



St. Joseph Children's Home
2823 Frankfort Avenue □Louisville, KY 40206 □502-893-0241

FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE

IDENTIFYING DATA Please provide a photocopy of your current driver's license.

Applicant #1 Name: (Last) (First) (Middle) SSN: - -

Applicant #2 Name: (Last) (First) (Middle) SSN: - -

Home Address: (Street # or RFD) (City) (County) (State) (Zip Code)

Mailing Address
If Different: (Street # or RFD) (City) (County) (State) (Zip Code)

How long have you lived at this address? \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone #: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant #1 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant #2 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant #1 Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant #2 Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant #1
Previous Address: (Street # or RFD) (City) (County) (State) (Zip Code)

Applicant #2 Previous
Address, if Different: (Street # or RFD) (City) (County) (State) (Zip Code)

How long did you live at your previous address? Applicant #1: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you lived in any other state during the last ten years of your adult life? If yes, please list the city, county, state and dates of your residency: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

Please write detailed directions for reaching your home from St. Joseph's: \_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS**

FAMILY MEMBERS LIVING IN THE HOME						
Name	Date & Place of Birth	Sex	Race	Religion	Last School Grade Completed	Occupation or School Attending
Applicant #1						
Applicant #2						
Children						
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
Others in the Home			Relationship to Family			
1.						
2.						
3.						
Political Affiliation:						
List all languages spoken in your home:						
Do you have any dogs or cats? If so, please list breeds and provide photocopies of current vaccinations:						

CHILDREN BY PREVIOUS MARRIAGES AND THEIR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS					
Parent	Child's Name	Date of Birth	Sex	Education	Address
CIRCLE ONE	Applicant #1 Applicant #2				
	Applicant #1 Applicant #2				
	Applicant #1 Applicant #2				
	Applicant #1 Applicant #2				
	Applicant #1 Applicant #2				

OTHER CHILDREN RESIDING AWAY FROM HOME				
Child's Name	Date of Birth	Sex	Education	Address


**EXTENDED FAMILY**

Please list mother, father, brothers and sisters. **If deceased, give date and cause of death.** (Attach a separate sheet if necessary.)

APPLICANT #1 EXTENDED FAMILY				
Relationship	Name	Address	Age	# of Children
Mother				
Father				
CIRCLE ONE	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			

APPLICANT #2 EXTENDED FAMILY				
Relationship	Name	Address	Age	# of Children
Mother				
Father				
CIRCLE ONE	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			
	Brother Sister			

**MARITAL HISTORY** Copy of Marriage Certificate needs to be on file.

Date of Current Marriage _____ Married by Whom and Where _____
Where was license bought? _____ (City) (County) (State)

PREVIOUS MARRIAGES (Copy of Divorce Papers or Death Certificate needs to be on file.)					
Former Spouse Of	Name of Spouse	Dates of Marriage	Place (County & State)	Reason Terminated (Death/Divorce)	Termination Date

CIRCLE ONE	Applicant #1 Applicant #2					
	Applicant #1 Applicant #2					
	Applicant #1 Applicant #2					

**CHILDREN DESIRED**

**Please state reason for wanting to provide care for a child: ! Foster ! Adopt ! Both**

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**Please check all that apply:**

Approximate age: ! 2-5 years ! 5-8 years ! 8-12 years ! Over 12 years ! No preference

Sex: ! Male ! Female ! No preference

Race: ! Caucasian ! African-American ! Hispanic ! Bi-racial ! Other \_\_\_\_\_ ! No preference

Are you interested in taking two or more children from the same family? ! YES ! NO ! Maybe  
! Brother and Sister ! Brothers ! Sisters ! No preference

If YES, how many children? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever applied to take a child from this or any other agency? ! YES ! NO

If YES, please specify: ! Foster Care ! Adoption

Name of Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Children \_\_\_\_\_

**EMPLOYMENT**

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT		
Information	Applicant #1	Applicant #2
Employer (will be contacted)		
Supervisor & Phone Number		
Title of Your Position		
Date Employment Began		
Total Annual Income		
LIST EMPLOYMENT FOR LAST FIVE YEARS AS REFERENCES		
Information	Applicant #1	Applicant #2
Place, Position and Dates (Month & Year)		

**INSURANCE**

Please provide a copy of your automobile and home/renters insurance.

