

Eligibility

To serve as an Agency Supported Foster Family for the State of Nebraska and Child Saving Institute, the following requirements are necessary:

1. Be at least 21 years of age
2. Be a resident of either Douglas or Sarpy County
3. Be able to satisfy all licensing requirements through the State of Nebraska
4. Have a valid driver's license and dependable transportation
5. Have a stable household income
6. Complete a CSI Assessment Team Evaluation

To be an Agency Supported Foster Parent, you may be single or married, however, if you are single, living with a significant other is not permitted. You may work outside the home or attend school while providing foster care.

In order to provide the level of quality care that is needed for children in the foster care program, CSI seeks individuals with the following skills and characteristics:

- ❑ A Desire to work with children
- ❑ Ability to balance conflicting demands on time
- ❑ Good organizational skills
- ❑ Energetic
- ❑ Informed about community resources
- ❑ Resourceful at problem solving
- ❑ Willingness to work in the best interest of our children
- ❑ Willingness to learn about therapeutic needs of Abused and Neglected children.
- ❑ Ability to be a team player

Responsibilities

Being a Foster parent is committing to becoming a member of the child's "team" and meeting the responsibilities of your role, which include the following:

- ❑ Serve as the primary provider and teacher to the children
- ❑ Provide for and meet the basic needs of children, (food, housing, clothing, recreational and educational activities, etc)
- ❑ Attend training and support group meetings
- ❑ Keep records and notes documenting the child's care
- ❑ Assist the child in setting and accomplishing goals
- ❑ Provide a safe and secure environment
- ❑ Transport a child to schools, appointments and visits

The Children We Serve

Child Saving Institute's Agency Supported Foster Care program differs from Traditional Foster Care in that, our clients are children and adolescents who have special needs due to various degrees of neglect and/or abuse. Many of our clients have been removed from their homes by Child Protective Services and placed in emergency shelters or crisis centers. Although CSI's client base is made up of children of all ages, a majority of them are over the age of six. There is an even greater need for foster homes who are willing to work with pre-teens and teens, especially males. Currently we have some younger clients, but the majority of our referrals are teens. The State of Nebraska is in crisis!

Often, because of their history and their exposure to both physical and emotional abuse, CSI's clients have special needs that require additional parental support and training due to one or more of the following diagnosis:

- Developmental Delays
- Aggressive Behaviors
- Bedwetting

- Hyperactivity
- Attachment Disorders
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Effect
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Other Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

Steps to Becoming Foster Parents

Inquiry –Step 1

Inquiry about CSI's Agency Supported Foster Care Program is the first step to becoming involved. This is done by contacting a CSI representative at (402) 553-6000 and requesting an informational packet. After reviewing the information, contact CSI to set up your Initial Home Visit.

Initial Home Visit – Step 2

This step involves a program staff member coming to your home to meet your family. You will be given the required paperwork necessary to complete before training begins. The program staff member will go over our foster care program in more detail and discuss any concerns or questions you may have regarding the information you have gathered so far.

Training – Step 3

To qualify as an Agency Supported Foster Care provider, it is required that 39 hours of pre-service training is completed. This is offered by Child Saving Institute and is typically held on Saturdays or weeknights. CSI also requires that you complete 12 hours of continuing education each year.

The training sessions are conducted by a CSI staff member and will review goals and objectives of being a foster family, what role a foster parent plays in the child's life, how to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child, who to contact if assistance is needed, and what can be expected while the child is in your home.

Home Study – Step 4

The home study process begins by gathering information from sources including: Child and Adult Protection Services, Nebraska State Patrol,

Department of Motor Vehicles, Omaha Police Department, various references, as well as paperwork to be completed by the potential foster family. Once all of the necessary information is gathered, we begin home study visits to obtain more information on the family as well as to educate and prepare the family for the fostering experience that's ahead of them.

Final approval of the family's application and home study is based on the CSI assessment team's review. The foster family will be informed of the agency's decision. Occasionally, there is a circumstance in which approval for foster care licensure may not be granted by Child Saving Institute.

Licensure/Contract – Step 5

Upon completion of the home study and the pre-service training, you may obtain a license to provide foster care in the State of Nebraska and Child Saving Institute. You will be asked to sign a formal contract that lists the responsibilities of the State of Nebraska and CSI of being a foster parent. This contract may be terminated by either party with notice given prior to the termination date. However, given lack of stability that many of these children have experienced, Therapeutic Foster Parents are encouraged to keep the child in their home until the child reunifies with their birth parent or can be placed for adoption.

Placement – Step 6

The placement staff will do their absolute best to find the right child for your family's lifestyle and environment. As soon as an appropriate match has been discovered for your family, you will be contacted so that preparations can be made for the child coming into your home. Ideally, we encourage pre-placement visits prior to the actual placing of a child in a home. This ensures your confidence of knowing the child ahead of time and familiarizes them with you as well. Occasionally, these pre-placement visits do not take place due to unusual circumstances. All medical costs of the child are covered by Medicaid and childcare is covered by Title XX if the foster parent works or attends school.

Reimbursement

Because of the higher level of care needed for the population it serves, Agency Supported Foster Care reimburses at a higher daily rate than traditional foster care. This rate is expected to cover the cost of food, shelter, transportation and incidentals. In addition, these monies are non-taxable, because it is considered a reimbursement for the cost of care provided.

Although challenges exist, the rewards to being a Foster Care parent are many. A foster parent can make a significant difference in a child's life and lasting attachments are formed. While fostering children, you can learn a great deal about yourself and improve your own parenting skills. Most of all, you have the opportunity to interact with very special children and their families by being the role model they need to live happy and meaningful lives.

Support and Retention

CSI understands that becoming an Agency Supported Foster Parent is a long term commitment and the needs of the children we serve are always changing. We feel that in order for you to feel confident in the care and support you are providing, ongoing education and training is necessary. As a TFC provider, you can expect:

- ❑ Weekly home visits by CSI staff specialists
- ❑ Ongoing support meetings
- ❑ Monthly continuing education classes-offering topics directly related to behavioral needs of the children we serve.
- ❑ 24 hour emergency assistance

Providing quality foster care takes time, effort and a solid commitment. Like good parenting skills, foster care skills evolve over time through trial and error. You can count on CSI to be there not only when things are going smoothly, but also when you encounter concerns or uncertainties. We are all an important member of a team whose success depends on how we touch the lives of our children. By nurturing and enriching the life of a child, we discover more about ourselves. This in turn, nurtures and enriches our lives...and...the cycle continues.