

GIVING KIDS HOPE & A HOME

A leadership guide to
promoting the Foster Care
Movement in your church



GEORGIA BAPTIST
CHILDREN'S HOMES
AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

Foster Care Program

Fostering Hope & A Home

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A Letter to

PASTORS

Dear Pastor,

There are thousands of children in foster care here in Georgia. These children enter the foster care system simply because they can't safely remain in their homes. The reasons vary, but these children need and deserve a Christ-centered home to care for them temporarily while families work to resolve their situations.

Georgia Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries (GBCH&FM) recruits, trains, and licenses foster families to serve these children and share with them the light of Christ.

Our Agency desires to come alongside your church with resources and our ministry team to encourage you in developing a foster care ministry within your congregation.

In this Leadership Guide, you will find information you can share with your staff and church, to explain the opportunities in becoming missionaries in their own community or in their own homes through fostering.

With nearly 13,000 children in Georgia's foster care system, many more foster parents are needed. Yes, opening your heart and home can be scary, but as Christians, God calls us to be workers where situations can be difficult, and the need is great.

We hope you will find this guide to be informative and we are here to answer any questions you may have about our ministry.

Together, we have an opportunity to address a growing problem in our state.

Please join us in becoming part of the solution.

Thank You,
Georgia Baptist
Children's Homes Family



FOSTERING WITH GBCH&FM

Our Mission:

We are a Christian caring ministry of services designed to promote the spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being of children, youth, and families.

WHAT MAKES GBCH&FM DIFFERENT

- ✓ Our foster parents are wrapped in the love of God and supported by the daily prayers of thousands of Baptist churches across Georgia
- ✓ As a private Child Placement Agency, we maintain smaller caseloads, which allows us to provide additional attention and support to families in our program.
- ✓ We will help your church discover ways to support foster families in your community and congregation.
- ✓ We are a Sanctuary certified agency, providing care from a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive perspective for our youth in care and our foster families.



Taking ACTION



Here's how you can get started sharing this ministry in your church

- ✓ Meet with your church leaders to gauge the level of interest in starting a foster care ministry in your church.
- ✓ Identify a champion in your church to coordinate the development of the foster care ministry.
- ✓ Visit our website at [**GeorgiaChildren.org/foster-care**](https://GeorgiaChildren.org/foster-care) where you will find additional resources like videos, printable materials, and graphics to use in your church promotion!
- ✓ Fill out the contact form on our website [**GeorgiaChildren.org/foster-care**](https://GeorgiaChildren.org/foster-care) so that our foster care team can help you organize a meeting at your church.
- ✓ Be a prayer warrior for foster care! Concentrated and focused prayer is a great way that anyone can help.

Promoting Involvement in YOUR CHURCH

Plan for Success



STEP #1

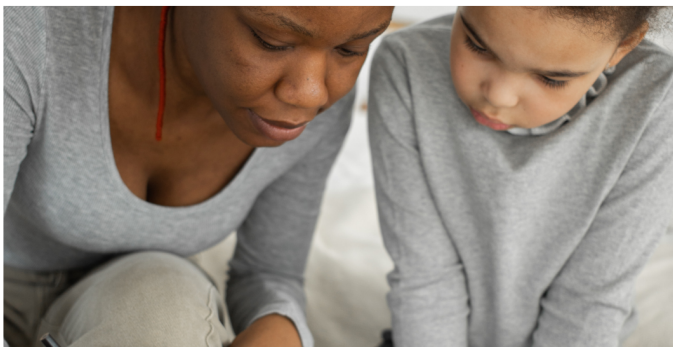
We encourage you to speak with your church family about the foster care movement . Have a prayer time to consider if God is calling your church to participate in a foster care ministry.

STEP #2

Share information and promotional materials you can download for free from our website to inform your congregation.

STEP #3

Establish a foster care committee within your church and set a time to meet with our foster care representatives to get your program started.



The CHALLENGE

Our challenge, together with your church, is to involve you in a partnership with GBCH&FM, so that we can introduce the idea of a fostering ministry in your church! There are a number of ways you can get involved but the best way is to help shoulder the responsibility with an active foster family in your church.

ADVOCATES

Share the importance of having a foster care ministry in your church

VOLUNTEERS

Provide assistance that directly benefits kids and families in foster care

RESPITE CARE

Serve as a support team to foster families by providing supervised care and enrichment activities

MENTORS

Use your knowledge to provide job assistance, life and work skills, and personal coaching to kids in foster care

FOSTER PARENTS

Consider opening your heart and your home to children in foster care and make an impact that will last forever



COMMON FAQ'S



WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT WITH GBCH&FM?

