



# Foster Child Adoption



## Information Packet

To Learn More Call: 402.504.3666

# Welcome

## **Thank you for inquiring about foster child adoption!**

It is hard to imagine, but currently Nebraska has over 200 children who are without families. They have been removed from their biological parents, mostly due to abuse or neglect, and are currently living in group homes, shelters, or foster homes. These children have become legally free for adoption and are Nebraska's children in waiting, waiting for a loving home that will last forever.

## Foster Child Adoption

### **Who Can Adopt?**

Different types of families are needed for different types of children.

- Single or married parents
- Families with or without children
- Families that are culturally diverse

Adoptive families must:

- Be willing to complete training and become a licensed home
- Demonstrate emotional and financial stability
- Love children, be flexible, resourceful and have room in the home for the child

### **Who are the Waiting Children?**

The children in waiting are a diverse group of children who are legally free for adoption. These children can be as young as a one year old but are typically 6-18 years old. They may also have brothers and sisters; some can be adopted with or without their siblings. These children may also suffer from mild, moderate or severe emotional, behavioral, developmental, physical and/or learning disabilities. Children in waiting have diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Child Saving Institute's focus is on recruiting adoptive families for children in Nebraska's foster care system. These children are legally free and are in need of a family to provide support, nurture and guidance. Many of these children have been in multiple placements while others

have had single, long-term placements. Some of these children will have cognitive, physical, and/or emotional challenges that will need to be worked through with professionals and unconditional support of a family.

### **Why do I need to become a foster parent in order to be an adoptive parent?**

In order to become an adoptive parent for a foster child, you must become licensed foster home. The State of Nebraska has requirements in place to ensure that every adult who wants to foster or adopt children fully understands what it is like to care for a child who may have been abused and/or neglected. Providing education to potential parents ensures fewer disruptions and gives parents the opportunity to make an informed decision on if foster-adoption is the most appropriate form of adoption for them. Once a family has made the decision to become a licensed foster home, children who are legally free for adoption can be placed in the home. It is important to understand that just because you become a licensed foster care provider, this *does not* mean that you will have to take in children who are not legally free for adoption, however, if you choose to do so, you may.

### **How long is the process?**

The entire process can take anywhere from 6 months to a year or more from the time of training to the placement of a child. These children have been through so many changes that great care is taken to find the right match between a child and family. A slow transition of the child to their prospective adoptive home is important.

### **What are the fees to adopt a foster child?**

There are no fees charged to families adopting children in the foster care system. In most cases, a financial subsidy is made available to assist the family with day-to-day expenses of parenting. Ongoing medical insurance through Medicaid is usually available for the child as well.

# Steps to Adopting a Foster Child

## **Step 1: Contact your local Service Area agency**

Nebraska is divided into five different service areas: Eastern, Southeast, Northern, Central, and Western Service Areas. Each of these areas have one or more lead agencies that are responsible for training prospective foster parents, completing home studies and submitting required licensing documents to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. To find your home's service area, click on the link below or see the map attached to end of this packet. You will find you service area's lead agency's information on the next page and you may call one or all agencies listed under your service area.

### [Service Area Map](#)

#### **Eastern Service Area**

*Nebraska Families Collaborative*  
402.498.1240  
Email: [contactus@nebraskafc.org](mailto:contactus@nebraskafc.org)  
<http://www.nebraskafc.org>

*KVC*  
10909 Mill Valley Rd #100  
Omaha, NE 68154  
(402) 431-4200  
<http://www.kvc.org>

#### **Southeast Service Area**

*KVC*  
5220 S 16th St  
Lincoln NE  
(402) 476-0040  
1-888-655-5500  
<http://www.kvc.org>

#### **Northern, Central and Western Service Area**

*Department of Health and Human Services*  
Division of Children & Family Services  
P.O. Box 95026  
Lincoln, NE 68509-5044  
Phone: (402) 471-9272  
[http://dhhs.ne.gov/Children\\_Family\\_Services/](http://dhhs.ne.gov/Children_Family_Services/)

## **Step 1: Continued**

### **All Service Areas**

*The Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association*

2431 Fairfield, Suite C

Lincoln, NE 68521

308-631-5847

<http://www.nfapa.org/>

If you are unsure who to contact, you should contact NFAPA and they will direct. Please keep in mind that as of January 1, 2011, these service providers may change.