**BACKGROUND**

**NOTE: The following information is true and complete to the best of our knowledge and belief. We are aware that should an investigation disclose misrepresentations or falsification, our application will be rejected.**

1. Have either of you ever been fined or convicted for violation of any law or are you now under charges for any violation of law? ! YES ! NO If YES, please give details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Are either of you currently involved in a civil suit or now paying a judgment in a civil action?

! YES ! NO If YES, please give details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Have either of you ever had any mental, emotional or nervous condition which required treatment?

! YES ! NO If YES, please give details, including physician's name and address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Have either of you ever been accused of child or spouse abuse? ! YES ! NO If YES, please give details:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Applicant #1*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Applicant #2*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

For Office Use Only  
Date Application Received:

# FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION FINANCIAL PROFILE

NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepting children into your home will inevitably create new financial responsibilities as you provide shelter, food, clothing, personal grooming necessities, transportation, recreational opportunities and allowance. You must decide whether your family is willing and able to make such a commitment. This profile will verify that your income is sufficient enough to meet your present family's needs, without the addition of foster care/adoption financial assistance.

**Income:**

Salary (after deductions) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spouse/domestic partner  
 income (after deductions) \_\_\_\_\_  
 SSI, SSDI or private disability income \_\_\_\_\_  
 Unemployment, TANF, food stamps \_\_\_\_\_  
 Child support \_\_\_\_\_  
 Investment income \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gifts \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
  
**Total Fixed Income:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Variable or Flexible Expenses:**

Food/household supplies \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dining Out \_\_\_\_\_  
 Clothes \_\_\_\_\_  
 Laundry/dry cleaning \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gas, oil, auto maintenance \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parking \_\_\_\_\_  
 Medical/dental/eye care \_\_\_\_\_  
 Disability- related \_\_\_\_\_  
 Entertainment \_\_\_\_\_  
 Music and books \_\_\_\_\_  
 Travel/vacation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Service animals, pets,  
 supplies, food \_\_\_\_\_  
 Personal care \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subscriptions \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cable Tv & Internet \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gifts \_\_\_\_\_  
 Charity/contributions \_\_\_\_\_  
 Savings for interviews/relocation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Fixed Expenses:**

Regular savings \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rent/mortgage \_\_\_\_\_  
 Utilities \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone (base rate) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Vehicle payments \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other transportation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Credit card payments \_\_\_\_\_  
 Personal loans \_\_\_\_\_  
 Educational loans \_\_\_\_\_  
 Insurance (life & health) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home/renter insurance \_\_\_\_\_  
 Auto insurance \_\_\_\_\_  
 Auto registration/taxes \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
  
**Total Fixed Expenses:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Variable Expenses:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Fixed Expenses:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Monthly Expense:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Income:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Less Total Expenses:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Discretionary Income  
or Deficit:** \_\_\_\_\_



## St. Joseph Children's Home

2823 Frankfort Avenue • Louisville, KY 40206 • 502-893-0241

March 14, 2012

Prospective Foster Parent,

Thank you for expressing an interest in our Therapeutic Foster Care and Foster to Adopt Program. We feel this program is an innovative and unique way to serve the special needs of children who cannot remain in, or return to their homes. We are committed to "doing whatever it takes" to secure, support, and maintain placements that help children grow and heal. We recognize, however, that we cannot accomplish such a monumental task alone. We need individuals who are caring, stable, skilled and knowledgeable to accept the challenging, yet rewarding task of becoming a therapeutic adoptive/foster parent. Being a therapeutic adoptive/foster parent is not for everyone, but it might be right for you.

