**How to become a Racine County Foster Parent**

How do I become a Foster Parent?

Racine County Foster Care assess all applicants and provide the opportunity for prospective foster parents to assess themselves before they accept the role of foster parent.

You can call 262-638-6356 to obtain information and discuss your questions with a foster care specialist.

If your family wishes to move forward, a Foster Care Program specialist will come to your home to acquaint you with the process and explain the forms, training and process you will be asked to complete.

The Foster Care Program specialist will schedule a home study/visit(s) with each prospective foster family to determine whether state licensing requirements are met. Part of the state requirements include a criminal background check, personal references, proof of physical health and insurances.

 The process takes from 2-3 months. Racine County Foster Care staff will be available every step of the way to guide and support you through the process.

Prior to a home having a placement of a child, each foster parent is required to complete 36 hours of initial training and 10 hours of on-going training per year. Foster Care licenses are reviewed for re-licensing every 2 years.

When approved, a family is then considered available to care for foster children. The request of the foster parents as well as the individual needs of the child will determine when a placement occurs in your home.





**Racine County Foster Care**

**1717 Taylor Avenue**

**Racine, WI 53403**

**262-638-6356**

FosterCare@racinecounty.com

<http://racinecounty.com/government/human-services/youth-and-family/foster-care>

 **Racine County Foster Care Frequently Asked Questions**

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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 at FosterCare@racinecounty.com or call 262-638-6356.

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

### To report child abuse or neglect in Racine County contact:

### Racine County Human Services Department

### 262-638-7720

### Staff available 24 hours/day – 7 days/week

### *If this is an immediate or life-threatening emergency, please call 911.*

 **Racine County Resources for Foster Families/Foster Children**

#### **Racine County Foster Care**

#### **Foster care placements are needed for children who cannot be safely cared for in their own homes. Racine County foster homes enable children to remain in their community and provide a loving and safe environment for foster children. Foster care is a temporary home for children until they can return to their own homes. Children in foster care come from different backgrounds and have different needs.  They range in age from newborns to teenagers.  They are of all races and nationalities.  The one thing they have in common is the need for a safe and supportive environment in which they can grow, emotionally and physically. Racine County Foster Care recruits, provides training and support, including respite care, to Racine County licensed foster homes.**

<https://racinecounty.com/government/human-services/youth-and-family/foster-care/>



 **Racine County Foster Care**

**1717 Taylor Avenue**

**262-638-6356**

FosterCare@racinecounty.com

**Wisconsin Foster Parent Information**

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families mission is to improve the economic and social well-being of Wisconsin’s children, youth and families. The Department is committed to protecting children and youth, strengthening families, and supporting communities.

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/parent>

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**The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center**

**The Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center website is a comprehensive site housing information and resources for new and current foster families, families considering adopting a child who they are currently fostering, and foster care licensing staff.**

<http://wifostercareandadoption.org>

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**Faith Hope & Love**

Faith Hope & Love help children in crisis through their Duffels for Kids, BlastPacks, and Birthday Closet programs across Southeastern Wisconsin, to reach as many children in crisis situations as possible.

<http://www.fhlforkids.org/>

740 College Ave. , Racine, WI 53403

262-902-0556

hlojeski@fhlforkids.org

**Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy**

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy supports low-income working families by subsidizing a portion of the cost of quality child care while the parents or caregivers are working or participating in another approved activity. Wisconsin Shares is implemented locally by counties and tribes.  888-713-5437

****<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares>

**BadgerCare Plus**

**BadgerCare Plus**

BadgerCare Plus is an insurance program for all children (up to age 19) who do not currently have access to health insurance, pregnant women, parents, caretakers, and foster families with limited financial resources.  800-362-3002

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/badgercareplus/index.htm>

[**Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association**](https://www.facebook.com/wfapa/)

WFAPA is a peer and volunteer-based organization that supports and advocates for foster and adoptive parents by offering training, support programs and helps to create and support different legislative measures in Madison.

