



## **So you're thinking about becoming a Foster Parent?**

It is our belief that every child deserves to live in a safe, loving, and stable home that provides the child with basic physical amenities, nurturing, and emotional support. They deserve to have parents who will care for them with dignity in a kind and respectful manner and who will provide them direction to enhance their future success.

In addition, we believe that those who choose to be a parent to foster children deserve to receive training to meet the specific needs of all children in their care and to receive the support needed to parent a child(ren).

Although foster parenting can be demanding, you will not be alone. Our staff of social workers, medical professionals, and placement coordinators will work with you to meet the needs of the individual child or children in your care.

The first step in becoming a HUGS Certified Foster Parent is understanding all the necessary requirements and costs. Becoming a foster parent is a huge decision, one that affects you and your entire family. Make sure you include your entire family in any discussions related to becoming foster parents to help everyone understand how bringing a child(ren) into your home can have an emotional, financial or quality time impact on your family. Of course, you will also be blessed.

Helping you to understand everything you need to do to make your family and home foster friendly is part of the first step. Enclosed is information regarding all the requirements and potential costs of becoming a foster parent. Once you and your family have made the decision to go forward, contact me office and I will send you the next step in the process; filling out the application and starting to complete the requirements.

If you have any questions regarding the process or requirements, please do not hesitate to contact me at (951) 695-0888, ext 402.

Sincerely,

*Rick Clayton*

Rick Clayton

Director of Business Development

**BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT**

Foster children placed with HUGS FFA may only be placed in homes certified by HUGS. The process of becoming a foster parent usually takes two to three months.

**HUGS FFA DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF AGE, SEX, RELIGION, COLOR, POLITICAL AFFILIATION, MARITAL STATUS, GENDER IDENTITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR DISABILITIES.** All potential foster parents are recruited, screened, trained and evaluated on an equal basis.

### **CERTIFICATION**

Foster parents must meet certain requirements before being certified:

- Successfully Completing 20 hours of Precertification Training.
- Fingerprinting and Background Check.
- CPR and 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Certifications
- Health Screening and TB Test
- Reference Screening
- Vehicles are Registered (Copy of Registrations & Safety Inspections)
- DMV Printout of Driving Record
- Babysitters Information
- Home Inspection
- Review and Signing Various Policies and Procedures

Upon certification, the home will be provided with a Certificate of Certification. The certification must be available to State or County workers who wish to view the certificate.

Once a home is certified by a foster family agency, it is a state regulation that the home cannot accept children from another foster family agency or county.

Certified homes must re-certify each year and must complete a new application and all requirements. **All requirements must be completed prior to the certification date.**

### **DECERTIFICATION**

Homes may be decertified for a variety of reasons, but most often because both HUGS and the foster parents have agreed to the decertification.

If a certified parent decides to voluntarily decertify, they must meet certain conditions to ensure the well being of the child. HUGS must be notified in writing at least two weeks prior to the removal of the child. This will allow for a suitable home to be located and readied for the child. It is imperative that the transition from one home to another be as smooth as possible.

Occasionally, HUGS must decertify a home for failure to ensure the safety of children or for the violation of HUGS or State regulations. Once again, it is important that the transition be as smooth as possible for the welfare of the child.

Whether a family voluntarily decertifies or is required to decertify, all of the children's belongings and records must be provided to the HUGS FCSW when the children are removed.

### **CAPACITIES IN CERTIFIED HOMES**

Homes certified by HUGS FFA are able to care for one to six children. Families must have the necessary bed space, seats in their vehicle and be able to demonstrate the ability to care for the number of children they wish to be certified for. Any foster family certified for more than three

children must demonstrate that they have the ability and resources to care for the children. New foster families are generally certified for two children.

**Families caring for children with special health care needs are only able to have two children placed in their home.**

### ***PREPARING A SAFE HOME***

Title XXII and HUGS policies require certain conditions in each home that a foster child is placed. The purpose of these requirements is to ensure that the home is safe and able to meet emergency situations. Foster homes and yards must be maintained in an attractive and nurturing condition that is in keeping with other homes in the neighborhood. There are specific regulations for each room in the home.

