

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Who can be a foster parent/family?

WACAP is looking for singles and couples who are open, flexible, committed, and empathetic for the children and families involved in the state of Washington's child welfare system.

General eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Applicants must be at least 21 years of age;
- If married, or cohabiting in a committed relationship, you must demonstrate an established relationship of at least two years;
- Applicants must complete a background check in the state of WA for anyone in the home aged 16 years and up;
- Applicants must be in good physical, mental and emotional health with physician verification;
- Applicants must have at least 2 bedrooms in your house or apartment (one for you and one for the prospective child);
- WACAP applicants should live in Pierce, King or Snohomish Counties

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What is the role of a foster parent?

Foster parents help support children and families in a time of crisis. They join the child's care team which is comprised of the child's biological parent(s); state case worker, teachers; coaches; therapists; WACAP case manager; Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA); child's attorney; and another important adult in the child's life. A very important part of the fostering process can include working in collaboration with the child's biological parent(s) to help prepare the child for a safe and healthy reunification.

Foster parents mentor, coach, guide, protect, love, support and encourage the child(ren) in their care. Foster parenting is filled with both challenges and opportunities. It can be challenging to parent children who come with trauma histories. However, being a foster parent to a child who needs your love, support, protection and stability can be one of life's greatest rewards!

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Can I adopt a child from foster care without becoming a foster parent?

You can work with your social worker during the home study process to establish a child profile that would only identify legally free youth for your family. These children are most often over the age of 8, or a part of sibling groups. Occasionally, we are asked to seek adoptive homes for younger children with severe physical or developmental needs. However, all families will accept placement of a child through foster care. WACAP requires all families to obtain a foster care license in order to qualify your family for reimbursement payments from the state and to ensure that your family is eligible for a widest selection of potential placements as is possible.

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Who are the children?

The children are as varied as the communities in which we live. They are aged 0-21 years old; of all races/ethnicities; all genders and sexual orientations; and all socioeconomic statuses. All children in care have complex developmental trauma that can include abuse and/or neglect histories. To meet some of the children in care, visit WACAP's "[a Family for Me](#)" page.

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What is the process to become a foster parent?

The process of becoming a licensed, approved foster family has various stages. While the process can seem lengthy and tedious, the goal is to assess, prepare, train and partner with your family in order to best meet the needs of children served.

INQUIRY. To get started, you will need to attend WACAP's informational/orientation meeting. A schedule of upcoming classes can be found [HERE](#). You can also call us at 206-922-1515 or complete an online interest form. We're glad to answer any questions you may have.

APPLICATION. You will then complete the application for services. When WACAP receives the application and non-refundable application fee of \$250, you will have an initial in-home, in-person interview with one of the foster care staff. Once this interview has occurred you will then move on to the family preparation phase.

FAMILY PREPARATION. This includes 36 hours of required training, the home study assessment and completion of foster care license.

MATCHING. Upon receiving an approved home study and a valid foster care license, you will wait to be matched with a child/ren for placement in your home. This time frame varies depending on the type of child/ren for whom you are approved as well as any specific dynamics of your family. The time can vary from hours after receiving your license, to weeks or months.

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What training is required?

Washington State requires all foster care and adoption applicants take the 24-hour, pre-licensing Caregiver Core Training (CCT,) a competency-based training. WACAP requires all applicants (if a couple, both spouses/partners must attend) to attend this training in-person.

In addition to CCT, all families must attend WACAP's orientation. This is an 8-hour course. It is hosted on a regular basis in the WACAP offices. You can find a schedule of upcoming classes [HERE](#).

WACAP encourages all families to continue to educate themselves on parenting a child from hard places throughout their fostering journey. WACAP has a [resource blog](#), including [books](#), articles, training, and videos. We also have an [Impact Blog](#), with inspiring posts, and a recent article about select adoption & foster care themed [movies](#).

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How long is the licensing process?

The home study and licensing process is a lengthy and very involved process which includes parent preparation training, home visits and interviews with a social worker, a home inspection for licensing compliance, and a lot of paperwork. Don't let this overwhelm you! Our team walks with you through the entire process. We find that much of the duration of this licensing process is dependent on how quickly you complete the paperwork portion as well as your level of flexibility throughout the process. It takes the average family about six to eight months from the beginning of the process (application) to the end of the process (receiving a license).

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What kind of support can I expect after placement?

After a child is placed in your home, you are not alone! A WACAP Foster Care and Adoption Specialist will visit you each month to provide support, coaching, and problem solving with a trauma-informed approach. This specialist will help you access other needed supports and services, including a monthly reimbursement from the State of Washington while a child is placed with you through foster care. WACAP will help you navigate both the expected and unexpected aspects of the foster care system and are glad to be your liaison with Children's Administration and the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) throughout placement.

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How long will a child stay in my/our care?

A child may live with you for a few days, several months, a year or more. When a child is placed in foster care, the social workers at Children's Administration (CA) don't know how long the child will stay in your home. The Court ultimately decides if and when a child will be reunited with biological family members, or become available for adoption.

Children's Administration (CA) makes every effort to reunite parents and children. By Federal Law, CA is required to make significant efforts to search for each child's relatives. CA prioritizes placement of children with their relatives whenever possible; you may have a child placed with you while CA continues to search for relative family members.

Many foster parents bond and attach to the children in their care. When a child leaves the foster home, it can be a significant loss for the entire foster family. However, if the biological parent(s) are unable to successfully re-unite with their child, and their parental rights are terminated by the court, the foster child becomes "legally free". If relatives have not been found who can adopt the child, CA will generally seek adoption by the foster parents.

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Will I be able to adopt the child placed with me for foster care?

The primary focus of foster care is the child's safety and well-being. Part of that focus is for the child to gain permanency- either with biological parents or with another loving family. The State will work diligently with the child's biological parents in efforts to reunite the parent(s) and child. If reunification is unsuccessful and the child is not able to safely return home to his/her/their parents and/or to extended family members, the State will begin to pursue a permanency plan of adoption. In these cases, it is likely that the child's foster family will have the opportunity to adopt the child in their home.

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Can I have pets in my home and be a licensed foster parent?

Yes, many licensed foster homes have household pets. As part of the licensing process, we will ask for current pet vaccination records. We will also need to interact with your pets in order to assess their safety around other adults and children.

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Can I have weapons in my home and be a licensed foster parent?

Yes, a family may have weapons in the home. However, the weapons must be locked and stored in a manner that is safe and inaccessible to children.

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Can I become a foster parent if I have been arrested or charged with a crime?

WACAP works with families individually to best determine how a past criminal history might impact your application. However, there are some crimes that would disqualify any application. These have been identified by the State of Washington, and you can find that list [HERE](#).

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