

Foster Care Licensing for Relatives



Why Should I Be Licensed to Care for My Relative?

Children's Administration seeks to place children with relatives whenever possible. We know relatives can provide stable, committed homes for children in crisis. While licensing is not required for relative care, there are specific benefits:

- Foster care reimbursement is a higher rate than the grant available through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. The 2015 basic foster care rates are:
 - ▶ Child ages 0 – 5 = \$562
 - ▶ Child ages 6 – 11 = \$683
 - ▶ Child ages 12 – 21 = \$705

Rates may be higher depending on the level of care the child needs.

- The Foster Parent Reimbursement program assists with paying for damages or injuries caused by a child placed with you that are not covered by private insurance.
- Extended Foster Care (18-21 years) allows foster care reimbursement to foster parents providing care to youth over 18 who continue in foster care to assist with the transition to adulthood.
- Each applicant will have a foster care licensor who provides support through resource referral, training opportunities and individual consultation.

Any adult living in a potential foster home must:

- Complete a Washington State Patrol background check.
- Complete FBI fingerprinting.
- Submit a tuberculosis test dated within the last year.
- Get the influenza vaccine and Tdap and/or DTap for all household members if taking placements of children 2 years or younger.

Youth ages 16 and 17 in the household also must complete a Washington State Patrol background check.

What Kind of Home Can Be Licensed as a Foster Home?

Foster families may rent or own their homes. Any home can be a foster home if:

- It is reasonably clean, safe, in good repair, and has adequate space.
- Poisons and cleaning solutions are kept out of reach of children.
- Pools have a fence designed to discourage climbing and have a locking gate.
- Hot tub and spa areas are locked when they are not in use.
- Medications, including vitamins and herbal remedies, are in their original containers and in locked storage.
- All firearms, ammunition and other weapons are kept in locked containers.
- Smoke detectors are installed.
- Approved 2A10BC rated or larger all-purpose (ABC) fire extinguisher is on hand.

Smoking is NOT allowed in the living space of ANY foster home or facility caring for children or in ANY motor vehicles transporting children. Adults may smoke outdoors away from children.

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Frequently Asked Questions About Foster Parenting as a Relative

Can a single person be a foster parent?

Yes.

Is there an age minimum?

Foster parents must be at least 21 years of age. The age requirement may be waived for relative caregivers.

How long does it take to become licensed?

While it largely depends on how quickly you submit the required information and the fingerprint processing time, the goal is to complete the licensing process within 90 days of receiving your application.

How long would my relative stay in my home as a foster child?

It depends on the particular child and the parents' situation. A child may stay in care a few days or several months. The goal is for the child to safely return home or have a permanent home if a safe return home is not possible.

What contact does a relative foster child have with his/her biological parents?

Most foster children have court-ordered visits with their biological parents. Children and parents need to have regular contact for children to safely return home. The child's Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) worker will work with you and the child's parents to decide on a location and time of visits. The court decides whether the visits will be supervised.

Can a relative foster child share a room with my child?

Yes. All children must have a separate bed. Your licensor will work with you and the child's DCFS worker to make sure that sharing bedrooms is safe for all of the children. Also, children of the opposite sex can only share a room if they both are under six years of age, unless a relative waiver is obtained.

Can I spank the relative foster child?

No. Foster parents and relative caregivers are prohibited from using any form of physical discipline. Positive discipline, combined with warmth and caring, should be used to teach the child.

Can we take the relative foster child with us on vacation?

Yes. For up to 72 hours. Anything over 72 hours requires prior approval from the child's DCFS worker.

Can we leave the foster child with a babysitter?

Yes. You may use a friend or relative to babysit without a background check if it is on an occasional basis and less than 72 hours. Please consult with your licensor and the child's DCFS worker. Respite care might also be available to you.

Is there a problem with our having pets?

Generally not. We would be concerned if there were issues of safety, cleanliness or health factors such as a child's allergies.

What training is required?

- ▶ First Aid/CPR
- ▶ Blood borne pathogens
- ▶ Licensing orientation
- ▶ Caregiver core training
- ▶ Caregiver continuing education training

Who Do I Contact For More Information?

Region 1 North:	Melissa Fielding, Spokane	fieldmel@dshs.wa.gov	509-990-1766
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Region 2 South:	Crystal Swanda, Seattle	swandcd@dshs.wa.gov	206-923-4890
Region 3 North:	Codie Jenkins, Tacoma	jenkicm@dshs.wa.gov	253-260-0452
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