



Choosing a Foster Care Agency

Choosing to be a foster parent is a big decision to make. The process can be emotional and complex and you want to be sure that the agency you choose to work with is a good match for you and your family.

By and large, the licensing portion of working with a foster care agency is quite similar across the board. No matter what agency you ultimately decide to work with, you will have to complete background checks, training, interviews, home visits, and lots of paperwork.

Many parents looking into foster care start by contacting the Foster Care Coordinator in their county. Those who are part of a Native or Tribal community can connect with their Tribal Coordinator. And other parents—typically those with more parenting experience and specialized skills to work with children and youth with more significant mental, emotional, or behavioral needs—choose to work with a private foster care agency. The Wisconsin Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center has contact lists for all of these agencies [on their website](#).

But how do you know which agency option is best for you?

Ask Questions

First know that you are invited to take the time you need as you consider your options. Also, feel free to ask questions when you

connect with different agencies. You might consider spending some time before reaching out to any agency to prepare a list of questions you and your family have about foster care, the agency, and the foster parenting licensing process. Some of these questions might



include:

- ◆ What can you tell me about this agency?
- ◆ What are your mission and goals?
- ◆ What training is required? How much training will be needed before we are licensed?
- ◆ How long will it take to complete the licensing process?
- ◆ What support services do you offer for your foster parents?
- ◆ How often will case workers come to my home?
- ◆ How many youth are placed through your

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- agency?
- What are the ages of children or youth who are most in need of a foster care placement?
- How do you determine which family to reach out to when you are preparing to transition a child into foster care?
- What are the responsibilities I and my partner, if applicable, will have in co-parenting with the child’s birth parents?
- What kind of community resources do you provide for the families who foster with your agency?
- How do you handle emergency situations?
- What types of supports and services will be provided for foster parents who welcome children into their home who have been abused or neglected? In addition, what type of supports and resources will be provided to the child who has been the victim of abuse or neglect?
- Does your agency have respite programs or options in place?



- Does the agency provide or connect you with training that is helpful and accessible?
- How long do children in care typically remain in your care?
- Is the agency to responsive to calls, questions, and concerns?

One tip to remember, as you talk with and hear from other foster parents, is that everyone’s journey and experiences are unique. While it can be valuable to learn from others, keep in mind that no two families will have exactly the same experience.

Ask for Information

Another step you can take is to read over the agency’s official policies to learn about the roles and expectations of foster parents, the case worker, and the agency. The [Wisconsin Foster Family Handbook](#) (Chapters 1 and 2) offers an overview of

foster care guidelines and expectations of foster parents and other team members that may be helpful, as well.

Seek Input from Current Foster Families

Another option for your consideration, would be to talk with currently licensed foster parents and ask them for input and feedback. Ask questions such as:

- Why did you choose this agency?
- How long have you been licensed with this agency?
- Have you worked with any other foster care agency?
- Do you feel supported by the agency?

Please know that the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families is here to support you along your journey! If you have questions or need support along the way, give us a call at 414-475-1246 or email our resource team at info@coalitionforcyf.org.



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