



Foster a Future

Information on becoming a foster family in Alaska



This publication was produced by the Alaska Center for Resource Families with support from the UAA Child Welfare Academy and Facing Foster Care in Alaska and funded through a grant from the Municipality of Anchorage.



A Division of Northwest Resource Associates

www.acrf.org 1-800-478-7307

It takes just one person to change a life...

you can be that person.

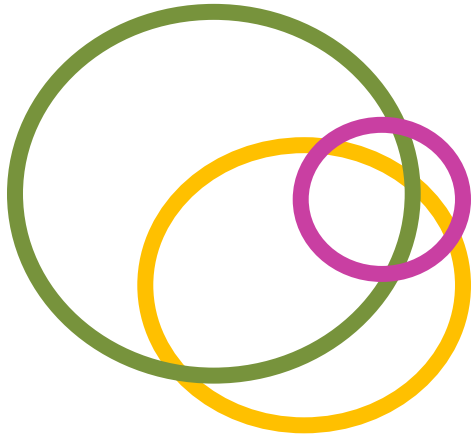


Thank you for your interest in becoming a **foster family** in Alaska. There is a **huge need** for families, and we thank you for learning more about how to become a home for a **child in need** and a **family in crisis**.

One person can change a life. But the work is hard. We are here to help along the way. For more information about foster care, or to find out more about resources for foster care in your community, **contact:**

The Alaska Center for Resource Families

www.acrf.org
acrf@nwresource.org
1-800-478-7307



STEPS To Becoming A FOSTER PARENT in Alaska

Produced by the Alaska Center for Resource Families
1-800-478-7307 www.acrf.org

A foster parent who is not related to a child must receive a foster care license before they can take children into their home. Learn about becoming a licensed foster home by attending a Resource Family Orientation. Included in this packet is a schedule of upcoming Resource Family Orientations.

Sign up by calling the Alaska Center for Resource Families at 1-800-478-7307 or email acrf@nwresource.org.

STEP 1:
Attend
Orientation.

STEP 2:

Fill Out the
Application and
follow instructions for
Fingerprinting.

Get an Application for Foster Care Licensure at orientation or go to the State of Alaska OCS Website. You will also get instructions of how to get fingerprinted. All potential foster parents (and persons 16 years and older in the home) need to be fingerprinted.

Fill out the application which asks for basic information about yourself and the people in your household. The application also asks for three personal references and for permission to complete a background check on all persons 16 years and older in your household. Follow the instructions on the application to submit to your nearest Office of Children's Services.

Application assistance available after all orientations.

After you return the application to the Office of Children's Services, you will be assigned to a Licensing Specialist who will process the paperwork and complete the background checks for everyone in your home 16 years and older. Background checks are required to prevent any predictable future risk to children.

Once the background check determines your family is eligible for licensing, your Licensing Specialist will make an appointment with you to complete the next step—the home visit.

STEP 3:
Complete
Background Checks.

The Licensing Specialist will visit your home to see that it has a place for the child to sleep and keep their clothes, and that your home meets basic standards of safety. The Licensing Specialist will also look for basic safety standards in your home, such as smoke detectors in bedrooms, a fire extinguisher, a carbon monoxide detector on every level, and no dangerous conditions in your home.

No need to be perfect! Your Licensing Specialist will guide you on what you need to do to get ready.

STEP 4:

Participate in a home visit.

STEP 5:

Receive your Foster Care License.

After completing all these steps, your Licensing Specialist will submit all the paperwork for approval, and you will receive a Community Care License. You are now a licensed foster home! That means you will be licensed by the state to care for a specific number of children in a specific age range.

Your license needs to be renewed after a year (and every two years after that) and you will continue to participate in ongoing training every year as part of your licensing requirement.

Foster families should attend Core Training for Resource Families either before or shortly after licensure and preferably before their first placement. Core Training is sponsored by the Alaska Center for Resource Families and covers information about the child protection system, the impact of trauma, separation, grief and loss, family contact, positive parenting, and transitions back to birth parents.

Core Training meets the training requirement for the first licensing year. Training is offered by web, Zoom, self-study workbook and in some communities, in a classroom setting.

STEP 6:

Attend Core Training for Resource Families.

STEP 7:

Children are placed in your home!

Once licensed, OCS will contact you to place children in your home. Always ask questions so you can decide if you are able to provide a good home to this child. Every child will have a caseworker you will work with. Your role will include caring for the child but may also include helping the child be available for visits with birth parents and helping them get to medical or therapeutic appointments.

Foster parents receive a stipend at the end of each month to help pay for expenses to take care of the child. The amount is established by the state and is based on how many days a child has been in your home. Children will also be eligible for medical assistance, childcare assistance for parents who work, and WIC for children under five.



Frequently Asked Questions About Becoming A Foster Parent For The State Of Alaska

Your questions still not answered? Contact the ACRF at 1-800-478-7307.

What is the greatest need for foster families?

There is a need for families willing to foster for children of all ages. There is a particularly high need right now for families willing to **foster teens, sibling groups,** and children who are **medically fragile or complex.** There is also a need for **Alaska Native or American Indian families** able to foster Alaska Native or American Indian children.

What is the difference between foster care and adoption?

Foster families provide temporary care for children in State of Alaska custody. These children usually return home or eventually go to live with relatives. Foster families have limited rights and responsibilities for the children in their care because the goal is to reunify a child with their birth family.

Adoption is a lifelong legal and emotional relationship with a child where adoptive parents assume all the legal rights and responsibilities that a birth parent would have. If reunification does not work for a child and a relative is not found, a foster family may be asked if they would be willing to adopt a child.

Do I have to own my own home?

No. You can rent or own an apartment, single-family home, or condominium. There needs to be **enough space** to add another child or children to your household.

