



Foster and Adoption: Frequently Asked Questions

There are more than 28,000 children in the Texas foster care system at any given time. 3,000 of these children are waiting to be adopted into forever families. All of these children are in need of safe temporary or permanent homes with parents who have a strong desire to help kids heal from trauma.

Who are the children in need of foster and adoptive homes?

The children needing your home are usually part of a sibling group, they may be school age or older, they come from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and they may have some medical or behavioral needs. All children awaiting foster or adoptive parents come from a background of abuse and neglect, and will need a parent who understands trauma-informed parenting.

What is the difference between adoption through an agency that specializes in birth-mother adoption and adopting through the foster care system?

When prospective parents feel strongly that they want to adopt a baby and parent a child from infancy, it is important that they explore private adoption where you are matched with a birth mother. However, if a family has a desire to grow their family while also helping children who come into care due to abuse and neglect, fostering and adopting through the foster care system is an option. Parents who successfully parent children from foster care have an understanding that this process is about finding the right match of parents for children who are awaiting homes and not the other way around.

Can I adopt a baby from the foster care system?

The goal of taking children into the foster care system is to keep them safe and to eventually return them to their families. There are times that this is not an option, and a kinship or relative placement is sought. When none of these above situations are an option, a child or sibling group becomes free for adoption. Due to the legal timeline of terminating parental rights, “legally free” children are often not younger than two years old. Families who adopt younger children from the foster care system are usually the current foster family for those children.

Who can be a foster or adoptive parent with The Settlement Home for Children?

- People over 24 years of age who have passed a criminal background check and have room in their home, which has passed a fire and a healthy/safety inspection;
- People who are safe, responsible, and who have flexibility in both their schedules and in their expectations of children;
- People who have completed Pre-Service Training observation hours with current foster and adoptive parents;
- People who have completed a home study interview with our Program Team; and
- People who have contracted with The Settlement Home for Children Foster and Adoption Program to provide quality care in accordance with our program’s values.

How is parenting children from the foster care system different than parenting biological children?

Children are placed in foster care due to trauma, abuse and neglect. Families working with these children parent from a background of Trauma-Informed Care and meeting a child's need individually. Foster and

adoptive parents must be willing to assess their own style of attachment, make sense of how they were raised, and parent mindfully in order to help children heal. Parents must have flexibility in their schedules, as the training and parenting process is time-intensive. Parents also must be willing to provide a safe home for children, which sometimes means making adjustments to meet a child's needs even after you feel they are safe and taken care of. Children are not actually safe until they *FEEL* safe.

What is the process to be a foster or adoptive parent?

The first step is to contact the Foster and Adoption Program's Family Developer to set up an orientation. The process to be verified as a foster parent and adoptive parent is very similar. There is an application packet and paperwork. Parents must complete Pre-Service Training classes, which consist of 40 hours of classes, including in-person training, online training, and CPR and First Aid certification. We require a home health inspection from the local health department and fire inspection from the fire department. The Program Team at The Settlement Home for Children completes a home study based on an interview with you and your family about who you are, as well as the strengths and challenges that you bring as a parent. All families verified through The Settlement Home also complete 10-40 hours of observation with other families. The entire process can take as little as three months or as long as a year, depending on how motivated you are.

What are the benefits of fostering and adopting through The Settlement Home for Children?

The Settlement Home for Children has been working in child welfare since 1916, and our programs are staffed with experienced professionals from many backgrounds. Our Foster and Adoption Program offers:

- A small, close knit team of knowledgeable and compassionate individuals who work to meet children and family's needs individually;
- 24/7 on-call crisis support;
- An on-site psychiatrist and nurse to assist with children with medication needs;
- A psychologist available for consultation;
- A supportive group of experienced and connected foster parents who are available for mentoring, babysitting and meal delivery (since food is super important in taking care of ourselves and nurturing others!)
- Two days of paid babysitting per child, per quarter with another family in our program;
- Monthly ongoing training opportunities with topics pertinent to working with children with histories of trauma;
- Assistance with providing birthday and holiday gifts to children;
- Financial assistance for emergency foster placements;
- Tickets to local events, such as Stars Hockey Games, UT sporting events, and the circus.

Do you have additional questions? Please contact maveryzellner@settlementhome.org