

Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE

**PRIDE
-
ADOPT**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR
PROSPECTIVE

FOSTER PARENTS

AND

ADOPTIVE PARENTS

FOSTER PRIDE/ADOPT PRIDE PACKET

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE FOSTER PARENTS and ADOPTIVE PARENTS

A lot of people say they are worried about what's happening to babies, children, and youth in their community. Some say we've got to do something about the tragedy of child abuse and neglect. Others say how important families are for raising healthy children. But not so many people come forward to try to help. With the phone call you just made to ask about being a foster parent or an adoptive parent, or just by reading this Information Packet, you've done something important. You've identified yourself as someone who put his/her concern into action. On behalf of the children in the care of our agency, thank you for your concern, for caring, and for coming forward.

PURPOSE OF THE PRIDE PACKET

PRIDE stands for Parents Resource for Information, Development, and Education. This program helps you and our agency. It provides the information you need, and we need, to make an informed decision if this program is right for you, and you are right for the program. It will help you develop the special knowledge and skills important for fostering or adopting the children we serve, and it will help educate you to be the best foster parent or adoptive parent you can be.

You may be thinking that you already know a lot about children. Maybe you have raised your own children and even grandchildren. Maybe you have baby-sat other children. Maybe you're asking why you need this program. If you are asking this, you're asking an important question. Many people who are interested in fostering and adopting have a lot of experience with children. But here's the big difference. The children in the care of our agency have very special needs and some have extraordinary needs.

Children who have experienced the tragedy of physical or sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to drugs, are more challenging. Often their experiences cause them to feel angry or upset. They need time to learn that adults can be trusted, that they are not going to be hurt again, and that there are okay ways to show bad, sad, and mad feelings.

Our experienced foster and adoptive parents tell us that helping children learn these things takes some special knowledge and skills. The Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE program will help you learn what our kids need you to know.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT ADOPTION?

According to the Child Welfare League of America, in its National Adoption Standards, adoption is the means of transferring to a child and parents all the legal rights that they would have if that child had been born to those parents.

The value of adoption is that it provides children with the basic needs of every child: the legal and social status and commitment that comes from having a family of their own in which to grow up.

Adoption creates a new family leaving the child connected to the original family through history, genetics, experiences, and emotions. Adopted children frequently want to know about their birth family and some want to reunite with them when they are older. Adoptive families must understand that this curiosity is natural and does not mean the child loves their adoptive families less.

Adoption occurs when a child is "legally free" for adoption because a court has terminated the parental rights of the birth parents or the birth parents have voluntarily surrendered their parental rights. Frequently when children become available for adoption, they are already in foster care. In those situations, the foster parents have the first opportunity to adopt the child.

Some children who are legally free for adoption are not adopted by their foster parents. For those children, adoptive families are sought. There are currently children available for adoption. Many of them have special medical, educational, or emotional needs. Some are part of a sibling group and will be placed together. Many of the children are minorities.

For children being adopted, the Department of Children and Family Services has permanent guardianship of the child until the adoption is finalized. Then the adoptive family has permanent legal responsibility.

Adoptive parents may be able to get adoption assistance. Adoption assistance information is available on the next page.

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE is available to children who have special needs who are adopted by their foster parents or by another family. Before a child is considered special needs, some determinations must be made. Those are:

1. A child cannot be returned to the home of his or her parents because of a judicial determination of abuse, neglect or dependency.
2. The child meets one of the following criteria:
 - a. Has an irreversible or non-correctable physical, mental, or emotional disability, or
 - b. Has a physical, mental, or emotional disability correctable through surgery, treatment, or other specialized services, or
 - c. Is one year of age or older, or
 - d. Is a member of a sibling group being placed together where at least one of the siblings meets one or more of the above criteria, or
 - e. Is a child being adopted by foster parents who have previously adopted, with adoption assistance, another child born of the same mother or father.

TYPES OF ADOPTION ASSISTANCE

1. Payment for physical, emotional, and mental health needs which existed prior to the adoption and are not covered any other way. (Adopted children are eligible for Medicaid which covers many services.)
2. Payment for therapeutic day care by specifically trained persons for children with certain disabilities.
3. One time only payments related to finalization of the adoption such as court costs, attorney fees, etc
4. Ongoing monthly assistance payments of the same amount the child would have received in foster care may be made until a child is 18 or 19 and still in high school. Payments may be made until a child is 21 years of age if the child has a physical, mental, or emotional disability that warrants continuation of assistance.
5. Respite care up to 10 days per year and only for families adopting children who meet medical eligibility guidelines.
6. Conditional adoption assistance is available for children who may not qualify for assistance at the time of adoption but have documented pre-existing risk factors that may become physical, emotional, or medical disabilities after the adoption.
7. Four year college scholarships are available for both foster and adopted children on a competitive basis.

