

Centre County Children and Youth Services (CYS) does not discriminate against resource parents or resource parent applicants in any aspect of the administration of the CYS foster care program on the basis of race, sex, handicap, national origin, religion, creed, or age or any other status classification protected by law.

RESOURCE FAMILY PROCESS GUIDE



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
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**Centre County
Children & Youth Services**

Dear Prospective Resource Parent(s):

We are very pleased that you are interested in working with our agency to help Centre County foster children who are in need of safe, stable and loving homes.

There is no doubt that foster parenting is hard work and is very challenging. Taking on this challenge as potential Resource Parents will require a lot of time and preparation. However, there are many rewards that come as a result.

This Resource Family Process Guide is to help you thoroughly understand each step of the home study process. This is given to you as part of your initial orientation. Please refer to it as you embark on your six step journey.

You may wonder why there is so much information to gather and questions to be asked throughout this process. The agency is required by law to assure that foster children will be safe and well-cared for in their new homes. And, we can serve you better once we get to know you and understand your ideas, preferences, and unique circumstances.

Please be aware that the steps in this journey and the time it takes will vary depending on your unique circumstances.

If you have any further questions, please contact Centre County CYS at 814-355-6755. They will put you in contact with a Foster Home Recruiter.

What is it?

This is the final meeting with your family and the Foster Home Specialist before being approved. During this meeting, the Foster Home Specialist will go over the Care Agreement and the Resource Family Agreement which detail what your obligations are to the agency and what the agency's obligations are to you. After you have reviewed it, you will be asked to sign the form if you are in agreement. Also, she will re-check anything that did not meet the home inspection regulations during the home study meeting.

After this meeting, the Foster Home Specialist will complete a final assessment on you and your family. This assessment details your experiences with children, your mental and emotional stability, your support system, and your ability to work with our agency and the foster child's biological family. It also summarizes information regarding children that the agency feels you are best suited to foster parent; including age, number, and special needs. Following the completion of this assessment, if you meet all of the licensing and approval requirements, the Foster Home Specialist will send you an initial approval letter along with a certificate of approval for your foster home.

What do I have to do during this step?

1. Read through and sign the Care Agreement and Resource Family Agreement.
2. Ask any questions you may have.



The Starfish Flinger

As the old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Finally, catching up with the youth, he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun. "But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish," countered the other. "How can your effort make any difference?" The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to that one," he said.

-Author unknown

**What basic qualifications
do I need to go on this journey?**

The following characteristics are necessary in being a good resource parent:

- *Stability
- *Maturity
- *Commitment
- *Dependability
- *Flexibility
- *Enjoys children and will advocate for them.
- *A team player willing to work with agency staff, community services, and the birth parents, as needed.

Prospective resource parents must complete assessment and licensing requirements which include:

- *Applicants must be age 21 or older.
- *Applicants must be financially stable and not have their income dependent on food stamps or public assistance.
- *Applicants must not have negative prior involvement with CYS.
- *Applicants must not have a history of serious mental health problems, drug/alcohol abuse, criminal activities, or child abuse.
- *Criminal record check at local, state, and FBI level.
- *Child abuse history check.
- *Medical exam.
- *Positive reference letters, e.g. personal, employment, etc..
- *Home must meet Department of Public Welfare safety regulations.

Step Five: Pre-Service Training

What is it?

This training program is six weeks long and is typically held on Monday evenings. They last 2.5 hours each night.

Sessions are designed to:

1. Prepare you for foster parenting.
2. Create a basis for teamwork between yourself and the agency.
3. Challenge you to grow and develop as a resource parent.
4. Help you to consider: Is fostering for me? Am I able to parent a child who has been neglected and/or abused? What type of child can I successfully foster parent? How is this journey going to affect my household members?

What do I have to do during this step?

1. Make the commitment to attend and actively participate in the training sessions.
2. Give careful consideration to the information presented.
3. Come prepared to ask questions.
4. Devote time to consider the full impact of fostering on your family, especially your children.
5. Gain the necessary information to make a personal decision about whether to become a foster parent.
6. Gain knowledge of which type of child you can best foster parent.