Enclosed you will find informational inserts describing our program and process for becoming a therapeutic adoptive/foster parent. This process includes an informational meeting, interviews, home-study and training, and is designed to help you make an informed decision about adopting/fostering. It will also help us in identifying a child (or children) whose needs, strengths and interests are most compatible with your family's needs, strengths, and interests.

There are 3 - 4 training cycles per year. The first cycle for 2012 will be on Thursday evenings and be held January 12<sup>th</sup> thru March 8<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. The second round will be a Wednesday evening class beginning March 28<sup>th</sup> and ending May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The third round will be a Saturday class and will be July 14<sup>th</sup> thru August 4<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. with lunch on your own. The last round for 2012 will be a Tuesday evening beginning September 18<sup>th</sup> thru November 13<sup>th</sup>.

We will hold an information meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at St. Joe's at 5:45 p.m. Please feel free to call (893-0241) to r.s.v.p. for the meetings or if you have further questions. This meeting will enable us to answer specific questions as well as explain the certification process.

Sincerely,

Lisa Barber Atwell  
Foster Care Assistant Director

**ST. JOSEPH'S FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION PROGRAM**  
**PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

In selecting prospective foster/adoptive parents, several important qualities are sought. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Motivation includes the best interests of children.
2. Committed to "*doing whatever it takes*" to maintain the placement.
3. Able to provide a nurturing, structured family environment that models corrective relationships.
4. View adopting/fostering as a "family commitment", seeking to involve own children in the process.
5. Able to integrate the child into their family.
6. Possess good communication and interpersonal skills.
7. Able to be firm and consistent, yet remain flexible.
8. Demonstrate emotional, mental, physical, marital (if applicable), and financial stability.
9. Demonstrate effective problem-solving and stress management techniques.
10. Willing and able to support and enhance the child's relationship with birth family.
11. Demonstrate tolerance, patience, understanding, responsibility and self-control.
12. Able to work in partnership with St. Joseph and other service providers.
13. Maintain realistic expectations of themselves and family members, accepting any potential limitations they may possess.
14. Able to adjust expectations concerning achievement and progress to a child's individual needs and capabilities.
15. Capable of using family, friends, neighbors and appropriate community resources as support.



