

Videos:  
<http://www.cravencountync.gov/departments/dss/foster.cfm>  
&  
<http://www.cravencountync.gov/departments/dss/adoption.cfm>



Foster Parent Orientations:

[www.ncswlearn.org](http://www.ncswlearn.org)

The Craven County Department of Social Services is seeking people with compassion to provide stable, loving and temporary homes for children. If you are in a position to help and would like to know more about foster care, please contact the HOPE Family Resource Center, 2820 Neuse Blvd., New Bern, NC 28561. Or contact:

Family Education and Resource Team  
252-636-6472

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### ***What is foster care?***

Foster care is a temporary program for children who, for various reasons, cannot live with their own families. Foster care is not a final solution, but a temporary plan to provide the child with consistent care by substitute parents until his own parents can assume the responsibilities, or until their permanent plan can be achieved.

### ***How do I become a foster parent?***

You start by contacting the Department of Social Services in the county in which you reside. North Carolina Department of Human Resources is the public agency that is given the power to license and supervise foster homes. The Craven County Department of Social Services studies the prospective foster homes and makes a recommendation to the Department of Health & Human Services, who then issues a license.

### ***How long does it take to become licensed?***

Prospective foster parents are required to participate in a 30 hour pre-service training program before the actual study of the home begins. During these training sessions, participants are asked to evaluate themselves in terms of ability to work with the agency, birth parents and provide the type of care required by foster children. After the sessions, families who wish to proceed with the licensure begin the licensing process under the supervision of the foster home licensing worker. Getting to know the family through training and home visits, and getting the paperwork completed for licensure will take 2-3 months.

### ***How old must I be to become a foster parent?***

A license may be issued to persons 21 years of age and older.

***Can a single person become a foster parent?***

Yes. Persons without spouses may be accepted as foster parents.

***If I am married, do I have to be married for a specified number of years?***

There is not a specific number of years you must be married; however, if you are married we must assess for the stability of your relationship.

***If both the husband and wife work, can we become foster parents?***

Yes. Both adult members of the household may be employed if suitable childcare can be arranged, and if the work does not interfere with providing family life and meeting the other needs of the children.

***Are there educational requirements?***

Foster Parents must have a High School Diploma or a GED and be able to read and write. Many of our children have educational difficulties and need foster parents who can assist them with school work. Foster parents must be able to read and understand medication instructions and be able to keep a log of the medications that are administered.

***Will I have to take children of all ages?***

No. If approved, a license will be issued for children ages 00-21. Although we prefer homes to be accepting of all children, we recognize foster families will have preferences. We do our best to respect the preferences of a foster family.

***How much money will I be paid?***

Foster parents in Craven County receive a monthly board payment of at least \$475.00 per child. Foster parents receive this payment retroactively. You will not receive payment for January services until mid-February. Payments are based on the number of nights a child spends in your home, and the child's age. This money is for the child's food, clothing, personal needs, social and school expenses. **It is NOT income for the foster parents and is not considered as taxable income.**

***Who pays for medical expenses?***

The Department of Social Services pays, since they have the legal responsibilities for those children. All foster children are covered through Medicaid, which pays for medical expenses, dental expenses, and mental health visits.

***Do I get to choose the children?***

We try to place children with foster families who can best meet their individual needs. We give the foster parents as much information as we have about the child in order to help them make a decision as to whether or not they will accept the child.

### ***Where do the children come from?***

Children who enter foster care are usually doing so because they have been abused and neglected. Most of the children do not come from stable homes. Many of them have never had any time spent with them by the parents in order to help them develop their own capabilities. Many of them will be troubled and all of them will test the foster parents greatly in the beginning. These children need acceptance, security, and love. Children in foster care come from all segments of the population. Most of the children who enter foster care have been neglected or abused. Neglect and abuse can occur in any segment of the population.

### ***Would I have to have a lot of money to become a foster parent?***

We have no requirement on the foster family's income, *except* that they have a stable income sufficient to maintain their own family without supplement of board payments. Foster parents cannot make money from the board payments that we pay. Therefore, we must be satisfied that the additional child or children that are placed in the home will not be a financial burden to the foster family. If the family is not able to support themselves without public assistance, we can not work with them.