## **Step 2: Register and Attend Training Classes**

Once you have contacted your lead agency, they will inform you of their criteria for adoptive foster homes. If you meet their criteria, they will inform you of their upcoming training schedule. A lead agency may also refer you to a subcontracting agency (like Child Saving Institute) to complete your foster parent training. This training is for all families regardless if they are currently parents or soon to be parents. This training is to inform potential foster and foster-adoptive parents about the children that come into the foster care system and how each child may have specific needs that require professional help.

## **Step 3: Complete an Adoptive Home Study**

During training, the agency will send a worker out to your home to complete an adoptive home study. This home study typically occurs in your home and consists of at least three visits. During the home study some of the questions you will be asked about are your family's dynamic, your childhood, your family's strengths and limitations, financial and emotional stability, and safety of the home. The purpose of the study is to help determine what type of child would be the best match for your family as well as the appropriateness for adoption.

Once you have started your home study, the evaluator will request references, financial statements, employment history, and background checks. After the worker has met with your family and collected all

documents, they could approve your family entirely, approve with stipulations or deny. An approval with stipulations would indicate that there is a limitation that your family should address before a child is placed in the home or that a child with certain limitations would not benefit from being in your home. It is important to remember that a stipulated approval or a denial of a potential adoptive family is not a denial that will last forever. The home can be re-evaluated again once you have addressed the issue(s) detailed in the home study.

After you have received an approval to become an adoptive home, you can begin to look for children who are legally free for adoption on our three adoptive websites listed below. On each of the websites is a picture and biography of each child. Once you have found a child or children you are interested in, be ready to give your home study to the Foster Child Adoption Specialist or the child's Adoption Recruiter to determine if the child is a match for your home. If the child is a good match for your home, your home study will be forwarded to the child's Child and Family Service Specialist (CFSS) through the Department of Health and Human Services and/or the child's Service Coordinator. The CFSS or Service Coordinator will then contact you to set up time to meet with them, the child and any other person they feel is important in the child's life.

Websites for Children who are legally free for adoption:

<http://nebraskheartgallery.org>

<http://AdoptUsKids.org>

<http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/adoption/>

#### **Step 4: Placement of a Child**

After making a commitment to the child, the family and child will begin pre-placement visits before the child is placed in the home. The frequency and location of visits will depend on the comfort of the child and adoptive family.

#### **Step 5: Adoption**

When a child is ready to move into your home, the CFSS and/or Service Coordinator will arrange for the child and all of their belongings to come into your home. Once the child is officially placed with your family, there is a 6 month period that must pass before Nebraska will allow the adoption to be finalized. This six month period allows for both the family and child to adjust to each other and determine if this is going to be a successful match.

## Guardianship

### **What is Guardianship?**

Guardianship is when an adult has legal responsibility over a child. This entails providing for the child's physical, educational, mental and emotional needs without pursuing adoption. A parent does not give up their rights to a child but rather allows another adult to care for them while they cannot. Guardianship is typically used for a short period of time and is not appropriate for long term. Guardianship must be renewed yearly and dissolved **at any time** by any adult involved with the Guardianship. This may include but is not limited to the biological parent, the guardian themselves and/or the Court system.

### **When is Guardianship more appropriate than Adoption?**

Children in waiting are children of all ages and backgrounds. Many of these children are older and have very strong bonds with their biological families. A child may feel that their identity is in their name or feel as though adoption would mean giving up the current life that they are leading. Some of the children in waiting are teenagers who simply need a home that has a guardian to protect them, provide for their physical needs and guide them for a few years. These reasons, along with others, would make guardianship more appropriate than adoption.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What qualities do agencies look for in an adoptive home?**

Agencies look for families who can best meet the needs of children currently in waiting. Agencies typically have a lot of families who are already licensed and looking for small children and are in need of families that are open to children who are 8 years old or older, who are willing to take sibling strips and/or children who have a variety of special needs. Many agencies accept people of all races, genders, ages, and parenting experience. Contact your local agency to find out more about your service area's needs.