WFAPA also educates the public and brings a more positive light to foster and adoptive parenting through stories in different areas of the media (including radio, newspapers, etc.).

<http://wfapa.org/>

**211 IMPACT**

**Changing Lives. For Good.**

**211 IMPACT** is a central access point for inquiries about family, health and social services. When someone calls 211 they will speak to a trained Community Resource Specialist who can assess their needs and connect them to an agency in their community that can respond to their needs.

<http://www.impactinc.org/impact-2-1-1/>



**The Wisconsin Department of**

**Children & Families Foster Parent Handbook**

The Wisconsin Department of Children & Families Foster Parent Handbook is intended to give basic information about foster care in Wisconsin to newly-licensed foster parents and to serve as a refresher for experienced foster parents. This handbook also provides additional tools and resource lists if foster parents want to learn more about a specific topic.

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/handbook>



**Behavioral Health Services of Racine County**

BHS provides a comprehensive array of mental health and substance abuse services including outpatient evaluations, psychotherapy and counseling.  BHS has licensed mental health and substance abuse counselors to assist individuals. To schedule an appointment, contact Behavioral Health Services of Racine County at 262-638-6744 between 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday to Friday.

*If you are currently experiencing a life-threatening emergency, please call 911.  If you would like to talk with someone contact the 24 hour Crisis line at 262-638-6741*

<http://racinecounty.com/government/human-services/aging-disability-services-division/behavioral-health-services-of-racine-county>



**Lutheran Social Services Sexual Assault Services**

LSS provides counseling and advocacy for child, adolescent and adult victims of sexual assault and abuse and their families.

**Call our 24-Hour Crisis Line at 262-637-7233 (SAFE) or toll-free at 800-656-4673 (HOPE). We answer calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and we accept collect calls.at**

<https://www.lsswis.org/LSS/Programs-Services/Mental-Health/Counseling/Sexual-Assault-Services>

Services

**Racine County Child Advocacy Center**

The Child Advocacy Center performs forensic evaluations for children who have made disclosures of physical and sexual abuse and neglect. Services are provided in coordination with Racine County Human Services Department, local law enforcement agencies, and the District Attorney’s office. Victim advocacy services are provided on site to be sure that all the children and family’s needs are met while going through the process of investigation and prosecution.

8800 Washington St., Suite 200, Mt. Pleasant, WI 53406

262-898-7970

<https://www.chw.org/childrens-and-the-community/strong-families/child-advocacy-and-protection/child-advocacy-centers/racine-county-cac>

**Racine County Workforce Solutions**

Racine County’s Workforce Solutions provides employment and training services to young adults starting at 16 years of age. We inspire and empower young adults to achieve lifetime success. Through Career Counselors (school-aged youth) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (16-24 years old), young adults are provided assistance to become gainfully employed, obtain additional education and credentials and become self-sufficient.

1717 Taylor Avenue, Racine, WI 53403
262.638.6312
Hours: Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

<http://racinecounty.com/government/workforce-solutions>

**Racine County Birth to Three Program**

**The Birth to Three Program provides case management, services and in-home therapy for babies and toddlers with physical and cognitive delays, as well as vision and hearing impairments.  To apply for services in Racine County please call 262-638-7720.**

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/birthto3/index.htm>



**DCF College Scholarship Application for Youth in Out-of-Home Care**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Scholarship Program awards scholarship funds for youth who have been in out-of-home care and are entering a degree, license or certificate program. To qualify for a DCF Scholarship award, the applicant must:

* Have been in out-of-home care (OHC) court ordered (Ch. 48 or 938) placement (kinship, foster home, group home or residential care center) and left OHC at age 18 or older; or
* Have been in OHC placement for at least six months after the age of 15 and went to Ch. 48 or 938 Guardianship or adoption after the age of 16.
* Aged out of OHC placement in another state but has become a permanent resident of Wisconsin prior to attending a Wisconsin postsecondary institution.
* Be accepted into a postsecondary institution (i.e., college, vocational or technical program) at the time the application is submitted.
* Be age 20 or less, unless enrolled in a postsecondary program and receiving the DCF Scholarship on his / her 21st birthday, thus extending eligibility to the student’s 23rd birthday.

