



**KIDS CENTRAL  
AND FOSTER CARE**  
*Because Childhood Won't Wait*

## **Becoming a Licensed Foster Parent**

Kids Central Inc. is the lead agency in Circuit 5, which includes Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion and Sumter Counties. We develop and manage the delivery of a comprehensive, community-based system of care for abused, neglected and abandoned children and their families. This includes contracting with service providers in each county for case management, adoption and other services needed to round out the full spectrum of care needed by the children and families in each county.

### **WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?**

A licensed foster parent provides **temporary** care to children whose families are unable to care for them. **Foster parenting is a position of public trust and a privilege, not a right or entitlement.** Foster parents provide temporary care to children between the ages of 0-17 until they can return to their family, a non-relative, an adoptive home is found, or the child achieves independence. Children are either in shelter care status or foster care status, depending on their individual situation. In shelter care status, children could be placed for a few days or as long as 6 months. Children in foster care status can remain for up to one to two years or longer. Families are licensed through Kids Central, Inc., by the Department of Children and Families to provide homes for children in either shelter or foster care status. It typically takes approximately 2-3 months to become a licensed foster parent after completion of the Foster Parent Pre-service Training.

### **WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT?**

- Foster Parents in Florida must be at least 21 years of age.
- Background screening is conducted on all adults in your home. This includes FBI (National), FDLE (State), local law enforcement checks, child abuse registry checks, civil checks through the Clerk of Court in the county of residence and checks through the Department of Motor Vehicles. If you have lived in the state of Florida for less than 5 years, abuse history checks, local law enforcement checks and civil checks will also be completed in the previous state of residence. Please report to Kids Central any previous involvement with law enforcement at the time of orientation. We understand that life happens and that errors in judgment occur. We won't judge you, but we need to be aware of your history and it's better if we hear it from you.
- All children in the home must have a child abuse registry check and all children 12 years of age and older must also have an FDLE check and local law enforcement check.
- Income – you must have legal, stable and documented income that is sufficient to support themselves and their family without the assistance of the board rate. As a guideline, discretionary income in the amount of at least four to six weeks of the board rate (board rate details below) should be available. You may not be able to continue the process if you are receiving unemployment (temporary income), food stamps, child support, alimony, or on public housing/section 8 program.
- You must take the 30 hours Pre-service training. In the case of an unmarried couple who resides together as a family unit, both individuals must complete Pre-service training, the background screening process and be fully assessed through the home study process.
- All applicants, married and single, must identify a "back-up". This is someone who can assist with the care of the foster children in your home in order to give you a break or in the event of an emergency. All back-ups must be cleared through the background screening process.

- It is highly recommended, that a back-up who will be providing primary care (i.e. watching children in lieu of daycare) for foster children, must also complete the required 30 hours of pre-service training.
- A water safety class is required prior to licensure if your home has a pool (above ground or in-ground) or Jacuzzi, if you live near a body of water or in an apartment complex that has either.
- At least 2 home visits will be conducted with all family members present and all family members will be interviewed.
- The following references will be completed: 3 personal references who have known you for at least 2 years (cannot be relatives), all adult children, 2 neighbor or 2 community references, employment references for the last 2 years, school and daycare references for all minor children living in your home. Other references will be completed as needed.
- Copies of all marriage certificates and divorce decrees must be provided.
- Copies of your driver's license, auto insurance (including bodily injury), social security cards, child support verification, citizenship papers/visa if **not** born in the United States and documentation of current Rabies vaccinations for all pets must be provided.
- Satisfactory Health Inspection completed by the Health Department in the county of residence.
- Evacuation plan is needed denoting the location of smoke detectors, fire extinguishers (size 2A10BC), all exits and a centralized meeting place outside the home.
- Radon test in all counties except Lake and satisfactory fire inspection in Citrus County.
- Medical clearance (physical) by a licensed physician.
- Transportation – you must be able to assist with the transportation needs of the children (visits with biological parents, medical appointments, counseling, etc.). Cars must be operable with working seat belts and have proper child restraint seats for the age range of the children to be placed in the home.
- Communication- you must have immediate access to a telephone, computer and printer.
- If you have a licensed in-home daycare, your daycare license must be amended so that the number of daycare children, the number of children that reside in your home, and your capacity does not exceed 5.
- Review of and signature on various forms to confirm an understanding of and agreement with policies specific to Kids Central, Inc. and the Department of Children and Families.

## **WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO PREPARE MY HOME FOR FOSTER CHILDREN?**

- Must have a thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer.
- Must have a first aid kit available.
- Home and yard must be free from clutter
- All walkways and exits inside the home must be clear
- Home must be free of exposed wires.
- All medication, poisonous and hazardous materials/chemicals and cleaning supplies must be secured (locked) in a closet, container or cabinet, which is inaccessible to children (locked area must not be laundry room or bathroom).
- Combustible items must be stored away from any heat source and it is recommended that they be stored in a locked location.
- Water quality will be tested for all homes with wells.
- All doors with locks must open from the inside.
- All swimming pools must have a barrier on all 4 sides that is at least 4 feet in height. This barrier can be a fence, screen enclosure, exterior walls of the home, child safety fence or the side of an above ground pool.
- All access points to the pool must be locked when the pool is not in use.

