

How do I become a foster parent?

Call 1-800-572-2390, or your local DCFS office, to become a foster parent. DCFS staff will work with you to obtain a foster care license for your home, and schedule you for the required, free training. After licensing and training are completed – a process that usually takes three to six months – children can be placed in your home.

Foster parents receive a monthly stipend to cover the child's food, shelter, clothing and personal allowance, with the amount based on the child's age and any special needs. Each foster child receives a medical card that pays for most necessary medical care and prescriptions. Other support services may include counseling, physical therapy and medical equipment. DCFS also provides additional payments for daycare services, after-school care, and extracurricular activities for foster children. Becoming a foster parent is an important decision, and DCFS is here to support you in this critical work.

Call us today, and let us help you help children and families in your community!

Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services
Pat Quinn, Governor

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YOU can make a difference
in the life of a child
in your community...



Be a foster parent!



Why foster?

All children need the love and support of a family to grow into healthy, productive adults. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) works to strengthen families, helping them provide that love and support to their sons and daughters. But when children are abused or neglected and cannot safely stay in their home, foster parents in

the community can step up to help both the children placed in foster care and their families.

Over the last decade, Illinois has transformed its child welfare system. In 1997, with over 52,000 children in state care, we struggled to do the right thing for so many children and families. Today, thanks to thousands of families across the state who came forward to become permanent, loving homes for these children through adoption and guardianship, we have just under 16,000 children in state care. This enables us to concentrate on finding the right home for each and every child, and on supporting these children and their foster caregivers with quality services to address their individual needs. With a better base of knowledge and a wider range of services to offer, we're now able to build brighter futures for kids in our care; as just one example, over 700 youth in DCFS care are currently attending college! It all starts when a foster parent decides, "I can help."



How can a foster parent help?

Each of us has unique strengths and skills, and each foster parent can make a unique contribution to a child's life. We work hard to match the needs of each foster child with the special strengths of each foster family. Some foster parents have a gift for working with adolescents, while others are inspired to help children with medical challenges. Some foster parents make themselves available to care for large groups of siblings, helping sisters and brothers stay together, while others are drawn to the mission of working collaboratively with biological parents to help them achieve the return of their children. All foster parents provide a stable, caring and safe family home, and work with DCFS as part of a team to ensure that a child's developmental, educational and medical needs are met.



When a foster parent helps a child and their family, they also help their own community. Children in foster care do better when they stay in their home communities, and also benefit when they can continue attending the same school. When placing a child in a foster home, DCFS therefore looks first to foster parents in the child's home community. When foster parents help a child maintain ties to community and strengthen bonds with nearby family members, they are creating better outcomes for a child, but also creating a stronger, more supportive community for all families.

Being a foster parent can be very hard work, but it can also be the most rewarding experience of your life. Many foster parents later adopt children they fostered, or keep in touch for many years with those who have returned home. You and your family can make a difference in the life of a child in your community!