

**INTERESTED IN BECOMING  
A RESOURCE FAMILY?**

**IN YOUR AREA, PLEASE CONTACT:**  
*(put local contact information here)*

*Becoming a Resource  
Family: What You  
Should Know*



*Questions You May Have When  
Becoming A Foster Or Adoptive Parent  
For A Child In Your Community*



The Alaska Center for Resource Families  
*A Project of Northwest Resource Associates*  
815 Second Avenue, STE 101  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701  
1-800-478-7307  
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Written By:  
The Alaska Center For Resource Families

In Collaboration With  
The Office of Children's Services

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Thank you for your interest in becoming a resource family and helping your community provide a home for its children. We hope this booklet will answer some questions you may have about licensed foster care or adoption.



## When You Become A Resource Family

Thank you for considering becoming a resource family (which means a foster or possible adoptive family.) Perhaps you are being asked to become a resource family because a relative of yours has come into the child protective system. Perhaps you have a special relationship with the child, such as being a teacher or a neighbor.

Resource families can be foster, adoptive, guardian or relative care-takers who provide a safe place for children during a very difficult time. By becoming a licensed foster parent, you make your home available for children who come into State custody or Tribal custody. That is a gift to your community as well as to the child in your care.

### Who Are The Children Who Need Our Care?

It may be a child you know, a child in your family, or a child in your community. There are some common reasons why children come into care and need your help to remain in your community:

- **Physical Abuse:** Some children come into foster care because they have been physically hurt by people who care for them.

For more information about foster or adoptive care, contact your nearest Alaska Center for Resource Families office.

#### Northern Regional Office

815 Second Avenue, Suite 101

Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

1-800-478-7307 1-907-479-7307

FAX: 1-907-479-9666

e-mail: [acrf@nwresource.org](mailto:acrf@nwresource.org)

#### South-central Regional Office

840 K Street, Suite 101

Anchorage, Alaska 99501

1-907-279-1799 FAX: 1-907-279-1520

e-mail: [acrfsc@nwresource.org](mailto:acrfsc@nwresource.org)

#### Southeastern Regional Office

9019 Mendenhall Mall Rd Suite 6A

Juneau, Alaska 99801

1-907-790-4246 FAX: 1-907-790-4248

e-mail: [acrfse@nwresource.org](mailto:acrfse@nwresource.org)

**[www.acrf.org](http://www.acrf.org)**

### IN YOUR AREA, PLEASE CONTACT:

*(put local contact information here)*

## What If I Have More Questions About Becoming A Resource Family?

This booklet has answered many of the questions that potential foster and adoptive parents most frequently ask. If you still have questions...

- ✓ If you have been asked to become a resource family for a specific child, write out a list of your questions and talk to the person who asked you. Writing down the questions helps you remember to ask them
- ✓ Talk to the Office of Children's Services in your area. Often there is a licensing worker or a social worker who would be happy to talk with you. To find out the location and the phone number to the nearest OCS office, call 1-800-478-7307.
- ✓ If you are a member of a Tribal organization or a shareholder in a Native Corporation, contact the Social Service Department or talk with your local ICWA worker. Some organizations have their own foster care programs and would welcome your interest in becoming a Tribal foster home.
- ✓ If you have access to the internet, go to [www.acrf.org](http://www.acrf.org). This is the web page for the Alaska Center for Resource Families. There you will find information about becoming a resource family.
- ✓ Finally, the Alaska Center for Resource Families has a toll-free number you can call. ACRF provides materials and training to foster parents to learn about the children who come into foster care. Call their toll free number at 1-800-478-7307.

- **Sexual Abuse:** Some have been sexually abused or molested by people in their lives and cannot be protected by their parents.
- **Neglect:** Other children are not receiving basic food, shelter, supervision or medical care from their caregivers.
- **Abandonment:** Other children are abandoned by their caregivers.
- **Alcohol Related Conditions:** Some children are exposed to drugs and alcohol pre-natally which results in behavioral problems and medical needs. Some children are hurt or neglected because parents are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

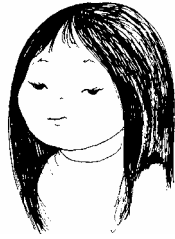
## What Is The Office of Children's Services? What Is The Indian Child Welfare Act?

