NORRIS

BEYOND FOSTERING

THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

"From the first interaction...we knew that Norris was an agency that would make a great partner for our family as we entered into providing foster care."

This eBook is intended to provide information and answer questions to help you decide if you are interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent with Norris.

Foster care is temporary care for children provided by licensed foster families when children are unable to live with their parents due to abuse or neglect.

***Therapeutic foster parents** at Norris generally have experience in working with children or parenting children as well as the willingness and ability to parent foster children who have behavioral, emotional and/or medical challenges.*

We partner with counties across the state of Wisconsin to provide therapeutic foster homes for children and youth. Our goals include:

- Providing safety and stability, and enhancing the quality of life for children and youth
- Facilitating the child's treatment team in establishing a comprehensive treatment plan
- Supporting timely permanence for children
- Cultivating and nurturing positive lifelong connections
- Building resilience while focusing on individual and family strengths

We asked foster parents to talk about why they foster, as well as what continues to inspire them...

A Calling...

Many foster parents share that they were called to foster care and that they have a strong faith that pushed them in this direction, or felt a civic responsibility to help the community.

"We wanted to be able to help children and families, and we have the resources to do so."

"We prayed on how to help our community and God told us to become foster parents."

Impact...

As a foster parent, you can be that one caring adult that makes a difference. When you provide a safe place for a child in need, you make a positive lifelong impact.

"The most rewarding aspect of providing foster care is helping children when they are most vulnerable. With the help of the entire team, we hope we can provide safety, love, and some normalcy for children in our care."

"Knowing I was helping kids with what they were struggling with on all levels and having a great team to work with."

Connections...

It feels good to help others.

"I have helped by being a part of a child's extended family."

"When they come back after they graduate. Come visit you, say hi, and thank you for what you've done. It's the most rewarding thing."

NORRIS
BEYOND FOSTERING
THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Deciding to become a foster parent is a big decision, and you probably have a lot of questions. We asked foster parents to complete this sentence, "I almost didn't foster because…"

I had to convice my spouse or partner.

It is important for foster parents to have support from their family and friends. Norris staff are available to talk with families and answer their questions.

I was not aware of the community support that would be available.

Norris staff will help you identify supports that make the most sense for you - that could include family, friends, neighbors, other foster parents, foster parent support groups, or a variety of other community resources.

I already have two kids OR my kids are too young OR my kids just left OR I have never parented before OR I'm too old OR I'm a single parent.

Every family is different and evolves from their unique experiences and strengths. Norris staff are here to help you identify what type of fostering would be the best fit for your family - you could be a respite foster parent, or a foster parent caring for a child for a longer period of time; you may find that caring for teenage boys would be a good fit, or that elementary school - aged children would be best. If you have not parented before, we look to see what experience you have had caring for others or working in a helping field.

I'm nervous about meeting the birth parents.

It is understandable that there might be some anxiety in meeting and building a relationship with a foster child's biological family; however the majority of the time, the goal is for children to return home...so it is crucial to focus on how to make the situation as smooth as possible for children and for children to see all of their parents getting along and focusing on a common goal - loving a child. Children's outcomes improve when they see their foster parents and biological parents working together. Norris foster parents receive training and support in how to navigate this complex relationship. We believe that positive, lifelong impact occurs when foster parents not only provide care for the child in their home, but focus on creating relationships with the children's family with the goal of sustaining change - **Beyond Fostering**. We believe that when positive connections are made, anything is possible.

I was worried about the impact on my biological children.

"Our biological daughter grew up with teenage foster brothers in our home. This allowed her to have siblings and now she is an Aunt to so many of their children. It has expanded her understanding of trauma and has led her to be an influence in many of her peer's lives."- Sara, Foster Parent

"My mom and dad were worried about how having a foster sibling would affect me, but I am glad that fear of the unknown didn't stop them. My foster brother blended right into our family when he came to live with us. He was younger than me which I think was helpful because my role in our family changed. I was no longer the youngest. It taught me to be more responsible and more of a role model. I thought of fostering as an adventure because I didn't know what to expect, but nothing really major changed in our family when he came to live with us except we became stronger and spent more time together. I also learned that he had a very different type of life than I did, and I felt sad that he couldn't be with his sisters, brothers, and his mom. He missed them a lot, so I tried to be the best brother I could to help him feel safe. The time we spent together and the relationship we built helped me realize that helping others is an important part of life. After 6 months, he got to go back to his family which was hard but happy. We still talk and joke around on Facetime, and I think we always will." - Jack, age 14

Norris staff will provide training to you and help you to best answer your children's questions and prepare them for welcoming a new child into your home.

It seems that the process to become a foster parent is overwhelming and there is a lot of paperwork.

Yes, there is paperwork. Norris staff are here to walk you through the process (we have checklists!) and can get you in contact with a licensed foster parent if you have specific questions you would like answered from someone who has gone through the process themselves. The paperwork is not arbitrary, but dictated by the state of Wisconsin to ensure that we are licensing safe foster homes. The first step is to **contact us** to request more information and/or schedule a time to meet via phone, video conference or in person to answer your questions and learn more about what you can expect.

Why should I become a foster parent?

Children are resilient, and thrive when they have stability and healthy relationships. We believe that when positive connections are made, anything is possible. You can make a positive impact in the lives of children and their families, giving them hope for the future. You can help mentor other parents to be the kind of parents that their children need.

You can make lifelong connections.

Tell me about the kids...

"It is rewarding to see the kiddos make progress. Seeing the emotional and physical changes. I love hearing them go from screaming and yelling to expressing their feelings and saying, 'I'm very frustrated. How do you think I feel?'"

