

FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION FAQ'S

Q. Do I need to own my own home to foster?

A. No. You may rent, live in an apartment or a manufactured home. You just need to have adequate, safe living space.

Q. Who are foster children?

A. Foster children have been removed from the only home they have known because of physical/sexual abuse, neglect/abandonment. These life experiences may manifest into behaviors associated with trauma. Foster children are in need of a loving, supportive home where they are able to develop with the assistance of devoted parents. Children range in ages from 0-17 years of age and often consist of sibling groups.

Q. Will I get to meet the child before he or she is placed in my home?

A. In many circumstances, children are placed immediately after entering into foster care. In some situations, you may be able to visit the child before accepting them into your home.

Q. What is the role of the foster family?

A. Foster families open their hearts and homes to children who need them. They are entrusted to love, nurture and protect these children, knowing that their time with them is only temporary. Foster parents are there in



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good times and bad, instilling in the children the skills they will need to face life's challenges and opportunities. Families are also responsible for working cooperatively with all team participants, including birth families.

Q. What do foster parents do?

A. In your role as a foster parent, you will make a huge difference in the life of a child who has experienced trauma and/or neglect. Some specific activities include:

- Provide a safe home for the foster child, and meet his/her emotional, developmental, and physical needs.
- Share information about the child with the Department of Child Safety (DCS), biological parents/relatives, and other professionals working with the child.
- Participate in regular home visits conducted by the foster child's DCS Child Safety Specialist and your agency's licensing specialist.
- Take the child to medical, dental, counseling, and other appointments as necessary.
- Ensure the child participates in typical child-related community activities such as school, sports, clubs, and other organized events.
- Maintain documentation of the child's appointments, behaviors, and records.

Q. What are the general requirements to be a foster parent?

A. General requirements include the following:

- Can be married, single or coupled
- Must be at least 21 years of age
- Successfully pass a criminal background records check and child/adult abuse check



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- Have a statement of overall good general health by a medical practitioner (all household members over the age of 18 must have one of these)
- Must be financially stable
- Provide a safe living environment with adequate space for a new child
- Must be free of serious CPS or criminal background
- Must be available to take in children on an emergency basis
- Attend and successfully complete a specialized pre-service training that helps prepare you for foster parenting
- Once licensed, complete at least 6 hours of additional training every year

Q. What are the steps to becoming a foster parent?

A. The entire licensing process generally takes between 3-6 months, and includes the following:

- Completion of Licensing Application
- Participation in the 7-10 week Pre-Service Training
- Completion of the Home Study Process
- A positive recommendation by foster/adoption agency to the State Licensing Office
- Approval of the licensing request from the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS)
- Once you have your license, you can accept placements of foster children in your home.

Q. How long does the foster care process take?

A. The foster care licensing process includes orientation, intake interviews, 30 hours of training, fingerprinting, and home study. The quicker you



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complete all the requirements (fingerprint clearance card, CPS/First Aid training, etc.) as well as necessary paperwork, the sooner you will progress through the licensing process. This process typically takes 3 to 6 months to complete.

Q. What kind of financial support is available to help me care for the child?

A. Yes. You will be provided financial compensation to cover the costs of caring for a foster child. Children with higher needs are eligible for higher reimbursement rates. This compensation is provided to cover expenses such as room and board, mileage, clothing, recreation, and allowance. Children in foster care have full medical coverage. Additionally, foster children may be eligible for other resources such as free school lunch, clothing, or daycare expenses for working foster parents.

Q. How long will a foster child stay with me?

A. This varies depending on the child's circumstances. Most children will return home to their families after a few months or a year. Others may become eligible for adoption or remain in foster care until they reach the age of 18. Children are eligible to continue in foster care past their 18th birthday.

Q. What are the qualifications to adopt?

- A.** Qualifications include the following:
- Can be married, singled or coupled
 - Must be at least 21 years of age



- Must be financially stable
- Must be emotionally ready for parenting
- Must be in good physical health
- Must be free of serious CPS or criminal background

Q. How do I go about adopting a child?

A. You must first obtain an Adoption Home Study to be certified to adopt in Arizona. Next, you must locate a child available for adoption. The most common ways to do this are:

- *Agency* – An agency guides you through the process and matches you to an available child (U.S. or foreign country).
- *Independent* – You locate an available child or a birthmother wishing to place her unborn child for adoption. Usually done in conjunction with an adoption attorney (typically U.S.).
- *Foster Care* – You adopt a child from the U.S. foster care system. You often provide foster care for the child until they are legally free for adoption.

The next step is to finalize the adoption in court. This usually includes one or more post-adoption/post-placement reports.

Q. How long does a Home Study for adoption take?

A. An Arizona home adoption study takes approximately 2-3 months for U.S. adoptions, and 4-6 months when adopting internationally. It also depends on how quickly you provide your information and how long your background checks take.

Q. How much does an Adoption Home Study cost?



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A. In Arizona, you must obtain your home study through a licensed agency. Agencies typically charge \$1,000 to \$1,800 for a home study.

Q. What is an Adoption Home Study?

A. An adoption home study is required before you can adopt a child. It is a detailed report which give information on a person/family's background, including:

- Reasons for adopting
- Plans to preserve the adopted child's heritage
- Education and job history
- Marital relationship, including previous marriages and children
- Children currently living in the home
- Other adults currently living in the home
- Home
- Community
- Finances
- Health
- Background checks (FBI, Dept. of Public Safety, and Child Abuse clearances)
- References from family and friends
- Parenting philosophy
- Guardianship plans

Q. How long does the adoption process take?

A. On average, 6 to 24 months, but it can vary widely based on how you're adopting, where you're adopting from and the age of the child you're adopting. Older children are typically available much sooner. Infants usually take the longest.



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Q. How much does adopting cost?

A. Foreign adoptions are usually the most expensive as they involved agency fees and travel – between \$30,000 - \$60,000 total, on average. Private and U.S. agency adoptions vary between about \$15,000 and \$40,000. Foster-care adoptions are practically no cost.

Keep in mind that your adoption expenses are tax-deductible. There are currently Federal and Arizona tax credits for adoption. Many employers provide a stipend for adoption expenses. There are also many resources for adoption loans and grants.



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