The Office of Children's Services (OCS) is the State of Alaska agency that looks after the welfare of Alaska's children ages birth to 18 years. It protects and provide services to children who have been abused and it tries to locate permanent homes for children who cannot return to their caregivers.

When a Alaska Native child comes into foster care, OCS works to meet the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act or ICWA. ICWA is a federal law which requires states to first try to work with a family to keep a family together. If a child is placed in foster care, ICWA requires that OCS try to place children with relatives or with a member of the same Tribe or village. The Tribe can also take an active role in child protection cases. If you are a Native Alaskan, you can help the children of your Tribe or village stay in the village or close to home by agreeing to become a foster parent.

## What Is Licensed Foster Care?

Alaska Native cultures, as well as many other cultures, have always taken in children when relatives or neighbors have not been able to care for their children due to illness or absence. Licensed foster care provides the same kind of care, but is more structured and more regulated.



Licensed foster care means a foster home is agency approved and meets basic standards of safety set by law and regulation. Because these foster homes are licensed and agree to meet these standards, licensed foster homes are eligible for foster care reimbursements to help with the cost of caring for a child. This money is designed to be a reimbursement for the child's expenses and costs of items which are normal in the care of a child.

When a child comes into the custody of OCS because of abuse or neglect, OCS can place a child in one of two types of resource families:

**RELATIVE HOMES:** While OCS is trying to reunite a family, children may be placed with relatives. These homes are interested in caring only for children related to them. Relative homes do not have to be licensed, but if a home is not licensed, it is not eligible for the foster care reimbursement. In this case, Alaska Temporary Assistance (ATAP) may be used to help supplement a family's income in order to care for a child.

**LICENSED FOSTER HOMES:** These OCS approved homes meet a standard of care established in the foster care regulations. These homes are eligible for the foster care reimbursement to help with the additional costs of caring for a child or for children. All licensed homes, whether relative or non-relative, must meet and follow the foster care regulations.

- Do you have two exits from your home?** Is there a window or outside exit in the room where the child sleeps? Getting out in case of a fire is important. Having monthly fire drills and an evacuation plan is required.
- Do you agree to be fingerprinted?** A state and national criminal check will be run on all household members 16 years of age and older. Be honest with your licensing worker about any past criminal history or substance abuse. Persons with serious criminal histories (such as sexual assault, child abuse or domestic violence) do not qualify to become a licensed foster parent.
- In getting your home ready, **look at the safety of the environment.** Licensed foster home need to meet certain standards and your licensing worker can help you determine what you need to do. These standards include having a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors on each level; locking up your firearms and making sure your drinking water is safe and the water temperature is set no higher than 120 degrees
- Are you willing to complete training for new for new foster and adoptive parents?** The Alaska Center for Resource Families will assist you with your training. All new families should complete the Alaska Resource Family CORE Training available on-site in some communities or through self study.
- And most importantly, **are you willing to provide a safe home for a child and provide the care and parenting he needs to grow in your home?** Many of children have challenging behaviors, but can thrive and heal in a loving, consistent home.



## Checklist For Becoming A Licensed Foster Parent

To become licensed, you need to meet certain standards. Your home does not need to be fancy and you don't need to be perfect! We are looking for safe, caring homes. But there are a few standards that you will need to meet. Work with your licensing worker or the ICWA worker in your community if you need help meeting these standards.

- Are you 21 years of age or older?**
- If you smoke, are you willing to smoke outside?**
- Have you ever been investigated for child abuse or neglect?** If you have been the alleged abuser in a **substantiated** child abuse report, foster home regulations would prohibit you from being licensed.
- Do you agree not to use spanking, hitting or slapping to discipline children?** Foster parents are not allowed to use any form of physical punishment with the foster children in their care.
- Can you provide the children with their own crib or bed or sleeping mat?**
- Do you have a special space for the child's things?** Children don't need their own room, but they should have a drawer, space in a closet or storage container to hold their things.
- Are you willing to childproof your home according to the age of the child coming to your home?** Work with your licensing worker to see if you need to cover up outlets, remove harmful chemicals from a child's reach, find a new home for a dangerous pet, or fix broken glass.

