



Kinship Quarterly Strengthening Families

January 2019
In this Issue:

Becoming a Foster Parent
Nutrition Benefits
Star Health Updated

Becoming a Foster Parent

What can I expect as a kinship caregiver if I decide to become verified as a foster home?

The verification process can seem overwhelming, but child-placing agencies across the state make every effort to maintain an approachable practice! One of the questions that often comes up for caregivers is about background checks.

When you became a kinship caregiver, you had to pass a Department of Public Safety (DPS) check and a Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) check, which are also called Central Registry checks. And if you lived out of Texas within 3 years prior to becoming a kinship caregiver, you had to have an FBI check.

Now, in order to become verified as a foster home you'll need further background checks including FBI (if you didn't already have them), local law enforcement checks for the past two years, and updated DPS and DFPS checks. We will also run central registry checks in any state other than Texas in which you have lived in the past 5 years. You are required to obtain your own FBI checks, with our guidance, and that costs around \$40 per person depending on the type of prints you need. We will handle all of the other background checks for you.

In order to become a verified foster parent, you must be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or other qualified alien.

You may have heard that verified foster parents must also adhere to Minimum Standards. It's true. But what are Minimum Standards? Don't worry, here is an explanation:

When we say Minimum Standards, we are talking about a set of basic standards that, at a minimum, foster parents (and their agencies!) must meet in order to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of children in foster care. Minimum Standards are part of the Texas

Administrative Code, and they are developed and enforced by the Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) Child Care Licensing Department. Here is where **you** come in as the kinship caregiver who wants to become verified as a foster home. There are LOTS of minimum standards you must follow, and your agency will help you, but some of the basics require that you:

- Pass all of the background checks mentioned above. Also anyone 14 years old or older living in your home has to have background checks.
- Are 21 years of age or older.
- Are either single or married, and if you're married you both have to become verified. If you are divorced, you must show proof.
- Have a high school diploma or GED, or pass a test that includes basic reading, writing, and math.
- Participate in a foster home screening, during which we assess your emotional and financial stability, physical health, home environment, & personal and relationship history.
- Agree for us to check references, both non-relatives and relatives, including adult children now living out of the home.
- Agree not to use physical discipline with children in foster care.
- Pass fire, health, and safety inspections on your home – or agree to make repairs so that your home is able to pass inspections.

- Show proof that your pets are current with vaccinations.
- Learn CPR and take first aid.
- Obtain a tuberculosis (TB) screening for yourself and all household members.

You are also required to participate in 25-35 hours of training before you can be verified as a foster parent. Trainings are free, and schedules and hours depend on the child-placing agency you are working with. This training, called pre-service training, will help you learn about how abuse and neglect can affect the children you are caring for!

Kinship caregivers who are considering becoming verified as foster parents also wonder about potential expenses they might incur. One cost you will incur includes the FBI background check for yourself and, if applicable, your spouse or anyone in your household who is 14 years old or older. Depending on the county you live in and other factors, you may incur costs associated with CPR, first aid, pet vaccinations, health inspection, fire inspection, fire extinguisher, medications lock boxes and any repairs or home modifications required for you to pass the home screening. If you need help with these costs, please contact your Kinship Development Worker for help.

We hope this answers some basic questions for kinship providers considering the foster home verification process! A directory of [child-placing agencies](#) who can assist you can be found here, or contact your local CPS [Foster Care and Adoption Development](#) (FAD) team.

Nutrition Benefits Child Development



Good nutrition is important for everyone, but VERY important for infants and toddlers. That's because good nutrition is needed for babies to be healthy, develop strong immune systems, healthy body functions, and new brain cells. Good nutrition is required for babies to achieve developmental milestones.

Providing needed nutrition is basic. Providing loving and responsive feeding gives babies the ideal environment for meeting nutritional needs, and also basic social and emotional needs. Meal times can be a special time for emotional bonding between families, children, and caregivers. Caregivers can lay the foundations of positive, stable, safe, and secure relationships during meal times.

Babies benefit from being held during bottle feeding, even when they are able to hold their own bottles. Bottle feeding is a wonderful opportunity for eye contact, loving touch, and a soothing voice. Maybe even a song or two. As a baby gets older, a quick tickle can add laughter and joy to feeding time.

By four-six months, babies can begin eating soft, semi-solid foods. Soon after that they take an interest in what other

people are eating and drinking. As their fine motor skills develop they learn to bring food to their mouths, and sometimes succeed! They also learn to hold and drink from an open cup. This is a messy time, so a good supply of bibs will come in handy.

Self-feeding is an important developmental milestone. Another step in this process is dropping food, bowls, spoons and cups on the floor. Again, messy, but developmentally appropriate. In spite of how it may seem, they don't do this to give you more work, it's just a part of how they learn. A tarp or towel under the high chair can make clean up easier.

Common Feeding Problems

Sometimes, a baby or toddler will experience feeding problems. It is estimated that 25% of children will experience some type of feeding problem.

