

The Foster Child



*A guide to understanding where foster children
come from and where they are going.*



STATE OF MICHIGAN
Department of Human Services

Introduction

You are important! What your foster child experiences during his stay in your home may make a life-long difference. Every child who comes into foster care is in crisis. They are children who have been removed from the home of their birth parents, often quite suddenly. The child is separated from the only family he's ever known and taken to live with a family who is strange to him. He may come into your home fearful and deeply hurt. You, by your understanding, your actions and your words can help him to deal with the hurt and prepare for the future.

The goal of foster care is to give the child a home and a family to care for him until he is either returned to his birth parents, permanently placed with relatives, or adopted.

As foster parents, you have a special job. You are a bridge for the child between a troubled past and a hopeful future. You and your caseworker are a team. Together you will map out a plan for the child. Your cooperation and help is a vital part of this plan.

You are important because:

- You will help prepare the child for a **permanent** living situation (either returning to the birth parents or adoption)
- You will nurture, love, feed, clothe and house your foster child in a family situation.

The purpose of this book is to help you understand:

- A. The goal of foster care.
- B. What happens when the plan is to return the child home.
- C. What happens when the plan is adoption.
- D. What are the needs of your foster child.
- E. What is expected of you as foster parents.

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The Goal



The goal of foster care is to give the child a home and a family to care for him until he is either returned to his birth parents or adopted.

Foster care is part of a process that leads to a permanent home for the child. All children need and want a family that will be theirs forever. If it happens that the child must be removed from the birth parents, that child begins a journey with several stops along the way. **One of the most important stops that the child will make will be to come into your care.** The child will enter your life in a time of crisis. Each child will be different. Each child will come with complex problems.

Permanent Placement

Return Home To Birth Parents

The majority of children in foster care are **temporary court wards**. This means that the court has something to say about the child's future but the birth parents are still legally in charge.

You may think that the foster child would want to leave his birth parents, especially if there has been neglect or abuse. This is not usually the case. No matter how painful the experiences which led to putting the child in foster care, he will almost always want to return to the birth parents. This is because the emotional bond between a parent and a child is very strong.

Since it is most often the child's desire to return home, the caseworker will do everything possible to help the birth parents correct the problems that caused the child to be placed in foster care. However, some parents' problems are so great that they may never be able to care for their child again. When the judge is convinced that return to the birth-parents is not possible, he will end the parents' legal rights to their child. This means that the child becomes a **permanent ward**.

Adoption

The most desirable thing for everyone is that the child be able to go back to his birthparents. When this can't happen the child becomes a permanent ward, and adoption is the next step. A child is a temporary ward when the goal is to return home. If the child is a permanent ward, the goal is adoption. When a child is fourteen years of age or older, he must agree to his own adoption. Sometimes a child chooses not to be adopted. If this happens, you and your caseworker will work out another plan.

It is the responsibility of the foster parent to work together with the caseworker to help the child achieve a permanent home. if you have questions about the plan for your foster child, contact your DHS caseworker.

The Child

Understanding Your Foster Child

Foster parents may think that the child will automatically become happy and well-adjusted after being placed in their home. It's natural to expect this from the child. However, it doesn't usually happen like that, at least not right away. It can be a very frightening experience for a child to be taken to live in a strange home, not knowing how long she will be there, why she is there, and what is happening to her parents. These are some big hurdles that the child must overcome before she can feel secure in her new home.

No matter what others think of the pain the child has experienced, it is the separation from her parents that is the most painful for her. The only life the child knows was experienced with the birth parents. Through them, she has learned who she is. Leaving them means leaving behind her identity. In her heart, the child fears that her parents are forever lost to her. She will grieve for them as if they had died.

The child may not be able to tell you in words that she is grieving. You will need to look for signs in her actions. For example, she may be so saddened that she won't eat or she eats too much. The child may also wet her bed, have nightmares, mope about, show a general lack of interest in things or have sudden bursts of anger. Separation causes such extreme feelings in the child because there is a bond with the birth parents that is much more than a "feeling" of love. A child's home is her world. Her parents construct this world for her through the shelter, food, clothing and warmth they give her. This is expressed in the many details of daily life, such as; remembering birthdays, signing report cards, getting pats on the head or a hug before going to bed. These experiences give the child a sense of belonging. This is a process that social workers call **bonding**.