ADOPTION ASSISTANCE MUST BE APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

THE FIVE BASIC LICENSING STANDARDS

There are five basic licensing standards that must be met by every foster and adoptive family. If these standards cannot be met, the family cannot be licensed. During the first visit in your home, the agency staff person will need your help in order to determine if these basic requirements can be met.

The five basic licensing standards are:

1. A safe residence with adequate bedroom space for a child

A residence can be a house, apartment, condominium, etc. A child placed with you does not require a separate bedroom of their own, but the sleeping arrangements have to meet the requirements in the standards.

The only way we know if your home meets this basic requirement is to see it. We ask that you accompany the agency staff person through your entire home during the first meeting. We understand that the need to see your entire home may feel intrusive but you need to be our partner in child safety and well being.

2. Income

Many foster and adoptive families have modest incomes, but are able to manage on their income. You will be required to provide information about your income.

The agency provides monthly reimbursement to support the needs of children in foster care. Many adoptive children also qualify for financial assistance in the form of adoption assistance.

3. Training

All adults interested in fostering or adopting must attend training. More detail about the training follows this section.

4. Fingerprint clearance and background checks

Everyone 18 years old and older living in the prospective foster or adoptive home must be fingerprinted and those fingerprints must be cleared by Illinois Bureau of Investigation (IBI) before a license can be issued. Persons being fingerprinted who have not lived in Illinois for all of the past three years, or persons with a criminal history in Illinois must also have FBI fingerprint clearance.

Having a criminal record does not automatically mean you cannot be licensed. The seriousness and nature of other criminal offense, along with when it occurred will be considered. The licensing standards list criminal offenses which prevent licensure. It is very important for you to share information about possible problems with fingerprint clearance during the first meeting with the agency staff

Everyone 13 years old or older living in the prospective foster or adoptive home will have a background check to make sure they have never been reported for any abuse or neglect involving a child. This check is done through the Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) operated by DCFS. These persons will also have a check through the statewide listing of Child Sex Offenders.

We are asking you to disclose very personal information and appreciate your willingness to share the information with us. Everything you share with the agency staff person will be kept strictly confidential.

5. Health of the foster or adoptive family

Everyone living in the prospective foster or adoptive home must have a health form completed by a qualified physician. Forms will be provided by the agency staff person. Everyone in the home must also have a tuberculin skin test with results.

If prospective foster or adoptive parents cannot meet these five basic requirements, A license cannot be issued. Our commitment to honest and open communication with prospective foster and adoptive parents includes our responsibility to inform you when foster care or adoption is not possible because of your family's current circumstances.

FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT PRESERVICE TRAINING SESSIONS

Before you can be licensed to care for children unrelated to through family foster care or adoption, you must complete "Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE" preservice training. This training helps prepare you for success!

FOSTER Pride/Adopt PRIDE is 27 hours (9 sessions of 3 hours each) of preservice training. PRIDE training is offered at various locations in your area at various times of the day and at night. The trainers are experienced in foster care or adoption and in child welfare. If you are a two parent household, both of you will need to attend this training.

Educational Advocacy training recommended. It is six hours (two sessions of three hours each) and is offered at the same places as Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE. This training helps you to make sure that your child's educational needs are being met. Only one parent in each household needs to take this training.

We know that the training is a big commitment of time. So is the commitment you are considering in becoming a foster or adoptive parent to a child.

We've learned that successful foster parents and adoptive parents have knowledge and skills in five basic areas we call "competencies." The Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE preservice training program will help you to understand and meet these competencies.

1. **Protecting and nurturing children**
Children need to live in a safe place where adults show that they care.
2. **Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays**
Children need to grow up being encouraged to learn how to do things that are appropriate for their age and ability.
3. **Supporting relations between children and their families**
Many children in foster care will return to their birth families once the problems are corrected. Adopted children will need to have questions about their birth family answered.
4. **Connecting children to safe nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime**
A permanent family for every child is the goal. If children cannot return to their birth family, adoption will be pursued.
5. **Working as a member of a professional team.**
As a foster or adoptive parent, you will work with agency staff and others toward the best interest of the child.

**Thank you again for you concern for the children and families
in need of foster and adoptive care in Illinois.**