- A desire to serve God by providing a home and healthy family environment to children and youth in foster care, helping to promote their spiritual, physical, and emotional safety and well-being
- A willingness to work in partnership with birth parents and family members so that the children can maintain family and sibling connections, as the birth parents strive to regain custody of their child(ren).
- Clear results from medical evaluations (including drug screen and TB test), criminal background checks, and child abuse and neglect clearances
- Adequate space in your home for each child to be able to sleep, play, and maintain their personal belongings
- Source of income sufficient to meet the financial needs of your current household
- Be at least 21 years of age and more than 10 years older than the child/youth who will be placed in your home
- Have a valid driver's license, current auto insurance, and a reliable means of transportation
- Proof of citizenship or legal residency in the U.S.

HOW LONG IS THE PROCESS TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT?

- On average, the entire process from orientation to licensure as a foster parent is about 3-6 months. The time frame may vary depending on your family's circumstances.

WHERE DO THE CHILDREN PLACED IN FOSTER CARE COME FROM?

- We receive referrals from the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) across the State of Georgia. DFCS retains legal custody of the children, and we provide placement supervision while they are placed with families in our foster care program.

DO I HAVE TO BE A HOMEOWNER?

- No! Foster parents can be homeowners or can be home or apartment renters. The only housing requirement is that the home provides a safe and clean living environment that includes adequate sleeping space for youth placed in the home.

WHAT IS PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND WHY DO I NEED IT TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT?

- Pre-service training is required by the state of Georgia for families seeking to become foster or adoptive parents. This training provides potential foster parents with a thorough understanding of the child welfare system in Georgia and how to effectively and safely meet the unique needs of children in foster care based on their history of abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The live training experience helps people feel more prepared and inspired to undertake the important journey of serving as a foster parent in Georgia. We offer this training at various times in different locations, so contact us today to be a part of the next class!

DO I HAVE TO BE MARRIED OR HAVE CHILDREN TO BECOME A FOSTER PARENT?

- No. Anyone – married or single, young, or old, parent or new to parenting – is eligible to become a foster parent.

WHAT IS A HOME EVALUATION AND WHY DO I NEED ONE TO BE FOSTER PARENT?

- The home evaluation is our opportunity to learn all about you and your family so we can make the best possible match when we place youth in your home. Our Home Study Practitioner will make at least three (3) visits to your home and talk individually with each member of your household so we can really get to know your family's strengths and lifestyle. We will also assess the physical safety of your home to ensure everything meets state requirements.

DO I NEED A LOT OF MONEY TO FOSTER?

- No. Foster parents receive monthly stipends for fostering and reimbursement for other expenses that allow them to care for children placed in their home without strain on the household budget. All that prospective foster parents need to show financially is that they have the income to meet their own monthly expenses.

WHAT IF I'M NOT SURE FOSTERING IS FOR ME? DO I HAVE TO MAKE A COMMITMENT NOW?

- We want you to have all the knowledge you need to make an informed decision to become foster parents! We will meet with you one-on-one to provide information and answer any questions you may have about foster care, your role, our expectations, and the process. You may change your mind at any time throughout the process, as we want to be assured that you are fully committed before a child/youth is placed in your home. We will be with you throughout the process and encourage open and honest communication, as we realize that sometimes circumstances change for families, and we want to help you make the right decision for your family.

Explaining the steps to

FOSTERING



✓ STEP 1 - INFORMATION SESSION

After your Initial Contact with our agency our Director will meet with you individually in your home or as a part of a group at a local church to talk with you about the role of foster parents, the needs of the children and youth we serve, and the requirements for approval.

✓ STEP 2 - DOCUMENTATION REVIEW

Our foster care team will meet with you to discuss the state requirements for foster parents and to review the required documentation with you. It is important for you to complete all of the required documentation to expedite the process.

✓ STEP 3 - FOSTER PARENT TRAINING CLASSES

Once you have made a decision to move forward in the process, you will complete the state-required training designed to equip you to meet the needs of the children and youth who will be placed in your home. You will be required to attend approximately 30-40 hours of pre-service training classes. This course is designed to help you fully understand the foster care process for the journey ahead.

✓ STEP 4 - THE FAMILY ASSESSMENT OR HOME STUDY

The home study process will begin toward the end of your training and will involve at least three visits to your home. We will talk individually with each member of your household so we can really get to know your family's strengths and lifestyle. All the information we gather during the home study process will help us to make the best possible match when we place youth in your home.

✓ STEP 5 - A CHILD IS PLACED IN YOUR HOME

Once certified, we will find a good fit for you and your family. If the match is right, the youth will come to stay with you until they can be reunited with their biological family or a relative or kinship caregiver. If neither of those options are available, the youth may be permanently adopted by your family (if you choose) or another family. We will talk to you about visitation schedules with birth parents and siblings and will continue to support you as you foster the youth.



SCAN HERE FOR
MORE INFORMATION





GeorgiaChildren.org

770-463-3800