

Core Training Assignment TALK IT OVER AS A FAMILY

Becoming a resource family affects all of your family members; so before you make that commitment, talk it over with everyone. Are both spouses interested in caring for children? Just having one parent interested usually doesn't work very well because it takes both parents to care for children and to support each other. Do you have your own birth children at home? How do they feel about sharing space, toys, parents and attention? Being a resource family can be a very good experience for children in teaching them our responsibility to care for others in the community. But it sure can get difficult when Mom seems to be busy taking care of the new kid all the time, or when that same new kid goes into your drawers and takes your stuff! It's important that parents do not neglect the needs of their own children. And while another child can add greatly to your family, remember foster children often go on to another place, so it takes a family with a big heart to be able to let go.

This is not to discourage you from being a resource family. But "fore warned is fore armed" (which is a fancy way of saying, "if you know it's coming, you can plan for it!")



Check in with everyone. Prepare your family for some of the changes that might come with being a resource family. Give each person a special role. (For example, your six-year old can make a special welcome card.) Just like the parents need to go to the Core Training Classes to get prepared to become a resource parent, children need some preparation, too. Try to set up a few family meetings to discuss some of the following topics.

- What do your children know (or think they know) about foster or adoptive care? Why do they think children go into out of home care? What do they think the word adoption means? What do they think the words “resource family” means? Discuss what it means to be a foster family and open up your home.
- If appropriate, share what you are learning in training. Encourage them to ask questions.
- Do they understand about confidentiality?
- Talk about where the new child will be sleep. Where is his bed? What closet or dresser will he be using? Will children be sharing a room? Will toys be shared?
- Do your children know that as a parent, you will have to share your time with the new child? It is important they know that this doesn’t mean that you won’t love your child any less! You might want to talk about the things you will continue to do together (such as go to sports games or share a special hobby.)
- Encourage your children to share their feelings with you at any time and pay attention to what is going on as the family members adjust.
- Especially in the case of foster children, it will be important to let your children know that the children who come live with you should be treated as part of the family. Check in with your children as the placement continues to let them talk about feelings of anger or jealousy they might feel. It’s easier to handle powerful feelings like that if you are allowed to have them and to talk about them.
- Talk to your children about how to make the new child in their home feel more comfortable and welcomed. Help your child do something special, like make a card or a sign or make up a poem. Give information about the adoption process or proceedings if you are adopting.
- If you are fostering, it is important that your biological children are aware that foster care is temporary. The child in your home is an important part of your family while he is there, but that someday, if all goes well, he will be able to go back to his birth family or find a “forever” home.
- Explain that discipline might look different for the children in foster care. They may not receive the same consequences as birth children because of their histories. Children need to understand why.