



# Resource Parent Introductory Handbook



Department of Children and Family Services



*Every Child Deserves a Family!*

# Table of Contents

Welcome from Assistant Agency Director.....	1
Mission Statement.....	3
The Need for Foster Care in Alameda County.....	5-6
Children and Youth who Need Resource Families .....	8
Family Foster Care and Adoption .....	9
Qualifications & Expectations of Resource Parents.....	11-12
Steps to Becoming a Resource Parent.....	13
Orientation Schedule.....	15
Services & Supports.....	16
Commonly Used Terms .....	17-18
Am I Ready to be a Resource Parent?.....	19-20
Contact Phone Numbers.....	20

*Cover photo and photo below by Ralph Granich for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*



*"You  
can change  
somebody's  
life..."*

# Did you know as a Resource Parent you can...

- Be single, divorced, married or domestic partners
- Be receiving TANF, SSI or Disability benefits
- Be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender
- Have children & youth share bedrooms
- Have a criminal record history-Let's talk about it
- Be a renter of your residence
- Become licensed in close to 90 days
- Be a young adult or in your "twilight years"
- Have a previous CPS history - Let's talk about it

*Photographed by Ralph Granich for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

*...You can actually change somebody's life."*

--Reggie Steele,  
Comedian/Adoptee



# From the Director...



**O**n behalf of Alameda County Social Services Agency, Department of Children & Family Services, please allow me this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude and excitement with your interest in becoming a Resource Parent in Alameda County!

You have gone one step further than many people in our community by seeking more information about what is needed in your community related to child abuse and/or neglect, and that is commendable. Now that you have decided to initiate the process of becoming a Resource Parent in Alameda County, it is our intention to keep you informed about the licensing process.

When children and parents must be separated, especially because of the tragedy of child abuse and neglect, children are confused and upset. To assist them with this major life change, our children and youth need the temporary protection and nurturing that a family can provide. When these children and youth cannot be reunited with their parents or kin, they need an adoptive family to provide a lifetime relationship.

Please read the enclosed information about family foster care and adoption in Alameda County. While it is lengthy we understand fostering and/or adopting a child or youth is a major decision in any family system. The Department is grateful and pleased you are considering joining us in this very important endeavor.

With great appreciation,

***Carol Collins***  
Assistant Agency Director





*Photographed by Aude Guerruci for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

*All children need the love,  
care and support that only  
a family or extended family  
can provide.*

# Our Mission Statement

**W**e appreciate your interest in the foster care program. The enclosed information will help you understand the program, the Department, the foster home licensing process and the adoption approval process. If you have any further questions or concerns, please call the Recruitment, Development and Support Information Hotline at (510) 259-3575.

**O**ur vision is that all children in Alameda County will have the opportunity to grow and develop in a safe, healthy, nurturing and stable home. To reach this goal, we strive to ensure that all children receive the support and security that a family, an extended family, or an alternative family can provide.

WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS  
THROUGH OUR RESOURCE PARENT PROGRAM.

**I**n support of our vision that all children and youth in Alameda County will have the opportunity to grow and develop in a safe, healthy, nurturing and stable home, we at Alameda County Social Services Agency aim to:

- protect children and youth when they have been abused or neglected, or are in danger of abuse and neglect;
- strengthen and preserve families;
- find permanent homes or alternative placements for children and youth who cannot remain safely at home or be returned to their families;
- assist children and youth in our care to become productive adults; and
- support the efforts of foster parents and other substitute caregivers to provide high quality services to children, youth and families.



*Photographed by Robin Fryday for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

*All children and youth  
deserve to grow  
up in a permanent,  
loving family!*

# The Need for Foster Care in Alameda County

A child or youth in need of a temporary or permanent and safe home comes to the attention of the Department by referrals from concerned people in the community. When the Department makes the decision to engage with a family in resolving an issue, we make every effort to work with the family while keeping their child or youth in the home.

Unfortunately, there are instances when a child or youth must be separated from their family. When children or youth must leave homes that are neglectful or abusive, they typically experience trauma that impacts the process of normal child development. What we know is even in these types of unfortunate situations, placing children and youth away from home adds to the trauma of abuse and neglect for that child or youth. The very nature of being separated from one's family is unimaginable and challenging.

It is for this reason that permanency is one of the Department's priorities. The most permanent plan for a child or youth is to safely return to their parents' care. To accomplish this, our first step in working with the child or youth's family is focused on re-stabilizing the parents so that the family can be reunited.

## PERMANENCY OPTIONS- WHEN REUNIFICATION IS NOT POSSIBLE

• Adoption • Legal Guardianship • A Permanent Connection

If the child or youth is not able to reunify with his/her biological parents, an alternative permanent home must be secured. It is the Department's mission and practice to place children and youth in the least restrictive placement and within their own communities. This is done so that children and youth can remain close to their school, friends, extended family, churches and places that are familiar. The Department is committed to placing children and youth with relatives whenever possible. When reunification is not possible, every effort must be made to identify adults to provide permanence for them so they do not grow up in foster care. Legal permanency for children and youth is established through Adoption or Legal Guardianship.



