



OKLAHOMA F O S T E R S

*Every child
deserves a safe, loving
home everyday!*



#OKFosters

[OKFosters.org](https://www.okfosters.org)

@OklahomaFosters



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OUR MISSION



Every child deserves a safe, loving home everyday!

To pursue the belief that every child and youth deserves a family and the supports they need to grow and develop into healthy adults.



OKLAHOMA
Human Services

#OKFosters



[OKFosters.org](https://www.OKFosters.org)

WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

Foster care is a temporary placement for children needing out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect. Foster families provide a safe and nurturing home and are committed to working with birth families to reunite children with their parents when it is safe.

Who are the children in state custody?

- Children under the age of 18
- Sibling groups
- Children of many diverse backgrounds
- Children with special emotional, medical or physical needs

What are the requirements to become a foster parent?

- Must be at least 21 years of age
- Can be married, single, separated or divorced
- Must have the ability to manage personal and household financial needs without relying on the foster care reimbursements
- All members of the household who are 18 years of age or older, must submit to background checks including child welfare records and fingerprints
- Provide appropriate sleeping arrangements for each child placed
- Be in good physical and mental health
- Provide references
- Complete all required training
- Comply with Oklahoma Human Services rules on discipline
- Be able to work as part of a team with Oklahoma Human services and the child's biological parents
- Provide a safe, loving home for foster children
- Have the ability to love, understand, care for and accept a child to whom you did not give birth

Understand that your life will change greatly. Foster parenting is difficult, but it's also one of the most rewarding things you'll ever do.



TESTIMONIAL

“Looking back at it, I was just another foster kid who wanted a home and unconditional love. I never had stability and wanted that more than anything.”

- Former Foster Youth

TAKING YOUR FIRST STEP

On behalf of the state of Oklahoma and Oklahoma Human Services, thank you for your consideration to become a foster parent. Your desire to share your love and home with children will create stability that will last a lifetime.

One of the first decisions to make is what agency you would like to work with while serving as a foster parent. Foster care services are provided by Oklahoma Human Services and private agencies. Oklahoma Human Services and their agency partners do an excellent job serving the foster families and children in care, but each have unique differences that suit an array of individual needs. You have the ability to study these agencies and see which agency fits your needs, personality and lifestyle the best. This is an important decision, and we encourage you to research each agency that interests you, including Oklahoma Human Services. Each agency can provide answers to any questions you have about the services they provide to foster families.

For an interactive list of current
Oklahoma Foster Care Agencies, visit

<https://okfosters.org/foster-care/types-of-foster-care/>



THE ROAD TO FOSTERING

FINISH

#9

Placement

Once approved, you will receive a call requesting placement for a child in need.

#8

Review Period

All paperwork has been submitted, training hours completed and family assessment performed.

Family Assessment

A foster care specialist will come to your home to ensure you are ready and equipped to welcome your children.

#7

Background Check and Fingerprinting

Enroll and Begin Training

#5

Complete Your Application

A foster care specialist will work with you to complete and submit your packet and application.

#6

Choose Who to Work With

Oklahoma has an array of foster care partner agencies. Take your time and choose the right one for you.

#4

Oklahoma Human Services Will Call You

You will receive a call to help answer your questions or concerns. Once you're ready to move forward, you'll be put in touch with a foster care agency or specialist.

#3

Initial Inquiry

Call **1-800-376-9729** or visit **OKFosters.org** to answer a few questions and request your information packet by mail or via email.

START

#1

#2



THROUGH THE PROCESS

Initial Inquiry and Information Gathering

Following your initial inquiry about becoming a foster parent, staff will answer your questions, send you an official application and provide information about the agencies with whom you can partner, including Oklahoma Human Services. We encourage you to research the agencies to determine which one fits your family best.

Orientation

Once you have decided to become a foster parent, you will begin with an initial orientation. This includes a discussion and videos giving you a basic understanding of:

- The children in foster care and the types of traumatic journeys they've had.
- The roles and responsibilities of a foster parent.
- The approval process and journey to become a foster parent.

We encourage you during this step to have an open heart and mind to all that is shared with you and ask any questions you may have.

Application Process

At this stage, you will complete your initial application and review with your assigned foster care specialist. This staff member will assist you with all of your foster care needs, including paperwork and, once approved, placement of a child or children in your home. Your foster care specialist is dedicated to you as a foster parent and will continue to provide ongoing support throughout your entire journey. We encourage you to lean on your foster care specialist through your application process and ask for help if you have a question or need assistance with your application.

During your application process, you will be asked to complete a variety of paperwork. You will also be asked to complete a background check and fingerprinting. We encourage you to proceed with your fingerprinting promptly as it often takes some time to obtain results.

Foster Parent Training

This training program will prepare you to address the challenges of caring for children in the child welfare system. Sessions are designed to:

- Prepare you to foster children with various needs.
- Create relationships of teamwork between you, the foster child's family and your agency.
- Inform you of services and support available to your family while fostering.
- Help you to consider:
 - o Whether you are prepared to parent a child who has been neglected and/or abused.
 - o The type of skills you need to support children who have experienced trauma.
 - o What age range best fits your family? Can you support a teenager? Can you provide for siblings? Can you support a child with special needs?