- Hot tubs must be secured with locked cover.
- Alcoholic beverages must be inaccessible to children. It is recommended to families who prefer older children that alcohol be stored in a locked location.
- Weapons, such as guns or a bow and arrows, must be locked and inaccessible to children.
- A fire extinguisher (size 2A10BC) must be kept in or adjacent to the kitchen. If the home has a 2<sup>nd</sup> story, another fire extinguisher must be kept on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. All fire extinguishers must be inspected and tagged annually.
- If the home has a 2<sup>nd</sup> story, another means of escape, such as a safety ladder, is needed.
- Smoke detectors must be present in all sleeping areas (this does not mean in each bedroom).
- Fire drills must be conducted at least every 6 months and every time a new child is placed in the home.
- Heating sources, fireplaces and any other hot surface will need a protective barrier in place to prevent accidental contact.
- Burglar bars on windows must be easily collapsible.
- There must be a window or door in each bedroom, in addition to the exit/entry door.

## **WHAT ARE APPROPRIATE SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN?**

As a general rule, there should be no more than a total of 5 children under age 18 in your home. This number includes biological children, adopted children, grandchildren if you are the primary caretaker for them, along with relative and non-relative placements and foster children. Exceptions by waiver can be made to increase your capacity temporarily. Infants under 12 months of age may share a bedroom with an adult. Children over 12 months may not sleep in a room with anyone 18 years of age or older. Children over 3 years of age may not share a room with a child of the opposite sex (this includes siblings). Every child in the home must have a bed of their own. Children may not sleep on a couch, futon, trundle, rollaway bed or in a pack-n-play on a long term basis. Children may not sleep in a crib with drop sides.

Each child must have adequate storage space to accommodate their belongings. All personal items acquired by the child while living in the foster home must be sent with the child when he/she leaves.

The licensing specialist will review your bedrooms when she/he visits your home and will work with you to determine the appropriate capacity for your family.

## **WHAT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE FOR FOSTER PARENTS?**

**Board Payment:** Foster parents receive reimbursement for standard expenses related to the care of children. Expenses considered in calculating reimbursement include food, clothing, transportation, extra-curricular activities, utilities, telephone, linens, recreation, child's allowance and personal incidentals. The board rate is as follows:

	<b>Monthly rate</b>
Ages 0-12 years	\$517.44
13 to 17 years	\$578.32

**Clothing allowance:** When a child **initially** comes into care, a foster parent can spend up to \$100 on a child and submit the receipts to Kids Central for reimbursement. This is only applicable for a child's FIRST placement in foster care.

An annual clothing allowance is issued during the summer with the expectation that this will help to offset the cost of preparing children for back to school.

## **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I'M LICENSED?**

- You will be assigned a Licensing Specialist who will be your "case manager".
- During your first 2 years of licensure, each parent must complete 12 hours of training per year. Beginning in the third year of licensure, each parent must complete 8 hours of training per year. Kids Central offers training on a variety of topics throughout the year.
- If daycare is used for a foster child, the facility must be licensed by the Department of Children and Families.
- Completion of HIPAA & Security Awareness and Kids Central email assignment. Electronic Blue Book assignment.
- Select a Pediatrician to use for foster children.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Spanking or any other type of corporal/physical discipline is not allowed with foster children under any circumstances. Training in the use of alternative, appropriate methods of discipline will be provided by Kids Central Inc.

## **ONGOING TRAININGS**

- ⊕ 30 hours of additional training if you are interested in becoming a medical foster parent. Can only be completed after traditional license is received
- ⊕ 30 hours of additional training if you are interested in becoming a therapeutic foster parent. Can only be completed after traditional license is received
- ⊕ NAPPI (Non-Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention) (4 hours) – Required annually
- ⊕ Psychotropic medication training - Required within 120 days of licensure
- ⊕ Water Safety Training – Required within first year of licensure if not taken prior to licensure, and updated at least every 3 years.
- ⊕ First Aid Training – optional, but highly encouraged
- ⊕ Car Seat Training- optional
- ⊕ CPR Training- optional, but highly encouraged

Training hours can also be obtained through providers in the community.

## **KIDS CENTRAL, INC. IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FOSTER PARENTS IN CIRCUIT 5**

As a foster parent, your ability to work in partnership with all of the professionals involved in a child's life, such as the biological family, Family Care Managers, Guardian Ad Litem, therapists, school staff and your licensing specialists, will largely determine the degree of your success. We strongly encourage new foster parents to become actively involved in the Foster Parent Association in their county. This source of support, as you learn to navigate the child welfare system, is invaluable. We need foster parents who can be strong advocates for the children they are charged with caring for, but this must be done in a professional, solution-focused manner while always keeping the child's best interests as the top priority.

No person shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.