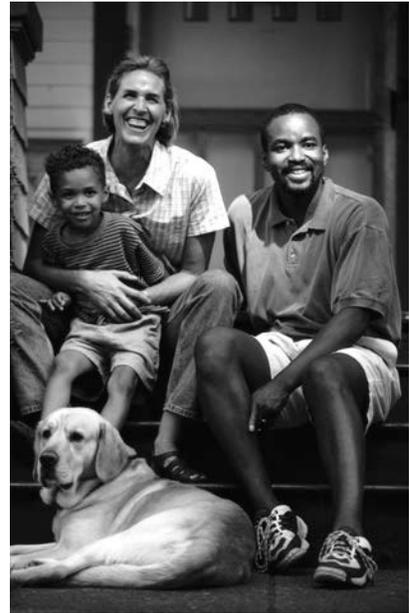


For more information about foster care in Wisconsin,  
contact the  
**Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center**  
at 1-800-947-8074 or  
[info@wifostercareandadoption.org](mailto:info@wifostercareandadoption.org)

Visit the Resource Center website at:  
[www.wifostercareandadoption.org](http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org)

# CHILD FOSTER CARE



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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Division of Safety and Permanence

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Association.

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## Jessica and Shauna

Jessica and her sister Shauna were brought by a social worker to stay at the Barrett home. Their father had disappeared and their mother, upset and discouraged, was unable to care for the girls.

The Barrett's own child was grown and married and living in another city. "You must not expect Jessica and Shauna to live up to your child's image," cautioned Ms. Shaw, the social worker who had placed the girls in their home. "They have their own personalities."

"We have plenty of room and time, now, to help children who need a place to live. They will make the house come alive again," said Mrs. Barrett.

Hurt and confused, the girls couldn't automatically fit into place like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. Their foster parents were concerned about some of their behaviors.



- a) to help them and the agency know each other
  - b) to see if their home satisfies the requirements and will meet the needs of the children available for placement. Remember this - a warm home atmosphere and a liking for children are much more important than the furnishings in the house.
8. When and where will the interviews take place?  
The interviewing may be done at the agency office as well as in the prospective foster parents' home. Times are chosen that are convenient for parents and the licensing social worker.
  9. Is a physical examination required?  
Yes. A statement from a doctor saying that applicants are free from diseases harmful to children and that they are physically and emotionally able to care for children under the age of 18 is required. They must also be free from active tuberculosis.
  10. For what length of time is a license issued?  
For not more than two years. At the time it expires, the foster parents may apply for a renewal.
  11. How much does a foster home license cost?  
There is no charge for a foster home license.
  12. Who pays for the care of children in foster homes?  
Foster parents are provided with reimbursement from the placing agency according to the child's level of needs, conditions, or behaviors.

## Other questions you may want to ask

1. Must a foster parent accept any child an agency offers?  
No. Information about a child is shared with the prospective parents prior to placement, so that they can help decide whether the child should be placed in their home.
2. Do children visit their own parents while they are in foster care?  
Children's visits with their families are usually arranged through a social worker at times mutually convenient to the foster family and the child's own family.
3. How long do children stay in foster care?  
This can vary from a few days to many years.
4. Can foster parents adopt a foster child?  
Most foster children are reunified with their birth families. If a child becomes available for adoption, the foster parents may apply.
5. Must I obtain a foster home license?  
Yes, this is required in Wisconsin unless you are a close relative or guardian of the child.
6. Where would I get a license?  
From a child-placing agency, including your County Department of Social or Human Services.
7. How does the agency decide whether or not my home is suitable to provide foster care?  
Potential foster parents are involved in a series of discussions.

On Ms. Shaw's second visit, Mrs. Barrett was troubled. "Jessica isn't adjusting to school," she confided," and she told the neighbors we hadn't given her any supper last Tuesday, when actually I had prepared her favorite - pork chops."

"There are some days when the girls can't seem to get along for one second. I get frustrated when I have to tell Shauna to do things again and again, and she doesn't seem to hear me." Mrs. Barrett told the social worker, "Jessica pulls away at any show of affection - not like my own child at all."

