



Foster Care/Texas State Adoption Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why should I become part of the International Family Services family?

A: There are a lot of really great agencies that you can work with. We feel that our best asset is that when you work with us, we treat you like family. We know that when you bring a child into your home that you will need a friend, a professional, a counselor and a strong agency that can stand behind you. Although International Family Services is a large agency, our foster program is small allowing both the resources and experience of the large agency and the personal connection of a small family. Our goal is to make sure that your family stays healthy and grows stronger through the foster care experience. We are also a lot of fun!

Q: Are you a part of Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (CPS)? Where do your children come from?

A: International Family Services is a private, non-profit child-placing agency. We are not Texas Department of Family & Protective Services. All of our children are placed with us by Texas Department of Family & Protective Services.

Q: I am single, can I be a foster or Texas State adoptive parent?

A: Absolutely!

Q: I rent a home/apartment, can I still be a foster/adoptive parent?

A: Absolutely!

Q: Do you have any requirements to be a foster/adoptive parent?

A: Applicants must meet the following requirements:

- *Be U.S. citizens,*
- *Be at least 21 years old,*
- *Speak fluent English without the assistance of a translator,*
- *Be a responsible, mature and healthy adult able to meet the needs of a child*
- *Wait 12 months after you marry, divorce or have become widowed,*
- *Wait 12 months after giving birth to a child or experiencing the death of an immediate family member living in your home,*
- *Have a clean criminal record for the past 5 years with no history of abusing children,*

- *Have a driver's license, auto insurance and dependable transportation,*
- *Not be dependent on the reimbursement from fostering to support yourself or your family,*
- *Agree to a non-physical discipline policy for foster children,*
- *Have a bedroom available for your foster child (can be shared with your other children),*
- *Complete IFS Pre-Service Training Requirements,*
- *Home must pass a fire and health inspection,*
- *Have CPR and First Aid certification (must maintain the certification while a foster parent),*
- *Participate in continuing education requirements each year (20 hours minimum for each parent annually or 30 hours if a single parent),*
- *If your home is on a well system, we will need a water test,*
- *Provide pet vaccination information,*
- *Provide TB test results for all residents in your home,*
- *Provide IFS with various signed forms as required,*
- *Complete a weapons inventory of your home and keep weapons and ammunition safely stored.*
- *Have IFS complete a Home Study for your home*

Q: What is a Home Study?

A: A home study is the culmination of all of your hard work gathering your documents, attending training and passing the foster parent requirements. A social worker will come to your home after all of the requirements are met and verify that the information that you provided is complete and accurate. You will then be interviewed by the social worker as a family and individually. Your social worker will be kind and compassionate. The process is not meant to be a scary process! Once the visit and interviews are done, your social worker types up a long document giving the details about your family. You will be able to check it for accuracy. The Home Study will also serve as the required Home Study if you decide to adopt (some updating might be needed).

Q: It seems like there is a lot of paperwork involved with being a foster parent. Once I meet the requirements and have my home certified, will I have more paperwork to do?

A: There is vital paperwork and reports that you will prepare while a child is in your care and minor document updates along the way, but nothing like what you have to collect initially!

Q: I heard that IFS has a great International Adoption program, can I decide to move to that program after becoming a foster parent?

A: You certainly can! Foreign countries have different requirements for adopting so we will make sure you meet the requirements of foreign adoption together. Your IFS Home Study for your Foster Home Certification meets all (or most depending on the country) of the requirements of an International Home Study. IFS trains all families on loss and cultural issues that apply to International Adoptions. Although there is no cost to have a Home Study for foster care, if you decide to adopt internationally, you will be subject to the fees associated with an International Home Study (please see our International Adoption Packet for more information).

Q: What are the ages of the children that IFS serves through Foster Care?

A: IFS serves children under the age of 18 and teens that have children. The majority of the children are school age. There is a huge need for foster homes for children over the age of 12.

Q: Once I have my Foster Home Certification, how long does it take to get a child?

A: It depends on how open you are to children of older age groups, ethnicity and sibling groups. If you are wanting to foster two teenage boys, you will probably have a very quick placement. If you are wanting a toddler or baby of a specific race, it might take longer. We want to make sure that you are fostering a child that is a good match for your family. By doing this, there is a much greater chance that you and the child will have a positive experience! We are committed to working WITH you to make sure that you have a good match!

Q: What is the average length of time that a child will be in my home?

