

RESOURCE FAMILY PROCESS GUIDE



CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES

Centre County Children Need Centre County Homes

(814) 355-6755

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Children & Youth Services

Dear Prospective Resource Parent:

Thank you for answering the call to foster a child in need. We are very pleased that you are interested in working with us.

There is no doubt that foster parenting is hard work and is very challenging. There is a lot you will have to do to get ready for this challenge and the many rewards that will come as a result. You may think of this as going on a life-changing journey. This guide was developed to help you along the way.

This is your guide for the journey. It is being given to you as part of your initial orientation. Please refer to it if you have any questions about the process. If the answer is not in this guide, please call our foster home recruiter at (814) 355-3807, ext 214.

On page 4, you will see the basic steps of this journey. This process guide will give you descriptions of each of these steps and what your responsibility is during each step. You may wonder why there is so much information to gather and questions to be asked in this process. It is because the agency is required by law to assure that foster children will be safe and well-cared for in their new homes. And, we can serve you better once we get to know you and understand your ideas, preferences, and unique circumstances.

Please be aware that the steps in this journey, and the time it takes, will vary depending on the circumstances.

This book was adapted from the
“Answering The Call” Pocket Guide from Adopt US Kids.

Step Six: Final Meeting and Assessment

What is it?

This is the final meeting with your family, the Foster Home Recruiter and the Foster Home Specialist before being approved. During this meeting, the Foster Home Specialist will go over the Care Agreement which details what your obligations are to the agency, and what the agency's obligations are to you. After you have reviewed it, you will be asked to sign the form if you are in agreement. Also, she will re-check anything that did not meet the home inspection regulations during the initial home study interview.

After this meeting, the Foster Home Specialist will complete a formal assessment on you and your family. This assessment details your experiences with children, your mental and emotional stability, your support system, and your ability to work with our agency and the foster child's biological family. It also summarizes information regarding children that the agency feels you are best suited to foster parent, including age, number, and special needs. Following the completion of this assessment, the Foster Home Specialist will send the resource parent(s) an initial approval letter and certificate of approval for your foster home.

What do I have to do during this step?

1. Read through and sign the Care Agreement.
2. Ask any questions you may have.
3. Make sure all safety requirements that did not meet criteria for the initial home inspection are completed.

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The Starfish Flinger

As the old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Finally, catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun. "But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish," countered the other. "How can your effort make any difference?" The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to that one," he said.

-Author unknown



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**What basic qualifications
do I need to go on this journey?**

Following are some of the characteristics necessary to be a good resource parent:

- *Stability
- *Maturity
- *Commitment
- *Dependability
- *Flexibility
- *Enjoys children and will advocate for them.
- *Is a team player willing to work with agency staff, community services, and the birth parents, as needed.

Prospective resource parents must complete assessment and licensing requirements which include:

- *Applicants must be age 21 or older;
- *Applicants must be financially stable and not have their income dependent on food stamps or public assistance;
- *Applicants must not have negative prior involvement with CYD;
- *Applicants must not have a history of serious mental health problems, drug/alcohol abuse, criminal activities, or child abuse;
- *Criminal record check at local and state level and FBI;
- *Child abuse history check;
- *Medical exam;
- *Positive reference letters, e.g. personal, employment, etc.;
- *Home must meet Department of Public Welfare regulations for safety.

What is it?

This training program is six weeks long and is typically held on Thursday nights and lasts 2.5 hours each night.

Sessions are designed to:

1. Prepare you for foster parenting.
2. Create a basis for teamwork between yourself and the agency.
3. Challenge you to grow and develop as a resource parent.
4. Help you to consider: Is fostering for me? Am I able to parent a child who has been neglected and/or abused? What type of child can I successfully foster parent?

What do I have to do during this step?

1. Make the commitment to attend and actively participate in the training sessions.
2. Give careful consideration to the information presented.
3. Come prepared to ask questions.
4. Devote time to consider the full impact of fostering on your family, especially your children.
5. Gain the necessary information to make a personal decision about whether to become a foster parent.
6. Gain knowledge of which type of child you can best foster parent.

What is it?

This is a time of waiting for you. You may be waiting for the recruiter to complete your background checks and review the various pieces of information you provided. Also, you may be waiting for pre-service training that must be completed before approval.

The agency will have to complete a written assessment and other licensing/approval paperwork. All of this takes time.

What do I have to do during this step?

During this step of the journey try to be patient.

1. You may have a hard time understanding why it takes so long to complete the paperwork.
2. You may be concerned about what has been put in the record about you and your household.

Be prepared for a bit of a wait. This process takes time. Use the time for further reading or networking with other foster and adoptive parents. Don't be afraid to use the agency to answer questions and help solve problems during this period.



First Contact



Initial Orientation/Application Process



Home Study



Licensing and or/Approval Requirements



Pre-service Training



Final Meeting and Assessment



Approval

What is it?

This is where you, the prospective resource parent, have made a phone call to the agency to get information about foster parenting.

What do I have to do during this step?

As a result of your initial contact you need to decide whether or not you want to find out more about this journey. If you decide you would like more information, your name will be given to the Foster Home Recruiter and she will contact you to set up an orientation/application meeting.

Date of Orientation/Application meeting:_____

What is it?

This is the time when the recruiter meets with you in your home to talk about personal history, family relationships, reasons for wanting to foster and/or adopt, the supports you have available to you, and to gather necessary paperwork for approval. The recruiter will determine whether your home is safe and has sufficient space for a foster child. The point of this step is to help you and the agency make the best possible decisions about whether the placement of a child in your home will or will not work out.

What do I have to do during this step?

Resource Family applicants are responsible to:

1. Cooperate with the home study and the home visit.
2. Ensure all necessary information is supplied completely and accurately.
3. Complete and return all paperwork that you receive from the recruiter as soon as possible.

What is it?

This is an orientation meeting where you will be given a basic understanding of:

1. Who the children are who need care
2. The role and responsibilities of resource parents
3. The process you will need to go through
4. The next steps you will have to take on the journey

This is also where prospective resource parents receive the application. The foster home recruiter will go over the application with you and see if you have any questions.

What do I need to do during this step?

1. Ask questions and listen carefully to what the recruiter is saying.
2. Take notes on things like:
 - a. What you will have to do to be approved or licensed as a foster parent;
 - b. Who your important contacts are.
3. Fill out the application the recruiter leaves with you and return it in the provided stamped envelope.
4. Collect any required paperwork that the recruiter may list for the next visit.
5. Be open and honest in filling out the applications, during the personal interviews, etc.
6. Supply necessary information completely, accurately, and as quickly as possible.

8. Ask for help if you don't understand something. It is better to take a little longer to fill out the application correctly.

During this orientation you may hear for the first time the real challenges of fostering, such as:

- These children have had a tough journey of their own
- The importance of birth parent(s) to their children
- You will have to go through background checks
- The length of the process

At this point in the journey, you may become conflicted; your emotions may come to the surface. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and be prepared to open your heart and mind to what is being said.

After you mail the application to the foster home recruiter, she will contact you and schedule a second home visit to complete Part Two of the home study.

Date of Home Study Appointment_____