we are making a difference. Our children have cancer, epilepsy,

and experience issues with choking because of a narrow esophagus. We have learned to live and to appreciate so much. Knowing that there are little ones needing love, needing to be safe, and needing medical attention prompts us over and over to continue volunteering as foster parents. Our philosophy is that our door is open to those who need a loving home, and they can stay for as long as they need a family. We reach out to their parents because they too are in need! All that we have can be used to bless others. To do this well we need to believe the world is a different place because of our family.”

Becoming a Foster Parent

Foster care is a protective service to children and their families when children must temporarily leave their parents’ homes. There are many reasons and circumstances that make it difficult for families to meet the needs of their children, which include poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, homelessness, loss of a job, or lack of support from extended family and community.

In foster care, the children are provided with a safe, nurturing, loving family for a period of time. Foster parenting is not a lifetime commitment to a child and his or her family, but a commitment to be meaningful in the child and family’s lifetime.

What foster care is:

- a chance to make the world a better place – one child at a time
- one of the most challenging steps you will take in your life
- one of the most rewarding opportunities you will ever volunteer for

What foster care is not:

- simple – emotionally, socially, or in terms of the time commitment it requires
- a way to solve personal or family problems
- a way to make money

Foster Parent Qualifications

The key qualification is being able to meet the physical, emotional and developmental needs of a child. We will help you evaluate whether this is something you might be able to do. We do this through a process that helps you and us evaluate your capabilities. In general, being a foster parent means that you can meet the following requirements:

- Provide 24-hour care and supervision to a child (or children) (DCYF will pay for such services as childcare)
- Be able to care for yourself financially without the child’s daily board rate
- Be flexible, patient and understanding
- Have a sense of humor
- Have a home free of fire and safety hazards

- Complete a criminal/protective services background check
- Have the ability to work as a member of a team

Both single and dual-parent families make great foster parents. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability status, religion (or a lack thereof), sex, gender, or sexual orientation.

How to Become a Foster Family

We need all types of foster parents. Being a successful foster parent is hard work and it requires opening yourself and your home. Yet, foster parenting can be some of the most gratifying work you will ever consider. The heart of it, of course, is working with children and their families. Foster care also involves partnering with social workers, schools and community resources to meet a young person's needs. All types of people make good foster parents as we all have our own special talents, although foster parenting is not for everyone. If your family is thinking of foster care, contact our recruiter Robin Perez at Robin.Perez@dcyf.ri.gov or 401-528-3700 and begin the conversation.