Bonding creates a child's sense of who she is. Her identity comes from her past and her parents who are the most important people in her life. If your foster child is to feel secure and cared for, she must know that you understand and accept her past.



When the child comes into your care, she may not be able to tell you her deepest feelings about her parents. You can be sure, though, that she thinks about them and may even day dream about returning to them. She may also feel sad because the children around her are with their birth parents and she is not. Or, maybe she blames herself for the separation. She's also apt to feel very insecure about her future if she has been in more than one foster home or has seen other foster children come and go.

Learning to trust adults is also a problem. Children in foster care have usually known inconsistent caring and kindness. They come to expect that it will always be this way. They may not know how to receive your affection or attention. Or, they are afraid that if they do respond they will be hurt again by having the affection withdrawn. The child may even see you as a combination of all the adults who have hurt or rejected her in the past.

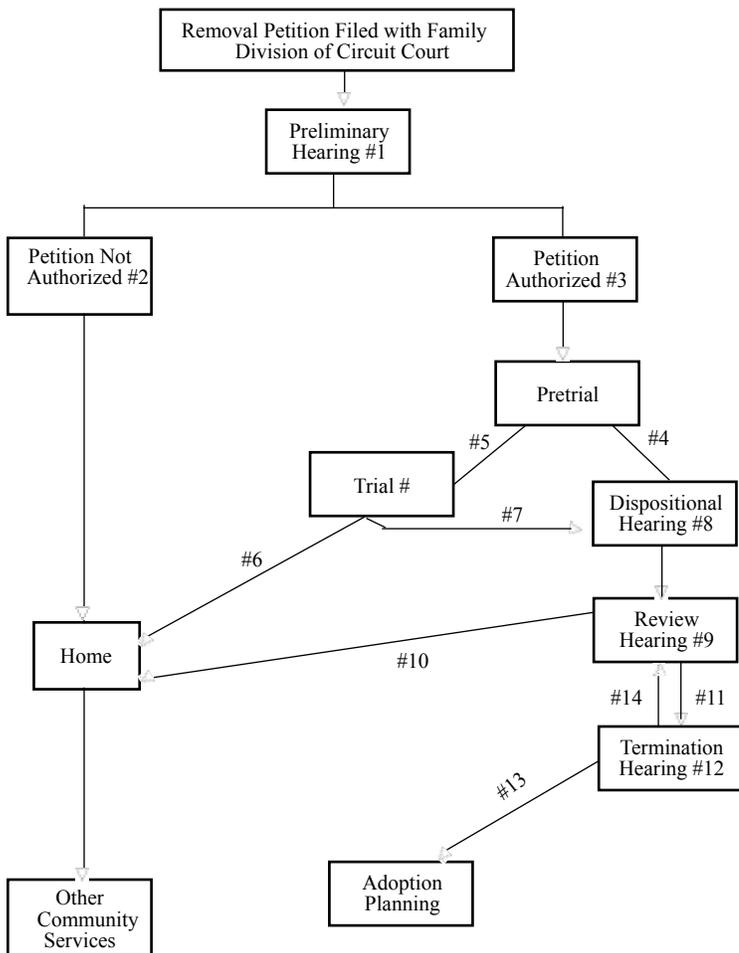
The child has many ways of saying, "I'm afraid" — afraid to trust, to care, to receive love. Very likely she sees herself as alone in an uncaring world. Your understanding and gentle discipline can help her overcome her fears and cross that bridge into the future where a permanent home and family are waiting.

How Children Come Into Foster Care

There are two ways that children come into foster care:

1. Court Ordered Placement

A child may begin the process when a member of the community reports possible abuse or neglect or abandonment by the parents. Protective Services, a program within DHS, investigates the situation to see if it is dangerous for the child to remain in the home. If it is, the police and a Protective Services worker might remove the child immediately and place him in an emergency foster home.



