



Anchor Family Services, Inc.

Helping Children Weather The Storm
A 501c3 Child Placement
Agency

Dear Prospective Foster Parent,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster parent through Anchor Family Services. Anchor Family Services is a federally recognized 501 (c) 3 nonprofit community-based agency established to provide comprehensive mental health and child placing services to children and youth displaced from their families. Anchor Family Services is a License Child Placing Agency, licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Anchor Family Services philosophy is rooted in the belief of servant leadership. We are humble servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our work fulfills the mission He has called us to do. As Christians, we are called to have Christ's attitude of self-sacrificing humility and love for others. The dual nature of our philosophy is represented in our tagline: Treating children and families with kindness, respect and dignity. We never forget that we have the ability to make a significant difference in the lives of others. We ensure that our passion and pride is demonstrated in everything we do and every service we provide. Our passion is the motivation for our performance.

Below is information at a glance on foster care and becoming a foster parent.

What is foster care?

Many foster children are kids who have experienced abuse, abandonment or neglect, and their families cannot provide them with a safe and nurturing home. The foster care system steps in to make sure these children are safely cared for until they can either return home to their families or find a new permanent home through adoption. Foster care is a temporary home for the child with a licensed and caring family. Amazing Grace works to make sure foster children have few disruptions in their care by recommending matches that have the best possible family for a child's specific needs.

The goal for many children in foster care is to safely reunite with their birth families. However, in some family situations, the courts decide that reunification will not be possible, and a judge terminates the parents' legal rights to their child. If both parents have their parental rights terminated, then the child becomes available for adoption. Adoption is the permanent placement of a child in a home with a loving family.

Who Are Foster Parents?

The word "foster" means to help someone (or something) grow and develop. It also means to take care of someone's needs. Foster parents, then, are people — other than a kid's parents — who provide a safe place for kids to be cared for. They take kids into their homes and let them stay for a while.

Being a foster parent is a calling. For a child, there's nothing more important than to have a place to call home, a family to love and parents who believe in them.

As a foster parent, you can transform the life of a child simply by becoming the first person to have faith in her, the first person to care where he is, the first person to believe in what she can become. If you have enough love in your heart for a child who desperately needs it, please help a child find the way home.

Foster a belief. It's more important than a bed. More life-changing than a meal. It's what a child needs. It's a calling.

Who Are the Children We Serve

The children who come to ANCHOR FAMILY SERVICES have experienced difficult lives, which may include abuse, neglect, abandonment and separation from their birth families, previous placements and multiple losses. Some children have special medical and/or educational needs. Other children need help moving toward independence and adulthood.

Although most children are school age, ANCHOR FAMILY SERVICES places children of all ages, races and ethnic backgrounds. Families are especially needed for sibling groups.

Most children come to ANCHOR FAMILY SERVICES with emotional and behavioral issues that require special parenting as well as counseling services. Some children require medication to assist them with these behaviors.

Although the children have dealt with a lot of painful experiences, all of them have the potential to become contributing members of society – with help from the team of professionals, including their foster parents.

Support Services

Training. Prior to your first placement you will receive specific pre-service training on the many aspects of foster care. As a foster parent you will receive on-going training to provide you with the basic and specialized skills needed for foster parenting.

Case Management. Our experienced staff will meet with you and the children placed in your home on a regular basis to support the child's placement and to provide you with the assistance and direction needed to care for the children.

Compensation. You will receive a daily stipend (paid monthly) to cover the costs incurred in providing room and board for each child. In addition, this daily stipend covers the cost of providing items such as weekly allowances, activities, haircuts, birthday gifts, clothing, school expenses, diapers, and formula for children, as well as required transportation.

Respite. Respite families are available to foster parents to take scheduled breaks from the demands of foster parenting.

Transportation. When it is not possible for a foster parent to transport children to family visits due to their work schedule or other demands, ANCHOR FAMILY SERVICES assist with transportation.

24 Hour On-Call. When difficulties arise and foster parents require assistance, staff is available and on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Medical Care. The medical needs of all foster children in care are covered by insurance. ANCHOR FAMILY SERVICES's is also available to support the placement of medically needy children.

Special Needs Fund. This fund provides for the varied needs of the children in care not covered through traditional funding sources. Special Needs Fund meets educational, recreational, and excessive medical needs as well as provides for summer camperships.

STAR Fund. An acronym for Supporting Teens After Release, this fund assists in meeting the needs of those clients who will soon "age-out" of the foster care/child welfare system. This fund provides limited funding to meet independent living, educational and job necessity related expenses.

Holiday Gifts. Through generous donations from the community and staff, ANCHOR FAMILY SERVICES is able to provide each foster child with several gifts of their choice for the holidays.

Recognition Events and Other Special Events. Each year our foster parents are specially recognized for their work with children at a special luncheon or dinner. In addition, special events for the entire family are arranged through the year, such as summer picnics or outings to an amusement or ballpark as well as holiday parties.