## What Is Involved In The Foster Care And Adoption Application Process?

Becoming a foster or adoptive parent is not as simple as applying for a job. Paperwork needs to be filled out. A background check will need to be completed to check for previous history of child abuse, criminal history or substance abuse. A visit to your home will also be made. This visit usually last around 3 hours.

You may be working with a licensing worker from your nearest Office of Children's Services or you may be working with an ICWA worker in your community. Either way, ask questions about the process. *You don't have to be perfect to be a foster home!* In order to provide safety for children, you will be asked for some information about your self, the place you live, and the people who live there. The steps to becoming licensed include:

- ✓ Fill out an application that you will get from your licensing worker or ICWA worker.
- ✓ In your application, you'll be asked for four (4) names for references. One can be a relative.
- ✓ Ask your OCS or ICWA worker about how to get fingerprinted.
- ✓ A background check will be run on everyone over age 16 living in your household.
- ✓ Someone will visit your home to determine that basic safety standards are met.

### A VERY IMPORTANT NOTE!

Any time you have a question, or don't know if you qualify, talk to your licensing worker or the Tribal worker in your community. *Don't assume you don't qualify!* The worker can help answer your question or help find the answers.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About Becoming A Resource Family**

***Can I receive the foster care reimbursement if I am not a licensed foster parent?*** Only licensed foster homes can receive the foster care reimbursement. Relatives do not need to be licensed to care for a child, but do need to be licensed to receive the foster care reimbursement.

***Will I be working with the Office of Children's Services or with my local Tribal organization?***

If a child is in the custody of the Office of Children's Services, you will be working with a social worker who manages the case. This worker may be located in another community other than your own, so you may be talking to him or her by phone. There may also be an occasional visit to your home. Often a local ICWA or Tribal worker may also be working with you to provide more informal support.

***I'm not sure my home will meet the foster care standards. What should I do?***

You don't have to have a fancy house to be a foster home. You do have to have a safe home or apartment. Look at the guidelines in this pamphlet and see where you may be able to improve your home. Talk with your OCS worker or ICWA worker about your questions. They may be able to help you meet the safety regulations or make the necessary changes.

***I made some mistakes when I was younger. What about criminal activity in my past?***

Some criminal actions prohibit you from becoming licensed as a foster home. These include felonies against children and substantiated child abuse. But some offenses may not preclude you from being licensed if they happened in the distant past and you have made an effort to live a better life. It is best to be honest about what happened in the past and to work with the licensing worker to see how this may impact your eligibility.

***Are guns prohibited in foster care?***

No. However, because of safety concerns, foster homes need to lock up guns and ammunition and make sure that both are out of the reach of children. You also need permission from OCS and possibly the birth parent before a child in your home can handle guns.

***I already have children of my own. What kind of financial assistance is available to help me raise the children I take in?***

Licensed foster families receive foster care reimbursements to assist in the costs for caring for a child. Foster care reimbursements are based on how many days a child is with you and how old the child is. If a family is not licensed, they can apply for ATAP (Alaska Temporary Assistance Program) which can help with public assistance payments to assist with caring for the child.

***I am already a grandparent. Do I still need to take foster care training?***

Foster and adoptive parenting depends on good parenting skills because children coming into care have special and challenging needs. These may not be things you had to deal with raising your own children. All licensed foster parents are required to have training and there is a distance education option available to assist foster parents in rural communities. The Alaska Center for Resource Families is set up to help foster parents with this requirement.

***Several other adults live in my home. Do they need to be licensed?***

Anyone over 16 needs to meet some basic background checks, but don't necessarily need to be licensed unless they are equal parenting partner or have regular daily parenting duties for a child. An in-state child protection check and fingerprints will be run on everyone over age 16 living in your household to check for past offenses against children.

***What about adoption?***

The Office of Children's Services works to reunite children with their family. If a family cannot keep its children safe, OCS may look for a home that is willing to provide guardianship or adoption for a child. That means the family is willing to provide a permanent home for a child. Some foster homes are asked to provide a permanent home for a child if reunification is not possible.