In cases where legal permanence is not an option, efforts are made to identify a permanent connection for older youth so when they emancipate from foster care they have a supportive adult in their life as they continue into adulthood. A permanent connection for a youth may be relational, physical, legal, or all of the above. For some youth, a committed relationship with an adult may be what's most important, and may or may not include living in that person's home. A permanent connection may result in an ultimate plan of Adoption or Legal Guardianship.

It is critical that we understand the importance of creativity and flexibility when thinking about the needs of the children and youth we serve. Different situations require different solutions. Child welfare workers help older children and youth understand permanency. Older children and youth need to be actively involved in planning for their futures. They need to be involved in the permanency planning process to help ensure that they do not leave foster care without a permanent lifelong connection.

#### THE CALIFORNIA PERMANENCY FOR YOUTH TASK FORCE HAS DEFINED YOUTH PERMANENCY AS FOLLOWS:

Permanency is both a process and a result that includes involvement of the youth as a participant or leader in defining for themselves what permanency means, and in finding a permanent connection with at least one committed adult, who provides:

- A safe, stable and secure parenting relationship,
- Love,
- Unconditional commitment, and
- Lifelong support in the context of reunification, a legal adoption, or guardianship, where possible;

And in which the youth has the opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons, including brothers & sisters.

A broad array of individualized permanency options exist; reunification and adoption are an important two among many that may be appropriate.

*Foster care provides opportunities for healing, growth, and development....*





*Photographed by Courteney Coolidge for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

*All children need the  
love, care and support  
that only a family  
or extended family  
can provide.*

# Who are the Children and Youth in Foster Care?

Children and youth in foster care may have experienced physical or sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, or their parents are incarcerated or hospitalized. These children and youth are of all ages, race and cultures. Some may need extra attention due to physical disabilities, developmental delays, emotional and/or behavioral issues. Children and youth live with selected resource families until they can return home or may need alternative permanency planning through adoption or legal guardianship.

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO NEED FAMILY HOMES ARE:

- brothers and sisters who want and need to be together
- teenagers
- school-aged children
- infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children
- children and youth who are medically fragile
- children and youth of all abilities
- children and youth with emotional and behavioral challenges
- children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, are questioning their sexual preference or gender identity, or are exploring their gender expression
- children born exposed to alcohol and/or other drugs
- children and youth of color of all ages
- teen mothers & their babies

# Family Foster Care & Adoption

## WHAT IS FAMILY FOSTER CARE?

According to the National Commission on Family Foster Care, sponsored by the Child Welfare League of America and the National Resource Parent Association:

"Family foster care is an essential service for children and parents who must live apart while maintaining legal and, usually, affectional ties. The value of family foster care is that it can respond to the unique, individual needs of infants, children, youth and their families through the strength of family living and through family and community supports.

The goal of family foster care is to provide opportunities for healing, growth and development leading to healthier infants, children, youth and families with safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime."

## WHAT IS ADOPTION?

According to the Child Welfare League of America adoption is "the means of transferring to a child and parents all the legal rights they would have if that child had been born to those parents.

The value of adoption is that it provides children with the basic needs of every child: the legal status, social status and commitment that come from having a family of their own in which to grow up. The goal of adoption is to provide a child with a family that intends to offer a lifetime commitment."





*Photographed by Chris Stark for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

*All of us  
need families,  
just like flowers  
need the sun.*



# Qualifications & Expectations of Resource Parents

## WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS TO BE A RESOURCE PARENT?

Resource Parents and Adoptive Parents can be married or single, with or without children already in their families. We are looking for individuals, couples, or families who can protect children and youth, and nurture them. Both Resource Parents and Adoptive Parents have to understand how children and youth grow and develop, and how abuse and neglect affect that development. Resource Parents are responsible for the full time care of children and youth placed in their homes, for partnering with child welfare staff and for maintaining contact with birth families.

## WHAT DO RESOURCE PARENTS DO?

The obvious answer to this question is that they love and nurture, and care for the children and youth placed in their care. However, there is a great deal more involved.

There are times when Resource Parents need to arrange and accompany children to medical, dental, or therapy appointments. The Department may rely on the Resource Parent to act as an advocate for the child or youth at school or to work with them to prepare them for returning home, and perhaps, most importantly, to provide a positive (nonphysical) form of discipline that is fair and appropriate. The bottom line is that Resource Parents are part of a treatment team including social workers, therapist, juvenile court personnel and, on many occasions, the biological parent(s) and extended biological family members.

## ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESOURCE PARENTING ARRANGEMENTS?

Concurrent Planning Resource Parents protect and nurture most of the children and youth in care. These Resource Parents understand and are committed to supporting reunification while also being willing to adopt or become legal guardian to the children or youth in their home should reunification prove to not be a viable option. Concurrent Planning Resource Parents also benefit from relevant training



and receive monetary reimbursement for the cost of fostering. Most of our children and youth in placement are involved in “concurrent planning” therefore we are constantly in need of more Concurrent Planning Resource Parents.