- #1 - Held within 24 hrs.
- #2 - Child remains with parent.
- Could be referred to other community services.
- #3 - Child placed in foster care.
- Scheduled for Pre-Trial.
- #4 - Parents admit allegations in petition.
- Set for dispositional hearing within 35days.
- #5 - Parent denies allegations in petition.
- Set for trial within 42 days.
- #6 - Allegations found to be not true.
- Child returned to parent(s).
- Could be referred to other community services.
- #7 - Allegations found to be true.
- Aet for dispositional hearing within 35 days.
- #8 - Case plan presented to correct problems in the home.
- Court can order all or some of the recommendations.
- Set for review hearing within 91 days.
- #9 - All parties review progress toward case plan.
- #10 - Sufficient progress made towards case plan.
- Child returned to parents.
- Family will be monitored for at least 90 days.
- Could be referred to other community services.
- #11 - Insufficient progress made toward case plan.
- If some progress has been made, set for another review hearing within 91 days.
- If no progress has been made, could be set for termination hearing.
- #12 - All parties review evidence to support lack of progress on case plan and best interest of the child.
- #13 - Sufficient evidence to terminate parental rights.
- Child referred for adoption planning.
- #14 - Insufficient evidence to terminate parental rights.
- Set for another review hearing.

2. Voluntary Placement

Voluntary placement is another way a child can come into care. There may be a good reason why the parent is temporarily unable to care for the child. Some of the reasons that are considered acceptable are; inadequate housing for a short time or hospitalization of the mother and no one else can care for the child. Voluntary placements are usually for three weeks or less, however, extensions can be given. The agency responsible for placing the child will make payment for services.

Carlotta And Franky (a story)

Carlotta huddled in the corner of the back room where her bed stood. She reached down for her rag doll, touching the cold linoleum floor with her bare feet. Hugging her doll close, she listened to the voices in the other room. She could hear her Momma, a strange lady and her older brother Franklin, whom everybody called Franky. He was ten and Carlotta was six last August. At first, the voices were soft, then they got louder and Momma was crying. Carlotta started to shake all over. Franky wasn't saying anything now so she knew he was mad. Franky always closed his mouth real hard and clenched his hands when he got mad.

She touched the red welt over her right eye and winced, remembering the awful look on Momma's face when she took a frying pan and hit her. It was yesterday, just after she and Poppa had a fight and he left again. Carlotta was hungry and asked Momma how come there was nothing to eat. Momma got so mad that Carlotta thought she must be a very bad little girl. It wasn't right to ask so many questions.

The voices in the other room were soft again. Then the strange lady came through the tattered curtain that separated the two rooms of their house. She had a briefcase in her hand. On it were shiny gold letters that made words Carlotta couldn't read. The lady smiled and smelled of perfume. She sat on the edge of the bed and talked but Carlotta couldn't understand her because her head hurt. Momma was crying in the front room. Franky stood in the doorway looking scared and mad at the same time. Then the lady started to pick up Franky's and her clothes, putting them in a paper sack. She wrapped Carlotta in a blanket and carried her into the front room. Momma looked at her real

sad and this made Carlotta cry. Momma turned away. Carlotta thought she did that because she was so bad and asked so many questions.

Outside there was a man in a uniform — a policeman. Carlotta thought they must be going to prison because they were bad. The policeman tried to take Franky by the hand but he wouldn't let him. They got into the car and went a long way. They stopped outside a red brick house. The front door had a mat that had bright red and blue flowers on it. A lady let them in who reminded Carlotta of her grandmother. She was round with big warm hands that were always patting you. As Carlotta looked around the house, she saw a big sofa, shiny wood and a picture on the wall of a beautiful boat sailing into an orange sun.

There was the smell of cookies baking, too. Carlotta couldn't help sniffing and looking towards the kitchen. She wondered why they were here but she would never ask questions any more. The lady took her out to the kitchen and gave her a glass of milk and a cookie. Carlotta thought that if the lady knew how really bad she was she wouldn't be so nice to her but would hit her like Momma. The lady patted Carlotta's hand and said she could eat as many cookies as she wanted. Then she said that they would be staying with her for awhile until Momma could take them back.

