

ASSESSING YOURSELF FOR FOSTER CARE

1. Do you have room for another child?
Physical space is certainly important, but do you have “emotional room” for the child? Is there a willingness on the part of the whole family to adopt to the needs of a child, whatever they may be, without a lot of grumbling?
2. Can you accept a mess?
Can you tolerate a certain degree of mess, noise, or even possibly some destructiveness? Your own children learned your rules over a period of time beginning the first day in your home. Your foster child(ren) often come from homes where chaos is the rule and effective discipline is lacking.
3. Consider the physical health of your family.
Care of the children is hard work and your health or special needs of other members of your household may effect your decision to participate in foster care or possibly the age of the child you take.
4. How stable are your family relationships?
Families all have problems and the agency will expect normal ups and downs and turmoil in your home. But the care of foster children places extra strains upon families and relationships. The quality of the husband-wife relationship is very important. Although the bulk of extra physical care of a child normally rests with the foster mother, foster children can often sense and exploit a weak relationship with foster parents! Do both of you want to get involved in foster care and are you prepared to work together in making a success of this experience?
5. How are you doing now as parents?
Do you feel that you can evaluate yourself and your relationship to your children and conclude that you are doing a good job?
6. How do your children feel about your plan?
Having agreed that you would like to try foster care, did you involve your children in the process of exploring the plan? Children should be given a clear picture of what kinds of changes foster care will bring to the family. Perhaps you won't be able to attend as many school functions with your child; also, your child(ren) will have to share a room, their toys, and most important, your time!
7. For what age child are you looking?
Think about the age of your own children as a factor as you try to determine what age foster child you would like to parent. If you want a younger child, will you expect your other children to babysit? Do they really have the time? If you are thinking about a child who is older than your oldest, will you feel comfortable handling problems that you haven't experienced with your own children?

8. What are your local schools like?
Many foster children have been through experiences that have caused them to fall behind academically. Do you have a good working relationship with school personnel? Will they be receptive and assist you with special classes for your foster child(ren), if necessary?

9. Crossing race lines.
Realistically, think about your own racial attitudes, as well as, the attitudes of the community or the schools. You may be ready to meet prejudice head on, but is the foster child?

10. Prejudice against Biological Parents:
Reunification with biological parents is always the primary goal with foster children. Therefore, you may be asked to work with these parents in some capacity. It could be during visitations (see policy), phone calls, Dr or School appointments, etc. Are you able to have a respectful relationship with these parents?