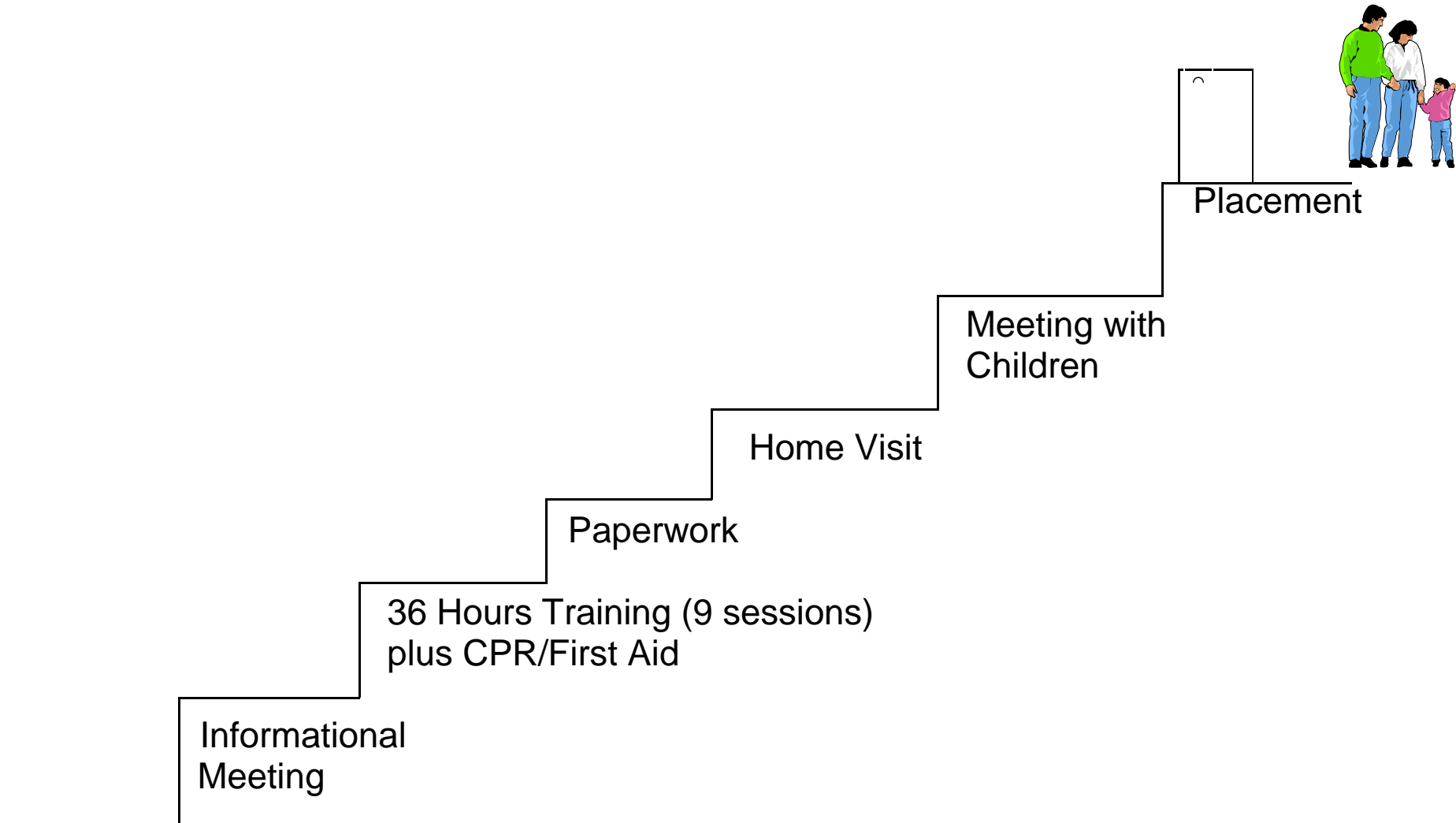
**ST. JOSEPH'S THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION PROGRAM**  
**BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THERAPEUTIC FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

There are several requirements to become a prospective foster/adoptive parent.  
These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Be between the ages of 21 and 65\* and of an age to have naturally parented the ages requested.
2. Must live within 50 miles of our agency to ensure that the needed support and supervision are provided to maintain a successful placement.
3. If married, be married at least two years\* and demonstrate marital stability.
4. Complete the orientation and interview process.
5. Complete criminal history check and child/spouse abuse records check.
6. Successfully complete 36 hours of pre-service training, in addition to CPR & First Aid.
7. Have an approved home-study completed by St. Joseph's, indicating the condition of the home to ensure the health, safety, well-being, privacy and comfort of each member.
8. Be willing and able to maintain accurate daily logs detailing the child's activities, behaviors, problems and progress.
9. Be willing and able to accept an intense level of supervision and involvement from the Foster Care Specialist. This includes being available for weekly or bi-monthly supervision, ongoing monthly training and monthly treatment team reviews. If fostering, participate in an average of 24 hours of training per year.
10. Be able to provide supervision of the child placed in their home.
11. Have an income sufficient to meet present family needs and obligations.
12. Have a reliable vehicle, good driving record, valid driver's license, and automobile insurance.
13. Have a plan for childcare developed by the time a child is placed in their home.
14. Provide a statement of health from a physician verifying that all household members are free from communicable diseases, and that the prospective adoptive/foster parents are physically able to care for a child.
15. Not be certified as a foster parent with any other agency.
16. Not have a licensed child care facility in the home.

\* Exceptions will be made on an individual basis.

# STEPS TO BECOMING A FOSTER / ADOPTIVE PARENT



Call  
Lisa Barber Atwell  
502-893-0241, ext 208

**“You don’t have to be married, own your own home, have a lot of money, or have raised children to become a therapeutic foster or adoptive parent.”**

# ***Our children are looking for a family. Are they looking for you?***

## **STEP 1**

Upon your initial inquiry, the Assistant Director of Foster Care/Adoptive Services or Recruitment and Retention Specialist will discuss the Therapeutic Foster Care/Adoption Program with you and send you information through the mail or e-mail at your request. You may then r.s.v.p. for an informational meeting which are held the first Tuesday of each month.