Carlotta wanted to ask where her Momma was but she didn't dare. She wondered if Momma was sick or sad. As she took another cookie, Carlotta thought that maybe it would be nice here but she wasn't sure. She would wait and see.

The Plan

What Is The Caseworker Doing?

While you're busy caring for your foster child, your caseworker is involved with many different activities. She must develop a case plan that involves foster parents, courts, attorneys, relatives, friends, doctors and counselors. Since the goal for the child is a permanent home, the worker is preparing him to either return home or be adopted. The case plan will determine which course of action your caseworker will follow:

When The Plan Is To Return Home

a. Work With the Birth Family

When the plan is to return home, the worker is often very involved with the child's birth parents. Together they are working on the problems that made it necessary for the child to be removed from home. Some examples of the activities that the worker and birth parents might be involved in are:

- gathering family history
- drawing up an agreement that describes the steps that need to be taken before the child can return home. This agreement will correct the issues that lead to removal of the child.
- the worker may be making referrals for support and assistance for the birth parent (e.g. counseling, medical help, housing).

b. Preparation for Court

Because the worker is involved with the birth parents, she is the best person to provide information to the court on the progress of the case. It is often the recommendation of the worker that determines the court decision.

When The Plan Is Adoption

When it is decided to seek adoption for the child, another caseworker will be brought in. The foster care worker will still be involved but only in those services related to foster care. However, the adoption worker will be responsible for all aspects of the adoption. The foster parent will be asked to work together with the worker to prepare the child for adoption.



The adoption process may go quickly or it may take a long time. The length of time depends on such things as; availability of an adoptive family, the child's special needs or background (i.e., age, part of sibling group, etc.). The following is a partial list of activities the adoption worker may be involved in:

• **Recruitment of adoptive family:**

Making contacts with other agencies, workers or possibly the media to match the child and the family.

• **Conferences with child:**

These may or may not begin right away. When an adoptive family seems like a possibility in the near future, the worker will prepare the child mentally and emotionally for the move.

• **Conferences with foster parent:**

The adoption worker will often need to get information from the foster parent in order to make some decision about the kind of parents that would be best for the child.

• **Prepare material for court:**

The worker must appear in court to get permission for the child to be adopted. It will be necessary to demonstrate that the family will be good parents for the child.

Other activities might include putting together information on the child, such as writing a history, making quarterly reports, contacting teachers, doctors and so on.

The Foster Parent

Foster parents are one of the most important elements in the child's journey to permanency. This is because they are closest to the child and can directly influence his attitudes and actions.

What A Plan Of Return Home Means To The Foster Parent

It is vital that the foster parents support the plan to return the child to his birth parents. This may seem hard at first because the child has suffered abuse or neglect. It should be remembered, however, that the birth parents are also suffering. They may be feeling guilt, anger, depression, or helplessness. The birth parents are often themselves victims of abuse or neglect from their parents. Their poor parenting is often a part of a never-ending cycle of inadequacy and suffering that must be broken. The best way to do this is to help them become worthwhile parents.

The relationship between the foster parents and the birth parents is especially important. If the child sees that both families are able to communicate, it helps him to feel more secure and hastens the healing process. It also frees the child from having to choose between two sets of parents for affection.

The birth parents need to be encouraged in their efforts to become better parents. However, each family may have certain notions about the other. The birth parents may see the foster parents as representing the agency who took their child away. Or, they may resent the foster parents because they are a constant reminder of their own failure as parents. However, birth parents may appreciate the care foster parents are giving their children.

On the other hand, the foster parents may see the birth parents as not loving the child or being irresponsible. They may feel that because the situation wasn't the best for the child, he should be taken from the home permanently. It is seldom that the birth parents do not feel love for their child. It is their parenting skills which may be inadequate, not their capacity to love.

There are many things foster parents can do to help the birth parents build better parenting skills:

- Include them in such decisions as shopping for clothes, getting haircuts, gifts, etc.
- Notify them of special school achievements, school problems or parent-teacher conferences.