It took time for things to get better. One day Jessica opened the door for the social worker. "Come on in," she said. "I want to show you what my friend gave me."

When Jessica left the room, Mrs. Barrett explained, "She's made some friends, and Shauna's doing much better. We think they are beginning to feel more comfortable with us."



## Who needs it?

So many children, like Jessica and Shauna, need the care of foster parents.

A teenager may be in trouble or has problems the family can't handle. A child may be physically or sexually abused. Home becomes unbearable, so a teenager runs away or may have a drug problem and be involved in delinquent behavior. A child may need care because of a physical or mental handicap. A divorce sometimes upsets the family so that outside help is needed. Situations like these arise right here in our own community. A parent may recognize the need and voluntarily place the child in foster care, or the court may order placement.

When such children lose their parents, for a time at least, through illness, desertion, family disorganization or abuse, they carry burdens that no one sees.

They need somebody to help. Could you be that person?



3. Can you accept children as different and interesting individuals, each with their own needs?  yes  no
4. Can you give children affection and care without expecting an immediate return of love and appreciation?  yes  no
5. Do you have a natural liking for children and enjoy taking care of them?  yes  no
6. Can you be part of a team helping a child?  yes  no
7. Do you have enough space in your home for a foster child?  yes  no
8. Are you in good physical and mental health and willing to have a medical examination?  yes  no
9. Do you have a steady income from regular employment, sufficient to meet your needs apart from foster care payments?  yes  no
10. When things go wrong, can you react appropriately?  yes  no
11. Do you consider yourself to be a mature individual who uses good judgement?  yes  no
12. Do you have a sense of humor?  yes  no

These answers are for your eyes alone. But if you have marked "yes" for most of the questions, foster parenting can bring you deep and long lasting satisfaction.



## What is foster care?

If children must be removed from their homes, where can they go?

A way of caring for these children has been developed, one that treats each child as an individual - the foster home.

In such a home, people are willing to open their doors - and their hearts - to children and their problems. Here, family life, which has broken down for a child, can be supported by foster care.

## How do you rate as a possible foster family?

Here is any easy self-test for you to check:

1. If you have children of your own, are they ready to share you, their home and themselves with a foster child?  
 yes    no
2. Is your family relationship stable and happy, and do both of you want foster children? Single persons can also be considered as foster parents.  
 yes    no



Is it similar to adoption? Not exactly. Children may be placed in a foster home for a short or long period, but most children are reunified with their birth families. If a child cannot be safely reunified with his or her birth family, then the foster family can be considered as a potential adoptive resource. Foster children should be given the same care and support as birth or adopted children in the home.



While the agency reimburses for the child's basic needs, foster parents should not think of this as a way to make money. They must have sufficient income to meet their own expenses. Nor should they plan to over-use the child, for example as a farm worker or a babysitter, except as they would expect help from a natural child. Children should be given responsibility as they can handle it.

A seventeen-year-old girl who has lived in three foster homes says, "The kind of people to be foster parents are those who can give time, energy, and love - just like a real parent."

### **Who can be a foster parent?**

Mature adults, happy in their own home life, can provide foster children with love, security, and understanding.

To be successful as foster parents, however, they must understand the possibilities. According to an experienced foster father, "You go into it with your eyes wide open. You know the child may someday be returned to his or her own family."

There may be special behavior problems when children have suffered crises in their own homes. They may be resentful, bad-tempered, ungrateful. As Jessica and Shauna's foster mother discovered, patience and time usually provide the answer.

### **The social worker**

The social worker is a continuing link between a foster child and the foster parents.

Before placing a child, the worker gets to know him or her as much as possible, studying both behavior and personality. The worker will be aware of the available foster homes, and with the needs of the child and the qualities of these homes in mind, can make the arrangements leading to placement.

In regular follow-up visits the worker will help ease possible tensions and make constructive suggestions. In this role the social worker becomes a dependable resource for both the child and the foster parents.