

# Foster A Future

FORGET ME NOT

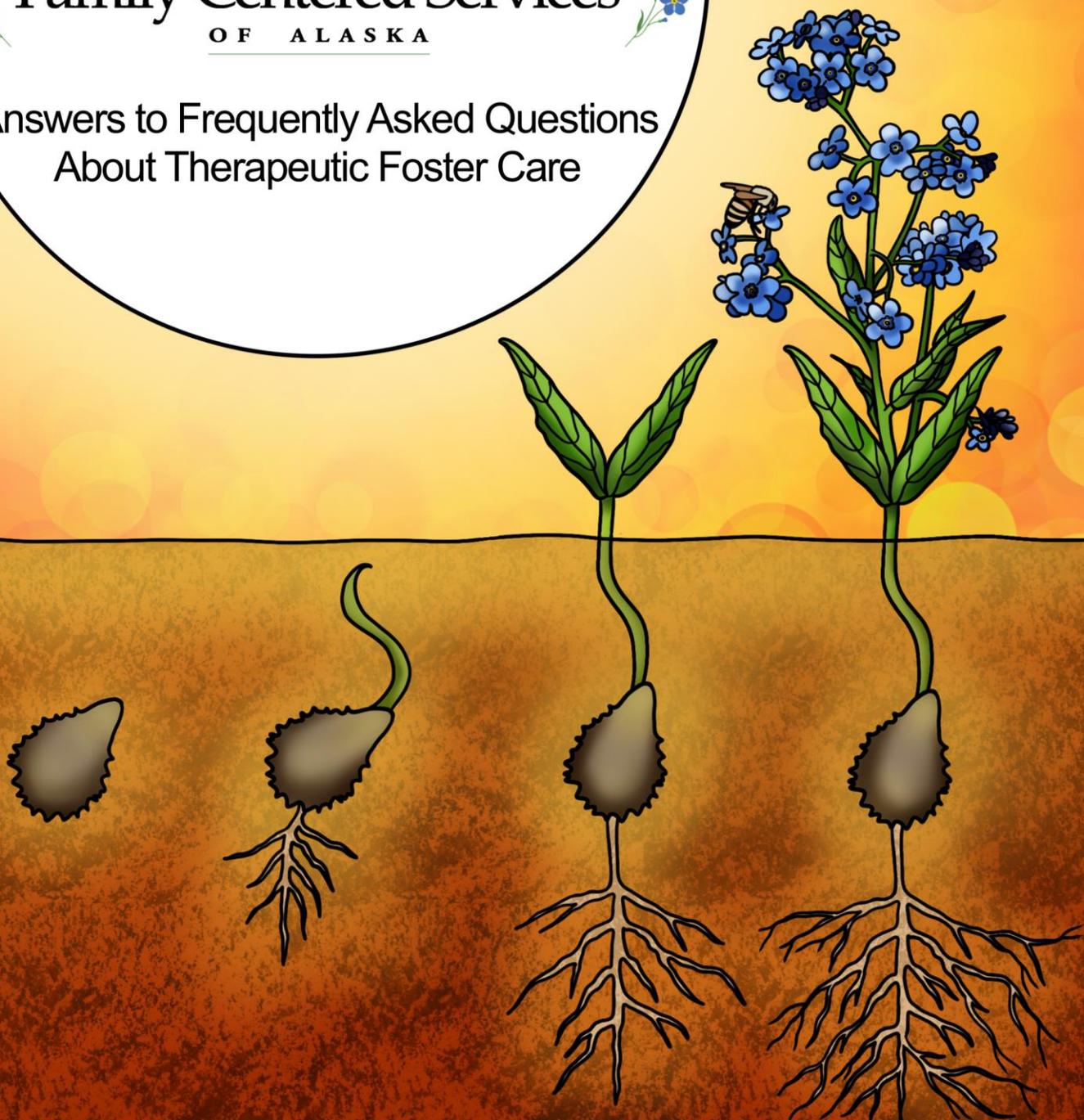


Family Centered Services

OF ALASKA



Answers to Frequently Asked Questions  
About Therapeutic Foster Care





## **What is Family Centered Services of Alaska (FCSA)?**

Family Centered Services of Alaska (FCSA) is a non-profit, 501(c) (3) corporation, founded in 1989. The reason for the establishment of the organization was to provide individualized behavioral and mental health services to children, and young adults experiencing emotional difficulties, in the least restrictive setting.

Today, the majority of services delivered by FCSA are provided in Fairbanks or the greater Fairbanks North Star Borough however, FCSA operates programs in the communities of Wasilla and the greater Mat-Su Borough. Services are provided by FCSA through a variety of programs. Each program is tailored to meet the special needs of a particular population of children.

FCSA holds a Child Placement Agency (CPA) License from the State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services (OCS) which allows us to recruit and begin the licensing process for therapeutic foster homes and group homes in Alaska. OCS must approve and issue the foster care license. FCSA assists all Foster Parent applicants through the process.

FCSA has both Community Based Foster Homes (CBFH) that are licensed for 1-3 foster children and Therapeutic Foster Group Homes (TFGH) that are licensed for 5 foster children. All foster children are behavioral and/or emotionally challenged and require behavioral health services.

