



# BE THERE

for Louisiana's  
Children and Youth



Department of  
**Children & Family Services**  
*Building a Stronger Louisiana*

## Our Mission

DCFS believes that every child has the right to a safe and permanent family of their own. The mission of the Foster Care program is to keep a child in a safe environment that is supportive of their development, while helping the birth parents work toward the goal of regaining custody, or in attaining an alternative permanent placement for the child as soon as possible.

## DCFS Beliefs

1. Parents/legal caretakers have the right and responsibility to raise their own children, unless it is determined that they cannot do so in a manner consistent with the safety of the child.
2. Children have the right to grow and develop in an environment free of abuse and/or neglect and free of factors that present a substantial risk of harm.
3. If a child cannot remain with their family, the substitute living arrangements must be safe, capable of meeting their basic emotional and physical needs, and be time limited.
4. Substitute placements must be in the least restrictive (most family-like), most appropriate setting available, and consistent with the needs of the child.



## What is Foster Care?



**FOSTER CARE** is a supportive service for children and their parents who must live apart because of child abuse, neglect or special family circumstances requiring the need for out-of-home care. DCFS ensures that the emotional, physical, and educational needs of children/youth are met while birth parents receive services to support the child/youth's safe return to the family home. If reunification with a birth parent is not possible, the agency works toward identifying a permanent caregiver for the child/youth.

### Responsibilities of a Foster Caregiver

- Open your heart and home to a child or youth who has experienced abuse or neglect
- Participate in a child's medical, dental, mental, and educational decisions
- Support a child's connection to the biological family, including facilitating visits with the family, and supporting reunification efforts
- Maintain regular communication with DCFS to share important information
- Participate in meetings to support the child's needs and goals, including court hearings and school meetings
- Support the child's right to privacy about their life and circumstances
- Facilitate normal childhood experiences by providing stability
- Encourage children and youth to express their thoughts and feelings about their care
- Refrain from using corporal punishment
- Obtain and maintain caregiver certification per agency guidelines



## Minimum Qualifications for Certification

Prospective caregivers must be at least 21 years old, have sufficient income to meet their own needs, enough space in their home to accommodate a child, pass state and federal criminal clearances, and be in good physical, emotional, and mental health. Foster caregivers may be single, married, divorced, or widowed.

## Steps for Certification

1. Attend a virtual orientation.
2. Complete fingerprinting and required background checks.
3. Participate in pre-service training.
4. Submit an application and supporting documents.
5. Work with DCFS to complete your home study.
6. Become certified and accept your first placement!



**For more information  
scan the QR code**