You are not in this by yourself!

During the training stage, you will likely have the opportunity to make new friends and contacts with other foster parents and staff. It will be important to lean on others for support as you begin this journey.

Family Assessment

The family assessment process is an opportunity for the agency and your family to collectively determine your family's readiness to provide foster care to children with a history of trauma. Together, we want to ensure families can provide a safe and nurturing environment to children who have endured trauma through neglect and or abuse and will share information with your family to help you prepare for caring for children with these histories. During the family assessment, you will have the opportunity to communicate about the children you are willing to accept into your home. We hope to get to know your family well enough to help determine what children might be the best fit in your home.

A foster care specialist will arrange to meet with you at your home. You will discuss your personal history, family relationships, reasons for wanting to foster and the support services available to you. Some of the support services offered will differ depending on what agency you choose to work with.

Plan for at least three visits during the family assessment process in order to complete interviews, collect any missing information and review the completed family assessment. To help you prepare for the family assessment and expedite the process, it is important to have your documents and records available for review including immunizations, auto insurance, copies of driver's licenses and copies of current pay stubs. Your foster care specialist will provide you with a detailed list of all documents that are needed. During this step of your journey, please be patient. It takes some time internally to complete background checks, review all of the pertinent information and write the family assessment. Please use this time to continue to ask questions and prepare for the next step.

Approval and Placement

Once approved, you will work closely with your foster care specialist to ensure the right match between you and a particular child or children. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's important that you have the necessary information to make an informed decision about placement.

Thank you for your hard work and incredible commitment. You will not regret taking these important steps to protect and nurture those who need it most.

THE FOREVER IMPACT

Foster parents don't just foster children, they foster families too – helping parents and children become healthy and whole again. With the help of individuals like you, we can support these families through difficult times in their lives and help them achieve successful outcomes. Children will experience fewer traumas and maintain long-lasting, healthy relationships. Because of you, we are one family closer to achieving our dream of having so many families that no child is left waiting, and to be able to choose the best home to meet each child's specific needs. Thank you!



FOSTERING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Some children in foster care have developmental delays or behavioral health needs that affect their abilities to learn, communicate, care for themselves or control their behavior. Some children have extensive medical needs that require a higher level of daily care which could include the use of assistive medical equipment or around-the-clock care.

Oklahoma Human Services will train foster parents on the special needs of children so families are well-equipped to provide specialized care. The agency also has nurses on staff to provide referrals for medical consultations, resources and specialized therapies to meet each child's needs. Your foster care specialist may make referrals to mental health supports. The children's medical care and other services are covered by Medicaid.

Please consider opening your home and providing a loving, nurturing environment to a child with special needs. You can truly make a difference in a child's quality of life and help him or her to reach their full potential. Below are programs we have to help support families caring for children with special needs.

- **Enhanced Foster Care (EFC)** provides additional supports to help families respond to the complex behavioral, medical, developmental, and mental health needs of children in custody. EFC provides individualized services and supports based on a child's specific needs along with coordination/collaboration of services between providers.
 - EFC is used to stabilize placement for a child in their current or identified family-based setting.
 - EFC is used to support children who need additional services to be successful in family-based settings.
- **Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC)** provides treatment for children aged 4-18 with special psychological, social, behavioral, and emotional needs who thrive in a family setting, but require more intensive or therapeutic services than those for traditional care.
- **Specialized Foster Care (SFC)** serves children and adults aged three years and older who have a primary diagnosis of intellectual disabilities and qualify for Developmental Disabilities Services. Some of these children could also have physical disabilities, and need families willing to provide for those needs. During the assessment process your family will let us know what type of special needs you are prepared to care for.
- **Intensive Treatment Family Care (ITFC)** provides treatment for children aged 6-18 who have experienced multiple placements in various settings, but can be successfully served in a family setting. This child has experienced trauma and may have behavioral, medical, developmental and/or intellectual challenges.

TRIBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Oklahoma Human Services and the 38 Oklahoma Federally Recognized Tribes actively seek Native American families to provide foster and adoptive care for children with Native American heritage. Placement in a Native American home is vital to help these children maintain the important life long connection with their tribe, family and culture.

The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) protects the rights of Native American children and families by establishing specific placement preferences for children who are in need of temporary or permanent homes.

Placement preferences of Native American children in foster care and adoptive placements are given to:

- a member of the Indian child's extended family;
- a foster resource home that is licensed, approved, or specified by the child's tribe;
- an Indian foster resource home that is licensed or approved by an authorized, non-Indian, licensing authority; or
- an institution for children approved by an Indian tribe or operated by an Indian organization which has a program suitable to meet the child's needs.

If you or your spouse are members of a federally recognized Indian tribe and are interested in learning more about becoming a tribal foster or adoptive parent through either Oklahoma Human Services or your Tribe, please contact your Tribe's Indian child welfare program or Oklahoma Human Services directly.

