

**County of Santa Cruz Human Services Department, Family and Children's Services  
Foster Care Program Fact Sheet**

Questions	Answers
<b>Who can be a foster parent?</b>	<p>Anyone who is 21 years or older, in good health, and demonstrates an ability and interest in caring for children, and becomes licensed. Single, married, divorced, and LGBTQ individuals are encouraged to apply. Same sex couples are also eligible and encouraged to apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You do not need to own a home.</li> <li>• You may own or rent a house, condominium, or apartment.</li> </ul> <p>The important thing is that you have room for a child in a safe living environment and that you can meet the child's needs.</p>
<b>What if I have never parented a child before?</b>	<p>It is not a requirement for you to have parented a child before. You must show an interest and ability to care for children. Whether you have parented a child or not you are required to do the Fostering Foundations training and possibly SPARK training.</p>
<b>How long will it take to be licensed?</b>	<p>That depends a lot on you. You must attend an orientation and complete the application process. You will be required to attend Fostering Foundations classes and if you are interested in caring for young children with special needs related to the alcohol and drug issues of their parents, you will need to attend SPARK classes too. Depending on the timing of orientations, Fostering Foundations classes, and your own motivation to complete the necessary processes, you could become licensed within 1 to 2 months</p>
<b>What about training?</b>	<p>Fostering Foundations is provided free of cost and all prospective foster parents and adoptive parents must complete the 15 hours of training. If you want to care for children under the age of 5 years who have been exposed to either drugs or alcohol (which a lot of children in our system are) you must also attend SPARK classes. These are also free and total 15 hours.</p>
<b>How long before a child is placed with me?</b>	<p>That depends on the age and gender of child you want to care for. The wider the age range the sooner a child will be placed with you.</p>
<b>What support will I receive?</b>	<p>A social worker will make visits to see how the child is adjusting and to provide an opportunity to answer questions and discuss any concerns. Foster parents are also invited to attend Coffee Connections, an informational meeting to help foster parents adjust to having a new child in the home.</p>
<b>Will I meet the child before being placed in my care?</b>	<p>At times a planned move occurs and there may be time for foster parents to meet children before they are moved. There are also times when there is an immediate need of a home for a child. When you are contacted about a child you always have the right to accept or decline.</p>
<b>How long will a child need foster care?</b>	<p>They may need foster care for a few hours or a few months. Some children may need care until they are returned to their families, adopted, or until they turn 18. Some youth choose to remain in foster care past their 18th birthday – under special circumstances, up until they turn 21.</p>
<b>Who do I call for more information?</b>	<p>Contact the Foster Parent Recruiter at by calling (831) 345-2700 or e-mail us at <a href="mailto:fostercare@fostercare4kids.com">fostercare@fostercare4kids.com</a></p>
<b>Contact Us</b>	<p align="center"><b>Family and Children's Services 1400 Emeline Avenue, Building K, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (831) 345-2700</b></p>