

## Keeping Families Together: Serving as a Foster Parent for Your Relative

### [Becoming a provisional foster home](#)

DHS Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) believes family connections are very important. DCFS wants relatives and fictive kin to stay in contact with a child in DCFS custody. Fictive kin are people who are not related by blood or marriage, but who have a strong, positive, emotional tie to a child and play a positive role in the child's life like a godparent, teacher, or family friend. One way relatives and fictive kin can stay involved is to become a provisional foster home and, eventually, an approved foster home.

Opening a provisional foster home allows DCFS to place children quickly with a relative or fictive kin who has a bond with the child. Provisional foster parents do not have to go through the formal foster care approval process right away. They will have up to six months to fully complete the approval process, but they do have to meet some basic requirements.

First, the relative or fictive kin must clear required state background checks. Someone from DCFS will run these background checks for you after you sign the forms DCFS gives you.

Second, DCFS must do a visual inspection of your home. This means a DCFS employee called a resource worker will come to your house. He or she will make sure it is a safe place for a child and that it meets rules for foster homes. These rules are called licensing standards. Some examples of licensing standards are:

- Cleaning supplies, insecticides, gasoline, hazardous tools, knives, or similar dangerous objects must be stored out of reach of children or kept in locked closets or drawers.
- All firearms must be unloaded; kept in a secure, locked location; and stored away from ammunition.
- An operational chemical fire extinguisher must be kept in the cooking area.

*For a full list of foster home standards, please ask your DCFS resource worker.*

People who become foster parents for relatives or fictive kin do not always have to meet all licensing standards. There is no guarantee, but waivers may be given on certain standards if waiving the standard will not risk the child's safety. For example, approved foster homes must have a bedroom for a child that is at least 50 square feet. If a relative or fictive kin has a child's bedroom that is 45 square feet, a waiver can most likely be granted since it will not affect the child's safety.

Other information DCFS will consider to open a provisional foster home includes, but is not limited to:

- Relationship stability
- General physical and mental health
- Resources
- Transportation

If you meet these basic requirements and it is in the best interest of the child to be placed in your home, you can be opened as a provisional foster home for the relative or fictive kin child. You will not be asked to foster other children.

As a provisional foster home, you will not receive any financial assistance from DCFS to care for the child. However, the child will have medical insurance. DCFS may also provide daycare assistance if appropriate.

While you are opened as a provisional home, the child is still in DCFS custody. You will need to follow all court orders. The child's caseworker will visit at least once a week during the first month and at least once a month after that. He or she will make sure the child is doing well, attending school and doctor appointments, and has needed services. If the court thinks it is ok, the child will also visit his or her parents. The resource worker will also come to your home to help you through the process of becoming an approved foster home.



Becoming an approved foster home

After you are opened as a provisional foster home, you have six months from the day the relative or fictive kin child is placed in your home to complete the formal foster home approval process.

To become approved you must:

- complete the national FBI background check (*fingerprints required*)
- make any requested changes to your home to meet safety standards
- attend foster parent training classes (*the total training time is 30 hours which usually takes place over a period anywhere from 4-9 weeks*)
- attend classes to become certified in CPR and First Aid
- complete a SAFE home study

The SAFE home study mentioned above involves a few steps. You will fill out two surveys at different times. There will also be someone who comes to your home a few times (most likely the trainer from your foster parent classes). He or she will talk with you about your experiences growing up, how you plan to care for the child placed in your home, and other related topics. This person will use information from the surveys and talks to write the home study.

Once all of these steps are completed, DCFS will decide whether to approve your home. Remember you only have six months to complete the steps listed under "Becoming an Approved Foster Home." If you do not complete all of the steps in six months, the law requires that the child be removed from your home.

Six months may seem like a long time, but it will go quickly! Be sure to talk to your DCFS workers often to make sure everything is on track.

Serving as an approved foster home

If you become an approved foster home, you will get a monthly board payment to help you with the cost of caring for the child. Usually the board payment is between \$410 - \$500 depending on the child's age.

Once you are an approved foster home, you still do not have to foster any other children besides your relative or fictive kin. You will continue to foster your relative or fictive kin until he or she can return home or a more permanent arrangement, hopefully with relatives, can be found.



After you become an approved foster home, the child's caseworker will continue to visit your home at least once a month. He or she will check in with the child and make sure everyone is doing well and following court orders. Your resource worker will also visit your home at least four times a year to make sure all foster home licensing standards are still being met.

We know this a lot of new information. If you have any questions, please ask your child's caseworker or your resource worker. Their names and phone numbers can be written at the bottom of this page. They will be happy to help you. Just like you, they want to do everything they can to make sure the child involved is safe, happy, and healthy during this hard time.

*Thank you for making a difference in a child's life!*

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Resource Worker Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Caseworker Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Resource Worker Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Caseworker Phone Number