



Your Guide to Becoming a
Foster Family
with Aspiranet

FOSTERHOPE
aspiranet.org/fosterhope  **Aspiranet**
or call 877.380.4376 HOPE FORWARD



Why Foster?

Children in foster care did nothing wrong to get there. Every foster child is unique, but the common thread that connects every experience is trauma. When a child has to be removed from their home, the reasons can be anything from abuse to neglect. Aspiranet's Foster and Foster-Adoption program works with families who are able to provide a high level of care and help ensure consistency and hope.

Aspiranet's Foster and Foster-Adoption program puts the needs of each child first. When you open your home to a foster child, you're giving them a safe and stable place to live. You're giving them a place to call home, whether it's for a short time or permanently.

Each year in California, as many as 50,000 children, youth and teens are part of the foster care system.

When you become a foster family, you'll have the opportunity to build a relationship that can last a lifetime. And most importantly, you'll give a child the greatest gift you possibly can... someone they can count on. Kids in your community need you. **Can you help us help them?**

Become a Foster Family!

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Why Choose Aspiranet?

- An Aspiranet Social Worker will be part of your family's team and will have weekly contact in an effort to support you and the child in your home.
- Aspiranet provides 24/7 on-call social worker support.
- Aspiranet helps secure medical, therapeutic and dental services for each foster child in your care.
- Aspiranet coordinates events and networking opportunities between you and other Aspiranet Families to help facilitate peer-to-peer support.
- Aspiranet's foster families will receive a monthly reimbursement for each foster child in your care.
- Aspiranet's annual satisfaction surveys continually show that our families feel respected, supported and that Aspiranet staff is just a phone call away.
- Aspiranet provides all levels of care including Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC).
- Aspiranet is a California licensed adoption agency supporting adoptions through foster care.
- Aspiranet has a dedicated staff with small caseloads, which means more personal attention for you and your family.
- Aspiranet is a statewide agency with 50 years of experience in California.
- Aspiranet takes the time to get to know your family in order to provide the best match for a child or youth in foster care.
- Aspiranet's pre-approval process helps ensure your success as a foster family, making Aspiranet the best choice from the start.



Fostering Requirements

We believe every child deserves to live in a safe and stable family, so we work to ensure that every Aspiranet Foster Parent can provide just that. Aspiranet works with families regardless of your ethnic background, education level, sexual orientation, relationship status (single, married or partnered), job status (part- or full-time) or home ownership. You don't need to be a special "type" of person, but the important requirements to become a foster family with Aspiranet are listed below:

- Parent(s) must be 21 years of age or older
- Families need to have adequate space for a child in the home (Preference is for an open room, but shared rooms with other children are allowed with certain restrictions)
- Families should be financially self-sufficient (income will be verified during the application process)
- All adults in the household (over the age of 18) must clear a background check
- Parents must have a valid California driver's license, clean driving record, reliable transportation and proof of insurance
- Parents will need to successfully complete Aspiranet foster parent classes, CPR and first aid courses, family interviews and assessments, and a home inspection
- In two-parent households, both parents need to complete all trainings separately and be available for interviews and home inspection



Steps to Become a Foster or Foster-Adopt Family

- Fill out the short questionnaire on our website at aspiranet.org/fosterhope, call us at 877.380.4376 or email familycoordinators@aspiranet.org.
- Speak with one of our Aspiranet Family Coordinators who will be glad to explain the foster and foster-adoption process, answer all your questions and help review our basic requirements.
- Schedule and join Aspiranet's Foster Parent Orientation and Trauma Informed Trainings via Zoom.
- After joining Session 1 of Aspiranet's Trauma Informed Parenting Training, you will be provided a link to Binti, our online application portal, where you will sign your application and complete all documents required for the approval process.
- As part of the application process, all adults in the home will need to complete and pass Department of Justice, FBI, and Child Abuse Index background checks.
- During the application process, you will have a weekly check-in phone call with a member of the Family Development Team who will guide you through the process step-by-step.
- Once you have completed all of your paperwork, your clearances have been received, and you confirm you are ready for the Home Inspection, you will be assigned to a Home Study Writer. An Aspiranet Home Study Writer will complete a home inspection and family assessment.
- Your Home Study Writer will work closely with your family throughout the process to learn more about what makes your family unique, with the goal of matching a child's individual needs to your home.



