

Racine County Foster Care Frequently Asked Questions

Every day foster families in Racine County make a difference by providing safe and caring homes for children living in foster care. Foster care is home-like care provided by licensed foster parents for children who cannot live with their parents.



What is foster care?

Foster care is home-like care provided by licensed foster parents for children who cannot live with their parents because they:

- are unsafe
- have special care or treatment needs that their parents are unable to manage
- other circumstances resulting in their parents or family being unable to care for them.

Placement in foster care is usually temporary and gives families time to make necessary changes so the child can safely live in his or her home and community. Most children in foster care return home to their families, which is called reunification. When children cannot return home, they find permanence through adoption, guardianship, or other means.

How do children enter foster care?

Children are placed in foster care for various reasons. Some examples include:

- a child who has been neglected,
- a child who has been abused,
- a child whose parent is in jail or is hospitalized and has no one to care for them during their parent's absence,
- a child who has committed a delinquent act, or
- a child who has significant medical or mental health needs.

Who are the children who are in foster care?

There are approximately 350 children in the Racine County foster care system. The children in the foster care system are between the ages of 0 and 21. Most often, the children in need of foster homes are adolescents, sibling groups, or have special needs. Many children in foster care have experienced some type of trauma. However, children are amazingly resilient. Foster parents can make the difference by providing a structured, nurturing environment.

Can I adopt through foster care?

Yes. Placement in foster care is usually temporary and gives families time to make necessary changes so the child can safely live in his or her home and community. When children cannot return home, they find permanence through adoption, guardianship, or other means.

When it is not safe for a child to return home, efforts may be made to find an adoptive family that best meets the needs of the child. These adoptive homes are sometimes referred to as foster home conversions. The Special Needs Adoption Program works to match children with an adoptive family.

How do I become a foster parent?

Counties, tribes and private agencies license foster parents in Wisconsin.

- To learn about becoming a licensed foster parent for Racine County contact the [foster care coordinator](mailto:FosterCare@racinecounty.com) at FosterCare@racinecounty.com
- For more information you can also visit: <http://racinecounty.com/government/human-services/youth-and-family/foster-care> and like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/racinecountyfostercare/>

The foster care coordinator will give you more information about becoming a foster parent with their agency, such as:

- licensing requirements, policies, and standards
- what to expect as a foster parent
- the foster parent application

During the application process, you will fill out paperwork and meet with social workers who will license your home.

How old do I have to be to become a foster parent?

To become a foster parent, you must be 21 years of age or older. There is no other age requirement and many "empty nesters" find foster parenting to be a rewarding experience.

Do I have to be married to become a foster parent?

No, you do not have to be married. Foster parents can be married, single, and in unmarried relationships.

Is there an income requirement to become a foster parent?

There is no minimum income requirement for foster parents, as long as they can take care of family expenses outside of the reimbursement received for fostering.

Do I have to stay at home to become a foster parent?

No, many foster parents work outside of the home. Foster parents should discuss with their licensing agency what options may be available to assist with child care costs.

Do I have to have parented before to become a foster parent?

No, many foster parents are childless. They are, however, responsible people who have made a commitment to children and demonstrate an ability to parent or learn to parent.

Are there requirements to become a foster parent?

To become a foster parent, you must meet all of the following:

- 21 years of age or older
- Responsible adult
- Criminal background check, law violations, and other background information requirements
- Your home must meet all physical environment requirements

Complete foster home licensing requirements are listed in Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter DCF 56. Foster care coordinators work most closely with the foster homes licensed by their agency. Foster care coordinators will make sure foster families follow the foster care rules and policies.

What support will I receive as a foster parent?

Children need stability and agency staff offer foster parents plenty of support to maintain an even keel. For starters, before foster parents even take placement of their first foster child, the agency staff works with them to develop a profile of the type of child best suited to the experience and capabilities of the foster family. There is also respite care for those times that foster parents need a break. The foster care coordinator will also continue to provide support to foster parents after they become licensed.

Will I be reimbursed for providing care for a foster child?

All licensed foster parents receive a foster care payment to reimburse for the care of a foster child, called the Uniform Foster Care Rate. The foster care licensing agency will provide foster parents with a copy of the brochure explaining the Uniform Foster Care Rate, reimbursement amounts and clothing allowances.

Do I have to provide medical insurance for foster children placed in my home?

No, foster parents do not pay any of a child's medical expenses, other than over-the-counter medicines and supplies. Each child in foster care has BadgerCare Plus covering their medical, dental, and mental health care needs. Foster parents should talk with their foster care coordinator about medical costs a foster child may have.

Is there liability insurance for foster parents?

A statewide fund provides some protection when the foster parent's own insurance policies do not. This is called the Foster Homes Liability Insurance Program. The state fund covers some property damage and personal injury caused by the foster child. The extent of coverage and exclusions is subject to change. The agency that licensed the foster home can give foster parents up-to-date information, including the Foster Homes Liability Insurance Program brochure.

Is there child care assistance available for foster parents?

Foster parents qualify for child care assistance as long as the foster parent is in an activity that qualifies under the Wisconsin Shares Program, including employment or education courses. Foster parents should contact their foster care coordinator or the child's caseworker to find out specific information about how to enroll in the Wisconsin Shares Program. Since the Wisconsin Shares Program has established reimbursement rates, it is important for foster parents to fully understand any co-pay requirements that may apply to a specific child care provider.

Are there training requirements for foster parents?

Training is necessary to prepare foster parents and help them to continue to develop as a foster parent. Being a successful foster parent means continuing to learn through:

- classes and other training methods
- reading books or magazines
- talking with other foster parents
- continually developing new skills

Each foster parent is required to complete training in relation to their Level of Care certification. Training requirements fall into three categories:

- Pre-placement
- Initial licensing
- Ongoing