FCSA, with the Foster Parents, provides wrap-around support services to each foster child that qualifies and is accepted into the program. In other words, each foster child has an individualized program built around them to meet their particular needs.

## What is the difference between traditional foster care and Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC)?

With regular/traditional foster care, a foster child is placed in the home of a single person or couple who have been licensed as foster parents. Typically, these children have been taken away from their parents by the Office of Children's Services (OCS) because they have been abused or neglected by their parents/guardians. One or more children are placed in the home and the parents provide care for them like they would their own child (bed, food, clothes, transportation, etc). They receive a stipend (or payment) for taking care of the child and these payments are tax-free. For OCS, the daily rate can range from approximately \$26 - \$33 per day, per child.

With **Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC)**, the Foster Parents receive specialized training and work with foster children who, as a result of past trauma, mental illness or other emotional or behavioral disorders, require intensive individualized behavioral health and support services. Foster children received therapy and other services from the agency. There are more training requirements and paperwork for Therapeutic Foster Parents than traditional foster parents. With FCSA, we also provide regular respite care, 24 hour on-call support, and many other support services to our Therapeutic Foster Parents.



**Therapeutic Foster Parents licensed with FCSA receive a higher daily reimbursement rate. The rate is based on geographic location and the number of children placed in the foster home.** FCSA also offers newly licensed foster parents a sign-on bonus and has an ongoing bonus program for foster parents that choose to renew their foster care license with FCSA.

## What is the difference between a Community Based Foster Home (CBFH) and a Therapeutic Foster Group Home (TFGH)?

An FCSA **Community Based Foster Home (CBFH)** is a therapeutic foster home that is licensed for 1-3 foster children. While it is preferred that applicants have prior experience providing regular foster care services, it is not required to be licensed to care for up to two foster children.

Community Based Foster Parents are licensed to provide foster care services **out of their own home** and are responsible for ensuring that their home meets structural safety requirements. The FCSA Licensing Specialist will review these requirements with you to make sure that your home is compliant with State Regulations.

An FCSA **Therapeutic Foster Group Home (TFGH)** is licensed for 4-5 foster children. The Foster Parents must have at least one year of experience as licensed foster parents in order to receive a group home license. While recruiting an experienced couple to provide therapeutic foster group home services is ideal, FCSA will consider licensing a single parent based on experience. **In the TFGH program, at least one parent must be a full-time, stay-at-home parent.**

**For our TFGH program, FCSA provides a 6-7-bedroom rent-free home to the foster group home parents.** Foster parents are responsible for paying the utilities and common house expenses like telephone, cable, etc. Applicants must pay a deposit and sign an Occupancy Agreement and Pet Agreement. Applicants may have up to one child of their own living in the group home. Applicants may have up to two pets maximum and no exotic pets.

**Both CBFH and TFGH the Foster Parents receive a daily reimbursement rate based on geographic location and the number of children placed in their home.** Foster care payments are considered reimbursement for expenses incurred while providing foster care for the child in the home and therefore are tax-free. Please contact the IRS for specific details regarding taxation of these payments. Foster Parents are private contractors and are not employees of FCSA.

Applicants must possess the appropriate skills and have the desire and time to work with youth diagnosed with behaviors health disorders. Foster parents cannot have any history of abuse or neglect and cannot have any previously negative foster care licensing history. Please see "What is required of me if I become an FCSA Therapeutic Foster Parent?" later in this handout for more information on requirements.

## What are the foster children like?

It is impossible to state what a typical FCSA foster child is like. They are all different, each having their own strengths as well as needs. Generally speaking, children in foster care range in age from 5-18. They are male and female and come from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The intellectual levels of the children also vary, ranging from gifted and talented to learning disabled.

What all of these children have in common is that they have a history of emotional trauma, behavioral issues, and a mental health diagnosis. They are in our program because they need behavioral health services. Their negative behavior either at home, school or in the community has adversely affected their lives. Most of these children have been in several foster homes and have received services from different people and agencies, prior to FCSA. Typically, these placements/services have been unsuccessful. Most children attend regular school, but some of these children are in special programs in school or attend an alternative school. Many children are privately placed with our agency, while others have been placed by the State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services (OCS) and have a social worker or probation officer.

All of these children have many positive attributes, but we want you to be aware of the possible negative behaviors. Examples of some of the behavior problems that foster children in our program may have include: aggressive verbal behavior; history of oppositional defiant behavior; destruction of property, self-abuse; depression, difficulty in the public school system, or substance use disorder.

The following is an example of one foster child that was in our program that has been successful. This child required the highest level of care. This may help give you an idea of some of the children and what can happen when we all work together. Keep in mind, FCSA provides therapeutic foster care for children and youth with different levels of need.