Basic Qualifications to Become a Foster Parent

- **Have a heart for children**
- **Be over the age of 21**
- **Have a reliable source of income to meet your own family's needs**
- **Be in good health and free from communicable diseases**
- **Have sufficient living space in your home for a child**
- **Complete state and FBI criminal background checks with no disqualifying history**
- **Have no record of child abuse or neglect**
- **Complete pre-service training requirements**

Characteristics of Successful Foster Parents

- **Stability**
- **Maturity**
- **Dependability**
- **Commitment**
- **Flexibility**
- **Sense of humor**
- **Advocate for children**
- **Enjoys spending time with children**
- **Team player**

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I be employed outside of my home? Yes, provided there is a child care plan in place. It is not acceptable for both parents to have second shift employment when caring for school age children.

Is there financial assistance for day care while I work? Yes, foster parents who work full time are eligible for daycare services through CCMS..

Do foster parents receive any financial reimbursement for caring for children? Yes, foster parents receive a daily stipend for each child placed in their home. This daily stipend is based on the needs of the child. Families must show proof that they are able to meet financial obligations prior to being approved as foster parents.

Are foster parents responsible for medical and dental expenses for a foster child? Foster parents are not responsible for medical or dental expenses. Each child has Medical Assistance, private insurance or a combination that covers most expenses.

How long does the approval process take? After we receive your application and background clearance information you are invited to start attending the training sessions. Typically you are ready to be approved as a foster parent upon the completion of your pre-service training. The amount of time required to complete this process varies from family to family.

Is it possible to adopt a foster child? Adoption for some foster children can be an option for foster parents.

Can a foster child share a bedroom with my child? Yes, however they must have a bed of their own and children of the opposite sex can only share a room if they are under five years of age. A bedroom must also have room for storage for each child's belongings.

Are single individuals allowed to become foster parents? Yes. We will work with you to determine that you have sufficient supports in place and that the child care issues are addressed.

Are foster parents responsible for transporting children? We expect that our foster parents provide the majority of transportation for the foster children. We can assist if foster parents have a conflict in their schedule.

What if I have a crisis with a foster child at night or on a weekend? You never have to feel that you have to deal with a crisis alone. We offer support 24/7. After hours there is a staff person assigned to answer all emergency calls. During office hours there is always someone available to assist you with any crisis that might arise.

Process for Becoming a Foster Parent

I. Initial Contact

After your first contact with ANCHOR FAMILY SERVICES you are invited to attend a foster parent orientation class. The facilitator will cover information about the agency, the children we serve, where the children come from and answer any questions you may have. If you are interested in proceeding with the approval process, you will receive more information

II. Application

At this step you will complete the formal application forms and return them to the agency. Don't let the paperwork discourage you. Your recruiter will assist you with anything that you may not understand.

The application process includes:

- A formal application**
- Financial information**
- A statement of health of each applicant from a physician**
- FBI fingerprints for all individuals, 18 and older, living in the home**
- Texas police checks and child abuse background checks for all individuals, 14 and older, living in the home**
- References**

III. Pre-service Training

All foster parents are required to attend PRIDE pre-service training prior to receiving approval of their home. This is basic education to help you understand the role you will be assuming. It also provides you with some tools for dealing with this new experience.

The office in which you are associated will give you the details of the location and times of each training session.

The sessions will help you gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the team members working with the children placed in your home.

The sessions also will help you to critically decide several questions: is foster parenting right for you and your family? Is now the right time? What type of child can I successfully parent? What are some of the special considerations of parenting siblings who have been neglected and abused?

To get the most from pre-service training, you need to:

- **Make a commitment to attend and actively participate in each session.**
- **Ask questions.**
- **Give careful consideration to the information presented during and between sessions.**
- **Challenge yourself to grow and develop as a parent.**

Texas *PRIDE* is a 35-hour competency-based training program that is co-trained by an agency staff member and a foster or adoptive parent. *PRIDE* provides prospective foster families with base knowledge of information on caring for children in the child welfare system. *PRIDE* covers topics such as child attachment, loss and grief, discipline and behavior intervention, effects of abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, working with the child welfare system, and the effects of fostering and adopting on the family.

Additional Training Requirements

The state minimum standards require that prospective foster families also complete the following trainings or certifications, which are not part of the *PRIDE* curriculum:

- **Universal precautions training**
- **Psychotropic medication training**
- **Certification in both First Aid and infant/child/adult CPR**

State minimum standards also require that verified foster homes receive annual in-service training. Depending on the number of foster parents and the needs of the children in a foster home, the annual training requirements range from 50 hours per family to 30 hours per foster parent.

IV. Family Assessment

The Family Assessment is also known as “the home study”. The recruiter will conduct an extensive in-home interview with you and other family members living in the home. This may be completed over two or three visits. The interviews are an opportunity for us to get to know you better. This will assist us in making the best placement decisions for your family. The interviews will explore personal issues, your relationships, your finances and any history of abuse or neglect will be covered thoroughly.

In addition to the interviews, there are documents that must be supplied, such as copies of your driver’s license, auto insurance, homeowner’s insurance, social security cards and pet vaccination records. Your recruiter will complete a safety assessment while in your home. This assessment is to determine that there are no safety violation Anchor Family Services that would be dangerous for children. If violations are noted, they will be pointed out and will need to be corrected before your home can be approved.