



**“I remember when I was in a group home I told everyone the same thing: find me a family. I thought about it every day. Nothing else was as important to me as finding a family I could call my own.”**

**- Nicholas, former foster youth**

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) works with families to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. If children cannot be parented safely at home, relatives or close family friends are asked to provide kinship care. If kinship care is not an option, DHS relies on a network of recruited foster families.

**Loving, supportive foster families are needed in Allegheny County.**

Children and youth who are welcomed by a supportive foster family are more likely to have a secure and successful future.

**DHS IS** responsible for providing and administering publicly funded services to Allegheny County residents.

- DHS PRINCIPLES**  
All services will be
- high quality, comprehensive, and accessible.
  - individualized and designed to be respectful of the unique cultural characteristics of each individual and/or community
  - integrated and offered through a team approach that recognizes the capacity of individuals and families to identify their own strengths, needs, and goals; create relationships with natural supports; and take steps necessary to accomplish these goals.



**Children, Youth and Families**

**Rich Fitzgerald**  
ALLEGHENY COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**Marc Cherna**  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**Patricia L. Valentine**  
DHS EXECUTIVE DEPUTY  
DIRECTOR FOR INTEGRATED PROGRAM SERVICES

**Jacki Hoover**  
DHS DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Phone: 412-350-5701  
Fax: 412-350-4004  
[www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/cyf](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/cyf)

Human Services Building  
One Smithfield Street, Suite 400  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of a protected class including: race; color; religion; national origin; ancestry or place of birth; sex; gender identity or expression; sexual orientation; disability; marital status; familial status; age (40 and older); use of guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness, or physical disability.

*DHS funding information is available at [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/funding.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/funding.aspx)  
Produced by the DHS Office of Community Relations 10/2019*



**Children, Youth and Families**

**Foster Parenting**



**“BE THE ONE WHO MAKES A DIFFERENCE.”**

**ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

[fostergoodness.org](http://fostergoodness.org)

DHS Director’s Action Line:  
1-800-862-6784



## Foster care is:

- Caring for a child or teen until his or her parent(s) can resume full responsibility, or until another permanent home is found.
- A commitment to help a child or teen through a difficult period.
- For people who can provide love and guidance, and then let go.

## Children in foster care:

- Are every race, age, religion, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Have different likes and dislikes, talents and skills.
- Are often in sibling groups, which are kept intact whenever possible.

## Foster parents are adults who:

- Are married, single, or partnered.
- Represent all races, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations and genders.
- Have a desire to help a child succeed.
- Are willing to accept a child as a member of their family, even if temporarily.
- Are willing to adapt their parenting style.

## Foster parents must be:

- Flexible. Foster care is usually temporary. Foster parents must be able to let go. In some cases, however, if the child is not able to be returned home safely, the foster parents may be interested in adopting. Every situation is different, and often unpredictable.
- Organized. Foster parents work with the child's team to organize the child's family visits, schoolwork, clinical appointments, CYF meetings, and court appointments.

- Team players. Foster parents collaborate with caseworkers, therapists, doctors, and others. Foster parents welcome service providers into their home and transport children to appointments. Ideally, foster parents can partner with the birth parent(s), as well, and build a positive relationship with them when possible.
- Dedicated and Understanding. Children and teens healing from trauma are hurt. They express their hurt at many different times, in many different ways. Foster parents work to respond to these expressions in the best way possible, based on their training and supports.

## Foster parents are required to:

- Meet all state requirements.
- Undergo a criminal and child abuse background check.
- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Complete 15 hours of pre-service training.
- Demonstrate proof of income.

## No one fosters alone

The Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF), foster care agencies, and many other organizations support foster parents in caring for children and teens. Foster parents meet with the child's team at least quarterly to make plans and manage challenges. Foster parents are given a stipend to defray the cost of caring for the child, and each child is covered by medical and dental insurance.

## Local foster care agencies

In Allegheny County, we contract with nonprofit agencies to recruit foster families. To learn more about the network of Pa licensed foster care agencies authorized to recruit, train and approve foster parents in Allegheny County, and to obtain a listing of network members, contact the Allegheny County Director's Action Line at 1-800-862-6783 or email [DAL@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:DAL@alleghenycounty.us)

Every agency in our network is different, so DHS recommends learning about each of the agencies to find the best fit for you.

