

## HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Contact the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center at 1-800-947-8074 or visit their website at [www.wifostercareandadoption.org](http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org).

They can answer your questions and give you the name and phone number of your local contact or, if included, contact the agency listed on the label below.

*“I think I thought it would give us a feeling of satisfaction that we had made a difference in even one child’s life...Something I could be proud of myself for accomplishing...”*

*“Our hope is that we’ve had some kind of good influence on them. The talks we have at the dinner table, the going to church...”*

*“People I knew only briefly have changed me in important ways. Knowing “I can be loved” is a very important insight.”*

*Live* DEEPER.  
*Love* WIDER.  
*Leave* BIGGER.



Our deepest appreciation to the foster parents whose words tell the story of foster care better than we ever could.

The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center is a partnership of the Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services, Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, St. Aemilian’s-Lakeside, Inc. and PATH Wisconsin, Inc.



*Live*  
DEEPER.

*Love*  
WIDER.

*Leave*  
BIGGER.

*Try it. Become a foster parent for even a few years and make a lifetime of difference.*



If you’ve ever thought about becoming a foster parent, chances are good that you’ve asked yourself, “Do I have what it takes?”

Foster parents are regular people who care a lot about children. This brochure provides you with common questions about foster care and answers from people like you – adults and families who have made an important decision to become foster parents

*“It just feels like I’ve got the time and the energy. I’ve always been a mom and it seems like I’ve got to keep going on.”*

*Fostering*

Successful foster parents come from a variety of backgrounds - they are all different ages, races, income levels, and occupations. But, they have two things in common: they have a desire to help children, and they have the ability to roll with the punches.

*“At first, it was probably completely selfish. I wanted to be able to bring children in my home who didn’t have a family and would have been prepared to keep them all. We now have just a desire to help. We’re very concerned about building strong families.”*

*“We know we are good at it. We know we’ve made a difference and we will keep making a difference...When the phone rings, we get very excited.”*

*“Both my husband and I have a love for kids. That had a lot to do with it – knowing our kids were in a very good situation and knowing there were others who were not.”*



## IS IT HARD TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT?

No, but it does take a little time. Your licensing agency needs to find out more about you and your family so that when they place a child in your home, it's a good match for you and the child. You will need to fill out paperwork and meet with workers who will license your home. You will also want to attend trainings to help prepare you for your new role as a foster parent and ensure that you can provide a safe home for children.

*"A lot of times the fear is that the agency was going to come into our home and change our family. We realized that they are there to help you."*

*"I think before anyone is licensed they need to take that training. It can either make you or break you in making the decision to be a foster parent."*

## WHAT KINDS OF KIDS ARE IN FOSTER CARE?

The characteristics of children in foster care vary across Wisconsin. However, most often the children and youth in need of foster homes are not babies or toddlers; they are teenagers, sibling groups, and children with special needs such as mental health, behavioral, or emotional concerns.

Some of them have been through some pretty tough experiences in their short lives and desperately need stability and attention.

*"I don't just want them to look pretty and cleaned up on the outside. I want them to feel good on the inside. To feel like they're somebody. I think I made a lasting difference in all of them...right down to sitting down at the table for a meal."*

*Live*  
**DEEPER.**

## WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR FOSTER PARENTS?

As a foster parent, you will receive a monthly reimbursement payment to help cover the costs of food, clothing, personal care expenses, and any kind of special assistance a foster child may need.



There may be other supports or services that your licensing agency provides for foster parents, such as assistance with day care costs or respite services. If you have questions, ask your licensing agency.

## HOW LONG WILL A FOSTER CHILD STAY WITH ME?

That's different in every case. Some children stay only a few days; others stay much longer. About two-thirds of the children in foster care eventually go back to their birth families. Most of the other children in foster care are adopted – many by their foster families, some by other families.

*"A lot of what keeps us going is the progress I've seen kids make in our home. When they go home, I feel like there's a possibility the improvement will last."*

Yes, it can be hard. But foster parents tell us that they take great satisfaction in knowing they made a difference for the children they have fostered.

*"...We had a four-year-old for fourteen months. By the time she left us she didn't need counseling any more. It makes me proud to look back and say, 'I really made a difference in that child's life.' And that's even one."*

*Love*  
**WIDER.**

## What do foster parents say they value most about fostering?

Fostering is...

- Rewarding, fulfilling, a sense of accomplishment.
- Very stressful but very gratifying.
- An adventure – an opportunity to make a difference.
- An opportunity to give and receive love, even if only briefly.
- Enjoying the hubbub.
- Helping vulnerable children feel loved and nurtured.
- Feeling that we are making a difference in the lives of those kids and adding meaning to our own lives.



*Leave*  
**BIGGER.**

## HOW WILL FOSTERING AFFECT THE CHILDREN IN MY HOME?

All members of your family should be involved in making the final decision about becoming a foster family. Foster parents tell us that, for the most part, being a foster family has been a very good thing not only for the foster children in their home, but for their birth and adopted children, as well.

*"This has done a lot for our son. He's gotten more patient and thinks about the bigger picture."*

*"I think it has been an incredible reminder to them of how blessed they truly are."*

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M READY?

It's not a decision you can – or should – make quickly.

*"It was a drawn-out decision. It took us about a year. The training was an excellent experience. It was motivational. It gave us momentum to continue. Initially, my husband didn't have as much interest as I did, but he gained momentum as we went through the process."*

We've all heard about those foster parents who've taken dozens of children in through the years, but not all foster parents are able or have a desire to care for a large number of children for an extended period of time. We need all kinds of foster families – those that can care for a small number of children for a short time and those who want to foster many children for as long as they are able.

*"If you feel called to do it, you should try it. It's not an overwhelming commitment. You can do it for short-term or long term."*

If you have a desire to nurture a child who needs a safe place to live, if you feel called to care for children who have lived through difficult experiences, if you think it is the right time to open your home to children, consider becoming a foster parent for just a few years and make a lifetime of difference.