



## Foster Care and Adoption

### What is foster care?

When children cannot safely remain in their own homes, they are placed in a temporary living situation called foster care. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) develops rules and guidelines to help agencies implement foster care programs. When children must be removed from their homes, a court grants temporary custody of them to a public children services agency. From there, a caseworker attempts to find a safe place for them to stay.

### How do you determine the best placements for children?

Caseworkers first try to place children with a suitable relative to help maintain family bonds. When a relative is not available, the caseworker will look for a non-relative with whom the child or family has a close relationship. Whether relative or non-relative, this is known as kinship care. If the caseworker is unable to place a child with a kinship caregiver, the child is placed into a licensed foster care setting. This might be a foster home, a residential facility or an independent living program for older teenagers. Each caseworker strives to achieve a culturally sensitive placement. To preserve relationships and help minimize disruption to the child's life, caseworkers try to place children in their own neighborhoods or communities whenever possible.

### When is adoption considered?

Foster care is intended to be temporary. If a court determines that it is not in a child's best interest to return home, the agency will take steps to find an alternative, permanent placement for the child. Such placements may include adoption or legal guardianship. Every child deserves a permanent family, where they can be loved, cared for and safe.

On any given day in Ohio, more than 2,800 children in foster care are waiting for adoptive families. Most of these children are older or part of a sibling group that needs to be adopted together. Adoption is a permanent, legally binding relationship. A child must live with the adoptive family for six months before the adoption can be finalized. During this time, an assessor from the adoption agency will visit monthly to ensure that the family is adjusting well and that the adoption would be in the child's best interests. Once the court legalizes the adoption, the adoptive family has full legal and financial responsibility for the child, just as they would a biological child.

### How do I find more information?

Visit [FosterAndAdopt.jfs.ohio.gov](http://FosterAndAdopt.jfs.ohio.gov). This website explains the requirements for becoming a foster or adoptive parent, explains how to begin the process, and has a variety of resources for current foster and adoptive parents, as well.