 **Requirements for Foster/Adopt Parents**

Our goal is to provide the highest quality standard of care for our children. This list is a guide and may not include everything. There may be other requirements depending on the applicant’s situation. Decisions will be made on an individual family basis and on what is best for our children. Fostering and Adopting is a PRIVILEDGE and not a right!

**Who can foster or adopt:**

* Applicants must be 21 years of age or older
* You can be married, single, divorced, and/or widowed with children or without children.
* You must be a US citizen or legal resident
* Applicants must obtain and pass a medical examination (physical- and ONLY for foster parents).
* Your life and home are stable. “Stable” means that you are not about to move and are not having any financial, marital or emotional difficulties.
* You can have up to 5 children ages 0-17 in your home. This include fostering, adopted and biological children. At times, we will approve homes that already have 5 children in the home, but this is on a very unique, case by case basis.

**Classes:**

* Treat this like Foster/Adoptive Parent College
* Complete Orientation and a five (5) week class called PRIDE (Parent’s Resource for Information, Development and Education). Attendance at Orientation, all five (5) classes, completion of four (4) online modules AND completion of homework is all REQUIRED for a certificate.
* Attendance is required at all classes and if 2 classes are missed, you must start all over.
* Complete the Family Profile and Life Story
* Big commitment: please be on time, no cell phones.
* If you live in a county other than Lake, Sumter, Marion, Citrus and Hernando, please check with your county to make sure it is allright to attend our classes.

**Finances:**

* Applicants income must meet all their household and living expenses and they must have enough funds to provide for a foster child for possibly 6 to 8 weeks before they receive the foster parent board check (may be a good idea to have some items stored up and ready).
* Applicants must provide verification of employment or income source ( W-2, W-9, or pay stubs)
* You can work outside the home or be retired.
* Disqualifiers with income:
  + Food Stamps
  + AFDC
  + Income does not meet listed expenses
* You can rent or own your own home or apartment. If you rent, we ask that you contact your landlord.

**Home and Safety:**

* The home must have adequate sleeping space/bedroom for a foster child. Each child must have their own bed or crib (no drop down cribs).
* Cribs must be free of bumper pads, blankets, stuffed animals and toys. Only a tightly fitted sheet is needed. Also, must not be in front of a window.
* All bedrooms must have a window and a door, and a dresser or closet.
* Temporary bedding such as pack and plays, play pens, sleeper sofas and trundle beds do not qualify for bedding.
* Applicants must pass a home health inspection (by Licensing) and Citrus county residents must pass a fire inspection ( Foster Homes only).
* There must be a fire extinguisher (2A10BC) in or adjacent to the kitchen and on each story of the home and it must be inspected annually (for fostering only). You can purchase this type of fire extinguisher at Walmart.
* A thermometer is needed for both refrigerator and freezer.
* If the home is two-stories, an evacuation ladder must be located in an upstairs room.
* Smoke detectors in sleeping areas (check your batteries!)
* Life saving device if the home has a pool. Shepherd’s hook, ring buoy are all acceptable. Licensing will go over all pool requirements.
* Cleaning supplies, medications, and alcohol must be in a locked closet/cabinet. A lock is defined as a “rotating mechanism”, i.e: Key locks, key padlocks, combination locks.
* Weapons and ammunition shall be locked and stored separately and in a place inaccessible to children.
* Have a car seat for each child under 40lbs. or a booster chair for every child between 40-90 lbs and under 4”11.
* Have an operating vehicle, with liability insurance.

**Background Screening:**

* The following background checks will be conducted- FBI, FDLE, Locals, Child Abuse registry, Civil checks which include domestic violence history, calls to service, and driver’s license check on all household members.
* Applicants cannot have any active criminal cases or be on probation. Applicants found guilty or pled guilty or No Contest to a misdemeanor or felony crime could be disqualified pending a review of the crime charged.
* Applicants can not have been a verified perpetrator on a DCF report.
* Applicants can not have had an Injunction for Protection filed against them.
* Violent crimes or crimes against a child are a disqualifier.
* For Child Abuse Registry checks, any incidents closed with qualified indicators are a disqualifier.
* Single individuals wanting to foster must have a designated back up babysitter who complete background screening.
* Out of State checks will be completed if lived in Florida for less than five (5) years.

**References:**

* For fostering: Three (3) personal references who have known you (and spouse) for at least two (2) years.
* Employment references
* References from all adult children.
* School references on school aged children
* Childcare references on all children in childcare
* For adopting: One (1) relative references and four (4) other references, need to know you for at least two (2) years.
* Reference and documentation regarding any previous out of home caregiver licenses.

**Personal History:**

* Participate in a home study that involves an in-depth review of the applicant’s life and history, where they will be expected to openly and honestly answer questions.
* Copies of marriage license, divorce decrees, death decree, social security card, driver’s license, proof of legal residency, vehicle liability insurance, housing verification, proof of income, floor plan of home, completion of fire drills, disaster plan/evacuation routes, pet vaccinations.

**Adoptive Homes:**

* Once your home has been approved to adopt, your homestudy will be sent to you and to the agency that Kids Central subcontracts with to provide adoption services. For Lake/Sumter counties, Lifestreams. For Marion, The Centers. For Citrus and Hernando counties, Youth and Family Alternatives.
* You will have a point of contact, but the goal is not to look for a child for you. The agency will look at the children they have and match the child with you according to your preferences you mention in the homestudy. The goal is to find a family for the child, not to find a child for you.
* Adoptive homes need five (5) references.
* You do not need the fire extinguisher, radon, health inspection, fire inspection that is required with Licensing.