## **STEP 2**

The Informational Meeting is designed to provide you with information on the program and process of becoming a Therapeutic Foster or Adoptive Parent. In this meeting you will be shown all of the paperwork that is required to be completed by you or others. We are required to complete a number of references on you, as well as criminal record checks, and have some forms for you to fill out that will help us get to know you and your family.

## **STEP 3**

You must successfully complete 36 hours of pre-service training to be approved as a Therapeutic Foster/Adoptive Parent. The training is designed to provide you with the information you will need to make an informed decision about fostering/adopting, as well as give you the knowledge and skills that will enable you to be effective in meeting the needs of a child in your care. In addition, you are required to complete CPR & First Aid training (unless you have current cards). St. Joseph provides opportunities for these trainings on campus, at no cost to you, but you may complete the training at any approved facility if you desire.

## **STEP 4**

During the course of training the previously mentioned forms and references will be collected by the Assistant Director of Foster Care/Adoptive Services. You may check on the status of your paperwork at anytime.

## **STEP 5**

After training is over and most of your paperwork is in, we will do a home visit to verify that your home insures the health, safety, well-being, privacy and comfort of each member. The information we have gathered from your interviews, home study forms, references, home visit and training are compiled into a written home-study, which certifies your home as a licensed foster or foster/adoptive home. You will be notified once your certification is complete.

## **STEP 6**

After the home is approved, we will begin looking for a match. We place a lot of emphasis on the matching process, on finding a "good fit", and will carefully examine the compatibility of you and a child or children. When we find a good match, we will present a child, or children, to you to determine your interest in pursuing it further.

## **STEP 7**

After a series of pre-placement visits (when applicable), if all are in favor and comfortable with the placement, a plan is made for finalizing the placement and contracts are signed. After placement, you and your family will continue to be intensely supervised and supported by St. Joseph's Foster Care Team!!

**St. Joseph Therapeutic Foster Care/Adoption Program  
2823 Frankfort Avenue  
Louisville, Kentucky 40206  
(502) 893-0241, ext 208**

# **ST. JOSEPH THERAPEUTIC FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PROGRAM**

## **PRE-SERVICE TRAINING SESSIONS**

### **Meeting 1 – “Welcome to Group – Preparation & Selection Program”**

- Important Definitions for Foster/Adoptive Parents
- Bill of Rights of Children in Foster/Adoptive Care
- Rights of Foster/Adoptive Parents
- Rights of Parents of Children in Foster Care
- How Children Come into Care

### **Meeting 2 – “Where the MAPP Leads: Grief & Loss, Separation”**

- Stages of Grief & Separation
- Loss Inventory

### **Meeting 3 – “Cultural Awareness”**

- Definitions
- Stereotypes
- Areas that shape culture
- 4 Levels of Diversity
- Meeting the cultural needs of the children we serve

### **Meeting 4 – “Behavior Management I & Verbal De-Escalation”**

- Ages & Stages
- Impact of Placement of Self Concept
- Policy on Discipline
- Why do Children Misbehave
- Side Effects of Physical Punishment
- ABC's of Behavior
- De-Escalation techniques

### **Meeting 5 – “Therapy & Behavior Management II”**

- Therapy & Medications
- Phases of Acting out Behaviors
- Intervention Strategies
- Behavior Charts

### **Meeting 6 – “Helping Children with Attachment Issues”**

- Cycle of Attachment
- Cycle of Disattachment
- Developing Positive Attachments Between Parents and Children
- Bonding and Attachment
- Cultural, Societal and Familial Connections

### **Meeting 7 – “Sexual Abuse”**

- Understanding Child Sexual Abuse
- Identifying Possible signs of Sexual Abuse in Children’s Behavior
- Managing the Emotional Impact on the Family