### **Can I choose the type of child I want to adopt?**

Yes! During the home study process, your worker will review what child characteristics your family is open to. This includes a child's age, gender, behavioral, physical, developmental, learning and emotional needs.

### **How old do I have to be to adopt?**

In Nebraska, the age of adulthood is 19 and therefore you must be at least 19 years of age to adopt. Our state currently does not have an upper age limit to adopt in this program.

### **Do I have to be married?**

No, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services does not require that a child be placed in a married couple's home. Agencies license parents that are single, widowed, divorced and married. If you are living with a person in your home that you are not related to, you cannot adopt without written consent from the division Director of Children and Family Services for the State of Nebraska.

### **Can biological parents regain their custodial rights?**

Once a parent has relinquished or their rights have been terminated, it cannot be reversed.

### **How do I adopt a child who is currently placed in my home?**

First contact your CFSS to determine if the child is available for adoption. If the child is not, you can express to them, that should the child become legally free for adoption you would be open to becoming an adoptive parent for the child. If the child is free for adoption, the CFSS will determine if you are a good match for the child. If your family is a match, they will make a referral to have an adoptive home study completed and start the process for adoption.

### **How do I adopt a relative who is currently in the foster system?**

You will need to contact the case manager of your family member and let them know that you are interested in adopting that child. The case manager will be able to answer any questions you may have and explain the process to you.

### **Can I meet the child before they are placed in my home?**

Absolutely! The case manager will arrange meetings with prospective home and the child to help with the transition of a child into a prospective adoptive home.

### **Is there financial assistance for an adopted child?**

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services has a set of predetermined qualities that will determine if a child will receive a subsidy or not. Each child is different, but typically children with special needs, in a sibling group and/or over a certain age will have a subsidy to assist them with their special needs. All children are eligible for Medicaid; most will be able to keep it until they are 19 years of age.

### **How much does foster adoption cost?**

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services will cover the cost of training, the home study, and all legal fees for adoption. A family typically is responsible for all other post-adoption needs with the option of receiving Medicaid free for the child until the child reaches the age of 19. A child may also receive a subsidy from the State to help the family care for the child's specific needs.

### **How long does the licensing /adoption approval take?**

The entire process can take anywhere from six months to a year. Each family will have to contact their service area's lead agency to find when their foster parenting/foster-adoption training occurs. Once the training is completed, the home will have an adoptive home study completed and this information will be sent to NDHHS for licensing.

## About Child Saving Institute

**Mission: Responding to the cry of a child**

For more than a century, Child Saving Institute has facilitated healing for children and families in crisis. At its core, CSI exists to help children and families. We're tireless in our mission to prevent, intervene and treat child abuse and neglect. We provide emergency services to children and teens in crisis. And we offer therapy for physically and sexually abused children. Additionally, CSI is a community leader in preventive family education, preservation, and childcare.

CSI also provides hope. We help to nurture a positive family dynamic by recruiting foster and adoptive families for children and teens.