*Keith came into services with FCSA when he was 12 years old. His parents abandoned him at age 2, and he had numerous failed foster homes. He got physical with his teacher and was often in trouble at school. He was referred to a locked psychiatric hospital in Oregon but was diverted to our program instead. During the first months of his program, Keith showed many challenging and disturbing behaviors. Because of the success of his treatment plan and determined foster parents and treatment team that did not give up on him, Keith lived with the same Therapeutic Foster Parents for two years, and did very well. He was able to transition to a family member's home and is doing well in school, is happy and has great potential.*

## **How much will I know about a foster child before they move into my home?**

Once you sign a confidentiality form, FCSA will contact you with some information about a particular foster child and ask you if you would be interested in taking the child. The child's Case Manager will spend time with you giving you very specific information about the child and ideas on how to best work the child. You will be encouraged to read the child's case file and become familiar with his or her case plan. The Case Manager will also facilitate pre-placement visits with you and the child. If the child is placed in your home, you will receive specialized training in how to deal with the child's specific problems.

In general, FCSA may have several weeks to find the right home for each foster child, but at times children may need to be placed more quickly. FCSA strives to match parents with children, and the other children that may be living in the home. FCSA will also look at your level of experience, time available for the child, where you live and other factors before placing a child. Most children remain in placement for approximately one year.

## **What kind of support will I receive from FCSA if I become a Therapeutic Foster Parent?**

We believe strongly in teamwork and supporting our Therapeutic Foster Parents. Each child in our Therapeutic Foster Care Program has a Case Manager. The Case Managers provide a lot of support to our Foster Parents and work very closely with them.

With many foster children, Behavioral Health Aides may be available to work a certain number of hours a week to provide additional support.

Each foster child and everyone that works with the child (their Therapeutic Foster Parents, Case Manager, parent/guardian, therapist, teachers, social worker, probation officer, etc.), make up what is called a "Treatment Team". Each Treatment Team meets at least quarterly, to assess how the child is doing and to brainstorm ideas. Foster



Parents' input is critical at these meetings.

Therapeutic Foster Parents receive specialized training geared towards working with emotionally and behaviorally challenged children. This is very important and useful. Specialists in this field and others who have worked with your foster child are also available for consultation. Mental health professionals are available and may meet with you on a regular basis regarding the foster child in your home.

In addition, FCSA has Administrative On-call services available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. If an emergency or other situation comes up which you do not know how to handle, just contact FCSA's Administrative On-Call.

**FCSA has a wonderful respite program for our Therapeutic Foster Parents and is one reason we have such a low turnover rate of our foster homes.** Each CBFH and TFGH receives a minimum of 24 days of respite each year. Most homes receive one session of respite through our REACH program approximately once a month. REACH sessions generally run from Wednesday afternoon to Sunday afternoon (4 days). All of the foster children in the home go to one of FCSA's REACH Houses for that time, to give the Foster Parents a break or time off. While at REACH, the children do many fun activities, go to community events, and get to spend time with other foster children. To ensure continuity of care, the REACH Program continues to work with your child on their treatment goals throughout the session.

## **What is required of me if I become an FCSA Therapeutic Foster Parent?**

FCSA Therapeutic Foster Parents are expected to provide a nurturing, supportive, and therapeutic environment for children in their care. Therapeutic foster parents much assist the child with working on their treatment goals and provide for the child's basic needs, such as food, general hygiene products, and clothing.

You will also need to provide transportation for the children and make sure they get to meetings, school, medical, and therapy appointments. You as a Foster Parent will also be required to attend Treatment Team meetings, meet with you child's case manager, school officials, probation officers, and mental health professionals periodically and attend all foster parent meetings/trainings. Your input is very important.

Another aspect of being an FCSA Therapeutic Foster Parent is paperwork. FCSA uses an Electronic Medical Records system. Foster parents must complete daily forms in our electronic system and other paperwork also. Training and ongoing support on how to complete these forms is provided. There are specific timelines to get paperwork/documentation done and these must be followed.

**One other very important part of being an FCSA Therapeutic Foster Parent is training.** Before the first foster child is placed in your home, both parents will be required to attend our basic training which consists of Therapeutic Behavior Management (TBM) for Foster Parents (8 hours); Client Documentation (4 hours); FCSA Foster Care Manual and Reporting Requirements (2.5 hours); Medication Administration Training (2 hours); CPR/1<sup>st</sup> Aid (4 hours) and shadow hours (4 hours).

There are also yearly training hour requirements for all foster parents. Single foster parents must receive at least 10 hours of training annually and couples must receive 15 hours (with each parent having a minimum of five hours). FCSA offers



several trainings each year, some of which foster parents are required to attend. It is also a great time to get together with other foster parents.

## **What do I do if I want to become an FCSA Therapeutic Foster Parent?**

**To begin, contact FCSA's Licensing Specialist, Miranda Schultz, at (907) 474 - 0890 ext. 120 or email her at: [mschultz@fcsa-ak.com](mailto:mschultz@fcsa-ak.com).** Miranda will discuss with you any questions or concerns you may have. Miranda will email you an FCSA Foster Parent Application and an interview will be set up. If you are selected, we'll begin the application and licensing process to get your foster care license and start the training also.

We hope this handout has answered some of the questions you may have had regarding FCSA and our Therapeutic Foster Care Program. Thank you for considering becoming a Therapeutic Foster Parent for these special youth. It can be a very rewarding experience for you and the children.