Absentee Shawnee Tribe	Iowa Tribe	Sac & Fox Nation
Alabama Quassarte Tribal Town	Kaw Nation	Seminole Nation
Apache Tribe	Kialegee Tribal Town	Seneca-Cayuga Tribe
Caddo Nation	Kickapoo Tribe	Shawnee Tribe
Cherokee Nation	Kiowa Tribe	Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes	Miami Nation	Tonkawa Tribe
Chickasaw Nation	Modoc Tribe	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokees
Choctaw Nation	Muscogee Nation	Wichita & Affiliated Tribes
Citizen Potawatomi Nation	Osage Nation	Wyandotte Nation
Comanche Nation	Otoe-Missouria Tribe	
Delaware Nation	Ottawa Tribe	
Delaware Tribe of Indians	Pawnee Nation	
Eastern Shawnee Tribe	Peoria Tribe of Indians	
Fort Sill Apache Tribe	Ponca Nation	
	Quapaw Tribe	



To contact your Tribe's foster care program visit

<https://OKFosters.org/foster-care/tribal/>



TESTIMONIAL

“I remember when I was younger, I really needed someone to help me. Help me prepare for aging out. Help me with school activities. Help me pay for those activities. Help me figure out how to be a person.”

- Former Foster Youth

FOCUSING ON THE CHILDREN

Once children are placed in your home:

- Keep in mind that children in state custody have experienced trauma, and they may exhibit difficult behaviors as a result.
- Lean on your specialist for support and attend any local support groups you may have in your area.
- Provide a safe, nurturing and stable environment for the children and care for them as you would for your own biological children.
- Ensure that each child's emotional, medical, dental, and educational needs are being met.
- Promote each child's physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth and development.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Work with Oklahoma Human Services on meeting the needs of each child, including any treatment planning.
- Respect the feelings each child has for his or her family.
- Participate in and help develop each child's visitation plan with his or her parents, siblings or others, when applicable.

The benefits of maintaining connections to kin, culture and community for children in foster care are:

- The impact of the loss, grief and uncertainty will be lessened.
- The children's history, culture and identity will be preserved.
- Loyalty issues are diminished by seeing both sets of parents working together.
- The children's needs are better met through an exchange of valuable information, such as shot records, likes, dislikes and fears.
- Foster families helping children to have frequent visits with siblings, grandparents, past teachers and others they were close to will help the children with any current trauma they might be experiencing. When it is possible, mentoring, encouraging and supporting the biological family can be vital to the outcome for everyone involved.

CONTACT INFORMATION



Oklahoma Fosters Website

There are many online resources available to help someone considering becoming a foster parent, including:

- The Oklahoma Foster Care and Adoption Support Center **OKFosters.org**
- Oklahoma Human Services Child Welfare Services **okdhs.org**



Foster Care and Adoption Support Center

Information about fostering or adopting in Oklahoma is available at **OKFosters.org** or by calling **(800) 376-9729**. You can also send questions by email to **FCASupportCenter@okdhs.org**.

Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline

To report abuse or neglect of a child, please call Oklahoma Human Service's 24-hour, toll-free abuse and neglect hotline at **(800) 522-3511**, or call local law enforcement. Callers may remain anonymous.



Additional Support

To find local events or additional support in your area, visit **BeANeighbor.OK.gov**.



1

Assistance with child care may also be available from Oklahoma Human Services.

Foster parents are given a monthly reimbursement to defray the cost for caring for each child they foster.

2

THINGS TO KNOW



9

Families who have experience parenting are a great support for foster children.

8

Each foster child in state custody has insurance coverage.

3

Oklahoma Human Services requires physical examinations from a doctor for the applicants and adults in the household. However, this does not mean that all adults in the home have to be in perfect physical condition to qualify.

4

Foster parents may also access formal respite caregivers that are approved foster homes.

5

You are encouraged to create and maintain a relationship with the biological family, if it's beneficial to the child's overall health and well being.

6

As an approved Oklahoma foster family, you gain exclusive access to a variety of community services. These discounts and benefits are being offered to you because of your tremendous compassion for our children in state care.

7

Support groups are designed to assist resource parents with in-service training, community resource information, peer support, and communication with Oklahoma Services.

FOREVER IN MY HEART

*Although I'm not their mother
I care for them each day,
I cuddle, sing and read to them
And watch them as they play.*

*I see each new accomplishment,
I help them grow and learn.
I understand their language,
I listen with concern.*

*They come to me for comfort,
And I kiss away their tears.
They proudly show their work to me,
I give the loudest cheers!*

*No, I'm not their mother,
But my role is just as strong.
I nurture them and keep them safe,
Though maybe not for long.*

*I know someday the time will come,
When we will have to part.
But I know each child I cared for
is **FOREVER IN MY HEART!***

Author Unknown





Oklahoma Human Services
Child Welfare Services

**Foster Care and Adoption
Support Center**
(800) 376-9729



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