### **Meeting 8 – “Professional Parenting” & Connections**

- Eco-map of family interactions
- Parenting as a profession
- Advocacy
- Responsible adult supervision
- Documentation
- Stress management and support systems

### **Meeting 9 – “Impact on Your Family”**

- Bringing the Child Home
- Foster/Adoptive Parent Panel
- Question/Answer Session
- Next Steps: Where do we go from here?
- “Graduation” from Training

## **WAYS YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE**

- **Becoming A Foster Parent**
- **Being a respite provider – which gives our current foster families a break**
- **Helping at Picnic (by volunteering or making cakes) Our Picnic is held on the second Saturday in August**
- **Donating goods or services for our Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner**
- **Donating money or goods for Foster care Christmas Party**
- **Sponsoring a child or family for Christmas**
- **Donating luggage for the children in the Program**
- **Telling friends, family, co-workers about St. Joseph Foster Care Program**
- **Providing tutoring or recreational lessons to the Foster Care children**
- **Inviting a representative of the Foster Care Program to speak or share information at fairs, or community events.**

**If you are interested in helping in any of these areas please contact Lisa Barber Atwell, Foster Care Assistant Director at 893-0241 ext. 208 or e-mail address [lisab@sjkids.org](mailto:lisab@sjkids.org)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Adoption:**

### **What type of adoptions are available?**

St. Joseph Children's Home Foster Care and Adoption Program facilitates adoptions from the foster care system.

### **How much does adoption cost?**

Adopting from the foster care system is one of the least expensive ways to expand your family. The main expense with Foster Care Adoption is the attorney's fees usually about \$750, but these are reimbursable from the state of Kentucky. There are no fees for the home study process or the training and support you receive. In addition children that you adopt through foster care may be eligible for medical insurance from the state, tuition waivers for state higher education, and a monthly adoption subsidy to help the family meet the child's special needs.

### **What are the qualifications to adopt?**

Families are as diverse as the children who are available for adoption. The parents may be single or married, they may or may not be the same race as the child, they do not have to be rich just financially stable, they do not have to own their home simply have enough room for another child.

The main qualification is that the parents be committed for the long haul and be willing to work with the child as they overcome their past traumas. Parents must understand that it will take a long time for the child to function well in their new family.

### **Who are the Children in Foster Care?**

Children in foster care were removed from their families due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. The child might live temporarily with extended family, a foster family or in a group home while social workers try to help the birth family. If the birth family's problems can't be resolved, the agency that has custody of the child goes to court to legally terminate parental rights. At this point, social workers try to find a safe and loving adoptive family for the child. Ages range from infant to early adulthood, although the average age is eight. Virtually every race, ethnic group and socio-economic category is represented. Some children are in foster care alone and others are in foster care with siblings. Those most in need of homes would be children over the age of 10 and large sibling groups (3 or more).

Many foster children have been emotionally, physically, and sexually abused. As a result, they may have emotional, behavioral, mental or physical problems. Many are insecure, frightened, confused, and often angry about what is happening to them. Based on their past and the disruption in their lives, these children sometimes present challenging behaviors.

### **What is the Adoption Process?**

The application/certification process takes about 3-4 months. There is a 10 session/36 hour training program which covers the basic topics you will need to know to bring a foster child into your family. CPR/First Aid certification is required. There is also paperwork and background checks and references to gather. After training is complete there will be a home visit where the placement specialist goes over health and safety issues in the home and discusses any questions you might have. A Home Study is written that assesses the potential adoptive family and summarizes their strengths, skills, attitudes and other qualifications that bear on the challenges of adoptive parenting.

Then a match is sought. Having children come live with you is a big commitment, so finding the right match is crucial. Children are placed for adoption by matching their needs with adoptive parents' or families' situations. You will never be forced to accept a child; you select the level of needs and age range you will consider.

There is a minimum of a 6 month window prior to finalization during which the child is placed in your home for adoption but remains under the care of the state. If the placement is stable and everyone is ready finalization of the adoption proceeds.