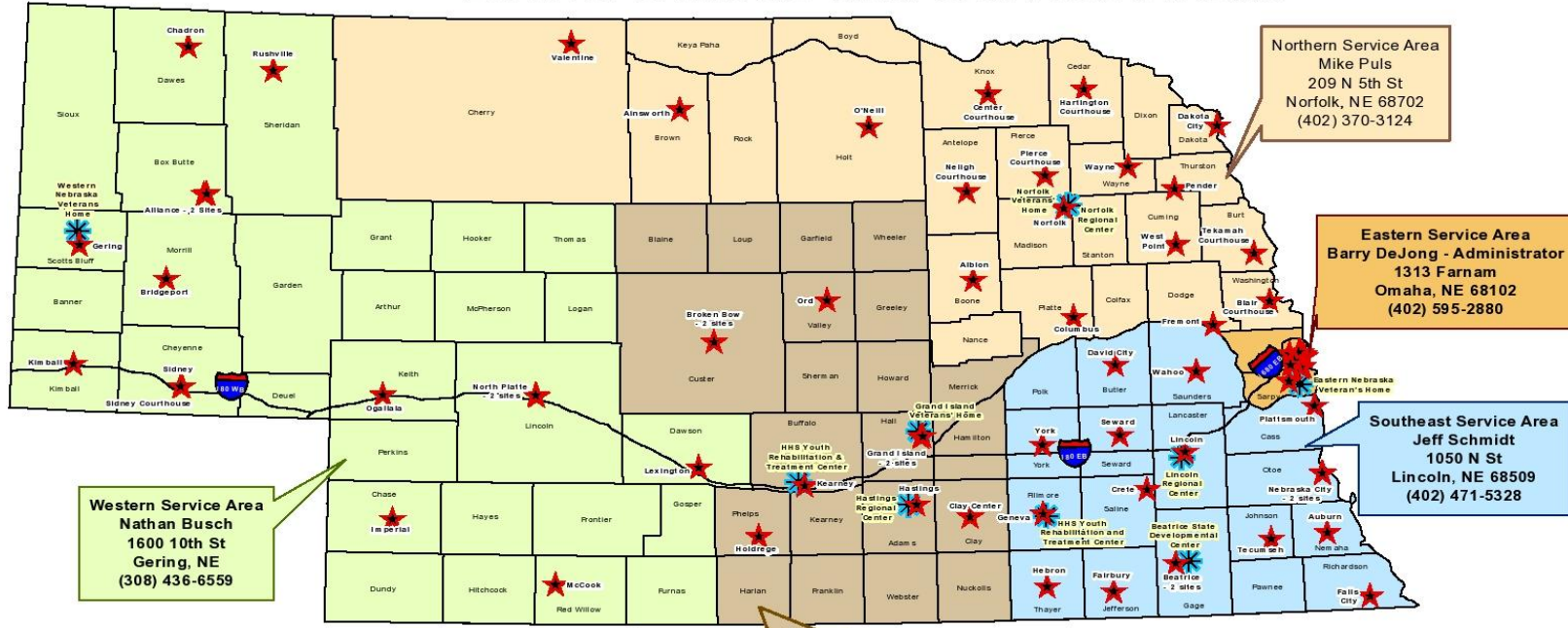
CSI is funded by private donations, government grants and contracts, and the United Way of the Midlands.



**4545 Dodge Street \* Omaha NE 68132 \*402.553.6000 \*402.553.2428 Fax**  
**[Http://www.childsaving.org](http://www.childsaving.org)**

Source: Division of Public Health

# DHHS Offices and Service Areas



**Northern Service Area**  
 Mike Puls  
 209 N 5th St  
 Norfolk, NE 68702  
 (402) 370-3124

**Eastern Service Area**  
 Barry DeJong - Administrator  
 1313 Farnam  
 Omaha, NE 68102  
 (402) 595-2880

**Southeast Service Area**  
 Jeff Schmidt  
 1050 N St  
 Lincoln, NE 68509  
 (402) 471-5328

**Western Service Area**  
 Nathan Busch  
 1600 10th St  
 Gering, NE  
 (308) 436-6559

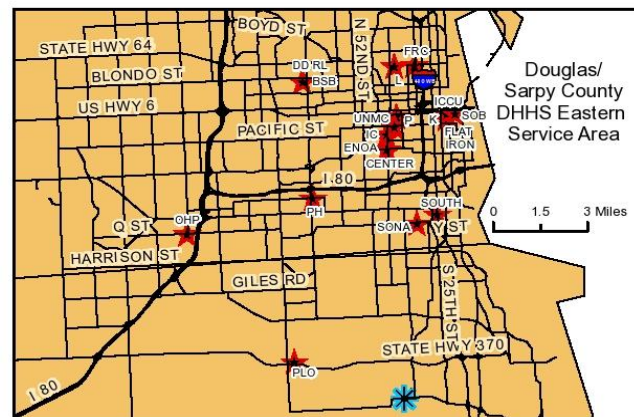
**Central Service Area**  
 Yolanda Nuncio  
 208 N Pine St  
 Grand Island, NE 68802  
 (308) 385-6126

**Legend**

- County outline
- Major roads
- Interstates
- DHHS Service Areas**
- Central
- Eastern
- Northern
- Southeast
- Western



Map created by Wendy McNulty  
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 DHHS GIS - 1/08  
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**Douglas/Sarpy County  
 DHHS Eastern  
 Service Area**

