



# HopeWell

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## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding How to Become a Foster Parent

### **How long does the process take to become a foster parent?**

The process can take as little as three months and as long as several months to complete. The background record check, review and approvals, and fingerprinting, take the majority of the time. The quicker you are able to produce the required documents, the more smoothly and timely the process goes.

### **Is there a formal training to become a foster parent?**

Yes. All foster parent applicants are required to complete a Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) training course. The training program takes 30 hours in Massachusetts and 36 hours in Connecticut. All training topics involve providing care to children who have been exposed to abuse and neglect and have been removed from their biological families. The training method is conversational and the environment is comfortably casual.

### **How much do you get paid if you are a foster parent?**

As of 7/1/18, foster parents in MA will receive a stipend of \$59.39 per day, per child and foster parents in Connecticut will receive a stipend of \$55.55 per day, per child.

### **Will I have to pay taxes on the money I am paid as a foster parent?**

No. Since these payments are a stipend to assist with the costs associated with providing care for a foster child, and this is not employment, you are not required to pay taxes on the foster care payments received.

### **Do foster children have health insurance?**

Yes. Foster children receive health insurance for medical and dental care provided through their state.

### **Do foster children receive money for clothes?**

Yes. In Massachusetts, foster children receive funds allocated specifically for clothing purchases. In Connecticut, clothing expenses are provided through the daily stipend.

### **Can I take my foster child on vacation?**

Yes. Overnight, out-of-state travel is permitted with the written approval of the child's DCF social worker. We encourage any appropriate opportunities for our foster children to experience positive life events.



# HopeWell

CARE IN ACTION

## **Can a foster child participate in after school activities, camps, or sports?**

Absolutely, and in many instances, we can even help pay for it.

## **What school will my foster child attend?**

A foster child's school placement is addressed on an individual basis. Some children may continue to attend the school in the community in which he/she has previously been enrolled, while others may attend school in your community.

## **Which offices are the foster children referred from?**

We can receive referrals from any DCF office in the state of Massachusetts and Connecticut. We generally seek to accept referrals from offices within a reasonable distance of our foster parent's home to alleviate some of the necessary transportation. Foster parents are informed of the transportation demands before a decision is made regarding a child's placement.

## **Will I have contact with the biological family?**

Any contact with a foster child's biological family is determined on a case-by-case basis. The treatment team will make the determination based on several factors, including input of the foster parent.

## **Can the child share a bedroom?**

Foster children may share a bedroom with another foster child or a biological family member in the home. There are guidelines based on age, gender and individual behaviors.

## **How long will the child remain in my home?**

Foster children may remain in foster care for days, weeks, months or years. The foster child's goal, along with the Department of Children and Family's plan, as well as several other factors, will determine the proposed length of stay.

## **What kinds of behaviors should I expect from a child?**

Since therapeutic foster care is a higher level of care than traditional foster care, most of the children placed in with us will present with a trauma history and, as a result, may exhibit a variety of behaviors. Children may experience one or more of the following: depression, anxiety, defiance, hyperactivity, learning disabilities, isolation, sadness or anger. Additional behaviors may include lying, sneaking, verbal and physical aggression, substance use/abuse, running, etc. The child's behaviors will be discussed with you before potential placement, and support will be provided to address these behaviors.



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CARE IN ACTION

While many of these behaviors may present a challenge, it's important to remember that these are still kids. You can also expect them to be happy, silly, curious, kind and loving.

### **Can I be a single parent and still become a foster parent?**

Absolutely! As long as your schedule will allow you to make yourself available for the child's appointments, you are a viable candidate to provide foster care.

### **Can I adopt?**

Many of our foster parents adopt children who were placed with them in foster care. If the child's goal is adoption, HopeWell supports foster parents making the permanent commitment to that child.

### **Can I work while I am a foster parent?**

Yes. You can work as long as your employment allows you flexibility to meet routine appointments and emergency needs of the child in your care.

### **I may have an offense listed on my record (CORI). Will that automatically disqualify me?**

No. While serious charges pose an automatic disqualification; many less serious offenses allow for discretionary approval.

### **What if a foster child is not a good fit for my family?**

Some placements just aren't a good match. Don't worry! You will be assigned a HopeWell social worker and a family resource coordinator to discuss any issues in your home. As a team, we will determine whether extra services are needed to support the placement or whether a change in placement is necessary.

### **What do I do if I need help?**

You always call us. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We provide routine and emergency support any time of day or night. We will then walk you through any necessary protocols. Don't worry! You're in very good hands with us at HopeWell. We want you to succeed, and we'll be right there to help!