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| Contact: Christine Lenske, Independent Living Coordinator Department of Children and Families P.O. Box 8916 Madison, WI 53708-8916 Telephone Number: (608) 267-7287 Email: christine.lenske@wisconsin.gov Fax Number: (608) 266-0260  |

<https://www.gtc.edu/sites/default/files/files/documents/DCF%20Scholarship%20Application%20Youth%20in%20Out-of-Home%20Care_2014%20.pdf>



**Scholarships and Financial Aid for Youth Who Were or Are in Care**

Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center has pulled together a variety of resources and sources that you will find helpful as you search for resources to ease the financial burden of higher education.

<http://wifostercareandadoption.org/Resources/For-Youth-in-Care/Scholarship-Information>

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**Trauma Informed**

**Trauma Informed Care**

SaintA is in the forefront of therapeutic practices called trauma informed care that apply what neuroscience has taught us about how the brain develops, functions and recovers from trauma to help children overcome adverse experiences and thrive.

This adversity can include abuse, neglect, exposure to violence, divorce, alcohol and/or drug abuse of a parent, incarceration of and mental illness in a parent. A seminal [study of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)](http://acestudy.org/), conducted in San Diego, shows their effects are widespread and can last throughout — and even shorten — a life. An [ACEs study conducted in Wisconsin](http://wichildrenstrustfund.org/index.php?section=adverse-childhood) had very similar outcomes.

As a result, all our services to children and families are based on trauma informed care. See more here.

<http://www.sainta.org/trauma-informed-care/>

**How to Support Foster Families/Foster Children**

**Please contact Racine County Foster Care at 262-638-6356 or email** FosterCare@racinecounty.com **to donate or to support foster families in other ways.**

**How you can support foster families:**

* Provide a free or discounted service to foster families such as hair-cuts, house cleaning, restaurant meals, movie passes, music lessons, etc.
* Contribute money or donate goods such as new car seats, school supplies, or support our partner agencies.
* Assist in recruitment efforts in the community by displaying posters, distributing brochures or hold a recruitment event.
* Offer a foster teen a job or become a mentor.
* Look around your church or business and identify foster familes; provide them respite and a night out by offering them help.
* Provide a meal a month for a foster family.
* Donate all those holiday gift cards that you never use for meals and store to your county human service agency. What a treat for a family to have a night out with their kids or to buy some clothes for a foster child who has only ever had used clothes.
* Endow a scholarship for post-secondary education for foster kids
* Develop company engagement projects such as building ‘back to school’ supply kits
* Hold clothing drives to help foster families get deficient winter coats, caps and mittens for kids
* Dedicate an internship or part time job for at least one foster kids to give them training and an opportunity to build self-esteem and confidence.
* Fund a summer activity program at your local school or recreation center to provide structure and guidance for kids
* Foster families are always needed-put a notice in your payroll envelopes or hang posters in your workplace to generate awareness
* Sponsor a ‘lunch and learn’ at your business or church and have foster or adoptive parents from your workforce share their experiences.
* Allow us to do a presentation at your church or organization
* Provide advertising in your community, business paper or local publication and newsletter
* Provide space or treats for foster parent appreciation events
* Partner with us for community events through volunteer work or sponsorship
* Provide material assistance with gift cards or basic child care products, cold weather clothing, graduation needs
* Help distribute flyers and brochures to area businesses
* Volunteer time to help with current projects throughout the year
* Holiday, birthday and graduation gifts
* Free or discounted sports, camping, art, dance enrichment opportunities
* Donate to the foster care enrichment fund
* Donate to ongoing recruitment efforts to foster care
* Donation for haircuts, school dance clothing
* Tickets for local festivals for the family
* Be a community ambassador for foster care
* Be a respite provider for a foster parent and child
* Support our community business partners
* Personalized caretaking gift like quilts

**Gift card ideas:**

Pizza

Groceries at holidays

furniture

clothing

personal care

shoes

entertainment: movies, bowling, science centers, zoo

Gas cards

Bedding

Baby care / toys r us / car seats

Book store

Music store

Chucky cheese

Contact Racine County Foster Care to support foster families.