- Include them in doctor's appointments.
- Ask them about the child's likes and dislikes, food or sleep habits.
- Send them birthday cards or Christmas cards.
- Send them photographs of their child.
- Praise them when you see improvements in their behavior.
- Ask them to help with feeding of the child during visits.

All these things will make the birth parents feel they are a part of their child's life. Every chance to involve the parents gives them dignity and brings them closer to becoming a family again.

Birth Parent Visits

If the plan for the child is to return home, the social worker will be encouraging the birth parents to visit their child regularly. These visits are essential to rebuild and strengthen the parent-child relationship. The social worker will discuss the parenting time schedule with the foster parent prior to visits. Visits will reassure the child that their birth parents have not died or abandoned him. They will also give the child the opportunity to see that their parents are working towards the goal of reunification.

Sometimes foster parents have the opinion that the visits are not good for the child, especially if the child is upset after a visit or the birth parent is late, or, if a birth parent dresses or acts in a way that bothers the foster parents. It is normal for foster parents to have this reaction since they feel protective towards the child. However it is necessary to look beyond appearances and minor behaviors and respect the bond between the birth parents and the child.

There are always reasons why people act the way they do. Foster parents often wonder why the birth parent is not able to give their child adequate care. Some reasons are physical or mental illness; being unable to budget money; substance abuse; marriage problems; or perhaps they were too young when they had children. Many birth parents never learned to handle stress. When problems occurred, they took out their frustrations on their children. Whatever the reasons, the birth parents should be given every chance to improve because it's important to the child as well as the birth parents.

Agnes And Jim (a story)

Agnes and Jim had been foster parents for ten years. They loved caring for foster children. Many of the children in their care came back to visit them when they were grown. Agnes and Jim had always felt that their home was a better place for the child than where they had come from. They resented it when their caseworker wanted them to get involved with the child's birth parents.

Then Gloria came to stay with them. A shy eight year-old who came to them with dark circles under her eyes and was so thin you could count her ribs. Agnes and Jim fell in love with her right away but decided to try out what their caseworker was asking them to do.

They encouraged Gloria to talk about her parents and even helped her put together a photo album of her family. Everybody was nervous on the first few visits. Agnes and Jim involved Gloria's parents in as many things as they could; shopping for clothes, dentist appointments, teacher conferences and so on. In the beginning, they didn't always show up or sometimes they were late. Gloria would feel bad and think they didn't come because she had somehow caused all this trouble. There was bedwetting and nightmares, too.

Agnes and Jim wondered how this could be helping Gloria. They confronted their caseworker about it and she said that it was a normal reaction. If the child is upset around the birth parents, it means that the parents are important to the child. She asked them to just stay with it awhile longer.

After six months, things began to change. The home visits went smoother. Agnes could call Gloria's mother and chat about Gloria's latest news. The bedwetting and nightmares stopped. Finally the day came that Gloria was to go home again. Agnes and Jim were sorry to see her go but they knew that things were going to be better for her now at home. When Gloria's parents came to pick her up, they thanked Agnes and Jim for all they had done. With tears in their eyes, they told how these two had helped them to believe in themselves again. By treating them with respect and dignity, Agnes and Jim made them feel they could be parents again. As the three happy people drove away, Agnes and Jim looked at each other and nodded. They knew they had done the right thing.

What A Plan Of Adoption Means To The Foster Parent

The child must be a permanent ward of the court before adoption can be the plan. As discussed in Part II, this means that the parents' legal rights to the child have been taken away. Adoption Services are provided by DHS' adoption staff or by the adoption staff of several private agencies under contract with the Department.

Once adoption becomes the plan, the worker must first take some steps to prepare the child for adoption. This is begun by telling the child that he will not be returning to the birth family. Being told this is a very upsetting

experience for the child. However, it must be done if the child is to feel emotionally ready to accept an adoptive family.

