

**Myth:** Most children in foster care have dozens of placements.

**Fact:** the average number of placements per foster child is around three. There are many reasons that children get placed in different foster homes. Some of the reasons may include:

- Location of the child's biological parents
- The foster parents cannot take care of the child any longer
- Reuniting the child with his or her siblings

**Myth:** Most children in foster care are teenagers.

**Fact:** Although there are teenagers in foster care only around 40% of foster children are teenagers. 60% of children in foster care are under the age of 10.

**Myth:** Foster parents will not have any control over which children they foster.

**Fact:** Although you will not be able to specifically choose the child you foster you are able to choose the age and gender that you prefer. You are also able to call the social worker at any time if you feel that you are not able to provide for the child you get placed with. One of the biggest reasons a foster child would move to a different home is because the foster parent is no longer able or willing to take care of the foster child.

**Myth:** I cannot foster if I have a full-time job.

**Fact:** You do not have to be a stay at home parent in order to foster a child. If the child requires daycare the state often covers that expense.

**Myth:** As a foster parent I will receive little or no support from the state.

**Fact:** Foster parents receive a reimbursement to cover the cost of food, clothing, medical, dental and counseling services. The state agencies will also provide supportive services such as training and respite care.

**Myth:** I am not allowed to adopt the children I foster.

**Fact:** While slightly more than half of the children who enter foster care return to their birth families, there are still thousands of children who cannot return home.

**Myth:** All foster children are bad, juvenile delinquents, or runaways.

**Fact:** One of the greatest myths about foster children is that they are in need of a home through some fault of their own. A common misconception about these children is that they are bad, aggressive, violent children no one wants or can handle. This is simply not true. Many of the kids in foster care have had a tough start to their life, and as a result need support to heal. The child's reaction to the trauma they may or may not have experienced is as varied as the child—some children act out, some withdraw, some resolve to live as if nothing occurred. Foster children are carefully placed with families capable of helping them heal, and foster care agencies provide support to both the child and family. The most important thing to remember is like all children, foster children are resilient.

**Myth:** You have to be young or older to be a foster parent.

**Fact:** There is one age requirement to foster a child—21 years or older. This misconception often involves empty-nesters or older foster parents/families. While caring for kids surely keeps a parent on their toes, there is no rule that states only young parents need apply. Likewise, from time to time, a young family or parent will believe they are not “established” enough to foster a child. This is also far from the truth. The greater reality is foster children need love from a caring adult, and love does not have a target age.

**Myth:** I need to be a home owner.

**Fact:** Homeownership is not the only definition of a stable, and loving home environment. Foster children need a stable home environment—whether that takes the form of an apartment or house. Foster children need school stability, and space to live and thrive in.

**Myth:** Foster parents are stay-at-home parents.

**Fact:** The median age of foster youth is 7.8 years old, or school-aged. These children spend the majority of their day in school, and work well for families with working parents.

Arrangements can be made for after-school care, as well as daycare for foster parents of younger children. Daycare, after-school care, and preschool are all options for foster care families, and there are often times reimbursement pay available for licensed preschools and/or after-school care costs.

**Myth:** Foster parents cover medical insurance.

**Fact:** The state fully covers medical insurance for foster youth.

**Myth:** I won't have a choice in the child who is placed with me.

**Fact:** The primary goal of foster care placement is to place the right child with the right family. All families have a voice and decision in the placement they receive. Assessing the child's needs, as well as the strengths and experience of foster families helps ensure a proper fit between child and family.

**Myth:** I will have to keep taking in children.

**Fact:** A number of foster children are a part of a sibling set, but families should agree on their own limits. Agencies should not guilt or pressure a family to take in more children than they can adequately, and comfortably care for.

**Myth:** I don't have parenting experience, so I shouldn't be a foster parent.

**Fact:** Foster children need responsible, loving, trustworthy parents who are willing and able to pour love and care into them. Every parent starts somewhere and there are many parenting support classes, as well as local resources to help support foster parents and children.

**Myth:** Once a child is placed in my home I'm on my own.

**Fact:** Part of providing children with love, stability, security and tools to heal is making sure their family has support, resources, and tools to help them heal. State agencies are present each step of the way to ensure a loving bond is established in the home, and the child and family has everything they need.

**Myth:** I will get too attached; it would be too hard to see the child leave.

**Fact:** The greatest gift you can give a child as a foster parent is love, stability, security, and trust—all things needed to form an attachment. Though it will be hard to see a child move on, it is greater to know you gave the child the love and stability they needed during a rough patch in their lives. This attachment helps the child regain trust in adults, helps the child heal, and greatly adds to our community. The greater pain is knowing a child is facing trauma without a loving adult and home to heal. The greater good you provide will outweigh the heartache of a child leaving your home.