**Racine County Foster Care**

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**262-638-6356**

FosterCare@racinecounty.com

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**National Resources for Foster Families/Foster Children**

**The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline**

The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. Serving the U.S. and Canada, the hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with professional crisis counselors who—through interpreters—provide assistance in over 170 languages. The hotline offers crisis intervention, information, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls are confidential. **Bottom line, we are here to answer the call.**

**Call** The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline **24/7**

1-800-4-A-Child

1-800-422-4453

<https://www.childhelp.org/hotline/>



The Children’s Bureau supports programs, research, and monitoring systems that prevent child abuse and neglect while ensuring that children who are victims receive treatment and care.

We provide funding to states and tribes to help them strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. Our funding also provides for child abuse and neglect assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/focus-areas/child-abuse-neglect>



FosterClub provides a peer support network for children and youth in foster care. Further, we believe that the experiences young people have in foster care place them in a position to affect change within the system, inform and motivate their peers, build public awareness and create public will for improved care for abused and neglected children.

FosterClub is about providing youth a voice within the system that so heavily impacts their lives. FosterClub is committed to providing the tools, training and a forum to help young people secure a brighter future for themselves and the foster care system.

[503-717-1552](https://www.fosterclub.com/contact-us)

[info@fosterclub.com](https://www.fosterclub.com/contact-us)

<https://www.fosterclub.com/>

**National Foster Parent Association**

*The National Voice of Foster Parents*

The National Foster Parent Association is a non-profit, volunteer organization established in 1972 because of the concerns of several independent groups that felt the country needed a national organization to meet the needs of foster families in the United States. NFPA’s mission is to support foster parents in achieving safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth in their care.

<http://www.nfpaonline.org/>



**Coalition for Children, Youth & Families**

The Coalition for Children, Youth & Families supports people who are changing kids' lives through foster care and adoption by connecting them with the resources that provide information, training and education, and support they need to succeed and excel in their unique, challenging, and rewarding role.

Our mission is to inspire, inform, and support individuals and families caring for children touched by foster care and adoption.

We are committed to a vision of life- long permanence for all children and youth by engaging and encouraging resilient individuals and families to create and maintain a healthy and stable environment in which children and youth can thrive and grow.

<http://coalitionforcyf.org/>



**Scholarships and Financial Aid for Youth Who Were or Are in Care**

Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center has pulled together a variety of resources and sources that you will find helpful as you search for resources to ease the financial burden of higher education.

<http://wifostercareandadoption.org/Resources/For-Youth-in-Care/Scholarship-Information>

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**National Human Trafficking Hotline**

Call **1-888-373-7888** or text **BeFree** (233733). The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) is a national, toll-free hotline, available to answer calls and texts from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

Call us at 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733).

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

**National Runaway Toll-Free Phone Number**

Call **1-800-RUNAWAY**

* If you are a teenager who is thinking of running from home, if you have a friend who has run and is looking for help, or if you are a runaway ready to go home.
* If you care about a youth and want information on how you can help someone who may be at risk of running from home
* If you are a teacher looking for information to pass along to your students about youth homelessness or the reality of life on the streets.

The 24-hour crisis line has an experienced front-line team member ready to help you now. If you're not ready to call, you can post to our bulletin board, send an email, or start a live chat. It’s anonymous, confidential and free.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/>



**National Child Abuse Hotline**

The National Child Abuse Hotline **1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)** is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse. Serving the United States, its territories, and Canada, the hotline is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with professional crisis counselors who, through interpreters, can provide assistance in 170 languages.

The hotline offers crisis intervention, information, literature, and referrals to thousands of emergency, social service, and support resources. All calls are confidential.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

