

Foster Care FAQ's

What are the requirements for become a foster parent?

- Possess a valid Georgia's Driver's License
- Be 25 years or older
- Complete the foster parent licensing process.

What is involved in the foster parent licensing process?

- Completion of foster parent orientation
- Completion of criminal checks, child abuse history check, and drug screen
- Completion of state and agency required forms for foster licensing file
- Completion of Impact training and CPR/First Aide training
- Completion of a medical exam
- Completion of home evaluation

How long is the process to become a foster parent?

The entire process from orientation to licensure as a foster parent can be completed in as short as 2 months, with the average time being 3-4 months.

What is IMPACT training and why do I need this training to become a foster parent?

IMPACT is the state mandated 24 hour preparatory training that foster parents complete in order to learn about the child welfare system in Georgia and about how to effectively and safely meet the unique needs of foster children based upon their history of abuse, abandonment, and neglect. IMPACT at GA Baptist is both engaging and enlightening, and upon completion of this training, prospective foster parents feel prepared and inspired to undertake the important work of serving as a foster parent.

What is a home evaluation and why do I need a home evaluation to become a foster parent?

A home evaluation consists of 3 visits made to the prospective foster parent home to complete a thorough home inspection and assess the prospective foster parent's suitability for becoming a foster parent. Home evaluations are completed for the safety of foster children and are conducted in accordance with state mandates for licensing foster homes.

Do I have to have had children myself or be married to become a foster parent?

No. Any one – married or single, young or old, parent or new to parenting – is eligible to become a foster parent. All that it takes is a passion for changing the life of a hurting child and the time to follow through on your commitment to caring for a child.

Do I need a lot of money to foster?

No. Foster parents receive monthly stipends for fostering as well as a myriad of other financial services that allows them to care for foster children without strain to the household budget. All that prospective foster parents need to show financially is that they have the income to meet their monthly expenses.

Do I have to own my own home to foster?

No. Foster parents can be homeowners or home/apartment renters. The only housing requirement is that the home provide a safe and clean living environment and include adequate sleeping space for foster children.

Where do the foster children come from in terms of referral? How do they get to GA Baptist?

All of the children placed in foster homes throughout GA come from DFCS (Department of Family and Children's Services). GA Baptist receives referrals from neighboring DFCS counties as well as other counties throughout the state. DFCS retains custody of the children referred to GA Baptist, while GA Baptist retains placement supervision of the children while they are placed in GA Baptist foster homes.

What are the rewards of fostering?

- 1) Fostering allows parents to minister to hurting children in our communities on a 24 hour basis and gives them the privilege of making a difference and forming bonds on a personal level.
- 2) Foster parents become members of a close-knit, supportive community within GA Baptist and their churches and make life-long friends in the process.
- 3) Fostering allows loving parents to help break the generational cycle of abuse, abandonment, and neglect by providing children a safe home to learn and grow, where they can learn how to be healthy, happy parents to their own children one day.
- 4) The best part of fostering is getting to know and love some of the most beautiful, amazing, and resilient children as they touch and change your lives forever!

What are the benefits of fostering?

- 1) Foster parents receive a monthly stipend for children in their care which is higher for older children and/or children with significant behavior and mental health issues.
- 2) Childcare services are covered through CAPS for working foster parents, so foster parents are not required to pay out of pocket for daycare and/or aftercare expenses.
- 3) Medical and dental care is completely funded for all foster children through Amerigroup insurance, so foster parents are not required to pay any copays or prescription drug fees.
- 4) Foster parents have access to 10 respite days a year through GA Baptist, so if foster parents need to go out of town for work, decide to take a vacation without the foster children, or just need a break due to difficult life circumstances, they can request that their foster children be temporarily placed in another foster home without having to permanently move from that foster home.
- 5) Foster parents are members of a cohesive wraparound team that is focused on serving the needs of the child(ren) in their home, so they have continual support in the parenting process and people they can call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What are the challenges of fostering?

- 1) Fostering requires a significant time commitment as it involves not only providing a home for a child, but also being available to take child(ren) to and from extracurricular activities, visits with biological parents, medical and dental appts, etc., as well as allowing DFCS, GA Baptist staff, therapists, and tutors to come to the foster home to complete regular visits with the foster parent and child in the home. *Note: It is not necessary to give up a full-time job in order to foster.*
- 2) Children in foster care tend to have more behavior and mental health issues due to the trauma they have endured through abuse, abandonment, or neglect at the hands of their biological family. Children will sometimes present more negative than positive behavior in foster homes until they learn to trust and bond with foster parents.
- 3) Many foster children end up reunifying with birth parents, which results in a natural period of grief and loss for the foster parent. However, many foster parents are able to maintain some contact with children even after they return home, depending on the situation.

- 4) Fostering requires openness to growing in parenting skills and learning how to safely and effectively discipline children without the use of ANY corporal punishment in the home.
- 5) Fostering requires an open-home policy, with the understanding that DFCS and/or GA Baptist staff could knock on the door at any time of day or night for an unannounced home visit to ensure the safety and wellbeing of foster children in the home.

I'm not sure if fostering is for me. Do I have to sign any kind of contract or make a commitment to look into fostering?

No. Prospective foster parents are invited to attend a no-pressure orientation to find out more information about the process of becoming a foster parent. If they decide to begin the process, they are able at any point in the process to change their mind and discontinue involvement with GA Baptist. Even when foster parents get to the point of licensure and placement, they are still able at any time to close their home and end their fostering service. We at GA Baptist encourage each family to take whatever time they need to make a decision about fostering, and we understand that life happens and circumstances change for our foster parents which may impact their ability to foster.