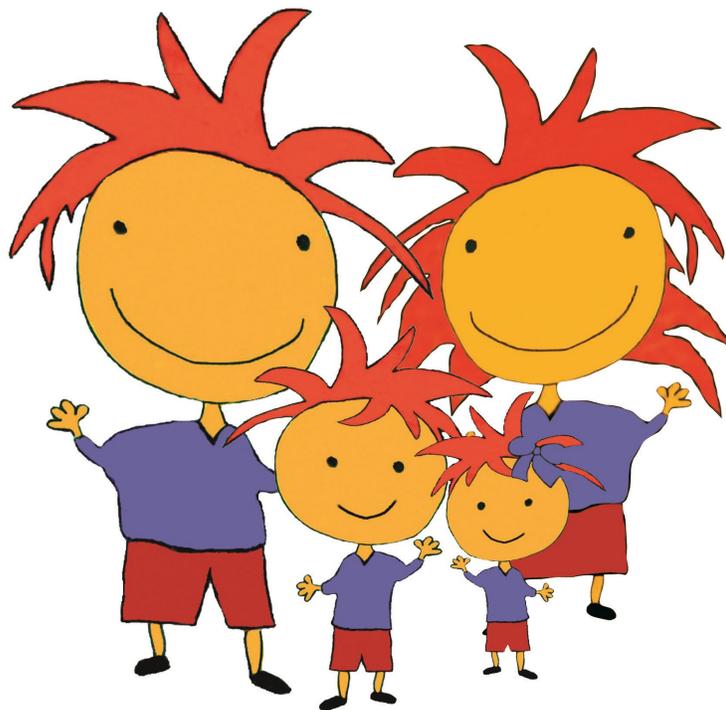




# What You Need to Know About Becoming a Foster or Adoptive Parent at Beech Brook



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216.831.2255 • [www.beechbrook.org](http://www.beechbrook.org)



Dear Prospective Foster or Adoptive Parent:

Thank you for contacting Beech Brook! We're delighted that you are thinking of becoming a foster or adoptive parent, and we'd like to tell you more about how we can help you prepare to welcome a child or children into your home.

Enclosed is information about our Foster Care and Adoption Programs, including dates for our upcoming information meetings and training. When you come to one of our information meetings, you'll have a chance to ask questions and learn all about the application process. You'll also discover all the clinical and support services available to you through Beech Brook's many other excellent treatment programs.

Beech Brook's training fulfills the requirements for both foster care and adoption. You may still decide that you want to do only one or the other, but if you change your mind, you won't need to complete another home study or go through the initial training again. Often our foster families do decide to adopt the children in their homes if they become available.

Since 1852, Beech Brook has been there for children and families in Northeast Ohio, and ***we want to assure you that if you choose to become a foster parent at Beech Brook, we will be there to support you, too!***

Please call me if you have any questions or would like more information about our training and support services. You can reach me at 216.831.2255 or toll-free at 877.546.1225. We're proud of our excellent network of foster parents, and we look forward to working together to help children who need homes and families.

Sincerely,

Akila Greenfield  
Director of Engagement

## Frequently Asked Questions about Becoming a Foster Parent

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster parent! There are so many children who need the special care and support of skilled foster families. We know this is a big decision, and we hope these *Frequently Asked Questions* will be helpful to you. At Beech Brook, foster parents receive extensive and ongoing training, 24-hour emergency support and competitive pay. Our training fulfills the requirements for both foster care and adoption, if you should decide to choose adoption. If you have any additional questions after you've read this, please call Beech Brook or contact us at [fostercare@beechbrook.org](mailto:fostercare@beechbrook.org).

### How do I become a Beech Brook foster parent?

Once you've decided to move ahead, you'll be invited to attend a free information session to learn more about becoming a foster parent. After that, if you'd like to go forward with the process, you'll participate in our foster parent training. (This training also fulfills the requirements for becoming an adoptive parent so that families have a choice to pursue foster care, adoption or foster care-to-adoption without additional training or home studies.)

### What are the qualifications for a foster parent?

- You must be at least 21 years of age.
- You can be married or single.
- You may be a homeowner or may rent your house or apartment.
- You must provide proof of a stable income to meet household expenses.
- Your home must pass a fire safety inspection.
- You and everyone in your household must have a physical exam.
- You and everyone over the age of 18 must pass a criminal-records check.

