

Foster parenting is a challenging job and foster families are special families. They possess the ability to open their home and share their families with children that are in need of an out-of-home placement. These children come into care with many scars, some seen but many hidden. Foster parents have the challenging task of providing an atmosphere that helps a child heal and prepare to go back home, if possible, or on to a new permanent home. The rewards of foster care are not monetary, becoming a foster family has hidden rewards; you see the change, you see the growth, a child calling "just to talk" after being returned home or visiting on a holiday because they remember a special connectedness.

There are many reasons a child may be in need of substitute care. Listed below are examples of children who may be screened for placement in a foster home:

- * An abandoned child
- * A child whose parent, for whatever reason is unable to care for the child
- * A child with a history of previous foster care placements
- * A child who has been severely abused or neglected
- * A child going through a difficult time with their parent.

"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drove...

but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."

Armstrong County Children, Youth and Families is in need of caring individuals who can provide a safe and nurturing home environment for children who are in need of an out-of-home placement. Financial support is provided by the agency to help maintain the child in the foster home. By becoming a foster parent, you can help make a positive difference by opening your home to a child and taking part in a process that leads to a permanent home for the child.

If you are interested in being a foster parent, or would like further information, please call 724-548-3466 or email with subject line: Foster Care.

Whatever the reason a child may enter into a foster home, the primary goal of foster care is most frequently to reunite the child with his or her parents.

While returning the child home may be the primary focus, there are situations that may arise when a child may be unable to return to their parent's home. When this occurs, there are several options for permanency, one of which is adoption. The foster family may be asked if they wish to adopt the child in their care. When adoption is not possible, the goal may be to prepare the youth for independent living.

Foster Care is seen as a short term solution to an emergency situation. The Agency needs committed individuals who are:

- * Willing to work with the child's birth parents and the agency

- * Supportive of efforts to return the child home
- * Able to work with children who have significant emotional and behavioral needs
- * Able to encourage teens toward independent living.

Requirements to Become a Foster Parent

- * Be 21 years of age
- * Complete an application
- * All family members, 18 years and over living in the home, must be able to pass a criminal background check as well as a child abuse clearance
- * Provide medical statements for all household members
- * Provide four positive references
- * Pass a home evaluation by the licensing worker
- * Attend 18 hours of agency provided training on foster care issues.

As a foster care family you are not required to own your own home, be married or give up your job and stay home full-time. You may be renting an apartment or single. You may apply for day care payments for the time that you are working or continuing your education.

Foster Care Program Mission Statement

Foster family care for children is based on the theory that no unit in our society, other than the family has ever been able to provide the special qualities needed to nurture children to their fullest physical, mental and emotional development. If for a certain period of time, a child's own family is unable to provide these special qualities, we ask foster families to nurture these children until the parent can resume their responsibility or a permanent home can be found. Parents who provide foster family care must have commitment, compassion and faith in the dignity and worth of children, be willing to work with the Children, Youth and Family Services Agency to develop and carry out a plan of care for the child.