Therapeutic Foster Care FAQ’s
Treatment-level care in a supportive, family environment.

Do you have a desire to make a difference in the life of a child?

One in 184 children in the U.S. are in the foster care system, meaning a child enters care every two minutes. Call today to learn how you can become a SAFY Foster Parent.

SAFY.org
What does Therapeutic Foster Care mean?
Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) is an intensive, treatment-based approach to meeting the physical and emotional needs of children who have been removed from their home. SAFY’s Therapeutic Foster Care places youth in need of treatment-level care in a supportive, family environment. Our services focus on permanency, safety and well-being for both youth and parents, providing a therapeutic level of care that addresses trauma healing, parental skill building, success in school and coping skills. Our goal is to ensure each child’s physical and emotional safety and facilitate their return to their family or another permanency option.

Who can become a Foster Parent?
Almost anyone who has a desire to help a child can become a Foster Parent. SAFY Foster Parents are…
- Married, single, divorced, widowed and unmarried co-parents
- Employed and retired
- Home owners and renters
- As young as 21 years of age and senior citizens
- Experienced and new parents
- Currently parenting biological or adopted children and parenting for the first time
- Empty nesters
- Any racial background, ethnic background, religious background, or sexual orientation.

Foster Parents are needed to enhance children and teenager’s well-being in a safe, stable, family environment. As a member of SAFY’s Foster Family Network, you can help a child feel safe and provide the guidance and compassion they need to find success in school, in relationships and in life. Our approach ensures parents’ capacity to develop strong and trusting relationships and provide guidance and protection in a safe environment where children thrive and are able to live up to their potential.

How can I get started?
It’s easy! Once you contact SAFY, you will be assigned a Recruitment Specialist who will walk you through each stage of the process. The Recruitment Specialist will schedule a one on one introductory session with your family where you will learn about children and teenagers who need care, review basic foster parent roles, responsibilities and expectations, and any questions your family has about foster parenting, adoption, or the licensure process.

Do children keep in contact with their biological families?
The specific type or amount of contact you have with a child’s parents depends on their reasons for being in care and how quickly reunification with their biological family is expected to occur. You will learn about the importance of family connections in training. As part of the SAFY treatment team, you receive support and guidance around each child placed in your home to help navigate their individual path to reunification.
What if I need a break?
Foster Parents are provided with planned periodic time away from foster youth, called “respite care.” Respite care is a support service for Foster Parents – a scheduled period of rest and relief from the responsibilities of parenting foster youth. Parenting can be stressful and respite care allows the foster parent time to rest. Respite care may also be needed when foster parents have an emergency situation in their own family. SAFY pays all respite care providers for overnight childcare as long as it is pre-approved by the SAFY office. SAFY strongly encourages all Foster Parents to designate friends/family members who can assist their family with child care and with respite. As part of the Foster Family Network, you are connected with other SAFY Foster Parents and respite providers who can provide you with support and child care.

I have an interest in fostering a child of a certain age. Is this program right for me?
The average age of a child in foster care in the United States is ten. SAFY, however, works with a variety of youth who are in need of a home. Our Therapeutic Foster Care Services support youth from newborn to age 18+ who have experienced trauma. Many of these youth have cognitive or behavioral problems, developmental delays, and aggressive behaviors, special medical needs including autism, and require support to manage complex trauma issues stemming from abuse and/or neglect and removal from their home environment. During the licensure process, your SAFY licensing worker will ask you about the age, gender and special needs of children you are interested in fostering, and work with you to develop your skill set to serve these youth and to help them heal from trauma.

Do I receive support from SAFY?
Yes! Our support services include:

• Extensive, specialized training and development before and after licensure
• One on one support in the home after a youth is placed
• In-home or out of home respite care (temporary breaks for Foster Parents)
• Financial reimbursement
• Therapy with the child, Foster Family and members of the child’s family of origin, when appropriate
• 24-hour emergency on-call services
• Mentoring network led by seasoned Foster Parents
• Assessment and clinical interventions as needed
• Advocacy in school, court and community

Do I have input regarding the youth placed in my home?
Yes! SAFY respects your family situation and wants to place a child in your home that will be the best fit both for your family and for the youth. Once you are licensed, SAFY staff will work closely with you to match your skill set with a youth or sibling group.
Do youth need their own bedroom space?
This can vary from child to child. In some cases, a foster youth may share a bedroom with your child/another foster child of the same gender depending on their treatment plan and individual needs. Foster children must have a bed of their own and cannot share a bed or sleep on a temporary bed (i.e. cot, futon, trundle bed). A foster child may not share a bedroom with any adult. Your SAFY licensing staff works with you to prepare your home for a potential placement and walk you through this process.

