



FOSTER CARE

Make a Difference, Become a Foster Parent

Information Booklet

Q: What does it mean to be a foster family?

A: Becoming a foster family is a positive, life-changing experience. This involves providing a selfless kind of love and support to children in need of a secure and stable home. The ultimate goal of Foster Care is to provide a safe and nurturing home environment for children until other suitable long term living arrangements can be made.

Q: What types of children may enter the Foster Care system?

A: Children are placed in Foster Care for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Abuse, neglect (intentional or unintentional), abandonment*
- Children who are in the process of being adopted*
- Children with behavioural or special needs*
- Children without parents or any other family*

Children can be placed in Foster Care either alone or with siblings. The Children's Authority will strive to keep siblings together where possible.



Q: What types of Foster Care are there?



A: There are two types of Foster Care, Traditional and Specialist. Specialist Foster Care aims to serve children with unique physical, psychological, social, behavioural and emotional needs. These needs require more specialist training.



Q: Who can become a foster parent?

- *Persons at least 21 years and over*
- *Males or Females*
- *Single, Married, Divorced, Cohabiting persons*
- *Persons willing to actively support children in maintaining connections with their own cultural and religious heritage*



Q: What Qualities are required to become a Foster Parent?

A: Foster Parents need to have the desire to love and parent a child, the ability to nurture, have an understanding of children, have patience and flexibility, the ability to provide a safe and stable home, and to provide daily care for children with diverse life experiences and needs.



Q: How can you become a foster parent?

A: Please contact the Children's Authority, and an application package and information about the fostering process will be provided to help you decide if fostering is right for you. (cont'd)



(cont'd)



As part of the initial application process, we will need you to provide the Children's Authority with the following: -

- A Medical Certificate of Fitness*
- Photo Identification*
- The names and contact information of two referees*
- A current certificate of character issued by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for all members of household over the age of 18*

There will be additional screening of all applicants. Training will be mandatory for all successful applicants.



Q: What happens after I submit the application and all the documents?



A: The Children's Authority begins to review and verify the information and documents submitted with the application form. This will be followed by any necessary investigations, which include background checks, in-depth interviews and home assessments. Once this stage is completed, the applicant will undergo all necessary training. After this, the Board of Management of the Children's Authority must give final approval before the applicant can be placed on the Register of approved Foster Care providers.



Q: How long will a child stay with me?

A: The duration of the child's stay will be dependent on the needs of the child, and this will be determined through the assessment process done by the Children's Authority. However, both short term and long term placement options are available.



Q: Do Foster Parents have a choice about which children they want to foster?

A: Potential foster parents can express the age group of their preference. The Children's Authority will always try to find the best match between children and foster parents.



Q: What kind of support will foster parents receive from the Children's Authority?

A: Over time the Children's Authority will aim to provide ongoing support to all foster parents in the form of supervision, monitoring, training, counselling, peer support groups and an online library.



Q: Can a foster parent adopt a foster child in their care?

A: It is possible to move from fostering to adoption. However, the adoption process remains independent so that a foster parent may not automatically be chosen as a potential adopter, but will have to comply with the Authority's Adoption application process. This application will be processed just as any other application for adoption.





Q: Are birth parents/guardians or other relatives permitted visitation with the child placed in my home?



A: As a foster parent you will be advised by the Children's Authority when and how to encourage and facilitate communication between a foster child in your care and his/her biological family. However, the location of the foster home will not be disclosed to the birth parents/relative, therefore access to the home of a foster parent will not be allowed.



Q: Can I take Foster Children on a Vacation with me ?



A: Permission from the Authority must first be sought, therefore prior notification, in writing, to the Children's Authority would be necessary. The request will then be reviewed and approved by the Children's Authority if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child.



Q: Am I able to work full time or part time and still be a foster parent?



A: Foster parents can work full time or part time, as long as it does not compromise the level of care that a foster child in your care receives. The Authority must however be satisfied that your support systems will adequately address the needs of the child in your absence.



Q: Will I be Provided with Training?

A: All foster parents would be required to attend an initial training that covers general topics relevant to the fostering process and child care. Additional specialist training will also be provided for those who care for children with special needs.



Q: Is there any Financial Support for Foster Parents?

A: Foster Parents will be provided with a monthly allowance, based on the needs of the child, to cover the direct costs of caring for the foster children in the home. You will be asked to provide records and keep receipts of all relevant purchases.

Q: Are there any costs for applying?



A: There are no application costs, however there will be costs incurred in providing some of the documents which need to accompany the application form.

Q: When will I know if my application is successful?

A: We will aim to notify all applicants within 60 days after receipt of the completed application with the required accompanying documents.

**For Further Information Please Contact
The Foster Care Unit**

The Children's Authority

35A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain

Phone: 627-0748/ 623-7555/ 625-7151 ext. 2012/ 2132

Fax: 624-6316

Email: fostercare@ttchildren.org