Step Four: Licensing/Approval Requirements

What is it?

This is a time of waiting for you. You may be waiting for the Recruiter to complete your background checks and review the various pieces of information you provided. The Foster Home Recruiter will have to complete other licensing/approval requirements as well as a written recommendation/assessment of your home. All of this takes time. Also, you may be waiting for Pre-service training that must be completed before approval.

What do I have to do during this step?

- During this step of the journey, try to be patient.
- You may have a hard time understanding why it takes so long to complete the paperwork.
- You may be concerned about what has been put in the record about you and your household.

Be prepared for a bit of a wait. This process takes time. Use the time for further reading or networking with other foster and adoptive parents. Don't be afraid to use the agency to answer questions and help solve problems during this period.

The Six Step Journey



First Contact



Initial Orientation Meeting/Application Process



Home Study Meeting



Licensing and or/Approval Requirements



Pre-service Training



Final Meeting and Assessment



Approval

Step One: First Contact

What is it?

This is where you, the prospective resource parent, have made a phone call to the agency in order to get information about foster parenting.

What do I have to do during this step?

As a result of your initial contact, you will need to provide your contact information to Centre County CYC in order for them to refer you to the Foster Home Recruiter. The Foster Home Recruiter will contact you as soon as possible.

When the Foster Home Recruiter contacts you, you will be asked to provide basic information on yourself, your household, and what your interest is in foster care. A First Home Visit will be scheduled to introduce Centre County CYC's Foster Care Program to all prospective resource parents in your home.

Date of Orientation/Application meeting: _____

Notes

Step Three: Home Study Meeting

What is it?

This is the time when the Recruiter meets with you in your home to talk about personal history, family relationships, reasons for wanting to foster and/or adopt, the supports you have available to you, and to gather necessary paperwork for approval. The Recruiter will determine whether your home is safe and has sufficient space for a foster child. The point of this step is to help you and the agency make the best possible decisions about whether the placement of a child in your home will or will not work out.

What do I have to do during this step?

Resource Family applicants are responsible to:

1. Provide all necessary documents to the Recruiter in order to ensure you can provide a safe and stable home for a foster child.
2. Cooperate with the home study process and the home study visit.
3. Ensure all necessary information is supplied completely and accurately.
4. Complete and return all paperwork that you receive from the Recruiter as soon as possible in order to complete the remaining licensing and approval requirements.

Step Two: Initial Orientation Meeting/Application Process

What is it?

This is a “First Home Visit” meeting with a Foster Home Recruiter where you will be given a basic understanding of:

1. Who the children are who need care
2. The role and responsibilities of resource parents
3. The home study process you will need to go through
4. The next steps you will have to take on the journey

This is also where prospective resource parents receive the Resource Family Application. The Foster Home Recruiter will go over the application with you and see if you have any questions.

What do I need to do during this step?

1. Ask questions and listen carefully to what the Recruiter is saying.
2. Take notes on things like:
 - a. What you will have to do to be approved or licensed as a foster parent.
 - b. Who your important contacts are.
3. Fill out the application the Recruiter leaves with you and return it in the provided stamped envelope.
 - a. Be open and honest in filling out the application.
 - b. Supply necessary information completely and accurately.

(Step Two continued on page 7)

Step Two continued...

4. Feel free to call the Foster Home Recruiter if you have any further questions before submitting the application. Ask for help if you don't understand something.

During this orientation you may hear for the first time the real challenges of fostering, such as:

- The length of the home study process.
- The various reference and background checks that you will be going through.
- Foster children have had a tough journey of their own.
- The importance of birth parent(s) to their children.
- The Reunification process.

At this point in the journey, you may become conflicted; your emotions may come to the surface. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and be prepared to open your heart and mind to what is being said.

After you mail the application to the Foster Home Recruiter, she will contact you and schedule a Home Study Meeting to complete Step Three of the home study process.

Date of Home Study Meeting: _____

Notes