#### **KITCHEN**

- All trash cans must be covered or stored under the sink.
- All knives and sharp objects must be locked with a Tot Lock or key lock. Tot Locks must be the magnetic type. All keys and magnets used to open any locks must be kept separately from the lock and only the foster parents should have access to the keys or magnets.
- All counters, appliances, floors, etc. must be clean and pest free.
- All food in the refrigerator and freezer must be in covered containers to prevent contamination. Aluminum foil cannot be used to cover food.
- All toxins must be locked by a Tot Lock or a key lock.
- There must be a **Type 2A10Bc** fire extinguisher in the kitchen area.
- A lock box is needed for any medications that must be refrigerated.

#### **BATHROOMS**

- All toilets and drains must be functioning properly.
- All Toxins must be locked by a Tot Lock or a key lock.
- Shampoos, hair care products, etc. must be inaccessible to children (If in doubt, look at the container. Does it read, "Keep out of reach of children?")
- Medications must be locked by a Tot Lock or a key lock and stored separately from toxins.

#### **BEDROOMS**

- There must be at least three feet between beds and only **two** children can be placed in each room (This is also true for biological children).
- Operable light in each room.
- Window that opens and has a screen
- Smoke alarms outside bedroom doors.
- Bunk beds must have a safety rail and a ladder (only children over the age of five are permitted on the top bunk)
- **Rooms for foster children should be decorated to the same standard as the other bedrooms in the home and should be age and gender appropriate. Children should be able to add their own personalized items and decorations to the room.**

#### **GARBAGE**

- All sharp objects and tools inaccessible to children.
- All toxins (paint, thinners, plant foods, etc.) must be locked by a Tot Lock or a key lock.

### **LAUNDRY ROOM**

- All toxins (bleach, laundry soap, stain removers, etc.) must be locked by a Tot Lock or a key lock.

### **OUTDOORS**

- Garbage cans must be covered.
- The yard must be free of debris and trash.
- Gate locks are to be inaccessible to children.
- All toxins should be locked by a Tot Lock or a key lock.

### **MULTI- LEVEL HOMES**

- Baby gates must be used at the tops and bottoms of stairs for children under 2 years old.

### **WATER SAFETY**

Hugs FFA will no longer certify homes with pools. In rare cases, Hugs FFA may approve a home with a pool if all the following requirements are met.

- Jacuzzi covers must be strong enough to support the weight of an adult.
- Covers must be locked or secured when not in use.
- Covers must be completely removed prior to use of the Jacuzzi.
- Pools must be surrounded by a fence that is at least 60 inches in height and has a maximum vertical clearance from the ground of 2 inches. Gaps in the fence, if any, cannot allow the passage of a sphere equal or greater than 4 inches in diameter.
- The area surrounding the pool must be free of protrusions, cavities or other physical characteristics that could serve as hand holds or footholds that could enable a child to climb over the pool. **Pool covers in lieu of fences are not allowed.**
- No door or window access to the pool.
- A life buoy and shepherd's hook must be kept in the immediate vicinity of the pool.
- Above ground pools are not allowed and must be dismantled prior to certification.
- Small kids or wading pools must be emptied immediately after use. Foster children are not allowed to use the pool without constant adult supervision.
- Fountains may contain no more than a ½ inch of standing water.

All foster parents who have pools or take foster children swimming in places where there is not a life guard, must have completed a water safety course and have the ability to swim. These courses are available through the Red Cross, Heart Savers and other community organization.

### **TEMPERATURES**

- The water temperature inside foster family homes must be maintained between 105 Degrees and 120 Degrees Fahrenheit.
- Air temperatures must be maintained between 68 Degrees and 85 Degrees Fahrenheit.
- Refrigerators must be maintained at 41 Degrees or below.