Another step in the preparation of the child for adoption is the making of a **life book**. This book is put together by the child, his foster parents and his case-worker. The purpose of the book is to give the child concrete evidence of his past and present. The book may include anything that establishes a sense of identity; pictures, drawings, mementos, awards, report cards, letters, birth

and medical documents. This method of establishing a link with the child's past is very important to prepare her for the future.

Once the child is ready for adoption, foster parents and relatives will be given consideration before a recruited family.

Moving In And Out

Foster parents are very important in helping prepare a child to move from their home as well as in receiving them into their home. Foster care is not a permanent solution for the child. There will be at least two big moves in his life; into foster care and either back to the birth family or into an adoptive family.

If a child is moving in, one of the most helpful things foster parents can do is to physically comfort the child, if he will allow it. Also, Foster Parents need to accept the feelings the child has. Moving for a child is a very intense experience. Feelings may range from fear, anger, and helplessness to resignation or relief. The child will need help to express those feelings in appropriate ways. Nightmares and bedwetting are very common in children when a separation occurs and are indications that the child is upset. It is better not to comment too much on these behaviors. Instead, help the child to talk about his feelings. In time, he will come to feel more secure and such behaviors will go away.

There can also be moves from one foster home to another. There are many reasons for this: the child's own needs, foster family problems, illness, etc. Whatever the reason for the move, the foster parent needs to help prepare the child.

Helping the child express his feelings is one way foster parents can prepare a child for a move in to or out of their home. Foster Parents can share their own feelings about separating from the child and how they have come to care deeply for the child. All separations cause feelings of loss or pain. This is normal and will take time to **work itself out**. The child needs to know that he is cared about. This will help him see the importance of relationships and that he need not stop caring because he is leaving one home and going to another.

When a child is leaving a home, it is necessary that he understand why a move is needed. The reason needs to be explained in clear, age appropriate language so there is no confusion. This will help not only to ease the uncertainty he feels but help him to adjust to his new home more easily.

When the child is leaving the foster home, there is a great deal the foster parent can do to help bridge the gap. The child will feel that he has permission to move if the foster parent takes an interest in the details of the move. The foster parent can also share a wealth of information with the new family about the child's habits, favorite foods, special schedules, etc. The foster parent can also tell what worked and didn't work with discipline and where any problems are apt to arise. Doing this will give the child a sense of consistency between the families he has loved in the past and will love in the future.

Foster Parent Adoption

If the child has been in your home for longer than twelve months, you may be asked if you want to adopt the child. The DHS encourages foster parent adoption, since the child has already formed an attachment to the foster parent. It would also mean that the child would not have to go through the separation and readjustment process again. The length of stay of a child in the particular foster family is a big factor in the decision by DHS to approve adoption.

If the foster parent expresses an interest in adopting a permanent ward, they then apply for a **home study**. This is an evaluation done to determine whether the family is able to meet the needs of the child.

Three important points are included in this policy. First, this policy applies only to permanent wards of the State of Michigan. It does not apply when a child is a permanent ward of another state, another country or a private agency. Second, the policy does not guarantee adoption of a foster child. The foster family can apply and will be given serious consideration. However, if factors exist that do not make adoption by the foster family in the best interest of the child, the application may not be approved.

Third, interested relatives will be given the same opportunity to apply to adopt the child that is given to the foster parent. If both a relative and foster parent want to adopt the child, the Department will recommend the family that it believes best meets the needs of the child.

An important fact to remember is that the focus of a foster parent adoption is to help the child. This is because the child may already have formed a good relationship with the foster parents. She knows them and feels absorbed into their family life. The ideal would be that this would become a permanent relationship through adoption; therefore, the Department of Human Services generally feels that it is best for a child to be adopted by the foster family. However, placement with relatives,

placement with siblings and other placement criteria must be considered before a decision is made. This may result in the foster parents not being selected for adoption. When this happens, the help of the foster family is very important in preparing the child for a new adoptive home. The foster parents should, under no circumstances, feel guilty if they do not wish to adopt.

There is financial subsidy for those foster families who decide to adopt and who qualify. This subsidy would help pay for shelter, food, and clothing. It is usually a flat rate payment. There is also a medical subsidy if the child needs special medical attention for a specific condition the child had before she was adopted.