### **How long will it take to have a child placed in my home?**

After your home has been certified, the amount of time it takes to place a child with you is dependent on several factors. It will be dependent on the range of ages, behaviors and special circumstances you will consider. The more open you are to age range, # of children and behavior issues, the more quickly a child can be placed with you. Conversely if you are very specific and narrow in these ranges it may take awhile to find a child who matches your criteria.

### **Why do you keep talking about foster care when I am interested in adoption?**

All of the children we serve are foster children and remain in the foster care system until the day you go to court and finalize your adoption. In fact you will be considered foster to adopt parents until that day. While in your home before finalization, a minimum of a 6 month time frame, the child is still in the custody of the state. There is no risk they will be moved to another home because they are in your home for adoptive placement.

Before finalization you will have all the requirements of a foster parent. You will be expected to function as a member of the child's care team and will advocate for the child's needs. There will be documentation that you will be required to keep on a daily basis. You will need to get further specialized training of at least 24 hours per year (provided free by our agency). You will need to remain calm, patient, and loving even when the child expresses their anger and confusion in less than socially acceptable ways.

### **Is St. Joseph Children's Home the right adoption agency for me?**

St. Joseph Children's Home is a small agency that gives our parents a lot of pre-adoption support and training. In 2008 we facilitated 12 adoptions. In 2010 we facilitated 11 adoptions which was the highest number of any private agency. If you wish to adopt from foster care and are open to an older child or a sibling group St. Joseph Children's Home may be the right agency for you. Our case workers have very small case loads and are available 24 hours by cell phone. St. Joseph Children's Home does not specialize in infant adoptions.

### **How do I begin the adoption process?**

Call Lisa Barber Atwell at 893-0241 x208 or e-mail [lisab@sjkids.org](mailto:lisab@sjkids.org). You will come in for an information meeting where we will go over the required paperwork and background checks and answer any questions that you have. Then you can sign up to begin the next 9 session training. If you have been thinking about adoption for awhile give us a call and let's get started. Our children need families!



# The Most Frequently Asked Questions About Foster Care:

## **Who can be a Foster Parent?**

Almost anyone can foster. *You can be:*

- Single or Married
- Any Race or Religion
- Working parents, retired, a stay at home mom
- Already parenting or have never parented

*You don't have to be:*

- Rich, just with enough income to be able to care for the family you have now.
- A homeowner, simply have a safe home/apartment with enough room for another child.
- A stay at home parent, just flexible enough with work to meet the child's needs.

You do need to want to provide a nurturing, safe and loving environment to a child.

## **Who are the Children in Foster Care?**

Children in foster care were removed from their families due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. The child might live temporarily with extended family, a foster family or in a group home while social workers try to help the birth family. If the birth family's problems can't be resolved, the agency that has custody of the child goes to court to legally terminate parental rights. At this point, social workers try to find a safe and loving adoptive family for the child. Ages range from infant to early adulthood, although the average age is eight. Virtually every race, ethnic group and socio-economic category is represented. Some children are in foster care alone and others are in foster care with siblings. Those most in need of homes would be children over the age of 10 and large sibling groups (3 or more).

Many foster children have been emotionally, physically, and sexually abused. As a result, they may have emotional, behavioral, mental or physical problems. Many are insecure, frightened, confused, and often angry about what is happening to them. Based on their past and the disruption in their lives, these children sometimes present challenging behaviors.

## **Does it cost a lot of money to be a Foster Parent?**

*No! Foster parents receive monthly compensation per child and:*

- The child or children are totally covered for medical and dental expenses.
- There is a Resource Room to assist with placement needs such as school clothes.
- You receive free specialized training from experienced staff.

## **What is the difference between Foster Care and Adoption?**

Foster care is the temporary care of a child whose goal is to return home. Foster parents must be willing to support foster children's ongoing contact with their biological parents and cooperate with the agency's efforts to reunite them with their families. The Foster parents' direct involvement with the birth family is determined on an individual basis.

If reunification with their families is not possible the foster parent is given the choice to proceed to adoption, otherwise the foster parent will help prepare the child for their permanent home through adoption with another family.