A: There are a lot of factors that contribute to the length of time a child will be in your home. Some are only in care for a few days (usually emergency situations) and some children can stay with their foster family for several years if they are looking for an adoptive home. The average length of time is between 8-18 months while a permanent home is established for the child.

Q: What is the likelihood that the child I foster will become available for adoption?

A: Each child has a different story. The majority of the children have been placed in the foster care system because of neglect and/or abuse by their primary caregiver. The first goal of the State is to reunify the children with their parents. They give the parents specific requirements and timelines that need to be met in order to keep their children. If reunification is not possible, the State will look at the foster child's relatives (called Kinship adoption). If there is no one willing/able to adopt from the Kinship program, the foster family is usually considered next. If your desire is to adopt, IFS will work closely with you to help this dream become a reality, however, families need to be prepared that the process can take patience and perseverance.

Q: How do I pay for the costs associated with caring for a foster child?

A: International Family Services has contracted with the state to be able to reimburse you for expenses associated with the care of the child. These expenses include food, clothing, household necessities, the added costs of having an extra person as it relates to your utilities bills, transportation needs, etc. The exact rate is determined on the level of care your child needs and the number of calendar days the child is in your home.

Q: If a foster child is placed in my home, who pays for their medical/dental/vision/hearing, prescriptions and therapy?

A: Children in the custody of Texas Department of Family and Protective Services receive state provided insurance. This state provided insurance covers medical/dental/vision/hearing, prescriptions and therapy.

Q: Can I foster more than one child?

A: Absolutely! As long as your home meets the requirements and we all feel that you can take care of multiple children, you may do so. One of the greatest needs is for families that can foster sibling groups.

Q: Will you charge me any fees if I adopt a Texas child through your agency?

A: No, International Family Services does not charge families a fee for adoptions through the State of Texas program. There are attorney fees for the finalization of your adoption.

Q: Approximately how much will my attorney charge for his/her role in the adoption?

A: Attorney fees typically start at approximately \$1200.

Q: How long does it take to become a certified foster home with your agency?

A: While there are a variety of factors that affect how long the licensing/certification process can take, most applicants can complete the process in 1-3 months.

Q: What is the first step in the licensing/certification process?

A: The first step is to attend our Orientation. Please contact our office for a class schedule

Q: Do I have to turn in any paperwork before I can attend Orientation?

A: No. However, we do ask that you RSVP and provide us with a contact number in case a class is ever cancelled or rescheduled.

Q: What paperwork or forms are required and how soon can I start to turn in my paperwork?

A: We invite you to start turning in paperwork as soon as you are ready to. We will start processing each piece of your paperwork as soon as we receive it.

Q: If I am seeking to be licensed with your agency, do I have to pay to attend your classes?

A: No, parents seeking to be licensed with our agency are not charged a fee for training. However, CPR/First Aid certification is required and families will need to factor in that cost.

Q: May I bring my child(ren) to training with me?

A: All classes are for adults only, however we may be able to provide childcare at some of our locations. Please contact us for more details.

Q: I have already been certified/licensed with another foster care agency, do I still need to attend your training and complete your forms?

A: We will look at each situation individually and give you a detailed evaluation of what you need to do before you can be certified by IFS. Most of the time most if not all of your training will transfer!

Q: I'm having trouble finding a CPR/First Aid instructor. Whom can I call?

*A: **Austin/Round Rock/Georgetown area:** A wonderful low cost option for families is C.P.R. Resources. You can reach them at (512)292-3130, website is www.cpr-resources.com. The cost for certification is \$25 and the classes are about 2.5 hours in length. They have several locations and classes each month. Make sure that you tell them that you need CPR and First Aid and need to have child and infant training.*

Q: May I take or renew CPR/First Aid online?

A: No, TDFPS Minimum Standards prohibits the taking or renewing of CPR/First Aid online. It must be instructor led and include the practice of CPR on CPR mannequins.

Q: Where do I find the Medical Consent training on the TDFPS website?

A: Visit www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/About_Child_Protective_Services/medicalconsent

Q: I need a little help getting my house ready for my foster child, know anyone good with a hammer?

A: One thing that International Family Services strives to do is help you overcome obstacles on your way to being a foster parent. We have a few gentlemen that are happy to help you get your house into compliance. IFS may also be able to reimburse you for part of the expenses associated with getting your home into compliance.

Q: Am I allowed to travel with children placed in my home?

A: Yes, travel is permitted but you must notify International Family Services of all trips and court approval is needed for any out of state travel. For this reason we need at least 2 weeks notice before any out of state travel.