Fostering with the Hope to Adopt

All children and youth that Aspiranet places with families begin in foster care.

Families interested in adoption start by fostering the child for a period of at least six months to a year. Every situation is unique, and these times can vary. Adopting an infant from foster care is uncommon because the birth parents are given time to do what is necessary to reunify with their child(ren). As such, the child has often grown past infancy once his or her parents' rights are terminated. Most children in foster care are over the age of 2, and many are older than 8 years.

Aspiranet's Foster-Adopt programs bridge the gap between immediate need and long-term care.

It is common for foster children to have attachment and developmental issues due to abuse and neglect. Prospective adoptive parents must prepare to help children with behaviors resulting from this trauma.

Adoption through foster care is a great option for families who want to adopt regardless of age, race, gender, or special needs.

Per state law, the primary goal is to reunify the child with a birth parent or family. When or if reunification is not viable, a permanency plan is established. Although the child's existing foster family is most often considered for adoption, there is no guarantee that a child matched with your family can be adopted.

Aspiranet needs families that are open to fostering children and actively supporting their relationship with their biological family. This can include contact with the biological family, supporting visits with the family, coordinating phone calls, and encouraging healthy interactions.

It's important to remember that Aspiranet puts what's in the best interests of each child ahead of everything else.

Out-of-state, out-of-country and home studies for private adoption are currently not offered by Aspiranet.



Relatives in Foster Care

California and Federal law requires that when a child is removed from the home, known relatives must be located, contacted and told about the child's removal within the first 30 days of the removal. The law allows for consideration of relatives as a placement resource for the child during this difficult time. The expectations of a relative who accepts placement of a child in their home are the same as those for licensed foster parents.

While Aspiranet can provide the necessary training, home inspection and family assessment, we cannot guarantee that a specific child will be placed in your home nor can we prioritize or expedite the process. This responsibility remains with the county welfare agency.

Aspiranet can provide support to approved Resource Families who are already providing care for a relative. If you are interested in transferring to Aspiranet, refer to the section about Portability.

Aspiranet Supports Keeping Family Together

**Do you want to be the person who
keeps your family together?**

Visit aspiranet.org/fosterhope or call 877.380.4376

Already Approved? Your Resource Family Approval May Be Portable

If you are currently approved as a Resource Family through a California county child welfare agency or another licensed foster family agency, you may be eligible to apply for approval with Aspiranet through the Resource Family Approval portability process.

Portability allows Aspiranet to obtain and review information from your existing Resource Family Approval record, including your written family evaluation, prior interviews, training documentation, approval history, and other supporting records. Using this existing information may reduce duplication and help streamline the Aspiranet approval process. However, portability does not guarantee approval, and Aspiranet may require additional information, interviews, training, or assessment activities before making an approval decision.

California permits a Resource Family to hold only one Resource Family Approval at a time. Your current approval will remain in effect while Aspiranet reviews your portability application. If Aspiranet approves your family and issues a new Resource Family Approval certificate, your previous approval will end in accordance with California law.

Portability is available only to families who are currently approved as Resource Families. Families who are still completing the approval process, or whose approval has been rescinded, surrendered, forfeited, or otherwise ended, are not eligible to use the portability process.

What to Expect

The process begins with an Aspiranet Family Coordinator, who will explain the portability requirements and arrange for you to meet with an Aspiranet Program Director. You will then be asked to complete the Resource Family Approval Portability Application and authorize the release of your existing Resource Family Approval record to Aspiranet.

Families completing portability with Aspiranet will:

- Attend an Aspiranet Portability Orientation
- Complete required applications and documents through Binti, Aspiranet's online application portal
- Complete all required criminal-record and child-abuse background clearance steps for adults residing or regularly present in the home
- Participate in a home health and safety assessment
- Participate in interviews with an Aspiranet Home Study Writer
- Complete any additional training, documentation, or assessment activities identified during Aspiranet's review
- Receive an updated written family evaluation reflecting current family and household circumstances
- Aspiranet will review the information received from your current approving agency, complete all required updates and assessments, and determine whether your family meets Aspiranet's approval and program requirements.



Our Most Urgent Needs

Keeping Siblings Together

Aspiranet tries whenever possible to keep brothers and sisters together. We need families who can take in sibling groups.

