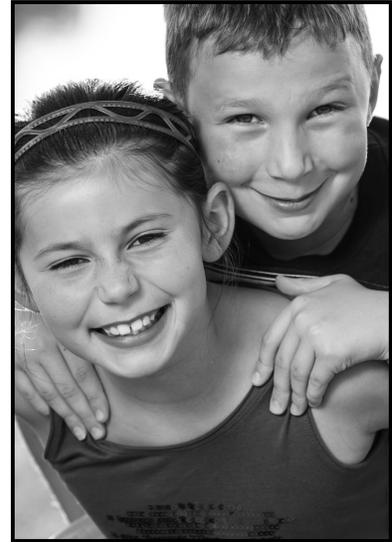
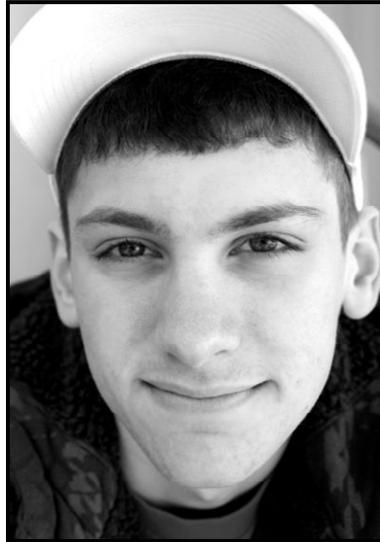


Foster Care & Foster Child Adoption



Inquiry Packet



snap.vu/xfb7

Learn More:

402.661.7100 ▪ www.LFSneb.org

 **Lutheran Family Services**
of Nebraska, Inc.



Welcome

Thank you for inquiring about foster care and foster child adoption!

Thousands of children and teenagers are in Nebraska’s foster care system, growing up facing challenges that have cost them their innocence and childhood. They all need stability, commitment and love. Some will eventually find that at home with their biological families, but others will need an adoptive family. All of them need you.

Foster Care Program

At Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska (LFS), we are committed to finding foster parents for those most in need in Nebraska’s foster care system—those aged 12-18. Hundreds of teenagers spend their days living in group homes and shelters, constantly switching schools, because there are not enough foster parents to care for them. We understand that parenting itself is challenging, and that parenting teenagers and children hoping to return home is even harder, but the LFS Foster Care Program staff is dedicated to providing unwavering quality support to foster families.

This support includes, but is not limited to:

- Initial and ongoing training opportunities.
- 24 hour on call support.
- Knowledgeable, responsive and supportive staff.
- Guidance on building positive relationships with birth families.
- Inclusion in the LFS Employee Assistance Program (*includes short-term counseling services*)
- A minimum of 2 days per month of respite.
- A suitcase for every child.
- Holiday parties, picnics, and other opportunities for access to the foster care community.
- Community connections to help meet the needs of the children in your care.
- Christmas assistance.

Foster Child Adoption

Every day in Nebraska, over 1,000 children are in the foster care system waiting for adoptive families. Lutheran Family Services is proud to provide quality services to establish permanency for these waiting children.

LFS is the local partner for **Wendy’s Wonderful Kids (WWK)**, a national signature program of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. This groundbreaking, research-based program uses aggressive, child-focused recruitment techniques to find permanent, loving adoptive homes for children in foster care.

Since 2005, WWK has experienced great success in finding permanent homes for Nebraska’s waiting children and teenagers. The program has since expanded and now includes two full time recruiters in the Omaha and Lincoln areas. For more information on Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, please visit davethomasfoundation.org.

Beginning in 2012, Nebraska Families Collaborative (*a private agency responsible for providing case management services for children in foster care*), joined forces with Lutheran Family Services, Child Saving Institute and Nebraska Children’s Home Society to create the new **Permanency Services Program**. Permanency Services combines best practices in moving children from foster care to permanent homes. Like Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, the goal is to provide stability and timely permanency for Nebraska’s waiting children and teenagers. Permanency Services supports the child and family throughout the entire process.

Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Foster Care Program	1
Foster Care Adoption	1
Foster Care and Adoption	2
Steps to Foster Care/Adoption	3
Resources	4
Frequently Asked Questions	5
Notes	6

Foster Care and Foster Child Adoption

Foster and Adoptive Parents

- May be married or single.
- May or may not have children.
- Must be at least 21 years of age.
- Must be willing to complete training.
- Must demonstrate emotional and financial stability.
- Must become a licensed foster parent(s).

Characteristics of Successful Foster and Adoptive Parents

- Have a sense of humor—don't sweat the small stuff.
- Have perspective—take it one day at a time.
- Have courage—welcome new challenges.
- Have the ability to adapt—comfortable with unknowns.
- Have commitment—persevere in the face of adversity.
- Have a holistic view of family—see the family as a team.