Here is a list of things that might indicate a little one is experiencing feeding difficulties:

- Difficulty sucking, swallowing, or chewing
- Vomiting, reflux and excessive drooling and/or colic
- Partial or total food refusal
- Picky eater
- Inability to try and eat foods with more textured
- Delay in self feeding
- Little to no weight gain
- Tantrums in and around meal times

Posture and seating are often over looked and can impact a child's successful feeding. An upright posture with a well-supported head, neck and trunk can help with swallowing. The head and neck should be tilted forward (flexed) slightly with the chin bent towards the chest so the head does not tilt backwards during feeding and swallowing. This ensures that food/fluids do not enter into the respiratory tracts.

Things You Can Do

Be alert and write down any reflux, frequent and/or large volumes of spitting and/or vomiting patterns. Contact your child's pediatrician if these symptoms persist.

Encourage self-feeding by allowing your toddler to pick up food and hold a spoon while eating and make note of any pickiness, delays in self-feeding, refusal to eat and tantrums during meal times.

If you suspect your child is experiencing feeding difficulties, a referral to ECI may be appropriate. ECI services can assist your family with gaining the knowledge and skills to support you and your child with these difficulties.

To find a local ECI program in your area, visit the [ECI program search page](#) or call the Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Ombudsman at (877) 787-8999.

Winter Safety Tips

Dress for winter

- If your child's feet and hands are warm, what they are wearing is usually good. If your child is dressed too warm, she could sweat and feel colder when she stops playing. Dress your child in layers of clothing that can be put on and taken off easily.

Car Safety

- Dress your child in thin layers.
- Tighten the straps of the car seat harness.
- Use a coat or blanket over the straps.

Water Safety

- Keep pools well-maintained with clear water even if it is too cold to swim. If someone falls in, they can be seen and be helped faster.
- Pool covers need to be drained of accumulated rain water and free of debris.

Fire Safety

- Install fire alarms strategically. Ensure that they are working order periodically.
- If you have gas appliances, install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Keep all matches, lighters and candles out of reach of children.
- Develop a plan for what to do if there is a fire and teach your children what they should do.

Resources

- DFPS Kinship Care Facebook www.facebook.com/TexasKinshipCaregivers
- STAR Health https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Medical_Services/guide-star.asp
- Texas Home Visiting <http://www.texashomevisiting.org>
- Help for Parents www.helpandhope.org
- Methodist Children's Home www.MCH.org
- Help for Teaching Reading www.sightandsoundreading.com/
- DFPS Kinship Care Information www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption_and_Foster_Care/Kinship_Care/
- Services for Youth and Young Adults www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/default.asp
- Child Safety Information www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/default.asp
- Summer Camp Information <http://www.campsusa.org/resources/>
- YMCA Camps <http://www.ymca.net/find-a-y-camp/>
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America <https://www.bgca.org>

Youth Take Flight Instagram Account for Youth

DFPS is pleased to announce the launch of the new youth and young adult focused Instagram page called "**Youth Take Flight**" on 2/1/19. The name of the page and content design was created in conjunction with the Statewide Youth Leadership Council. Information posted to this page will include uplifting quotes, success stories, pictures and some important resource information. Instagram is now replacing the former Texas Youth Connection Facebook page.

Please ask youth and young adults currently or formerly in foster care to sign up for an Instagram account and visit and follow the Youth Take Flight Instagram page by either:

- Opening the Instagram application on their phone and searching for **@youthtakeflight**
- Logging in to Instagram online and visiting this link: <https://www.instagram.com/youthtakeflight/>

There will be a \$75 prize to the youth or young adult who submits the logo selected for use on the Youth Take Flight Instagram page. **Submissions are due no later than 3/15/19.** Please send submissions for the logo or any suggested content to be posted to Davina Hollin, DFPS State Office Education and Training Voucher/Youth Program Specialist at (512) 438-3769 or davina.hollin@dfps.state.tx.us



Update on STAR Health Pharmacy Providers

Superior HealthPlan (Superior) members will no longer be able to use Walgreens Pharmacy for their pharmacy needs. This change affects members in the STAR, CHIP, STAR+PLUS, STAR Kids and STAR Health programs and is effective February 1, 2019. This means that Walgreens Pharmacy will not be able to provide medications through Superior. Members still have access to a large provider network and Superior will work with members to make sure they get the care they need.

Changing medications to a drug store that is in the Superior network is easy. Members can do this in one of three ways:

1. If you have refills on the prescription, take prescription bottles to a new in-network drug store to request transfer from store to store. The prescription must be in date and transferable. Your local pharmacy can help you understand if that will work for you.
2. Ask their doctor to call in a new prescription to the new drug store.
3. Bring a written prescription from their doctor to a new drug store.

*Certain medications such as CII (highly controlled substances) are not transferable and generally require a new prescription.

There are many drug stores that can provide services to Superior members. A list of these can be found using Superior's [Find a Provider search tool](#).

If you need help or have any questions, call:

STAR/CHIP: (800) 783-5386
STAR+PLUS: (877) 277-9772
STAR Kids: (844) 590-4883
STAR Health: (866) 912-6283

Anyone who needs help transferring a prescription to a new pharmacy or with any other health care service can also contact their Kinship Development Worker.



Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities at
(800) 252-5400 or www.txabusehotline.org.