### What if I have children of my own?

Many foster parents also have children of their own. It's important that everyone in your household supports the decision to foster children since everyone is impacted by the addition of another family member. We will interview everyone over the age of four.

## **How will my child/children be influenced by the presence of a foster child?**

All children are influenced by their peers, whether in school, in the neighborhood or in the family. That's why it's important to involve your child or children in the decision to foster and to discuss the issues involved in foster parenting in an age-appropriate way.

## **Do foster children need their own room and bed?**

Foster children do not need to have their own room, but they must have their own bed. They can share a room with children of the same sex; however, an adult cannot share a bedroom with a child. The rules require that every child in the family – whether your own, foster or adoptive – must have his/her own bed. You should not change your own child's sleeping arrangements to accommodate a foster child.

## **Where do the children come from?**

Most children in foster care are coming from families in crisis. This may be the result of abuse/neglect, homelessness, parental illness or death. The children may be coming from their own homes, another foster home, or a residential treatment setting. The children are typically referred by a public children's services agency. Often these children have emotional/behavioral problems which require therapeutic services.

## **Do the children visit their parents or families?**

Many foster children will return to their own families once the crisis has been resolved. While the child is in care, it's important that the relationships with parents and siblings be maintained. Early in the child's placement, a visitation plan is arranged. Foster parents are expected to transport their foster children to these parental visits.

## **How long do the children usually stay?**

Foster care is meant to be a temporary situation. The ultimate goal is to return every child to his/her own family or to a permanent home. The average length of stay is six months to one year, although this can be shorter or longer, depending on the situation.

## **Isn't it hard to say good-bye when it's time for the child to leave?**

Some foster parents are concerned about separation and loss issues when the foster child must leave their home. In many instances, the foster parents remain connected to their foster child or children and continue to serve as a resource for many years.

## **What if I want to adopt my foster child?**

If a child becomes available for adoption and there are no other relatives able or willing to adopt the child, foster parents then have the first option. Beech Brook will help you through the adoption process.

## **Do I have any choice about the child or children I foster?**

Yes; however, many of the children referred to Beech Brook are age 10 or older. Beech Brook matches the needs of the children to the strengths of your family. During the home study process, we'll reach a mutual agreement about the types of children to be considered for your home, including the number, age range, sex and behaviors that you feel prepared to handle.

When a referral is made, we will call you to present as much information as possible about the child, based on the above criteria. You have the option of accepting or rejecting the placement at that time.

## **Will I get to meet the child or children before I decide?**

Most foster children are coming out of a crisis situation and need a home immediately, usually within 24 hours. In some cases, children may be coming out of a residential treatment setting. In these instances, there may be time for pre-placement visits.

## **Will I get paid to be a foster parent?**

You will be reimbursed for the cost of caring for a foster child. This reimbursement, which is tax exempt, includes a difficulty-of-care and room-and-board per diem as well as a personal expense allowance for the child.

## **If I am married, does my spouse need to complete the training?**

Yes, both of you must complete the training in order to be licensed.

## **What kind of support can I expect from Beech Brook?**

Beech Brook offers a wide range of support to foster families, including:

- 24-hour emergency support;
- case management services;
- respite care;
- intensive initial and ongoing training;
- wraparound services;
- competitive reimbursement.

In addition, Beech Brook provides:

- individual, group and family therapy;
- art and music for the foster children;
- attachment and bonding therapy;
- psychiatric consultation;
- psychological testing;
- independent living skills for older teens.

## **What if I or a member of my family has a criminal record?**

There are certain offenses that disqualify you from consideration as a foster parent, such as homicide; assault; menacing; patient abuse and neglect; kidnapping and related offenses; sex offenses; arson; robbery and burglary; offenses against the family (domestic violence); weapons control (carrying concealed weapon); drug offenses.

If you or family members have been convicted of a misdemeanor offense, at least three years must have elapsed since the person was fully discharged from any imprisonment or probation arising from the conviction. If the offense was a felony, at least ten years must have elapsed since the person was fully discharged from imprisonment or probation. With either conviction, certain rehabilitation standards will then be taken into consideration.