Children deserve to be loved, have a chance to be a child, and to be treated with respect. Children in foster care are brave, resilient, misunderstood, and vulnerable. They ultimately are in need of a safe, stable home with a consistent, caring adult. Many children in foster care have experienced complex trauma and may exhibit behavioral concerns or struggle with their emotions; Norris staff are here to help support you in caring for them.

Foster children range in age from 0-21 and present with varying strengths and challenges. Here are some examples of children and youth referred to our program...*

Joy

Joy (transgender – identifies as male, aged 15) suffers from anxiety and depression and is prescribed medication. Joy has experienced significant sexual abuse and requires a high level of supervision as it relates to social media.

Damian (male, aged 16) is currently placed in a group home and has been doing well. He wants to be placed with a family. He has a delinquency order as last year he was involved with the wrong crowd and vandalized property. Since then he has not had any incidents with the law. He does well in school when he puts his mind to it. Damian is a likeable kid who loves to play jokes, video games and basketball.

Damian

Summer

Summer (female, aged 14) is needing placement in a foster home as her treatment at a residential treatment center has concluded. Her mother passed away from a drug overdose several years ago. Summer wants to fit in and does well when adults treat her like an equal and are not "super firm". She can be unsure of herself at times and have low self-esteem; she gets overwhelmed easily. She has been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Joshua (male, aged 6) and Jade (female, aged 4) are needing a foster home placement as their parents were arrested and are expected to be incarcerated for several months; there are no known relatives. Jade has no known special needs and appears developmentally on track. Joshua is diagnosed with autism and is high functioning; he is verbal and no physical aggression has been reported. Joshua and Jade get along well with each other.

Joshua & Jade

Josephine

Josephine (female, newborn) was born drug addicted and with a heart defect. Foster parent will need to participate in specialized training at the hospital before she can be released.

Claudia (female, aged 11) and Gina (female, aged 5), are currently placed with a relative and Claudia displayed sexualized behavior toward another child in the home. Both girls are very smart and love to learn. It is unclear at this time the amount of sexual abuse they may have had and/or sexual encounters they were exposed to.

Claudia & Gina

Langston

Langston (male, 22 months old) is needing to be placed in a foster home due to experiencing neglect (parental drug addiction and mental health concerns). He appears to have some delays, for example not being able to walk on his own, is not talking and does not like to play on his own. He loves to be held.

Tressa (female, aged 14) is pregnant and needs a foster home that is willing to parent her and help her parent her own child in a few months. Tressa does well in school and is respectful. She has a history of running away, but that has subsided since she found out she was pregnant.

Tressa

*Names have been changed to respect confidentiality.

Are there specific requirements you need to meet to be licensed as a therapeutic foster parent with Norris?

Of course! Here are a few of the highlights...

- Be single, married, or partnered
- Age 21 or older
- Have enough space in your home
- Be financially stable
- Have support from family and/or friends
- Knowledge of child development
- Have experience working with or caring for children
- Participate in background and reference checks
- Attend and participate in trainings
- Have a sense of humor
- Have energy and time to devote to a child (or children)

Can you care for children for short periods of time or do you have to commit to a longer term placement?

When a child is placed in a foster home, the foster parents assume parenting responsibilities and the child lives in the home with the goal of staying in that home until permanency is achieved. Respite care is short term, generally between 2-7 days. The purpose of respite is to provide short term relief and/or support to the primary caregiver of the child. Norris licenses foster parents to provide both longer term placement and respite.

Do you have more questions? Would you like to talk with one of our current foster parents? Click **here** and one of our foster families will reach out to you.

Norris foster families were asked what they like about fostering as part of Norris' team...

"Everything that I have to say, suggest or question has been considered. I appreciate feeling valued."

"I really enjoy working with Norris and I feel like we're a team wanting the same thing. What's best for children."

"The best thing about Norris is the staff...It has been a really good experience!"

Norris foster parents share this advice with new foster parents...

"*Have a sense of humor."*

"Learn to ask for help, or at the bare minimum accept help in whatever form you have help offered to you."

"Know that [the foster kids] have an invisible suitcase and you're going to be helping them unpack it."

"Lead with your heart but keep your eyes wide open."

"Try to step back and appreciate the things that you can see in the amazing times as well as in the trying times. There are beautiful moments everywhere and sometimes we just need to try a few different perspectives."

"Each foster child is completely different. You have to play to their strengths when they have weak moments."

Do you have more questions? Here is a list of **FAQs** to review and you can also contact us **here**.

OK, I think I'm ready to talk with someone about next steps...

1. **Inquire:** request information **here** or call 262-222-2000.
2. **Attend** an orientation meeting to learn more - this can be arranged via phone, virtual meeting platform, or in-person conversation.
3. **Apply:** complete an application and other required paperwork needed for background and reference checks.
4. **Home Visits:** participate in home visits for psychosocial interviews, allow for the entire home to be viewed, attend training, ask questions.
5. Licensing decision is communicated and if approved, a foster home license is issued. Generally, the licensing process from application receipt through a licensing decision being made takes 60-90 days.
6. A child's team agrees to pursue placement in the foster home. First meeting with the child and his or her family occurs.
7. Child is placed in the foster home. Relationships are built and nurtured.

NORRIS
BEYOND FOSTERING
THERAPEUTIC FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Connecting Families. Changing Lives.

Connections Matter.

Become a Therapeutic Foster Parent.

(262) 222-2000

tfc@norriscenter.org

www.norriscenter.org

© 2020 Norris, Inc.