## **How do I become a Foster Parent?**

The application/certification process is about a 3-4 month process. There is a 10 session/36 hour training program which covers the basic topics you will need to know to foster a child. CPR/First Aid certification is required. There is also paperwork, and background checks and references to gather. Then there is a home visit where the worker goes over health and safety issues in the home and discusses any questions you might have. A Home Study is written that assesses the potential foster family and summarizes their strengths, skills, attitudes and other qualifications that bear on the challenges of foster parenting. If you are interested in pursuing Foster Care, please call Lisa Barber Atwell 502.893.0241. x208 or e-mail [lisab@sjkids.org](mailto:lisab@sjkids.org)

## **How long will it be before a child is placed with me?**

After your home has been certified, the amount of time it takes to place a child with you is dependent on several factors. It will be dependent on the range of ages, behaviors and special circumstances you will consider. The more open you are to age range, # of children and behavior issues, the more quickly a child can be placed with you. Conversely if you are very specific and narrow in these ranges it may take awhile to find a child who matches your criteria.

## **Who decides what children are placed in my home?**

It is a mutual decision between the agency and you. Having a child come live with you is a big commitment, so finding the right match is crucial. Children are placed in foster homes by matching their needs with foster parents' or families' situations. You will never be forced to accept a foster child you are not prepared to help. You select the level of needs and age group of the children you would like to foster.

In addition, much support is offered you and your family. You will have a Foster Care Specialist who will be available 24/7 to help you handle any questions or deal with unexpected developments. You and your child will have a therapist who will work with you to help address the issues of loss, anger and behavior management. In addition you are encouraged to attend support groups where you can connect with and get help from other foster parents.

## **What is required of me as a Foster Parent?**

In addition to providing a secure and nurturing environment for the child or children placed in your home, you will be expected to function as a member of the child's team and advocate for the child's needs. There will be documentation that you will be required to keep on a daily basis. You will need to get further specialized training of at least 24 hours per year. (provided free by our agency). You will need to renew your CPR/First Aid certification as it comes due. You will need to remain calm, patient, and loving even when the child expresses their anger or confusion in less than socially acceptable ways. Foster Parents need to be able to support the goal of reunification with the birth family until and unless it is changed to adoption.

## **Do all Foster Children have problems?**

Many of them do, to some degree. Many are frightened and confused at the sudden separation from their parents. Some are angry. Others may think they are being sent to a foster home as punishment. Even babies may be fretful and irritable at first. These problems gradually lessen, as a foster child comes to trust that you care for him or her.

## **Can Foster Parents Adopt Children in Foster Care?**

The first goal is to return foster children to their birth families, whenever that is possible. However, sometimes it is not possible for children to return home and no relatives can be found to provide appropriate care. If the permanent plan for the child becomes adoption and the child has been living in your home, you will be given the opportunity to consider becoming the adoptive parent. Since our agency dually approves all homes for Foster Care and Adoption, you will already have met all the regular requirements for becoming an adoptive parent.

## **Won't it be hard on us when the Foster Child returns home or is adopted?**

*Yes. That is the hardest part about being a Foster Parent.* You will certainly feel sad for a time, and feel a loss. It is only natural, since a part of that child will live in your heart forever. Many foster parents find comfort and understanding from other foster parents through support groups. Some foster parents find comfort in the fact that there will be new foster children who need their care and affection. Some foster parents feel satisfaction at helping a family become whole again. But all must go through a grief process.

## **Is St. Joseph Children's Home the right foster care agency for me?**

All agencies, either private or the state, offer one or two things that will meet your needs better than others. We are looking for families who are passionate, committed, and want to foster or adopt because they feel called to do so. St. Joseph Children's Home has been serving children and families in Louisville since 1849. If you are looking for an agency that believes in matching kids with families, an agency that has extremely high standards and expectations from both our staff and our parents, and an agency committed to supporting our foster parents however possible, St. Joseph Children's Home might be right for you. Becoming a foster parent requires a lot, but the rewards and the supports are great.