

What are the requirements for becoming a licensed foster home?



Background checks ~ Everyone in your home age 13 and older, except the related child placed with you by DCFS, must authorize and undergo a background check as part of the licensing process. Adults (persons age 18 and older) must be fingerprinted as part of the background check process. The

background check process includes a review of the state's child abuse and neglect records, criminal history records and the Sex Offender Registry for Illinois and any other state you have lived in during the past five years.

References ~ You must provide the names and addresses of three persons who are not related to you who can attest to your character and suitability for becoming a licensed foster family home.

Health of Family ~ You and all the members of your household, except the related children placed with you by DCFS, must provide reports of recent medical examinations as part of the licensing process. School medical reports may be accepted for your children.

Training ~ You and your spouse (if you are married) must complete six hours of training to get a license. To meet this requirement, you may take special training classes or watch a set of four training video-tapes in your home.

Discipline ~ You and the rest of your family must understand that corporal punishment or the threat of corporal punishment may never be used with foster children, including foster children who are related to you. Corporal punishment may be defined as any type of physical punishment, discipline or retaliation inflicted upon any part of the body of a child. This would include such actions as slapping, hitting, punching, spanking, shoving, pinching, or any other type of action geared toward inflicting pain or body discomfort upon a child. In addition, DCFS does not allow caregivers to use derogatory or demeaning language directed toward the child or his/her family.

Other requirements ~ A licensing worker will conduct an assessment of your home to ensure that it is clean, well-heated, lighted and ventilated, free from observable hazards and has enough room and is a safe environment for a child in your care.

Are there other permanency options?

Whether or not you become licensed, you may also be interested in discussing other permanency alternatives with the caseworker if, after some time, the plan for the child does not involve a return to his or her home. Every child needs the stability and security offered by a permanent home in order to thrive and develop into a caring, competent adult. The permanency alternatives that might be appropriate for you and the child in your care include the following options:

Private Guardianship ~ This means that the court appoints you as the child's private guardian (instead of DCFS). As a private guardian, you assume the right and responsibility to make important decisions that will have a permanent affect on the development and life of the child, including the right to consent to marriage or major medical treatment and the right to represent the child in legal actions. If you become licensed, you could be eligible to receive a monthly subsidy payment that is the same amount as the Full Foster Care Board Rate that you will receive when you became licensed.

Adoption ~ This means that you provide a permanent home for the child. Again, if you become licensed, you may still be eligible to receive a monthly subsidy payment that is the same amount as the Full Foster Care Board Rate you will receive when you became licensed.



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What You Need to Know About Being a Relative Caregiver



Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services

A related child is being placed in your home because the child has been abused, neglected, or is dependent and needs to be removed from his or her home and placed in a safe environment.

The Department is required to make and document reasonable efforts in locating relative placements at the initial placement and for any subsequent moves where a home environment is appropriate.

This brochure contains information about the services, payments and procedures that you need to know when caring for a related child. It also explains the benefits of becoming licensed as a foster home, and alternatives to DCFS being the guardian of the child – such as private guardianship and adoption.

The worker who places the child in your home will discuss this information with you. Please review it carefully and keep it in a safe place for future reference.

What is a Foster Care Placement?

A foster care placement occurs when a child cannot be left safely in his or her home and the court has determined that DCFS should have custody of the child.



A caregiver, such as yourself, in partnership with DCFS, takes on the responsibility of caring for the child until a permanent home—such as returning the child to his or her home, private guardianship or adoption—can be arranged for the child.

The child's foster parent or relative caregiver receives monthly payments for costs associated with being in foster care, such as housing, food and clothing.



What is a child in foster care entitled to?

A child in foster care is entitled to the following:

- Casework and other services such as counseling
- Medical benefits
- Educational services

The child is also entitled to visits with his or her parents, siblings and other family members as determined by the court and the child's service plan. It is very important that you follow the instructions of the court and the Family Service Plan regarding supervised and unsupervised visits with parents, siblings and other relatives. There are serious potential consequences for both you and the child's parents if those directions aren't followed.

Services and instructions for the child's parents will also be spelled out by the court and the Family Service Plan in order to help the parents correct the conditions that led to the child's removal from their home. The parents must cooperate with DCFS, and comply with the court orders and the Family Service Plan in order to be reunited with their child. If that is not possible, an alternative permanency plan for the child will be developed.

A caseworker will be assigned to work with you, the child and the child's parents to identify services that are needed and to provide and arrange for those services. This is the person with whom you will work most closely while the child is in your care.

What are my responsibilities as a Relative Caregiver?

The worker who places the child in your home is required to make an initial safety check before making the placement. This safety check includes child abuse and criminal background checks for you and certain other members of your household.

The placing worker will also ask you to read and sign a Relative Caregiver Placement Agreement. This agreement states that your role as a Relative Caregiver has been explained to you, and that you agree to keep the child safe from harm, cooperate with the Family Service Plan, and, unless specifically told otherwise, facilitate an ongoing relation-

ship between the child and his or her parents and siblings. It also explains why pursuing licensure as a foster family home is beneficial to both you and your related child.

What payments may I be entitled to?

There are two different payment levels for a child placed in the home of a relative:

- Payment to **unlicensed** relative caregiver
- Payment to **licensed** foster family home

As an **unlicensed** relative caregiver, you will be paid a monthly amount equal to the state's "Standard of Need" rate, which can vary depending on the number of related children you care for and the county where you live.

When you become **licensed** as a **foster family home**, you will be paid the Full Foster Care Board Rate, which is a **substantially higher monthly amount** for each child in your care, depending on the age of each child.

There is a chart in your "Relative Placement Packet" that shows both the "Standard of Need" payments and the "Full Foster Care Board Rate" payments for your county (and the number and ages of children in your care).

How do I apply for a foster home license?

To become a licensed foster home, you must complete and submit an application for licensure. A foster home license certifies that you have met the standards set forth in state law and DCFS rules, and includes an assessment of your family, home and personal references.

A licensing worker will contact you with additional information about the benefits of becoming licensed as a foster family home and how to begin the licensing process.



If you have not heard from a licensing worker within 60 days after the child is placed in your home, please contact the DCFS Advocacy Office for Children and Families at **1-800-232-3798** and tell an Advocate that a licensing worker has not yet contacted you.