Is there an age restriction on being a foster parent?

You must be **21 years of age** to become a foster parent. There is no age restriction on how old you can be.

My spouse and I are in the military, and we live on base. Can we be foster parents?

Yes. you would need to get permission from the base commander. Your Licensing Specialist will give you the information you need.

Do a child's birth parents visit him or her?

Yes. Because reunification is the initial goal for a child, visits between parents and children are **part of the efforts to reunite families.** The child's caseworker has the primary responsibility for planning visits and arranging supervision, if required. The caseworker will talk with you and the child's parents to work out the time and location of the visits.

Does a foster child need their own bedroom?

No. A foster child can share a room with your children or other foster children. The child should generally have a bed of their own except young children of the same sex (up to 9 years) can share a double bed. Children need a dedicated space for their clothes and belongings.

How long does the process take to become licensed as a foster parent?

This will depend on your circumstances, but the process can take anywhere **from two to six months** depending on fingerprinting, background checks and training requirements.

Is training provided?

Yes, training **provided free of cost.** *Core Training for Resource Families* is the initial training for newly licensed foster parents. Training is offered by web, Zoom, self-study workbook and in some communities, in a classroom setting. Contact ACRF at 1-800-478-7307 to find out how to enroll in Core training.

Can I work outside of my home and still be a foster parent?

Yes. For working parents, appropriate childcare arrangements must be made by the foster parents. OCS will assist in the cost of a licensed child care provider up to a certain limit.

Can a single person be a foster parent or adopt? Can a same gender couple be foster parents or adopt? Can a retired person be a foster parent?

Yes. Yes. And Yes!

What kinds of financial supports are available for foster parents?

A **foster care stipend** is available to help with the daily costs of caring for children including help to pay for food, clothing, school expenses, toys, allowances, and recreation. This pre-determined amount is paid to families at the end of the month of providing care as a reimbursement. You should be able to handle the rest of the family's expenses from your own source of income. The foster care reimbursement is not considered an income and is not taxable.

CHECKLIST FOR HOME VISIT BY STATE OF ALASKA FOSTER CARE REGULATIONS



Fire Safety

- One fully charged 2A10BC dry chemical fire extinguisher on each level of the home.
- Basement needs direct escape to outside or near ground level or children can't spend time down there
- No accumulated combustible materials around house or yard.
- Flammable liquids are stored in appropriate containers.
- One smoke detector (battery or AC powered) for each level of the home and each bedroom.
- Openable window required in each child's sleeping room to provide emergency escape to outside.
- At least two means of emergency escape out of the home, which are remote from each other
- If second exit is window it must have the following minimum dimensions for opening: 24" height, 20" width and the window sill cannot be more than 44" from the floor.
- Exits are kept free and clear of obstructions.

If heating appliances are used such as space heaters, wood stoves, or fireplaces:

- They are not located in sleep areas (unless no separate sleep areas) or
- Exits or hallways
- Are maintained in a safe manner.
- If fuel burning, they are vented to the outside.

Environment Health and Safety

- Refuse is stored in containers with tight lids.
- Sanitary facilities for food storage and preparation.
- Hot water temperature kept at 120 degrees or less in a home that take young children (0-9years).
- Medicines, cleansers, chemicals are inaccessible to young children.
- Furniture and equipment are safe, durable and in good repair.
- Home kept in clean sanitary condition.
- Sanitary toileting facilities; if take infants and toddlers, safe and sanitary equipment and supplies for diapering and toileting; place to wash hands.
- If more than one child, label pacifiers, bottles; if reuse bottles, must sanitize bottles, nipples, caps in dishwasher or boil for 5 minutes.
- Smoking is not permitted in the home, however, can be assessed if have an adequately ventilated room. If there is smoking in the home then a plan must be submitted to the agency that adequately addresses protecting children from the effects of second-hand smoke.
- *Water supply is adequate and meets one of the following:*
- Community water supply
- Well water that has been tested for coliform within the past year or well casing that extends 12 or more inches above ground, has a sanitary seal and is located 100 feet or more from sewer system.

- Firearms are unloaded and stored and are inaccessible to children.
- Ammunition is stored separately.
- Foster home that takes foster children 12 years and older and who plan to allow foster children to handle firearms need to submit a firearm safety plan.
- Childproof caps on electrical outlets not in use and accessible to children in care 5 years and under.

Space

- Adequate indoor and outdoor space for age and needs of child placed.
- Adequate space for each child’s clothing and personal possessions.

Equipment and Supplies

- Sufficient number and appropriate toys, games, equipment to support and meet the developmental needs of the children placed; stored properly.
- Infant walkers are prohibited.
- Telephone or message phone unless phones inaccessible in community.
- Sufficient play space indoors and outdoors.
- Individual beds or cribs for each foster child; young children of same sex (ages 9 or younger, excluding infants) can share double bed.
- Adequate beds, cribs, bedding (mattresses and linens) and sleeping space.

CONTACTS FOR RESOURCE FAMILIES

Alaska Center for Resource Families Support Contacts:

Anchorage: 907-279-1799 or 1-866-478-7307

Mat-Su: 907-376-4678

Fairbanks: 907-479-7307 or 1-800-478-7307

Rural Areas: 1-800-478-7307

Office of Children’s Services Contacts:

Anchorage Regional Office: 907-269-4000

Northern Regional Office: 907-451-2650

Southcentral Regional Office: 907-357-9780

Southeast Regional Office: 907-465-1650

Western Regional Office: 907-543-3141

General Provider Payment Questions: 907-465-3136

OCS Staff Emails: firstname.lastname@alaska.gov

Online Searchable Directory: <https://alaska.gov/whitepages/>

