

When a Child Comes in to Foster Care

Why are Children placed in Foster Care?

In most instances, children are placed in foster care involuntarily by order of the court. An involuntary placement occurs when a child has been abused or neglected (or may be at risk of abuse or neglect) by his or her parent/guardian or someone else in the household, or because a court has adjudicated the child deprived, neglected, unruly or delinquent. The court orders the child removed from the home and determines the duration of the court order.

North Dakota also has a voluntary treatment program where a child can access treatment services for an emotional or behavioral problem without parents having to relinquish custody. Eligibility for this program is determined by the Department of Human Services.

Matching the Child and the Foster Home

In placing a child in a foster home, agency staff try to find a home that best suits the child's needs. A successful match between the child and the foster home will make all the difference in a child's life during an extremely difficult period. It may be helpful for you as a foster parent to know what factors are considered when a child is placed into foster care.

- **Relatives:** This would be the first consideration before placing a child in a foster home.
- **Previous Foster Home:** If the child was previously placed in foster care, this would be considered before looking for another foster home.
- **Placing Siblings Together:** If appropriate, attempts would be made to place siblings in the same foster home.
- **Preferences of the Foster Parents:** The age range and gender preferences expressed by the foster parents will be considered as well as other factors such as lifestyle of the foster family and ability to provide transportation to necessary appointments, school and/or childcare.
- **Native American Identity:** The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) placement preference applies.
- **Religious Background:** If religion is a factor in the child's life, the preference of the child's parent must be recognized.
- **Neighborhood and School:** The preference would be to find a foster home where the child does not have to change schools, however if the foster home is outside of the child's home school district, transportation must be provided to this school.
- **Special Needs:** Children with special physical, emotional or medical concerns will be placed in a foster home that is able to meet their needs.
- **Other Children in the Home:** If the foster home already has other children, this would be considered prior to placing another child into the home.

Cultural, ethnic, or racial background can be considered when determining the best interests of the child, but placement in a foster home cannot be delayed or denied based on these factors.

Being Prepared When a Child is Placed

The agency must provide basic information to the foster parents about each child to be placed in the home. Each agency's informational packet may slightly differ, however information may include:

- Anticipated length of stay
- Health of child and medical history
- Physical and/or behavior problems
- Relationship of the child to his/her parents
- School and educational background
- Visitation plan
- Placement and discharge goals
- Child's full name and date of birth

A case manager will be assigned to the case and will be the primary contact with the foster parents. You will be given contact information, both during working hours and after hours, for the case manager and supervisory staff.

If the child is placed on an emergency basis, some of this information will not be available until a later time. Foster parents may also be asked to accompany the child to a medical appointment. Please do this under the direction of the custodial agency.

Reminder: Information received about the child, his/her family or any other pertinent information is CONFIDENTIAL. It is Department of Human Services' policy that foster parents not discuss information about the child or family with neighbors or friends.

Suggested Items for Foster Parents to Have:

- ✓ Toothbrush/toothpaste
- ✓ Hairbrush/grooming supplies
- ✓ Rubber mattress cover on foster child's bed
- ✓ Night Light
- ✓ T-shirts and/or sweat pants suitable for sleeping
- ✓ A few basic toys or games

Foster parents must also consider and develop a plan for child care if both work out of the home. Reimbursement for child care can be requested; however the placing agency is not responsible to find child care for foster parents.