

Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do.

With no relatives, no support, we've put it in an impossible situation.

*American Cultural Anthropologist,
Margaret Mead*



What are some of the responsibilities of a foster parent?

Foster parents are to provide children and youth with a safe, stable, nurturing and loving environment during a very difficult time in the child's life, for as long as the child will be living there. Every child placed with AFS has a service plan that foster parents, AFS staff, the county child welfare worker, and the child (if old enough) all develop together. Placement goals include permanency outcomes, community integration, meeting the medical and dental needs of the children, reducing and eliminating inappropriate behaviors, and supporting the child's educational needs.

Who are the children placed in AFS foster homes?

Children placed in AFS homes are usually dependents of the court who are referred by county departments of social services. We place children 0-21 years old, removed from families usually for reasons of physical and/or emotional abuse, neglect, maltreatment or family crisis. Potential foster parents may choose from among three AFS foster programs designed to be solution-focused, strength-based, needs-driven, community-centered and culturally competent.

Therapeutic Foster Care

Intensive Treatment Foster Care (ITFC)

Family Alternatives for Children with Developmental Disabilities (FACDD)

How long do children stay in a foster home?

Foster children may stay in care from a few days up to many months. In some rare cases, foster children might stay for years. Foster families may adopt their foster children. The goal in every case is to work towards building a stable, *permanent* relationship. Possibilities include reunification with biological family, adoption by foster parents or emancipation for older youth.

How are foster children matched with foster homes?

AFS conducts an in-depth family assessment including a home study, home visits and personal interviews with every potential foster family. During the assessment process, AFS carefully considers the abilities and preferences expressed by the family and the unique needs of the foster child. Every foster placement is considered an agreement among the foster parents, AFS staff, county social worker, biological parents (in some cases) and the foster child (if old enough).

Do foster parents receive funding?

AFS foster and adoptive parents receive a generous monthly reimbursement depending on the child's age and program placement. These funds reimburse foster parents for the cost of the foster child's room, board, clothing, transportation and other incidentals. Foster parent reimbursements are not considered taxable income by the IRS or the state of CA. In addition to the monthly reimbursement, foster and adoptive parents with children in care receive \$75 (taxable) for attending monthly training meetings. Adult friends and family members can qualify to become paid AFS Respite Workers who can help care for foster children, allowing families to take time off.

Becoming an AFS Foster Parent - FAQs

Does a foster child need his/her own room?

State regulations require that no more than two children of the same gender and within five years of age may share a room. Each child must have his or her own bed, closet space and dresser. A foster child may not share a room with an adult (18+) unless the child is under 2 years of age.

What screening and training are necessary to become a certified foster parent?

The following table identifies the screening and training necessary to become a certified foster parent. The process can take approximately three to four months to complete.

Screening (all adults 18+ in the foster home)	Training (provided by AFS)	Documentation
CA state fingerprint clearance	First Aid/CPR	Valid CA drivers license
Criminal background check	Pre-service training (21 hours)	Insured passenger vehicle
General health/TB test	Foster parent orientation	Proof of age (21+ years old)
All CA licensing requirements	Annual CA re-certification training (12 hours)	DMV record
AFS home inspection, home study & personal interviews		Social Security Card
3 confidential non-family references		
Out-of-state criminal record <u>statement</u> for ALL applicants		
Out-of-state criminal <u>clearance</u> for foster parent applicants who have lived in another state during the past five years		

Who provides health and dental care for foster youth?

Medi-Cal fully covers a foster child's medical and dental care. Foster parents must keep every foster child current on all medical and dental appointments and vaccinations. AFS will assist foster families in this process.

May a foster child be placed in a home where there are already children living?

Yes. Many foster families have both biological and foster children. It is important to involve a foster family's biological children in the fostering process, allowing them to voice their feelings, questions and concerns.

Do foster children have contact with biological family?

The goal for every AFS foster child is to establish a stable, permanent environment to grow and thrive. Reunification with their biological family members is desirable if possible. Every case is different. When the service plan calls for family reunification, AFS coordinates the therapeutic visits between foster children and biological family members. The names and addresses of foster families remain confidential, when necessary. In other cases, especially those where children are bound for adoption, contact between the child and the biological parents may be forbidden.

What are the educational responsibilities of a foster parent?

AFS assists foster families in enrolling the foster child in a public educational program that suits the child's needs. It is the foster parent's responsibility to supervise the child's attendance and monitor his or her educational progress. AFS maintains communication with the school, teachers and foster parents to assure the child stays on-track academically and behaviorally. In some cases, AFS may provide tutors for AFS foster children.

Becoming an AFS Foster Parent - FAQs

Can I take a foster child to my place of worship?

AFS encourages foster families to include foster children in all foster family activities including religious activities if the foster child chooses to participate. Every child also has the right to choose their own faith and which services to attend. Compatibility between the foster family and foster child's belief system is taken into consideration during the assessment period prior to placement when the information is available. Foster parents need an approved respite plan in place if the child chooses not to attend worship services with you.

What happens if a placement is unsuccessful?

AFS makes every effort to ensure that a foster child has a successful placement including 24/7 support for foster families. In some unique situations a change in placement may be necessary.

Can foster parents adopt their foster children?

Permanent, legal adoption into a new family is often the very best thing to happen to a foster child. While not all foster children are adoptable, many children and youth are unable to return to their biological families and, with the county's approval, are adopted by their AFS foster parents. If you desire, you may choose to become a foster/adoptive parent with the specific intent of adopting a child from the foster care system. AFS will support you without charge through all steps of the legal adoption process.

I want to become an AFS foster or adoptive parent, what do I do?

Contact the AFS foster parent recruiter who will answer your questions and help you through every stage of the application process.



Thanks for considering AFS! As the AFS Foster Home Recruiter I am here to answer all of your questions, and to make the process of becoming a foster parent enjoyable and fulfilling.

Feel free to call me on my direct line at (510)282-8354 or email me at twhittington@afs4kids.org
~Thomas Whittington

Si necesita hablar con alguien en español, favor de llamar a mi compañera, Silvia Mendoza, al (800) 300-1022

AFS Locations

Santa Rosa Office

Administrative Office
1421 Guerneville Road, Suite 218
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
(707) 576-7700

Sacramento Office

8795 Folsom Blvd, Suite 109
Sacramento, CA 95403
(916)267-4045

San Francisco Office

250 Executive Park Blvd, Suite 4900
San Francisco, CA 94134
(415) 656-0116

Oakland Office

401 Roland Way #120
Oakland, CA 94621
(510) 839-3800

Vallejo Office

160 Glen Cove Marina Rd #102
Vallejo, CA 94591
(707) 648-2000