Heartfelt Calling

Make a Difference, Foster or Adopt a Child

A program of South Carolina Foster Parent Association
**FOSTER CARE**

Children are placed in foster care for a variety of reasons and must live apart from their families for a period of time. At any given time, there are thousands of children in South Carolina in foster care ranging in age from birth to 18 years normally, but up to 21 years in some cases. These children have been removed from their homes as a result of neglect or abuse; so it is important they have someone they can depend upon while their own families are trying to find solutions to their problems.

When foster children are placed in a temporary living situation, they are given an opportunity to grow and develop to the best of their abilities during this painful time of separation from their families. Through the love and nurturing of foster families, children can feel secure until they are reunited with their families.

**FOSTER FAMILIES**

Foster families are individuals or couples licensed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and supported by their Regional DSS Family Support Unit. They provide temporary care for children who must live apart from their families. Foster families willingly open their homes to offer a safe and loving environment for children in crisis. They are special people whose greatest reward comes from the satisfaction of helping a child.
REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME
A LICENSED FOSTER FAMILY OR APPROVED ADOPTIVE FAMILY

Requirements of the Licensed or Approved Home

➤ You may apply to foster or adopt living in a house, apartment or mobile home as long as there is adequate sleeping space.

➤ Foster children may share a room with another child of the same gender as long as each child has his or her own bed.

➤ Families requesting to foster children including those from birth-two years of age must have a crib set up for sleeping. (No bassinettles, no Pack & Play® and no drop-side cribs.)

➤ Children may not share a room with an adult (including children 18 or older still living in the home) except for medically fragile children including babies under 1 year old whose crib may be placed in the foster parent’s room temporarily.

➤ Each bedroom must have a window, a door and a closet/clothes storage area.

➤ Your home’s bedrooms must either have at least one window opening to five square feet with a minimum height of 24 inches and a minimum width of 20 inches and the bottom of the window being no higher than 44 inches from the floor; or
  ➤ Interconnected smoke detectors; or
  ➤ A sprinkler system
REQUIRED DOCUMENTS
FOR FOSTER HOME LICENSING AND/OR ADOPTION APPROVAL

The following must be supplied for every member of your household:

- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Card
- Driver’s License (if applicable)
- Photos of family and outside of home

If applicable:
- Marriage License
- Divorce Decree AND Complaint/Petition (Complaint/petition may be obtained from civil court of the county in which divorce complaint/petition was filed.)
- Military Discharge Papers (DD214)
- Bankruptcy Discharge Papers
- Pet Vaccination Records (Rabies—must be current)

In addition:
- Each person in the family 18 years or older must be fingerprinted, undergo a criminal background check and a check of the Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect.
- Each person 12 years or older in the home will be checked against the Sex Offenders’ Registry.
- If you have lived outside of South Carolina within the last five years you will need to have an Adam Walsh check for each household member 18 years or older.
- Each family member must have medical exam; including TB test for adults.
- Each applicant must complete 14 hours of pre-service training.
- You must provide four references that have known applicant(s) a minimum of 3 years and are non-related.
Foster Family Responsibilities

➤ You will be responsible for providing necessary documents to your licensing worker at the first home visit.
➤ You will be responsible for completing the licensing process in 120 days or less. DSS has worked hard to streamline the foster home licensing process in order to fully utilize all foster families as soon as possible for the benefit of children in care in need of loving, nurturing homes. If you have an issue that will prevent you from completing your portion of the process within 120 days (home preparation, pre-service training, completing all paperwork) you will be asked to withdraw until such a time is suitable for you to do so. This allows the licensing staff to concentrate on families who are ready, willing and eager to provide homes for children.
➤ You will be responsible for the cost of medical exam(s).
➤ You will be responsible for passing Fire and Sanitation inspections. Homes built prior to 1978 will be required to have a lead risk assessment.
➤ You will be responsible for all costs related to inspection preparation and home study preparation such as beds, car seats, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detector, fire extinguishers and lead or water correction.
➤ You will be responsible for transporting your foster child(ren) to appointments, visitation, etc.; the same as you would your own child.
➤ If you are licensed for children birth-five years old, you will be responsible for purchasing/providing appropriate car seat based on age and weight of child(ren) placed with you.
➤ You will be responsible for working in conjunction with case worker(s), guardian ad litem, therapists and birth family for the benefit of the child.
➤ To maintain your foster home license, you will be responsible for earning 28 continuing education credit hours during the two-year license period.
Completing the Adoption Process

Once the DSS requirements are met, the formal adoption process begins. The steps involved in completing the process can be lengthy, but please be aware every precaution is taken to match the right family to each child or sibling group. The goal is to serve the best interest of the children by not setting them up for the future trauma and disappointment which could occur if the right family is not matched to the child or children.

Assessment
Family and agency assess readiness to adopt.

Preparation Workshop
Applicants share experiences, discuss parenting and coping skills, and find out about children available for adoption.

Home Visit and Pre-Placement Investigation
Adoption worker visits home to conduct interviews, answer questions and complete adoptive home assessment. A report on the applicant’s readiness to adopt is written, compiling information gathered from the application and assessment process. This report is required by law and is part of the final court hearing.

Placement Committee
Adoptive parents are selected by a committee of adoption professionals based on the needs of the child eligible for adoption.

Placement
Visitation between the adoptive parents and the selected child usually begin prior to placement. When the child and family are ready, the child is placed with the adoptive family.

Adoption is Final
Adoptive families are required to obtain an attorney. Financial assistance is often available. Finalization of the adoption takes place in Family Court.
To begin the application process for becoming Licensed to Foster or Approved to Adopt, contact us:

888-828-3555
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Heartfeltcalling.org