

Foster Families



**CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
OF WESTERN MANITOBA**
SERVICES À L'ENFANT ET À LA
FAMILLE DE L'OUEST DU MANITOBA

We exist so that children are safe
and nurtured in strong, loving
families within a community of
caring people

www.cfswestern.mb.ca

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About CFS Western

Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba (CFS Western) is a private, non-profit, community-based charitable Agency. The Agency is led by a community-elected volunteer Board of Directors.

The Agency's goals are to:

- **Strengthen** and **support** families
- **Protect** children from neglect, abuse and exploitation
- **Ensure children** in our care are parented appropriately
- **Work in partnership** with the community
- **Be a recognized leader** in the advancement of health and well-being of children and families in southwestern Manitoba

CFS Western achieves their mission and goals by providing mandated protection and preventative services to Westman children seen to be at risk of neglect and abuse, offering effective family strengthening programs to Westman communities with services that seek to support families as well as protect children, and ensuring staff receive current training, evidence-based practice and professional development opportunities to continually enhance the quality service and support they provide to clients.

The Agency serves an area of about 12,000 square miles in southwestern Manitoba, reaching a potential population of approximately 180,000.



Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

CFS' responsibility to children

Newborns, teenagers, and even sibling groups who are unable to remain in their family home all need love, nurturing and a safe place to live where their most basic childhood needs can be met.

Foster families are CFS Western's primary resource for these children. They work in partnership with social workers, other professionals, and the child's birth parents to give children the best support possible. CFS Western's foster families receive ongoing training and support in dealing with the challenges and rewards of fostering.



Fostering a child means:

- Becoming part of a team with CFS Western and working collaboratively with Agency social workers and resources.
- Accepting and loving a child who may have difficulty returning affection.
- Helping a child with their emotional, physical, mental and spiritual development.
- Providing a child food, clothing, shelter and a safe environment.
- Supporting the child's relationship with their birth family.

Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Why become a foster family

When protection issues in a family threaten a child's safety and they need care outside of their own home, foster families provide a warm safe place for them to be while their family's problems are being worked through.

Foster parents and families help children who deserve an opportunity to be kids experience a safe relationship with caring adults and other family members. Even if you can only foster one child, that's one life you will help turn around.

"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or what kind of car I drove...but the world may be a better place because I was important in the life of a child."

anonymous

Other reasons to become a foster family:

- You have room in your heart and your home.
- Your family is ready to accept the challenge of fostering.
- You believe children need to remain connected to their communities and families.
- You are ready to support a child to maintain their cultural and spiritual identity.
- You have a desire to help make a difference in the life of a child or youth.
- You are needed to help children and youth develop into healthy, confident, and stable people.

Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Responsibilities of foster parents/families

Foster parents and families must be able to:

- Accept a child's spiritual and cultural practices.
- Provide appropriate physical space and a safe environment.
- Provide stable and consistent parenting practices.
- Offer honesty and integrity.
- Have time to spend with their foster children.
- Support the child's relationship and contact with their birth family.



Foster parents and families are responsible to share their home and family with children in care. They are also responsible for the child's daily care—following a plan and meeting the child's individual needs. As part of a team that cares for and about the child, a foster family's observations and notes of the child's behaviour and experiences in the home are invaluable.

Foster parents must also want and be able to help foster children reunite with their birth family. When a child enters CFS Western's care, the Agency ensures the birth family is involved and informed of events in their child's life. Most foster children have ongoing visits, sometimes with Agency supervision, with their birth parents. As such, it is important that foster parents and families are supportive of that contact.

Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Responsibilities of foster parents/families

Other foster parent/family responsibilities include:

- Helping children move on to another permanent home if needed.
- Helping young adults move on to independent living.
- Sharing the parental role of fostering a child with both CFS Western and the child's birth parents.