### ***PETS***

Documentation of all required vaccinations for pets in the home will be required prior to certification. All eligible pets in the home should be licensed by the county in which they reside.

(Prohibited pets include Pit Bull Terriers, Rottweilers and Doberman Pinchers). Only lawfully domesticated animals are allowed to reside in HUGS Certified Foster Homes.

## **INSURANCE**

Foster families are required to have homeowner's or renter's insurance. HUGS foster parents are financially responsible for any and all damage to their home caused by any foster child. Terra Manor Inc. does not cover any said damages.

## **DISASTER PLANS**

Per California Law, each certified foster family must create and maintain a disaster plan. These plans enable the foster home to handle any emergency which may arise and to protect the safety and well-being of each foster child. The plan, and implementation of the plan, must include the following:

- A First Aid Kit and a copy of a current First Aid Manual.
- Current and valid First Aid and CPR Certification Card.
- An Emergency Care and Disaster Plan, which shall be posted in the home. A copy of the plan must be provided to HUGS. The disaster plan will include the following:
  - Contingency plan for action in the event of fire, floods, and earthquakes, including exit. plans, transportation arrangements, relocation sites, supervision of foster children in their care, means of contacting local agencies, including law enforcement, the fire department, and civil defense and other disaster authorities.
  - Notification to the foster children of their duties and responsibilities under the plan.
- **Every six months and with each new placement, the foster family home must conduct an emergency drill.** Upon completion of the drill, the foster family will notify their assigned HUGS FCSW in writing that the drill was completed, the date of the completion, and the results of the drill, including any modifications identified to improve their Disaster Plan.
- Foster families will post a list of emergency numbers in the home or will have such list readily available. The numbers shall include:
  - Police Department
  - Fire Department
  - Poison Control Center
  - Hospital
  - Physicians for all the foster children in their care
  - The assigned HUGS FCSW
  - The HUGS FFA Office

### **NOTIFICATION OF DISASTER OR EMERGENCY**

**In the event of a disaster, the foster parents are required to report the emergency to the appropriate agency and then immediately notify their assigned HUGS FCSW.** In addition, the foster parent will notify the child's CSW of the whereabouts and condition of the child.

### **FIRST AID**

In addition to First Aid and CPR certifications, California Title XXII and HUGS FFA require all foster homes to have an appropriate First Aid Kit.

**The first aid kit should contain at least the following and no medications:**

- A current edition of a first aid manual approved by the American Red Cross, the American Medical Association, or a state or federal health agency.
- Sterile First Aid Dressings
- Bandages or Roller Bandages
- Adhesive Tape
- Scissors
- Tweezers and Thermometer

## **SMOKING AND ALCOHOL USE**

Foster parents (and others in the home) are not allowed to smoke in the foster home. An area outside the home can be designated as the smoking area. Foster parents may keep alcohol in the home, but it needs to be inaccessible to the foster children. Foster children are never allowed to smoke or drink.

## **ON-GOING TRAINING FOR FOSTER PARENTS**

All Certified Foster Parents are required by California regulations to attend **15** hours of training annually that includes the following subjects:

- Age-appropriate child development.
- Health issues in foster care.
- Positive discipline and the importance of self-esteem.
- Disaster and emergency planning.
- Child abuse identification, prevention, and treatment.
- Emancipation and independent living skills, if a foster parent is caring for youth.

Foster parents may obtain training credits by attending training classes offered by HUGS, seminars and classes offered through community resources such as community colleges, associations, etcetera. In addition, certain training credits may be awarded when parents read pre-approved books or view pre-approved videos or movies. Verification of training must be provided to HUGS to obtain credit for the training. *Please note, at least six hours of training must be completed in a class room setting.* It is important to receive professional training and to network with other foster parents.

Foster parents, who are designated medically fragile parents, must complete the initial **nine** hour; three class medically fragile training **and** receive **12** additional hours of on-going medical training related to medically fragile foster children and their special needs, yearly. *Please note, at least six hours of training must be completed in a class room setting.*