Am I responsible for paying for all of the child’s needs?
To help offset the cost of bringing a child into your home, Foster Parents are provided with a bi-monthly reimbursement. The reimbursement covers essentials such as food, clothing, school supplies, incidental expenses, extracurricular activities and a monthly allowance. State programs provide medical and dental care for the children.

How do I become a Foster Parent?
Our goal is to support you by being direct and transparent throughout the licensure process. Our talented and dedicated staff members walk you through the process to assist you and answer your questions on your journey to becoming licensed. There are five basic steps to becoming a licensed Foster or Foster to Adopt Parent:

**Step One: Introductory session**
- Learn about children and teenagers who need care
- Review basic Foster Parent roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Tailored to your schedule and needs – one on one and in-home sessions are available.

**Step Two: Complete required paperwork including but not limited to:**
- Application to Foster or Foster to Adopt
- Letters of reference from those who know you
- Background checks at local, state and federal levels.

**Step Three: Actively Participate in Required training. Training is designed to:**
- Prepare you for fostering a child or teenager
- Network with other parents who will be able to help you throughout your foster care journey.

**Step Four: In home and family assessments (referred to as a “home study”) that includes:**
- Telling your Family’s story: background, education & employment, relationships & social life
- Readiness and reasons for wanting to foster or adopt.

**Step Five: Receive license to Foster or Foster to Adopt!**
How long will it be before a child is placed with me?
You and SAFY will invest a lot of time and energy into becoming a Therapeutic Foster Care Parent. Our goal is to help you gain foster parenting experience as quickly as possible so you can begin to use the skills that you built during training. As soon as you are licensed, you are ready to accept a placement with the support of SAFY staff - we encourage you to begin foster parenting as soon as a match is made. SAFY’s treatment team will be with you every step of the way.

How long does it take to become a licensed Therapeutic Foster Parent?
It is our goal to have families licensed within 90 days of their first visit with a SAFY Recruitment Specialist.

Does my spouse have to become licensed?
Yes, spouses, domestic partners, and other adults living in the home must complete the licensure process. It is essential that adults living in the home work as a team. Your training classes prepare you to make an informed decision about becoming a foster or adoptive family and help you understand how to provide the support and nurturing children in foster care need, as well as how to manage behaviors and special needs.

How often does fostering result in adoption of children?
While the goal of most children entering foster care is reunification with their biological family, some children’s goal will become adoption. When children in out-of-home care cannot be safely reunited with their birth families, SAFY provides services and support to match them to adoptive homes.

Most children who are unable to return home are adopted by a relative or their Foster Parents. SAFY provides supportive services to ensure post-adoption success. Your licensing worker will discuss our Foster to Adopt program with you during the licensure process. SAFY’s goal is to provide permanency for every child.

Does SAFY provide weekend training for persons with irregular work schedules?
Yes. SAFY provides weekday, weekend, and evening trainings around each prospective parent’s schedule. Make-up sessions are also available. Your Recruitment Specialist will discuss your training options and come up with a training schedule that works for you and your family.

As a first time Foster Parent, am I allowed to have a “sibling group?”
Yes, approximately two-thirds of children in foster care in the United States have a sibling also in care. Our goal is to keep siblings together and maintain sibling connections, whenever possible. Your training and SAFY licensing worker prepares you for working with sibling groups should you have the space and skill set to do so.

What is the average length of time for a child to be with a Foster Parent?
The amount of time any youth is in care is dependent on the reasons why the child was placed in care and how quickly reunification is expected to occur. SAFY ultimately wants to help youth heal from trauma so they can be reunified in the shortest amount of time possible. If reunification is not possible, SAFY works toward another permanency plan as quickly as possible (i.e. adoption, kinship placement).
What if I’m not ready to be a full-time Foster Parent?
If you’re not ready to commit to being a full-time Foster Parent, you can consider becoming a “respite care” provider, or short-term care provider for the child when Foster Parents need a short break. Respite care parents provide temporary assistance to Foster Parents by caring for children for a weekend or a few days at a time. Other volunteer opportunities are available in each division. Your Recruitment Specialist can meet with you one on one to discuss all of the options available to you.

Would I be allowed to have a family, friends or a babysitter watch the youth in my care?
Although being a Foster Parent is rewarding, it can also be difficult work. It is important for Foster Parents to have support from family, friends, and community. Your licensing worker will meet with you to discuss all of the options available to you, and how to prepare your family, friends and community to help.