Foster parents and families must also be prepared for the ups and downs of fostering. Because of what the child may have experienced, they may go through stages of anger, depression, frustration and sadness. It is important that foster families remain sensitive to these experiences and temperaments while still setting limits and showing the child what is expected of them (and what they can expect) through everyday routines. But most importantly, foster parents and families need to be patient, caring and understanding of what these children have gone through.



Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Who foster parents are

Foster parents are:

- At minimum 18 years of age
- Male or female
- With or without their own children
- From all cultural backgrounds
- Home owners or home renters
- Retired
- Employed outside of the home
- Living in southwestern Manitoba
- Married, single, divorced, widowed or living common-law (for a minimum of 12 months)
- Physically and mentally capable of meeting a fosters child's needs
- Free from a major illness or trauma in the past 12 months



Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Who foster children are

A child who comes in CFS Western foster care is a child who is experiencing an interruption in their current attachment with their birth parent(s). Often these traumatized children have special needs that may include behavioural, emotional or learning challenges. What they all have in common is that they require care, nurturing, comfort, security and stability.

A foster child can be:

- Male or female
- Newborn to 18 years of age
- Part of a sibling group (CFS Western often needs foster homes for sibling groups)
- A special needs child



These children have lived through experiences at home that could include parents with addictions, mental health struggles, who lack parenting skills or have unresolved grief or trauma. Some foster children have suffered neglect, abandonment and exposure to domestic violence. For some, physical, sexual or mental abuse has also been real.

Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Frequently asked questions

How long are children in care?

Placements may last from a day to many years depending on each child's individual circumstance. Most children who come into care remain for only brief periods of time before returning to their birth family, extended family or cultural community.

The primary goals of fostering are to:

- Protect children for the time that they are not able to live with their birth family.
- Reunify child and parent.
- While a child is in care, provide their birth family with a variety of services to resolve the problems which led to the child's removal in the first place.



Is there a limit on the number of children that can be in a foster home?

In most cases, there can be no more than four foster children in a foster home. However, there are some circumstances when exceptions are made (for example, placement of large sibling groups).

Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Frequently asked questions

Do foster parents choose the children who come into their homes?

Foster parents select the age range and gender of the children who come into their home, and they can help decide if a child's placement in their home is appropriate.

Every attempt is made to match the child's individual needs. This provides needed stability for foster children.

Do foster children need their own bedroom?

Foster children do not always require their own bedroom. However, it is required that:

- If a child is over two (2) years of age, they do not share a bedroom with an adult.
- A foster child over the age of five (5) years old does not share a bedroom with a person of the opposite sex.
- Children who are sharing a bedroom should be of similar age.
- No basement area or room is to be used for sleep unless specifically inspected and approved.
- Children must also have ample room for storage of their clothing and other possessions.



Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Frequently asked questions

How are foster parents compensated?

Foster parents receive a monthly payment to cover the costs of raising the child. There are a number of approved methods for financially compensating foster parents.

The rates allow foster parents to provide for physical needs, including food, shelter, clothing, personal items, transportation and recreation. Additional funds may be available for expenses such as sports, music lessons, cultural activities and other special needs. These funds are issued based on the assessed case plan needs of each individual child.

- **Basic maintenance rate** reimburses foster parents for expenses incurred meeting day to day needs of foster children, and is set based on the age of the child. The regular monthly rate (based on a 30-day month) for a child newborn to age 11 is \$663.30, and \$823.50 for a child aged 11 to 17.
- **Special rates** compensate foster parents based on their demonstrated abilities to meet the needs of a specific child. This is assessed through a completed document 30 days after a child is placed within a home.



Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Frequently asked questions

Do foster families have contact with birth families?

Foster parents should expect some level of contact with birth families and extended family. These will vary according to the child's care plan and may include:

- Sending written information about the child.
- Making phone calls.
- Face-to-face contact (during visits, trips to the doctor, school, etc.).

Foster parent contact with birth parents can be positive for a variety of reasons, including lessening a child's anxieties and loyalty issues, providing opportunities for mentoring, and modelling good parenting behaviours.

