

BASIC CRITERIA FOR FOSTER PARENTS

These are some general criteria to help people to determine if they have the potential to be foster parents:

- ♥ Have a real love, interest, and concern for children and enjoy being around children.
- ♥ Between the ages of 25 and 60. If over 60, in good health.
- ♥ Married or single.
- ♥ Have sufficient income to support yourself and family.
- ♥ Have a home that is of adequate size and meets local standards for health and safety. Each foster child must have his/her own bed in an enclosed room with no more than three children to a bedroom.
- ♥ Live in Washington, D.C. or suburban Maryland.
- ♥ All household members are free from communicable diseases.
- ♥ Have an adequate plan for adult supervision of foster children on a twenty-four hour basis. Day care providers must be licensed, but foster parents may not operate an in-home day care center.
- ♥ Offer the warmth, stimulation, and guidance children require to achieve their potential for growth and development.
- ♥ Be in good emotional and physical health, physically able to provide adequate child care, and willing to submit current medical information when requested.
- ♥ Able to accompany the child to medical appointments, attend teacher conferences, and be involved with school activities.
- ♥ Have a stable relationship with members of the foster family.
- ♥ Provide for the foster child's religious training in accordance with his/her own religion as nearly as possible.
- ♥ Work cooperatively with the agency social worker and follow the independent plan established for each child.
- ♥ Understand the fact that birth parents are encouraged to maintain contact with the child. Contacts will be arranged by the social worker according to individual situations, but do not occur in the foster family's home.
- ♥ Be willing to complete pre-service training and attend post-placement training and foster parent meetings.
- ♥ Have the ability to obtain an approved home study.

If you have questions about any of these criteria, **do NOT give up**, but rather call the agency and ask for clarification. We need you, we want you, and we want to encourage you while giving you the information that you need to make a decision of whether to proceed because children need you. Remember, you can turn back at any time if you feel this is not the right avenue for you.

The following is a general outline of the steps involved in becoming a foster parent:

1. Complete and mail the enclosed application.
2. Upon receipt of the application, a social worker will call you to make an appointment to meet with you and to discuss all aspects of the program. She will also explain and give you the necessary forms that must be completed.

3. **TRAINING**

The Board of Child Care requires that all potential foster parents participate in a course of training. This training is provided by the Consortium for Child Welfare to all persons applying to be foster parents through a member agency.

This training helps you to understand the feelings and needs of foster children which will be crucial when actually dealing with a foster child placed in your home. It will also help you if you are uncertain as to whether you are really interested and ready to commit to being a foster parent. In two-parent families; both persons are required to attend all sessions. Other adults in the home are also encouraged to attend. Your social worker will provide you with the dates and times of the next training session.

4. **HOME STUDY**

The home study is a process of getting to know you and how you deal with children. It will help the agency to determine what type of foster child can best fit into your home and lifestyle. It is the beginning of the foster family/foster care agency relationship. The home study consists of several interviews in your home. In two-parent families, both must participate jointly as well as individually. Children and other household members are also involved in one interview.

5. Completion of all necessary paperwork and documentation is required prior to being licensed. As this usually takes quite a bit of time, these papers are provided at the first meeting for your convenience. Your social worker will help you with understanding them. Although this is a tedious and time-consuming piece, this documentation is required by law to protect the children placed in any foster home. All licensed foster care agencies must comply with this law. The social worker will collect all documentation and apply for your foster care license.

6. When you have become an approved foster home, a child or children will be placed with you. When this actually happens will depend on how narrow your range of acceptance is. If, for instance, you will only accept a three-year-old girl, you may wait several months. However, if you will accept either gender, from birth to ten, and that is part of a sibling group, the placement will occur much sooner. There is no way of knowing when a child who will fit into your home will be needing you, but that time may be now!