



Foster Care Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the benefits of becoming a foster family with Access Services?

As an Access Services foster family you would become a valued member of a dynamic team and your ideas and opinions would count. You would receive regular guidance and support as you care for vulnerable children, especially when you run into challenges. You would have access to 24-hour support in person in your home and by telephone, when needed. You would have the opportunity to participate in training opportunities in addition to the initial required training and orientation for all families.

Following the placement of a child into your home you are assigned a foster care coordinator/case manager who is tasked with ensuring your child's needs are met. They can assist with making appointments (medical, dental, psychological, behavioral, etc.), getting children registered into school, interfacing with the county, ensuring that you (as the foster parent) understand what is happening in the case, and providing support when you are feeling like you need it or just need to talk to someone who understands. Our foster care coordinators are an indispensable resource to our families!

2. What are the basic requirements for becoming a foster family?

To become a foster family, you will need a valid driver's license and reliable transportation. Household members will need physicals, showing that everyone is free from communicable diseases. Various clearances and references are also required. **It is important that your family has sufficient income to meet the financial needs of your household without relying on the reimbursement you will receive for providing care and support to the child(ren) placed into your home once you conclude the licensing process.**

3. What is the process for becoming a foster family?

You can rest assured that Access Services will guide you through the process of becoming a foster family without it becoming a long, drawn-out process. Once we receive your completed application packet, we will reach out to schedule a time to meet with you in your home for the home safety inspection and orientation. This is also a great time to get answers to any questions you may have about fostering, we will also discuss what becoming a foster family with Access Services entails. *More detailed information about Access Services, our foster care program, the approval and placement processes, along with specific documentation and training requirements will also be provided at this visit.*

Following orientation and the completion of all required paperwork and trainings, a home study visit will be scheduled and completed. This visit typically takes approximately 3-4 hours to complete, and both the primary foster parent and alternate must be present.

Access Services provides you with all necessary training free of cost. We do not require that you come to the office multiple evenings to obtain the training. Most of the trainings can be done in the comfort of your own home by way of modules or on-line trainings. Currently, the only 'classroom' required pre-service training is First Aid/CPR which is provided free of charge several times per month at Access' offices located in Bethlehem. *It is important to note that both the primary and alternate providers are required to complete all foster care trainings, both initial and ongoing/annual.*

Once your file is complete, it will be reviewed, and you will be notified if anything is missing or still required. Upon approval, you may begin receiving calls for referrals for children in need of foster homes through the 14 counties Access Services contracts with.

4. What would my responsibilities be as a foster family?

You would be responsible for the day-to-day care, supervision, and development of the child(ren) placed in your care. Foster families are required to ensure that the children placed into their homes get to the doctor and dentist within 30 days of placement. In addition, they are charged with ensuring that their foster children are seen as for required well-exams, when needed for illness or injuries. Foster parents are also responsible to ensure that the children in their care are

scheduled for and seen by their dental provider every six months for exams as well as for any treatment that may be required. Some children in placement have developmental, emotional, behavioral, and/or psychological needs that require services such as Early Intervention, speech, PT/OT, mental health therapy or medication management, it is important that foster parents can manage these needs as well.

Children in foster care are just like your own children/nieces/nephews/neighbors, etc. and attend school, play sports, participate in after-school clubs, and work outside of the home. Our kiddos come to us with varying levels of need and ability, much like one's birth children, and require foster families who are willing to understand their background and provide safety, love and support.

5. How much compensation would I receive when it comes to providing foster care for a child or children in need?

As a foster parent with Access Services, you would be an independent contractor and all monies you receive are *reimbursement for room, board, and care to the child(ren) placed in your home.*

Please bear in mind that children placed into your home **CANNOT** be claimed on your taxes regardless of the number of months that they have been living with you.

Reimbursement rates are based on the needs of the child and determined by the county at the time of referral/placement. We have three levels of reimbursement depending on the child's needs and what type of care they will require post placement. All of our reimbursement rates are competitive and tax-free (non-reportable).

6. Will I be responsible for any 'out of pocket' expenses?

Children being placed into foster care have Medical Assistance provided to them by the county who has custody of them. This covers all their medical and dental needs/expenses including co-pays and medications, as such there is no out-of-pocket expense to foster parents, provided they stay within the network of approved providers.

Outside of medical costs, depending on one's lifestyle there could be out-of-pocket expenses in caring for a foster child. Access Services provides a generous reimbursement which allows for families to invest in their foster children without it eating into their monthly budget. There are also programs in the community designed for children in placement at low to no cost - something to keep an eye out for and to take advantage of whenever possible.

Once a family is licensed with Access their coordinator can help them to sign up with the Kindness Exchange (Emmaus or E. Stroudsburg locations) where they can go to "shop" for clothing and request items (such as highchairs, pack-n-play, dresser, etc) they may need for the children who they have placed.

Access Services currently partners with an organization that donates diapers, pull-ups and wipes to our families in need of these items on a monthly basis. This benefit however is NOT guaranteed as we do not necessarily receive shipments each month of diapers/wipes from our partner.

Children placed into foster care are eligible for Title 20 benefits to help cover the cost of weekly daycare expenses and WIC can be established for children ages 5 & under.

7. Can the person coming to stay with my family share a bedroom with one of my family members? What items are needed for the bedroom I will be providing for the person staying in my home?

Children can share bedrooms with same gender children aged five years and older. Children **under the age of five** can share with others of the opposite sex. *Children are never allowed to share a bedroom with an adult* unless the child is under the age of 2, in which case they can be in a crib in the bedroom of their foster parent. All children in care need their **OWN permanent bed** (no pack-n-plays, trundle beds, blow-up mattresses, etc. are allowed to be used for foster children). Bedrooms need to have appropriately sized beds for each child/individual, **bed sharing is not allowed.** There should be a mirror, dresser or chest of drawers, and closet or wardrobe space available for each individual living in the room.

8. What kind of support would I receive in providing foster care? If there were ever an emergency after office hours is there someone I could reach?

As a foster family, you would be assigned an Access Services coordinator as your primary contact person. The coordinator will partner with you making sure that you have all the information that you need to care for the child/youth placed into your home. After hours, you will have access to our 24-hour on-call line which is staffed around the clock by one of our foster care coordinators with back up from our Assistant Director. Excellent, knowledgeable support will always be readily available in an emergency.