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**FFCS FOSTER CARE**

A GUIDE FOR POTENTIAL FOSTER PARENTS BY JENDA FOSTER CARE

# HOW TO: START YOUR FOSTER CARE JOURNEY



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Thank you for your interest in Jenda Foster Care! We are so excited for you to learn about us and for us to learn more about you and your family. This is a guide for you that hopefully starts to answer the question we get most frequently: **How do I get started in foster care?**

We broke down the general timeline and steps to the final goal of being a licensed foster home. Your journey goes at your own pace, and Jenda Foster Care is ready to help create a timeline that works for you! We are available to answer all your questions, process your feelings and hesitations, and discuss what foster youth placements will be a great match for your family. Starting with formal training in Foster Care Class, to 24/7 Support from Jenda Foster Care Specialists after licensing, we are here for you every step of the way. Everyone's foster care journey is unique, and this is the heart of our support. We provide individualized, intentional support and resources to our families, with access to other services in Jenda including therapy, visitation services, drug testing, and life skills instruction. We're excited to show you who Jenda is, and we hope that we are a match for your family.

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## STEP ONE

### **Call Jenda Foster Care to ask any and all questions you have about foster care!**

A Jenda Foster Care representative would love to discuss your hopes and dreams, concerns, fears, excitement, anxiety, and everything in between when it comes to getting started in foster care. We at Jenda believe having all the information you can helps inform the best decisions for you and your family, and starting your journey to providing foster care is no different! Even if the time isn't right now, join our email list to stay informed about upcoming classes, meet & greet events with Jenda Foster Care, opportunities to get involved, resources, and more!

## STEP TWO

### **Express interest in joining Jenda Foster Care, discuss what you will need to start the journey, and sign up for foster care class!**

Whether you are brand new to foster care, transferring your license from another agency, or providing relative/kinship foster care for a family member, Jenda Foster Care will do what we can to support you. **If you have never provided foster care before, signing up for the next TIPS-MAPP course offered through Jenda is your first step.** After committing to your class, you will complete your initial background checks and fingerprinting, which screens for criminal history, as well as the Adult/Child Protective Services registry. You do not have to have a perfect history to become a foster parent! Be ready and willing to discuss your history if necessary, as well as steps you've taken to grow and change, and Jenda Foster Care will be honest with you throughout the process about DHHS conditions for approval and the impact of your history.

# STEP THREE



## **Review Initial Home Checklist and note adjustments to your home that you will need to complete prior to meeting with your Jenda Foster Care Licensing Specialist.**

An Initial Home Checklist is a guide given to potential foster parents upon first meeting in-person with a Jenda Foster Care representative. The guidelines provided are taken directly from Nebraska DHHS Compliance Checklist for Foster Homes, so you have an idea of what to expect when completing the official home walk through with a Jenda Foster Care Licensing Specialist. Common adjustments include: purchasing a carbon monoxide detector, fixing exposed wiring or pipe, adding shelves or storage for a foster youth's belongings, and purchasing a medication lock box.

# STEP FOUR

## **Complete your Home Study with your Jenda Foster Care Licensing Specialist!**

A Home Study is the packet of information provided to DHHS including a write up about your home and family, preferences for placement, and official DHHS forms such as your Foster Care License Application. As a potential foster parent(s), you will have to complete an individual self-study, provide references, sign paperwork required by DHHS and Jenda Foster Care, and do a formal walk-through of your home with a Licensing Specialist to complete and sign the Compliance Checklist. Please know that when we are visiting your home, we do not look for perfection, simply safety! DHHS provides a Compliance Checklist which the Licensing Specialist will complete with you. If you reviewed the Initial Home Checklist and made updates as indicated, your home will pass the Compliance Checklist with ease. Families may need to purchase cribs, bunk beds, or additional furniture as needed based on placement of foster children. You can discuss your options with Jenda Foster Care!



## STEP FIVE

### **Graduate from your Foster Care Class and complete supplemental trainings!**

After completing all the hours of your required training, you are one step closer to having your foster care license. There are additional trainings provided from DHHS with topics pertaining to providing care to children who have been sexually abused and preventing sex trafficking as a Nebraska Foster Parent. These trainings are provided to you by your Foster Care Licensing Specialist, and all certificates must be provided to them prior to submitting your Home Study for review. Even if you have been a parent before, specialized training for foster care is important to prepare foster parents for the various situations and they could experience while providing care.

## STEP SIX



### **Communication, communication, communication!**

Depending on the caseload of DHHS, processing time for Home Studies vary. Typically after 2-3 weeks, Jenda Licensing Specialists receive feedback and follow-up questions from DHHS regarding the Home Study. If necessary, the Licensing Specialist will reach out to your family or request an additional meeting to go over any concerns or questions raised by DHHS. Staying in-touch with Jenda is vital for the timeliness of your foster care license. Once your Home Study is approved, DHHS will send a virtual copy of your license to Jenda and mail a physical copy to you for your records!

# STEP SEVEN



## **Get ready for placement of foster youth or start providing respite!**

Once you have your foster care license, you are set to start providing care! Some families prefer to start by providing **respite**—short term care for youth placed in another foster home, typically 1-2 nights. Becoming a regular respite provider for a youth is a great way to provide them support and additional connections, as well as give other foster parents a break or chance to complete tasks such as shopping, holiday preparations, go on a date, and more. You can communicate with Jenda Foster Care your availability, and we will reach out accordingly whether to discuss potential placement, or work out a weekend to provide respite.

# STEP EIGHT

## **Complete required Continued Education hours and renewals as outlined by DHHS.**

Foster parents must complete 12 hours of Continued Education hours per year of their foster care license. Jenda will provide you a list of training materials, books, podcasts, and articles that can help you complete your hours. Jenda also offers quarterly trainings hosted by Jenda Family Services staff over various subjects, which can also connect you with additional families and foster parents with Jenda.

Foster care licenses must be renewed every two years. Your Licensing Specialist will communicate with you when it is time to start working on your renewal and guide you through the process.