



Snyder County Children and Youth Services

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Out of Home Services

Foster Care

Foster care is a service designed to provide a substitute family life experience for a child who needs care for a temporary or extended period of time. The primary goal of foster care is to reunite families. Foster care is founded on the premise that all children have the right to physical care and educational and emotional nurturance.

Foster parenting is not a lifetime commitment to a child, but a commitment to be meaningful during a child's lifetime.

Being a foster parent requires love, understanding, and a lot of responsibility. You are parenting someone else's child, who comes to you with established values and ways of behaving. Indeed, parenting someone else's child may be more difficult than parenting your own children.

Because you and the child's caseworker are both concerned about the child's best interests, it is vital that the two of you develop a trusting relationship. In fact, as a foster parent, you will be part of a team that will include not only the child's caseworker, but also the child's birth parents. Therefore, even though the responsibilities of team members are somewhat different, the goal is the same: to make a child happy and safe in a temporary home with a substitute family.

The Foster Care Program

The first step to entering the foster care program was your decision to obtain information about the program.

All prospective foster parents must complete **pre-service training**. In these training sessions, prospective foster parents will learn about laws, regulations, and policies

related to foster parenting; the Agency's philosophy; and the roles and responsibilities of foster parents, birth parents, the Agency, the court system, and others. In addition, information is presented about issues and behaviors common among foster children, communicable diseases, and some basic parenting. At least 1 foster parent in each foster family is also expected to become certified in First Aid and CPR within 1 year of approval and maintain current certification throughout their service as a foster family.

After pre-service training is completed, a **home study** of the prospective foster family is completed by the Agency. A home study is an extensive report on the family, detailing their childhood and family history, financial stability, medical history, education, marital relationships and family court involvement, and information about their motivation to be foster parents. Criminal and child abuse clearances are required of all household members who are 14 years of age or older. The family's home is inspected ensure compliance with safety and residence requirements. Upon completion of the home study, the Agency will either approve or disapprove the prospective foster family and provide notice to the family of such.

After their initial approval, each Agency foster family must participate in an **annual re-evaluation** to ensure the family's continued compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Following are the responsibilities of all foster parents:

- Provide temporary care to children, giving each the same loving care given to their own children
- Encourage and supervise school attendance, participate in teacher conferences, and keep the caseworker updated regarding any special educational needs
- Attend to the regular and/or special medical and dental needs of the child
- To encourage the child to use good personal hygiene habits
- Improve the self-concept of the child, and when possible, that of the child's parents
- Assess, maintain, and build positive essential connections
- Preserve the child's cultural identity
- Cooperate with the caseworker and the child's parents in carrying out the permanency plan
- Facilitate visits between the child and the parents, as well as siblings, to help improve their relationships
- Help the child cope with issues of separation

- Tell the caseworker promptly about any problems that arise or help that is needed
- Abide by all the foster care regulations and policies, including the discipline, punishment, and control policy
- Develop a lifebook for the child
- Attend at least 6 or 12 hours of Agency-approved training annually. The primary parent in each home must participate in at least 12 hours of training annually. The second parent in the home must participate in at least 6 hours of training annually.
At least half of each foster parents' annual training must be earned through Agency-provided trainings.

Independent Living

Snyder County Children and Youth Services Independent Living (IL) program primarily serves youth ages 16 to 21, who are or have been in the custody of Snyder County Children and Youth Services (SCCYS) or Snyder County Juvenile Probation on or after the youth's 16th birthday. IL services are also available, on a limited basis, to youth ages 16 to 21 who have not been in Agency custody.

The mission of SCCYS' Independent Living (IL) program is to assist youth in developing the various skills, tools, resources, and personal enrichment to help them live independently and successfully in the community. The IL program focuses on the following areas of skill development:

- **EDUCATION:** Assisting youth with graduating from high school and exploring higher education possibilities. Financial assistance is available to those youth who attend higher education.
- **EMPLOYMENT:** Developing skills for employment.
- **HOUSING:** Finding housing.
- **LIFE SKILLS:** Developing life skills, such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, decision-making, and goal-setting. Relationship issues and transportation needs are also addressed.
- **PREVENTION:** Providing educational material for smoking cessation, utilizing preventive health care, birth control, preventing sexually transmitted diseases, abstaining from illegal drug use, and nutrition.

Adoption

Snyder County Children & Youth Services provides adoption services for families who currently provide foster care services to the Agency's foster children and who are adopting a child from the Agency.

Snyder County Children & Youth Services does not have a separate adoption unit. The Agency is not able to conduct adoption home studies for private adoptions. Adoption home studies will be conducted only at the request of other child welfare agencies or by court order. It is suggested that persons seeking private adoptions utilize private adoption agencies that serve Snyder County.

Snyder County Children & Youth Services is continuously seeking adoptive families for special needs children who are not being adopted by their foster family. Any interested family should contact the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN) at 800- 585-SWAN or the Pennsylvania Adoption Exchange (PAE) at www.adoptpakids.org for information on how to have an adoption home study completed and to search for children who are available for adoption in the state of Pennsylvania.