



**CHANGE A LIFE
FOR GOOD.**

BECOME A FOSTER PARENT



**CHILDREN'S
NETWORK
OF HILLSBOROUGH, LLC**

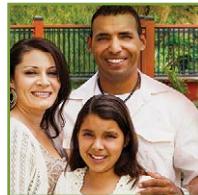
ChildrensNetworkHillsborough.org



LOCAL CHILDREN NEED YOU

Hundreds of children in Hillsborough County have suffered abuse, neglect, and abandonment. There is an urgent need for caring foster parents right here in our community.

Foster parents provide a caring, temporary home to children when they need them the most. The youth who enter foster care do so through no fault of their own, but because of the trauma they have experienced. Foster parents give them a loving place to call home until they can return to their parents or transition to a permanent living arrangement such as adoption.



Many local foster parents say that they feel called to care for a child or group of siblings. Those with this sense of purpose find the rewards of foster parenting to far outweigh the challenges. And the first life that they change is their own.

If you have ever felt called to help kids, then please open your heart and home as a foster parent. In a short time, you can make a difference for a lifetime.

SHOULD YOU CONSIDER FOSTERING?

Ask yourself the following questions to help decide if foster parenting is right for you. Will you be able to:

- Love and care for a child with a challenging background and sometimes difficult behavior?
- Help the child develop a sense of belonging in your home, even though his or her stay will be temporary?
- Stand by the child through life's ups and downs?
- Be willing to work with the child's birth family?
- Feel that it's your personal mission to help children in crisis?



REQUIREMENTS

Foster parent candidates must:

- Be a Florida resident age 21 and older;
- Be financially stable;
- Be able to care for children;
- Pass an extensive background check and home study;
- Have reliable and safe transportation; and
- Have adequate room and beds in your home for children.

The biggest requirement to be a foster parent is love — and the desire to help children move past their past.



MYTHS ABOUT FOSTERING

Many myths surround foster parenting. Please keep these facts in mind:

- **MYTH:** You have to be wealthy and a homeowner to foster.

FACT: You may rent or own your home, and you definitely don't have to be rich. It's the size of your heart – not your paycheck – that matters most.

- **MYTH:** You have to be married to foster.

FACT: Single, partnered, and married people alike can all be great foster parents. (An *increasing number of local foster parents are single.*)

- **MYTH:** Foster parents must have biological children or prior parenting experience.

FACT: You don't have to have children of your own or past parenting experience, just lots of love for the children you will foster.

- **MYTH:** Only people younger (or older) than you can foster.

FACT: People begin fostering at many different points in life. The only age requirement is that foster parents must be at least 21, and many great foster parents are in their 50s or 60s.

- **MYTH:** LGBTQ people can't foster.

FACT: Many excellent foster parents are part of the LGBTQ community.

Don't be deceived by foster parenting myths. If you feel called to foster, Children's Network of Hillsborough and our community partners are here to help — and that's a fact.



BEGIN YOUR FOSTERING JOURNEY

If you feel called to be a foster parent, the path to becoming a licensed foster parent involves the following steps:

1. **Contact Children's Network of Hillsborough:** We are the local lead agency selected by the State of Florida to oversee the child welfare system in Hillsborough County.
2. **Complete the Pre-Service Training:** Attend an information session followed by a 21-hour pre-service training program called Professional Parenting.
3. **Complete the Other Licensing Requirements:** These include background checks, an inspection of the home, and an assessment of the family called a "home study."
4. **Welcome Your First Foster Child:** You will make a difference for a lifetime in a relatively short time.

Take the first step today. Contact Children's Network of Hillsborough at ChildrensNetworkHillsborough.org, or call **(844) 933-KIDS (5437)** to speak with a member of our team. Become a foster parent, and change a life for good.