## **What if I or a family member has been involved in an abuse or neglect investigation?**

We are required by custodial agencies to secure an abuse/neglect clearance from your county of residence. If you or a family member have had substantiated allegations of abuse or neglect, you will not be approved for child placement.

## **What is involved in the process of becoming a licensed foster/adoptive parent?**

Prospective parents must attend an orientation session. At that time, you will receive an application which must be completed by the first training session. Upon completion of the training program and required documentation, an assessor will be assigned to complete the home study process. The home study consists of a series of interviews with the family members, both together and individually. The interviews focus on family members' life experiences to learn about the strengths the family can offer a given child. The completed home study consists of a write-up of the interviews, an assessment of the physical environment into which a child would be placed, as well as the following documents:

1. The Application for Child Placement (ODHS 1691)
2. Copy of a certificate or verification of marriage (for current marriage)
3. Copy of divorce decree(s), for any previous divorces
4. Copy of spouse's death certificate, where applicable
5. Financial Statement (ODHS 1681)
6. BCI/FBI Criminal Records Clearance
7. Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Member (ODHS 1653)
8. Fire inspection
9. Four reference letters, with at least three from non-related persons
10. Employer reference letter(s)
11. Current copy of car insurance policy
12. Valid driver's license

## Respite Care Parents

Respite care parents are an important part of Beech Brook's services for children who are currently placed in foster care or with family or relatives.

Respite parents provide a much-needed break for foster families as well as biological families and/or relatives who are caring for children with emotional or behavioral challenges. These breaks help stabilize families and keep placements from disrupting, a high priority for Beech Brook. Disruption, or moving from home to home, is extremely difficult for children; too many already have suffered from multiple moves in their short lives.

Respite needs vary, depending on the program and the child. Beech Brook currently has more than 100 children in foster care and other programs, including our new System of Care program which helps children remain connected to their families and neighborhoods by providing services close to home.

Respite parents have the flexibility of caring for children/youth without having the full-time responsibility of an ongoing placement. For many families, this can be an ideal situation. Respite care is an ideal alternative for families who are not yet ready to become full-time foster parents or who prefer to help on a more time-limited basis.

Respite care parents must complete the licensing process for foster care, which at Beech Brook meets the requirements for both foster and adoptive parenting. Respite families are needed to provide hourly, daily, overnight and emergency overnight respite. The rate for these services varies depending on the need of the child. Most respite needs are for individual children, although the need for sibling group respite does arise occasionally.

If you're not ready to become a full-time foster parent right now, please consider becoming a licensed respite foster parent who can provide positive, loving care on a temporary basis. In many cases, once the relationship is built, the child can continue to respite with the same family regularly.

You can learn more about becoming a respite parent by attending one of our free information meetings about foster care and adoption at Beech Brook.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Adopting a Child with Special Needs

### Becoming an Adoptive Parent

Thank you for taking the time to learn about Beech Brook's adoption program!

Every child deserves the chance to grow up in a safe and loving family. But for many children who have suffered abuse and neglect, the dream of a stable and happy childhood is fading quickly as they wait for permanent homes and families.

Since 1976, Beech Brook has specialized in finding families for children who need a special kind of parenting. Beech Brook provides a wide range of child-focused adoption services and support which begin before a child is placed in the home and continue through the post-legalization period. Our training fulfills the requirements for both adoption and foster care.

If you're thinking about adoption, please come to one of our free Information Meetings to learn more about how we can support you through this important process. Call Beech Brook or contact us at [adoption@beechbrook.org](mailto:adoption@beechbrook.org).

### What kinds of children are available for adoption through Beech Brook?

Beech Brook specializes in the placement of school-age children and sibling groups. Many of the children have special needs. "Special needs" may be defined as children who

- are age 8 or older;
- are members of a sibling group
- are members of a minority group;
- have been in permanent custody for more than one year;
- have a medical, physical or developmental disability;
- have been diagnosed with emotional or behavioral problems;
- have a social or medical history which may place them at risk of acquiring a mental or development disorder;
- have experienced previous adoption disruptions or multiple placements.

Beech Brook does not hold custody of the children. They are generally referred by other child-placing agencies, such as the Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services, the Summit County Children's Service Board or similar agencies in other counties.

## **Who can adopt a child with special needs?**

There is no “typical” family. The ideal family, whatever its form or lifestyle, must be willing to make a long-term commitment to meeting the needs of their adopted child with unconditional love and support.

