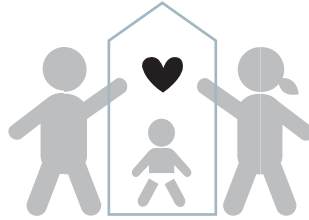


FOSTER CARE



care
protect
empower





What is foster care?

The term *foster care* refers to a Court finding that a child needs to be placed in alternative care due to the need for care and protection. Such a Court order is revised at least every two years. Social workers constantly have to attempt to improve the circumstance of the biological parents or legitimate guardians from whose care the child(ren) were removed, suchlike that the child(ren) can be reunited with their families.



Acceptable motives for foster care:

- A love for children and like caring for children
- Love large families
- Have a positive experience of foster care
- Know friends/family that have children in foster care and enjoy it
- Want to render neighbourly charity service
- Own children have already left home and dearly want to provide a child in need with a loving home
- Want to invest in a child's future



Unacceptable motives for foster care

- Want the foster child to take the place of a deceased child
- Want to supplement income by means of the foster care grant
- Searching for a playmate for their own child
- To reach own unfulfilled aspirations by taking in a foster child
- To save a marriage or to free them from loneliness
- Have failed in educating own children and wish to prove themselves as parents
- For status in the community; have a need for attention
- Are looking out for a child for adoption.

A few conditions and considerations:

- Foster parents have to indicate that they are prepared to house such children.
- The most important prerequisite is that foster parents must understand that it is a temporary arrangement, and that they may not stand in the way of reasonable contact between the child and their biological parents – except when a Court has emphatically ordered it (as can happen in the case of serious maltreatment)
- Foster parents must act in the best interest of the child. Extremely heavy demands are made upon them because they have to be capable of caring for traumatised and disrupted children. The same demands apply, even if the prospective foster parents are members of the children's family.
- Foster parents must be prepared to accept professional persons' guidance.
- Foster parents have to undergo a stringent selection process. They need to comply with certain legal requirements to be approved as suitable foster parents, amongst others, an investigation into whether they have ever in the past been accused or have been found guilty of crime against children.
- In families where problems such as alcohol abuse or family conflict already occur, the parents cannot be considered as foster parents.
- Each case has its own merits and during the selection process facts are investigated and the possible effect thereof on the children is thoroughly considered.
- Prospective foster parents must take into consideration that the selection process takes time because it must be determined whether the child will indeed fit in with and adapt to the specific family.
- It must be determined whether the family will indeed be able to deal with the pressure of such a placement and that the prospective foster parents' own family members will not be disrupted or wronged by the placement.
- Prospective foster parents must be willing to attend orientation- and training opportunities for foster parents.

Who cannot be considered for acting as foster parents?

Persons that do not have children are seldom considered to be a good option for foster care. Bear in mind that there always is the possibility that the child(ren) can be restored in their parents/guardians' care. Foster care is not adoption. Age is also taken into consideration. For instance, persons older than 70 can seldom be approved as foster parents for a baby.

The process:

1

Contact your nearest NG Welfare office and fill out a foster parent application form.

2

A social worker conducts an investigation, which can also include an evaluation by a psychologist. Aspects that are investigated are the prospective foster parents' motive for foster care, home circumstances, family relationships and social functioning of the family.

3

A panel comprising senior social workers and other experts consider the application and can either approve of it or reject it based on the information obtained from the investigation.

4

The desirability of placement with specific foster parents is considered following on a report submitted to the Children's Court by the social worker.

5

Once the Court has placed a child in foster care, a social worker has to render foster care supervision services to the family. The social worker supports the family and works in a team together with the foster parents to assist and support the foster child.

Support concerning physical care of foster children:

- Application is submitted for a foster care grant by: reporting at the nearest office of the South African Agency for Social Security (Sassa); and taking along the Court order and identifying documents as proof.
- Foster children are exempted from paying school fees. The foster parent must only follow the prescribed administrative process at the school.
- The choice with regard to bearing medical costs for foster children rests with the foster parents. The following options exist:
 - Government Hospital: free medical care at presentment of Court order
 - Medical aid: some medical aids allow foster children as co-members or dependents
 - Private: own choice and financial responsibility

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