Fostering Teens

Just because they're older doesn't mean teenagers don't need a stable home. You have the potential to make a significant impact on a foster teen's life.

Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC)

Children and youth with developmental, behavioral and emotional challenges require a higher level of care and support from foster families.

Become a Foster Family!

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Siblings and Teens

Siblings in Foster Care

Many siblings who enter the foster care system are separated from each other. The trauma of being removed from their families is made that much more difficult if the children don't remain with their brothers or sisters. The sense of unity and familiarity in having their siblings with them can also help make the adjustment to your home easier.

Teens in Foster Care

Teens have often been in the foster care system the longest of any group. Teens may have been without stable and consistent role models through the most critical stages of their development. Their ability to successfully prepare for their future can be impacted. By fostering a teen, you can affect another person's life just when they need it most.

“When we went into foster care, it was the fact that my little brother was with me that made things better for both of us.”

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Intensive Services Foster Care

Children and youth with special needs require a higher level of care due to behavioral, physical, developmental or mental health issues. These children and youth are either transitioning from group homes into foster homes or are in foster care and have been assessed as needing additional services and supports. Aspiranet is an approved ISFC provider in the communities we serve.

Our ideal candidates for ISFC families includes:

- A “professional parent”, someone with experience being a foster parent
- A parent with a desire to learn additional parenting skills
- Experience working with behavioral, physical or developmental needs in youth and children
- Healthcare experience (CNA and above) for children with medical needs
- Stay-at-home parent or someone with a flexible schedule

What's different about being an ISFC family?

- Child has a higher level of need than other foster children
- Particular challenges require a higher level of parental knowledge and skill
- Often a greater need for outside care (appointments, therapy)
- Child or youth may have additional challenges due to time spent in a group home
- Additional 12-hour training is required
- ISFC families receive a significantly higher level of reimbursement
- Families qualify as an approved ISFC Parent
- Additional support services are provided by Aspiranet
- Families receive additional respite services
- Aspiranet provides additional support and linkage to community resources

Glossary of Terms

Foster Care

Foster Care is an out-of-home placement option that occurs when children cannot live with their families, often as a result of abuse and neglect. Children in foster care live with relative or non-relative adults who have been approved to provide them with shelter and care.

Intensive Services Foster Care (ISFC)

The ISFC program was created to provide supports to children and youth who require intensive treatment for behavioral and specialized health care needs. ISFC is intended to stabilize children and youth in foster care with the services they need in family settings and reduce placement in congregate care and residential programs. Aspiranet provides special training to resource parents interested in working with children needing ISFC.

Foster Family Agency (FFA)

A Foster Family Agency (FFA) such as Aspiranet is a private organization that recruits, trains, approves, supports and develops foster families to care for children and youth that have been removed from their own families for reasons of abuse and/or neglect.

Child Welfare System

The Child Welfare System is a group of services designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety, achieving permanency, and strengthening families to successfully care for their children. The child welfare system is not a single entity; public agencies, private child welfare agencies such as Aspiranet and community-based organizations work together to strengthen families and keep children safe.

Resource Family

A Resource Family is a family that has been approved to care for children who have been placed in foster care. The term Resource Parent is inclusive of Foster Parents, Adoptive Parents, Relative Care Providers and Non-Relative Caregivers.

Reunification

Reunification occurs when a child is returned to the custody of their parents after they have been involved in a period of foster care placement outside their family home. Reuniting children with their families as soon as possible is the first goal of child welfare agencies.

Adoption through Foster Care

Adoption through Foster Care (also known as foster-adopt) may occur when children in foster care are unable to reunify with their parents and a plan of permanency is determined to be in the child's best interest. In order to adopt a child through Aspiranet a Resource Family must provide foster care.

Concurrent Planning

Concurrent Planning is a type of permanency planning in which reunification services are provided to the family of a child in out-of-home care at the same time that an alternative permanency plan is made for the child, in case reunification efforts fail.

Family Evaluation

A Family Evaluation occurs as part of the process to be approved as a Resource Family. The Family Evaluation process is an assessment conducted by an agency social worker to help determine family system dynamics and strengths and identify areas where more support or resources may be needed for effective and quality parenting skills.



Aspiranet is a statewide agency
with 50 years of experience
in California.



For more information, please visit aspiranet.org/fosterhope

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