You may be

- single or married
- age 18 or older
- with or without children of your own
- a homeowner or renter of a home or apartment.

You must also have an income adequate to meet your financial obligations.

## **Are there any fees involved in adopting a child with special needs?**

No. There are no fees for families who adopt through Beech Brook. In fact, adoption subsidies are available to help families adopting children with special needs. Each child receives a monthly stipend until at least age 18. A Medicaid card, entitling the child to medical and mental health care, is also available until the child is at least age 18.

## **How does the adoption process work?**

Once you’ve decided to move ahead, you’ll be invited to attend a two-hour information session to learn more about adopting a child with special needs. After that, if you’d like to go forward with the adoptive process, you’ll participate in our adoptive parent training. (This training also fulfills the requirements for becoming a foster parent so that families have a choice to pursue foster care, adoption or foster care-to-adoption without additional training or home studies.)

The next step is the home study, which is usually completed within six months. Once the home study is finished, you’ll be ready for the placement of a child or children in your family. (NOTE: Beech Brook home studies are completed **only** for families interested in adopting children with special needs.)

## **What kind of support is available from Beech Brook?**

Once a child or children are placed in your home, a Beech Brook adoption worker will be available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Beech Brook adoptive families also have access to

- monthly parent support groups;
- family therapy;
- attachment/bonding therapy;
- in-home, adoption-sensitive family preservation services;
- psychiatric and medical consultation;
- training in “Parenting with Love and Logic” techniques

## **What is involved in the process of becoming a licensed foster/adoptive parent?**

Prospective parents must attend an orientation session. At that time, you will receive an application which must be completed by the first training session. Upon completion of the training program and required documentation, an assessor will be assigned to complete the home study process. The home study consists of a series of interviews with the family members, both together and individually. The interviews focus on family members' life experiences to learn about the strengths the family can offer a given child. The completed home study consists of a write-up of the interviews, an assessment of the physical environment into which a child would be placed, as well as the following documents:

1. The Application for Child Placement (ODHS 1691)
2. Copy of a certificate or verification of marriage (for current marriage)
3. Copy of divorce decree(s), for any previous divorces
4. Copy of spouse's death certificate, where applicable
5. Financial Statement (ODHS 1681)
6. BCI/FBI Criminal Records Clearance
7. Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Members (ODHS 1653)
8. Fire inspection
9. Four reference letters, with at least three from non-related persons
10. Employer reference letter(s)
11. Current copy of car insurance policy
12. Valid driver's license

## **If I am married, does my spouse need to complete the training?**

Yes, both of you must complete the training in order to be licensed.

## **What if I or a member of my family has a criminal record?**

There are certain disqualifying offenses which may prevent you from adopting a child if rehabilitation requirements have not been met. Please call if you have specific questions.

## **What if I or a family member has been involved in an abuse or neglect investigation?**

The county that holds custody of the child or children has the final say in determining whether or not you can adopt.

## Highlights of Beech Brook's Adoption Services Policy

This document represents a condensation of our official adoption policy which meets all requirements of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and is in compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act, as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provision of the Small Business Jobs Protection Act of 1996; the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978; the Small Business and Job Protection Act of 1996; and the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.

A copy of our full Adoption Policy is available upon request.

Beech Brook's Adoption Services exist to find homes for the many waiting children in the State of Ohio. All Ohio children over the age of six who are waiting for adoptive homes are known to us.

Our services are child-focused, with the goal of finding a family who will meet the child's needs, as opposed to an emphasis on searching for children for families. Our clients are the children who are waiting. We only provide adoption services for families who are interested in adopting these children.

Beech Brook's Adoption Program is licensed in Ohio as a Private Non-Custodial Agency. As such, we make recommendations to legally responsible agencies about the appropriateness of a specific family for a specific child in their care. The legally responsible agency ultimately makes the decision as to whether or not a placement will be made.

Because of the need for extensive in-home post-placement work, we limit our families to those within a one-hour drive of our offices.

Families participate in our experiential adoption training. During the training program, applicants are fingerprinted for the required criminal record check.

