

WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

Foster care is a protective service provided to families experiencing difficulties so severe in nature and degree that children must temporarily be removed from their home. Children are removed to ensure their physical and emotional safety. Living in the least restrictive environment of a caring family allows children to receive nurturance, guidance, and therapeutic intervention.

The primary goal of foster care, which is supplemental family care in an agency-approved home, is to reunify families. While children are residing in a foster home, a variety of services are provided to birth parents and their children with the main objective of resolving the problems that led to the foster care placement. In most cases, children are returned to their birth families. If such a goal cannot be achieved, other permanent plans are pursued which might be permanent foster care, independent living, or adoption. The foster family and the agency work as a team toward meeting the needs of the children and their families. Foster parenting, therefore, is not a lifetime commitment to a child, but rather a commitment to be meaningful to a child's life. Foster care means families helping families.

WHO ARE THE FOSTER CHILDREN?

The children range in age from infancy through teenage and are primarily minority children. Many infants and toddlers have been prenatally exposed to drugs and require extra care, patience, stimulation, and nurturance. Some children may need to attend therapy appointments while others attend special education classes. Some children have handicapping conditions. Brothers and sisters would like to be placed together which is why at this time there is a special need for foster parents for sibling groups as well as for children over the age of eight.

WHAT ABOUT THIS FOSTER CARE AGENCY?

The Board of Child Care is a small agency providing foster care for children from the District of Columbia. Our emphasis is on a strong, close relationship between the agency and foster families. We will help you to help the children. The social worker will be available as often as necessary to assist with the adjustment and on-going problems. The social worker helps to identify children's needs and to find appropriate resources (i.e., special education, psychotherapy, special medical clinics, etc.) to address those needs. The District of Columbia provides, through the Board of Child Care, a small monthly stipend depending on the age of the children and their identified handicaps or special needs. Medical care is covered by Medicaid.