What support is available to foster families?

CFS Western provides individual and ongoing support via support workers. Training is also made available through workshops, conferences, and accredited courses. CFS Western tries to create a community for foster parents of peer support and socialization.

I have a previous criminal record. Am I ineligible?

Criminal records need to be discussed with social workers. Any positive results of the criminal record check will be evaluated as part of an assessment. Convictions that include violence, threats, and/or actions that would reflect poor judgment and potentially compromise child safety would point to ineligibility for acceptance into the Foster Parent/Family program.



Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Types of foster care

Foster care of children can be for a variety of reasons and for a variety of times.

Emergency—Emergency care is for urgent situations when a child requires immediate placement within a home for an undetermined amount of time.

Emergency-care foster families are prepared to accept children on short notice at any time of the day or night, often with little information and sometimes with a child in poor health or physical condition.

Short-term—There is no specific timeline; however, the expectation is that the children will not stay within the home as a long-term placement. The placement could be for as little as a few days.

Long-term—Though this time period is not necessarily known, the expectation is that children will remain in the home for a long period of time, usually more than a few weeks.

Respite—Respite homes are needed as a support to other foster parents. They provide care for foster children for a specific length of time to allow other foster parents the opportunity for a break.



Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Things to consider when considering fostering

There are many challenges and rewards to becoming a foster family. Even so, people need to think about some things before taking fostering on:

- Is emergency foster care or regular foster care a better fit for your family?
- What age and gender of children would you prefer to foster?
- Would you consider caring for children with special needs or for sibling groups?
- How will fostering affect other children in your home?
- Do you speak a second language?
- Would you be willing to care for children from different cultural backgrounds?



Fostering a child or children involves the entire family. Adding a new person to the family means an adjustment for everyone, not just for the foster child coming into the home. Not only are there changes when a foster child joins a family, but also when that child leaves the foster home.

Fostering gives families a chance to help children and their families through a difficult time. Foster families are also rewarded by watching and helping a child grow and gain confidence and by seeing the child or children get back together with their birth family.

Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Ready to get started?

Step 1—Initial Meeting

A social worker will visit a potential foster home to meet with prospective foster parents and discuss any questions they may have. Together with the parents, the social worker will tour the home to ensure that basic safety standards as set by the Province are achievable and complete a physical standards checklist.

At this stage, the adults residing in the home must complete a Criminal Record Check, a Child Abuse Registry Check, a Prior Contact Check, and provide a Driver's Abstract to CFS Western.



Step 2—Application

Applications to become foster parents/families must include four references as well as a medical reference.

Step 3—Home Study

The social worker will arrange various appointments to meet with the foster parent applicant and their family. The **Home Study** will include discussions about the family's history, family relationships, and significant events. It will also show the worker how the applicant family works together.

Families Come In All Shapes And Sizes

Ready to get started?

Step 4—Orientation Day

All candidates are required to attend a full day workshop designed to cover the world of children entering care, their needs, and the variety of ways to take care of those needs.

Attendees also receive direction and training regarding acceptable disciplinary practices—physical discipline is not permitted.

Step 5—Final Step

After the home study, a recommendation is made by the social worker. This includes the number of children that could be placed in the home as well as the foster parents and family's strengths and skills. It also includes any possible limitations the applicant family brings to fostering.

CFS Western's Supervisor of Resource Development and Chief Executive Officer are part of the steps to licensing. Once the home study is approved, applicants will be granted a license that states the numbers, ages and genders of children the foster parents/family is permitted to care for.

A foster parent/family license is valid for one year, with a re-approval process needing to be completed annually. CFS Western licensed foster parents are expected to attend ongoing annual training.

For more information about becoming a foster parent and family, please contact:

Foster Parent Recruitment and Training

Telephone..... 204-726-7190 or toll free 1-800-483-8980

Email fostering@cfswestern.mb.ca

Website www.cfswestern.mb.ca

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