You will receive an application at the information sessions prior to the training program. Following the training program, an adoption assessor is assigned to complete the home study process. The home study consists of a series of interviews with the family members, both together and individually. The interviews focus on family members' life experiences in an attempt to learn of the strengths the family can offer a given child. The completed home study consists of a write-up of the interviews, an assessment of the physical environment into which a child would be placed, as well as the following documents which are required by law:

1. The Application for Child Placement (ODHS 1691) or Application to Adopt a Foster Child in the Home Twelve Months or More (ODHS 1692)
2. Copy of a certificate or verification of marriage (for current marriage)

3. Copy of divorce decree(s), for any previous divorces
4. Copy of spouse's death certificate, where applicable
5. Financial Statement (ODHS 1681)
6. BCI/FBI Criminal Records Clearance
7. Medical Statement for Foster Care/Adoptive Applicant and All Household Members (ODHS 1653)
8. Four reference letters, with at least three from non-related persons
9. Employer reference letter(s)
10. Home Safety Audit
11. Fire Inspection

## Adoption Subsidy Programs

Most children placed by Beech Brook qualify for some type of adoption subsidy to assist parents with the costs of caring for the child. Families may apply for adoption subsidies through the county which has custody of the child prior to adoption, with the exception of the Post-Adoption Special Services Subsidy, for which application is made to the family's county of residence or the county which previously had custody of the child if the family now lives out of state. A copy of that agency's Subsidy Policy and Procedures will be provided by the county during the pre-placement period.

Beech Brook does not directly provide Title IV-E Adoption Assistance, reimbursement of non-recurring adoption expenses or other in-state adoption subsidy program; however, Beech Brook staff will help the family apply for these subsidies.

Listed below is a summary of the adoption assistance programs, eligibility requirements and application procedures

### Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program

Title IV-E provides a monthly maintenance payment, Medicaid coverage, and eligibility for Title XX social services for special needs children who are placed in adoptive homes and who are eligible for federal Title IV-E funds.

### Eligibility Requirements

1. The child must have special needs.
2. The child must be placed for adoption by a public or private children services agency which has permanent custody of the child at the time of placement, unless the child meets the SSI-relatedness test or is living with a specified relative at the time the relative petitions the court to adopt the child.
3. The child must meet the SSI-relatedness test or the ADC/TANF-relatedness test.
4. There must be a judicial determination of best interests
5. There must be a signed adoption assistance agreement between the PCSA and the adoptive parents prior to adoption finalization

## **Application Process**

Prospective adoptive parents must apply to the public children services agency holding custody of the child prior to placement or, if the child is in the custody of a private child placing agency, to the county in which the private agency is located.

## **Non-recurring Costs**

This subsidy provides reimbursement of expenses directly related to the legal adoption of a child with special needs. These include reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by or on behalf of adoptive parents. The maximum amount is \$2,000. This subsidy is provided only once.

## **Eligibility Requirements**

The child must meet Title IV-E Special Needs criteria.

## **Application Process**

Prospective adoptive parents apply to the Public Children's Services Agency holding custody of the child prior to placement; to the county in which a private custody-holding agency is located; or, if the child is not in agency custody, to the county in which they reside.

## **State Adoption Maintenance Subsidy**

This subsidy provides a monthly maintenance payment for special needs children who are placed in adoptive homes and who are not eligible for federal Title IV-E funds. The child may be eligible for Medicaid.

## **Eligibility Requirements**

1. The child has special needs according to the Ohio definition.
2. The child is not eligible for Title IV-E.
3. The adoptive family's gross income does not exceed 120% of the median income of an Ohio family of the same size, including the adopted child.
4. The child is legally free for adoption.
5. The child is placed into an adoptive home and an adoptive placement agreement has been signed prior to the final decree of adoption.
6. The child meets age requirements.
7. The child is a resident of the state of Ohio.

## **Application Process**

The family must make application to the Public Children's Services Agency in the placing county.

## **State Special Services Subsidy**

The State Special Services Subsidy may be used to cover costs that are not covered by the Medicaid card.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

1. Sources of assistance are inadequate or unavailable to meet the child's special needs or the needs of the child are beyond the economic ability and resources of the adoptive parent.
2. The child is legally free for adoption.
3. The child has special needs.
4. The child is placed in an adoptive home and an adoptive placement agreement has been signed prior to the final decree of adoption.
5. The child meets age requirements.

### **Application Process**

The family must make application to the Public Children's Services Agency in the placing county.