



foster care

INFORMATION BOOKLET

Issued by: **Christian Social Council North Offices**

(Booklet adapted by: Foster Care in S.A. Resource Centre with permission from the Wisconsin Department of Children & families)

The Urgent need for Foster Parents

In South Africa, thousands of children are in desperate need of loving care in a stable family environment. These children have been removed from their family due to sexual, physical, or psychological abuse, as well as neglect. They are in urgent need of becoming a part of a family where they can be loved and nurtured. Sadly, there's a critical shortage of loving, secure homes that will unconditionally commit to making a difference in the lives of these hurting children. As a Foster Parent you can offer these children a brighter future and the opportunity to achieve their full potential in life.

Thank you for taking the time and making the decision to learn more about becoming a foster family!

The process of fostering can be an emotional and complex one, but it is also very rewarding. This booklet has been specifically designed to provide you with information about foster care.

As you read through the steps involved, keep in mind that the staff of the CSC and the Parent Support Group is here to support, encourage and assist you throughout your journey. You are welcome to call us at (012) 344-1291, or visit our resource website at: <http://christianfostercareasa.wordpress.com>

Getting Started

You probably have a lot of questions about how to start the process of becoming a foster parent. What are the requirements? What types of children are in foster care? What is the timeframe for getting a placement? There are probably many more questions in your mind and we are here to help provide those answers for you.

What is Foster Care?

Foster care is the act of taking responsibility for a child who is unable to live with his or her biological parent/s because of safety concerns, special care or treatments

needs or other circumstances. A foster child is a child who needs a temporary home in order to be safe and cared for. Generally, placement in foster care is temporary and intended to give the child's family time to make necessary changes so that the child can live safely in his or her home.

Children in Foster Care

The children in the South African foster care system are usually between the ages of 0 and 7. The amount of time a child will spend in foster care depends on the specific child. Some children are in care for one year, others for many years; each child's case is different. Children are placed in foster care for reasons. Some examples include: a child who has been abandoned, a child who is not safe, a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect, and a child whose parent is incarcerated.

Some of the basic responsibilities of a foster parent are:

- Provide a nurturing environment.
- Include children in the daily activities of the family.

- Arrange and take the children to medical and dental appointments
- Take the child to regular professional counselling sessions, if needed.
- Support contact between your child(ren) and their birth families.
- Communicate with the school and keep up on the child's progress.
- Communicate and cooperate with your worker and the child's worker about progress and concerns.

The basic goals of foster care are:

- To protect the child from further abuse or neglect.
- To provide a safe and nurturing home.
- To provide consistent care and supervision that meets the child's needs.
- To aid emotional healing in the child's life.
- To help the family make positive changes in order to work toward reunification.

Overall, foster care aims to keep children in a safe and positive environment.



Requirements

In order to become a foster parent:

- You must be 24 years or older.
- You may be single, married, widowed or be in a significant long-term partnership.
- You must be in good health and be willing to provide documentation from a medical professional.
- You and your family must participate in the Foster Care Group Meetings and Training.
- You must be able to provide proof of a valid driver's license.
- You must have a dependable monthly income or means of support.

- You will be required to provide fingerprint-based criminal background checks.
- Your home must be within the physical borders of South Africa.

Time Frame

The process of becoming an approved foster parent varies, but usually takes at least one month to complete.

Process

Your first step in becoming an approved foster parent is to contact the Christian Social Council or any other placement agency in your area. Herewith a web link to a list of the CSC Offices in South Africa <http://christianfostercareusa.wordpress.com/2011/09/21/nationwide-list-of-christian-social-council-offices>.

Once you have contacted the agency to begin the process, you and your family will fill out an application. When your application is approved, you are ready to start the interviewing process.

Interviewing

During the interviewing process, you, as a prospective foster parent, will need to complete an application and participate in a series of personal interviews in your home. Your worker will:

- Complete a thorough criminal background check on every member living in the home.
- Complete reference checks.
- Evaluate your home to ensure that it meets with the requirements needed to care for children in foster care (such as having a pool net, if appl.)
- Gather information about your parenting skills and abilities.
- Discuss with you the reasons you are interested in fostering and assess how fostering may impact you and your family members.

The interviewing process also gives you and your family a chance to ask any questions or concerns you may have. Shortly after it is completed, you will need to complete the pre-placement training before receiving placement of children in your home.

Training Requirements

Training requirements are divided into three phases:

- Pre-Placement: To be completed prior to the placement of the first child in a family's home.
- Initial: To be completed within the first period of evaluation.
- On-going: To be completed every year of being a foster parent.

What it Means to be a Foster Parent

I learned that a parent's love is priceless and cannot be substituted, so I shouldn't try. I also learned that healing their wounds did not heal their hearts. Stopping their hunger did not stop their longing. To any new foster parent, I would like to say:

"Each child is precious and unique and will need something different from you. Every child needs you to respect their birth families and their culture. No child needs you to save them; they just need you to hold them tight until the storm passes".



"When I am among foster parents, it becomes very clear to me that we are **the few—the privileged**—each of us learning unique life lessons as only foster parents can. We are not perfect. Our homes get cluttered and our schedules are busy, but we are focused on our job—our job of caring for children. Often, everything else must wait. Through it all, we learn. We live bigger and love deeper. We are foster parents, and we are privileged!"

Self Reflection

We know this is a lot of information to digest. You may be wondering if this is the right thing for you and your family. We recommend taking some time to read the articles on our Foster Care Resources blog. Take some time to assess your feelings. Consider what responsibilities you would take on as a foster parent and also the goals of foster care. You may also want to ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I meet the qualifications to become a foster parent?

- Am I willing to work with birth families, including extended relatives, when appropriate?
- Can I handle having my family's way of life examined?
- Am I patient, flexible and do I have a sense of humour?
- Would I be willing to keep up with the latest training and look for resources when I'm stuck?
- Will I be able to cope with the grief and loss when a child leaves my home?
- Will I be able to take the child to regular professional counselling sessions, if needed?
- Do I have a big support network?

The Impact

Try to think of the impact that each foster child can make in the life of everyone they touch with their lives. Imagine the potential of every life they could impact as adults.

Adding in the dedicated commitment and impact that every foster parent and social worker bring to the mix –and it all adds up to a sum too vast to calculate in any monetary terms. In lives impacted, it is so vast that we are unable to comprehend it.

Together we can impact society and those around us, with unstoppable ripples of hope and change; **one child at a time!**

More Questions?



If you have more questions, please call us at the Christian Social Council North Offices at telephone number (012) 344-1291. We are here to help!

Or alternatively e-mail the Foster Care Resources of S.A. centre, at *Foster-CareResourcesSA@gmail.com*

We are here for you during every step of your journey!

foster care

INFORMATION BOOKLET

RESOURCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

- **Christian Social Council North Offices** Tel: (012) 344-1291
- **E-mail questions to the Foster Care Resources in S.A. Offices at:** FosterCareResourcesSA@gmail.com
- **Sharing resources, advice and experiences with Safety and or Foster Parents** <http://christianfostercareza.wordpress.com>
- **Information Sheet on S.A. Foster care grants:** http://www.blacksash.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=894&Itemid=175
- **The Amended Children's Act No. 41 of 2007:** *(Amendments to the Children's Act, 2005, so as to insert certain definitions; to provide for partial care of children; further protection of children; or prevention and early intervention; for children in alternative care; to provide for foster care; and to create certain new offences relating to children; and to provide for matters connected therewith).* <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=78580>



*The Foster Parent journey is not the easiest of roads to follow; but it's end destination has eternal value and worth”
~ A Foster Parent from the Moot Area*