Adoption Through The Department Of Human Services

If the foster family does not adopt a child in their care or the child is not placed with a relative, the Department will seek to place the child with a recruited family. Initial recruitment is done by adoption staff of a private agency under contract with the Department or by Department adoption staff. After the child has been available for six months, and no family has been identified to adopt the child, the child's photo and information about the child is placed in the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) which is available through the Department, private adoption agencies and many libraries.

Tom (a story)

Tom was six months old when he went into foster care. He was born to an unmarried sixteen year-old who was not prepared to give him all the things he needed. Tom was born with cerebral palsy. This frightened her even more because she didn't understand the nerve disorder. Even though she was willing to learn to care for Tom, pressure from relatives caused this young mother to more and more neglect her child.

The DHS was called in to help. The caseworker put Tom into foster care and began to counsel the mother on the best plan for her child. The worker and mother tried for nearly a year to overcome all the financial, emotional and social blocks. The mother visited Tom often in the beginning, then the visits began to drop off. Finally, she decided to give the child up for adoption. It took four more years for an adoptive family to be found that could meet Tom's needs.

During Tom's five years in foster care, his foster mother worked regularly with his caseworker to plan diet, exercise and medical help. She took Tom to a special school each day where he learned to feed and dress himself. Eventually Tom learned to walk with leg braces.

When the news came that Tom was to be adopted, his foster mother thought he would move in to his new home right away. She had come to love Tom as much as any of her own children, so she knew it would be hard to let him go. Tom's caseworker explained to her that there would be many visits by the adoptive parents before he moved. As Tom's foster mother, she would be able to help him make the adjustment. So, she began to talk to Tom about his new family. At first, Tom was afraid of the change, his foster mother was the only mother he'd ever known. But gradually, with encouragement, he began to talk about his new home.

When the visits began, Tom's foster mother shared with the new parents all the things she'd learned about Tom over the years. Like any proud mother, she boasted about his successes. She shared family pictures, stories of special happenings, Tom's loves and hates and what kinds of discipline worked best: all the things parents would need to know to become a part of their child's life.

When the day finally came to say good-bye, Tom's foster mother had mixed feelings. She was sad to see him go but she was happy, too. Happy because she had been a bridge for Tom between his past and his new future.

Foster Parent Responsibilities

1. To give tender loving care — the same type of care given to one's own children.
2. To have your home meet and maintain licensing standards to be licensed and remain in good standing.
3. To provide shelter, well-balanced, nutritious meals, personal care, including: laundry, cleaning, toilet articles, haircuts, recreation.
4. To demonstrate ethical, responsible and caring behaviors in the community.
5. To provide learning stimulation for the children by reading to the younger children and encouraging the older children to read and develop good study habits. To encourage constructive play with games such as checkers, puzzles, monopoly, building blocks, water colors, crayons, etc.
6. To provide for school attendance, educational needs, book rental and incidental supplies; to bring any special educational needs to the attention of the caseworker; to encourage the development of any special talent a child may have.
7. To discuss with the caseworker emotional and/or behavioral factors that may affect the plan for the child.
8. To show, by example and instruction, good habits for health and cleanliness.
9. To help teach money management skills by providing an individual allowance for the child based on the age and developmental needs of the child.
10. To take care of the child as long as he is in need of foster care. (If circumstances in the foster home are changed through accidents or illness such that it is impractical or impossible to care for the child, other arrangements can be made.)
11. To accompany a child in need of medical and/or dental services to the doctor's or dentist's office.
12. To keep a medical record of the child.
13. To notify the agency of a change of address or telephone number.
14. To allow a child to participate in the religion of his choice.
15. To report any change in the family living situation.
16. To discuss plans with the caseworker before boarding or lodging other children or adults in the home.
17. To be respectful of the bond between the child and the birth parents by encouraging them to visit regularly and trying to make the visits as pleasant as possible.
18. To notify the agency before taking the child for extended trips in time or distance; to consult with the caseworker about any extended baby-sitting arrangements.

Department of Human Services (DHS) will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to a DHS office in your area.