Children in Foster Care

Through no fault of their own, children and teenagers in foster care have experienced abuse and/or neglect which leaves them with emotional and behavioral needs. They need to work on these issues with the help of knowledgeable professionals and the unconditional support of a family.

Children most in need of supportive foster and adoptive families are:

- Teenagers (ages 12-18)
- Minority or multiracial children
- Sibling groups
- Those struggling with emotional or behavioral issues
- Those struggling with physical, cognitive or developmental needs

These children have likely moved many, many times and have possibly been separated from one or more siblings.

Length of Process

The entire process of becoming a licensed foster parent takes approximately six months. The time it takes to have a child placed in the home varies greatly. Because the children have already been through so much change, great care is taken to match the child with the right family. It is even more difficult to estimate the wait time for a potential adoptive family. It is important to take time for an appropriate and healthy transition of the child from his/her current placement to a prospective adoptive home.

Financial Support

There are no fees charged to foster or adoptive families. However, all families are required to provide for the children in their care. To help meet the needs of the children, foster parents receive monthly reimbursements. Adoptive parents often receive a financial subsidy to assist with the day-to-day expenses of parenting. Additionally, daycare support is often available until the child turns 12 and ongoing medical insurance (Medicaid) is usually available for the child until their 19th birthday.

“I want to be in your family because you might adopt me. Because you guys might be nice to me. And if you're nice to me I'll be nice back.”

14 year-old boy waiting for an adoptive family

Steps to Becoming a Licensed Foster Parent

Step 1: Identify a Foster Care Agency

Lutheran Family Services recognizes the importance of identifying the right foster care organization for your family. While LFS is dedicated to providing quality supports to families serving children and their biological families, we feel it is important to contact multiple organizations to determine which would be the right fit for you.

Step 2: Register and Attend PS-MAPP Training Classes

Children who have been in foster care face many challenges, such as a history of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to drugs or alcohol before birth and the loss of being moved from their birth family. Foster parent training (PS-MAPP) provides education, support and resources on how to effectively parent the needs of a child in foster care.

PS-MAPP stands for Partnering for Safety and Permanence—Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting. It is a 30-hour, 10-week preparation and education training required for families to become foster parents. The training classes are for those who have parented before and first-time parents. For two-parent families, both parents are required to attend.

Step 3: Complete a Home Study

Once families successfully complete the PS-MAPP training, a social worker will be assigned to complete the home study. The home study process takes an average of six hours and consists of two separate visits to the potential foster family's home. The home study will assess the family's strengths, needs, financial stability, emotional stability and the safety of the home environment.

Some of the documents required for the written portion of the home study include personal references, employment references, medical reports, financial statements and background checks. The home study must be approved by the social worker.

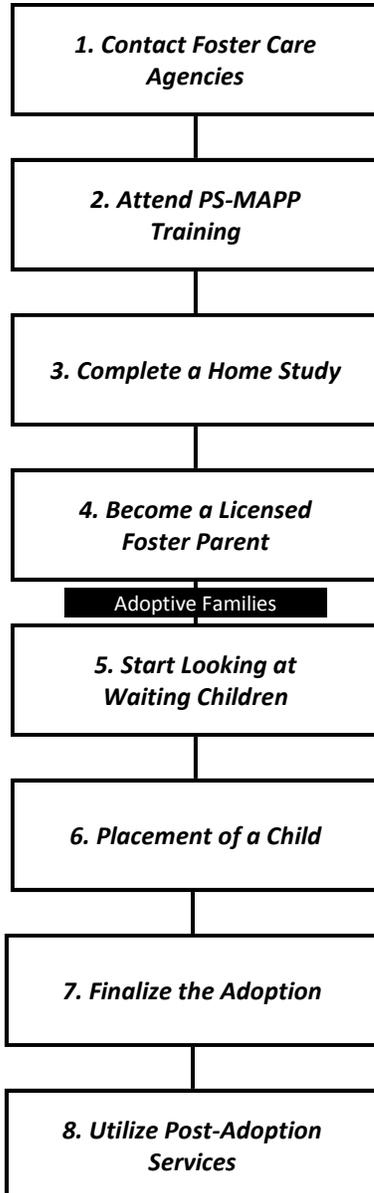
Step 4: Become a Licensed Foster Parent

Throughout the training and the home study process, LFS will work to assess whether your family meets the licensing requirements of the state of Nebraska (much of this includes information documented during the home study). The safety and environment of your home and family will also be evaluated on things such as working fire alarms, cleanliness, discipline and financial stability. Once completed, the licensing and home study forms are sent to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for final approval.