### ***How many children could be placed in my home?***

The number of children that a foster home is licensed for depends upon the number of children that the foster parents feel they can work with and the sleeping space available in the home. By law, a foster family cannot have more than five children in a foster home at any one time. (The five children include the foster parents' own children, relatives in the home and any day care children which may be there.) We also have some restrictions regarding space. For example, if a foster family only has girls and the foster children would have to share a bedroom with a biological child, then the family would be restricted to a "girls only" license. If, however, there was a bedroom that would be used for foster children alone, then the home would be licensed for both boys and girls.

### ***Would the biological parents know where the child is staying?***

In many cases, no. Visits between the children and their parents take place either at the Department of Social Services or in the children's own home. However, school age children can very easily get in touch with their biological parents; they know the foster parents' names, addresses, and telephone number. There is no way to prevent them from giving out this information if they want their parents to know.

Foster parents are strongly encouraged to develop a relationship with the birth family to promote a shared parenting experience. In some cases, foster parents are asked to permit the visits between children and their parents to occur in the foster home. These arrangements are made when the social worker, foster parents, and biological parents are in agreement for visits to occur in the foster home. Foster parents can be wonderful role models for biological parents, and can assist them in improving parenting and child management skills. Additionally, visits in the foster home are often more comfortable for the foster child.

***How long would the child stay with me?***

This varies with the situation that has caused the child to be placed in foster care. Children may stay for short periods of time while we evaluate the children and their home situation to plan for what would be the best for the family. Still, in other cases, the children might be with foster parents for possibly longer while we work with the family towards correcting the situation that has caused the placement of the children in foster care. The goal is to have every child in a permanent home within a year.

***Is the foster parent eligible to adopt a child if the child becomes available for adoption?***

It is the agency's goal to return foster children to their biological parents. However, if this is not possible and a child is cleared for adoption, the foster parents have the right to apply to adopt in order to be considered for that child.

***Are foster homes licensed for a certain length of time?***

A foster home license is good for two years, and must be renewed biennially after the first issuance. This means that the agency must submit a written evaluation of the home and other recommendations to the State Office. The family must get additional physical examinations and a fire inspection at the time of relicensure. The foster family must also accrue 10 hours of in-service training credits each calendar year.

***Who decides whether or not a home is licensed?***

The actual foster home license is issued by the State Department of Health and Human Services, based upon the recommendation given by the local agency. This recommendation is made after a thorough study of the home.

***What do I do if the child I have displays behavior that I cannot handle?***

If situations arise that you and the foster child cannot work out, contact the social worker. The child placed in the home would have a social worker who would want to know, as soon as possible, any difficulties that begin to develop or any patterns of problematic behavior in order to help you and the child solve any differences. We would be able to have the child evaluated, if this is indicated, and would certainly help you to get the resources needed to handle the situation.

***Don't let your talents go to waste.***

## Basic Requirements for Foster Parent Licensure

- ◆ Be at least 21 years of age.
- ◆ You can be single and be a licensed foster home.
- ◆ Any person in the home over the age of 21 who will have any caretaking responsibilities for foster children is required to complete the MAPP-GPS training.
- ◆ You must have a High School Diploma or GED. A certified copy of your diploma or transcripts will be required.
- ◆ CPR, First Aid and Medication Administration trainings are required prior to your first placement.
- ◆ You must provide proof of a valid driver's license, operable vehicle and insurance coverage.
- ◆ You must be able to document a stable income for your own household. You can not be receiving any financial assistance from DSS. Foster parents receive board payments based on the number of nights a child stays in their home. Monthly board payments of at least \$475 per child are paid retroactively. **Board payments are not considered taxable income for foster parents.**
- ◆ Physicals and Tuberculosis tests for all household members are required.
- ◆ Fire inspection and environmental safety inspections of the home.
- ◆ Criminal and abuse registry background checks for all adult household members. This includes being fingerprinted.
- ◆ Suitable bed for each child
- ◆ Home study and references.
- ◆ Including your own children, you can have:
  - no more than a total of five children in your home (this includes your own children, relatives in the home and daycare children.)
- ◆ Complete the 30-hour Pre-Service training (MAPP-GPS). Attend in-service training once licensed (20 hours per licensure period).

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