**Upon approval, you would be a *licensed foster family*.
If your family is only interested in parenting children who are legally
free for adoption, you would continue with the following steps.**

Step 5: Start Looking at Waiting Children

Once a family has an approved home study and completed licensing, it may begin looking at the profiles of waiting children. Families may receive phone calls from case managers looking for adoptive homes for children. Once a potential match is found, case workers will have the family talk with those who know the child best, for example: previous care providers, the child's therapist, teachers, and so on.



Step 6: Placement of a Child

After making a commitment to the child, the family and child will begin pre-placement visits before the child moves into the home. The frequency and location of the visits will be based on best practice and on the comfort of the child and the adoptive family. During this time families will receive support from their foster care agency and the child's case worker.

Step 7: Adoption

The finalization of the adoption can take place after the child has been in the family's home for six months. After finalization, families will receive support from their lead agency for one year. After the first year, **Right Turn**SM post-adoption support is available.

Step 8: Post-Adoption Support



Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and Nebraska Children's Home Society, two well-respected and well-established human care agencies in Nebraska, joined together to create Right TurnSM, a collaborative program to provide help to families who have adopted or entered into a guardianship.

Right TurnSM was established in response to some of the post adoption/guardianship issues that arose from Nebraska's original Safe Haven law in 2009. Safe Haven made it clear that many adoptive and guardianship families were struggling and frustrated and did not know where to turn for help. Right TurnSM is the first call you need to make as a single point of access to best help your family.

Our professionals will help your family develop individualized success plans and can connect you to respite care, mentoring, counseling, classes, and support groups. Please visit www.RightTurnNE.org to learn more.

Helpful Resources

There are many resources readily available to families interested in foster care and foster care adoption. Several resources are listed below.

AdoptUSKids

www.adoptUSkids.org

Answers4Families

www.answers4families.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov

Dave Thomas Foundation

www.davethomasfoundation.org

Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute

www.adoptioninstitute.org

Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

402.476.2273 • 877.257.0176 • www.nfapa.org

North American Council on Adoptable Children

(651) 644-3036 • www.nacac.org

Older Child Adoption

www.olderchildadoption.com

Tapestry Books

(800) 765-2367 • www.tapestrybooks.com



To view profiles of waiting children visit:



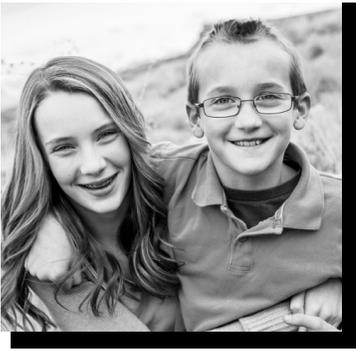
snap.vu/xfb7

LFSneb.org

dhhs.ne.gov/adoption

adoptuskids.org

nebraskaheartgallery.org



The cost to the family is the same as any child living in your home - clothes, food, toys, educational needs, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much does foster care and foster child adoption cost?

The state pays for the cost of training, home studies, and if adopting—the adoption finalization. The cost to the family is the same as for any child living in your home - clothes, food, toys, educational needs, etc. Foster families will receive a monthly subsidy to help meet the needs of the child. Following adoption, most families will continue to receive a stipend. Children typically receive Medicaid until age 19. Daycare until age 12 is sometimes available.

What qualities do agencies look for in foster and adoptive families?

Families who are patient, flexible, have a good sense of humor and are willing to try creative approaches to parenting are needed. Agencies look for families who can best meet the needs of the child – families who can commit to helping a child reach permanency whether through reunification or adoption. They need people who like to parent!

Can I choose the type of child I would like to foster or adopt?

During the home study process, the worker will talk with the family about their strengths and what children they believe would fit into their home. This includes the child's age, gender, and different behavioral issues and emotional needs.

Can I adopt the foster child living in my home? Am I required to adopt?

Once the biological parent's rights have been relinquished or terminated, the child is then legally free for adoption. While most children in foster care who become legally free for adoption are adopted by their foster parents, it is not a requirement. Many foster parents specialize in helping a child be reunified with their birth family or move on to their adoptive family. A foster family can choose to adopt a specific child who becomes legally free for adoption while living in their home. The goal in adoption is always to find the best match possible for children in foster care.

How do I foster or adopt a relative who is in the foster care system?

First, contact the child's Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services case worker and let them know that you are interested in parenting the child. They will be able to answer questions and explain what options are available.

Can biological parents regain custody after a child is adopted?

No. Once parental rights have been relinquished or terminated (which must occur prior to an adoption) the biological parents cannot regain custody. However, whenever possible and appropriate, an open adoption relationship is important for the child's well-being.

Can foster children share a bedroom with biological children?

Yes. Foster children can share a room with other children of the same gender. However, due to a child's history and needs this may not be appropriate and should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Can foster/adopted children attend our local school?

It is important for children in foster care to remain in their current schools whenever possible. This reduces the amount of change and disruption in their lives. Once adopted, the child can transfer to the school of the adoptive parents' choice.

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