**DO RESOURCE PARENTS HAVE COMPLETE LEGAL AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDREN?**

The Department has either temporary or permanent guardianship of the children and youth. The ultimate authority regarding these children and youth rests with the Juvenile Court regarding the medical, psychological, educational and travel needs of children in care until dependency is dismissed.



*Photographed by Ralph Granich for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

*Concurrent planning prevents children and youth from languishing in foster care.*

# Steps to Becoming a Resource Parent

THE FOLLOWING STEPS ARE REQUIRED FOR ALL RESOURCE PARENTS THAT WILL BE LICENSED BY ALAMEDA COUNTY TO CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

- Attend a Resource Parent Orientation
- Fingerprint for a criminal record clearance (all adults 18 years and older that reside in the home to be licensed)
- Attend and complete pre-licensing PRIDE training
- Participate in two pre-licensing home visits with a licensing evaluator
- Submit the licensing application
- Provide all required information to complete the licensing application
- Complete CPR & First Aid training
- Provide TB Screens (all adults 18 years and older that reside in the home to be licensed)



*Photographed by Peter Samuels for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

*Older children and youth  
need families too!*

# Resource Parent Orientation

## NO PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Orientations are held the 1st and 3rd Thursdays every month from 6:30pm to 8:30pm.

Orientations are the first Thursday of each month in **Oakland** at:

**Oakland Main Office**  
**401 Broadway**  
**Oakland, CA 94607**

Orientations are the third Thursday of each month in **Hayward** at:

**Glad Tidings Church of God in Christ**  
**Helen J. Macklin Hall**  
**27689 Tyrrell Avenue**  
**Hayward, CA 94544**

*Come to listen and get your questions answered about opening your home and heart to a child or youth in need!*

# Services & Supports



*Photographed by Ralph Granich  
for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

**Foster Care Monthly Reimbursement-** a stipend (referred to as a board payment or per diem) is issued each month for services provided the previous month. The rate is set by the State of California and varies according to the age of the child or youth placed in your home.

**Foster Care Clothing Allowance** - this stipend is awarded once per year for each child or youth who is placed in your home. The rate is set by the State of California and varies according to the age of the child or youth placed in your home.

**Medical, Dental, Counseling and Therapy Needs** - these costs are covered by Medi-Cal and Dental-Cal, the medical and dental insurance provided for foster children and youth.

**Alameda County Foster Parent Association** - this support group consists of Resource Parents who have experienced the same things that you will experience as a new Resource Parent. Trainings, conferences and advocacy are the main goals of the Foster Parent Association.

**On-Going Visitation** - monthly visits are made by the assigned child welfare worker to your home to avoid any disruptions by settling unsolved issues, sharing information, offering resources and discussing concerns. The assigned child welfare worker changes as the case moves through the dependency process.

**Training and Conferences** - allows Resource Parents to obtain the skill level needed in caring for children and youth that have been abused and neglected. Reimbursements for some trainings and conferences are available yearly.

**Pre-Placement Adoption Services** - once a prospective match has been made, a plan will be developed consisting of visitation dates. Adoption subsidy information is provided to the family.

**Post Adoption Services** - adoption subsidies are available for children and youth based on their basic and special needs. Resource and referral information is provided upon request.



# Commonly Used Terms

**Child Protective Services (CPS)** This is the name commonly used in the community to refer to the Child Welfare Agency that investigates child abuse and neglect and removes children and youth from their homes due to abuse or neglect. It is part of the state of California's child welfare system, funded through federal, state and county funds and regulated by laws and regulations. The Child Welfare Agency in Alameda County is the Department of Children and Family Services of Alameda County Social Services Agency. The Alameda County Adoption Program is licensed by the State of California, and is part of the Department of Children and Family Services.

**Court Dependency/Jurisdiction** When a child or youth is abandoned, or removed from their home due to neglect or abuse, the child or youth is detained by the Juvenile Court. If the court rules that the child or youth should be placed in out-of-home care, or remain in-home, with court supervision, the child is adjudged to be a Dependent of Alameda County (a Court dependent).

The county of residence of the child or youth's custodial parent determines which county may take Jurisdiction of the child. Children and youth who are placed in out-of-home care may live in relative placements that have been screened and approved by the Agency, foster homes licensed by the county, foster homes certified by licensed, private Foster Family Agencies (FFAs).

**Family Reunification Program** When the Court orders out-of-home placement for a child, Family Reunification Services may be ordered. The Agency is required to provide reasonable services to assist the family in meeting a court ordered case plan in order to reunify with their child or youth. Case plans for parents include visitation, and may include parenting classes, counseling, drug or alcohol treatment, and/or plans for self-sufficiency, depending on the family's individual circumstances. Depending on the age of the child or youth, parents are given a limited time period in order to meet the

case plan or make substantial progress in meeting the plan. When a family is unable to meet the plan or make significant progress within that time frame, the Court may order that these services be terminated, and a permanent plan of Adoption or Legal Guardianship be made for the child or youth.

**Concurrent Planning** This is a case management plan which includes working toward family reunification while, at the same time, developing an alternative permanent plan for the child or youth if returning the child or youth to the birth parents is not possible.

**Legal Rights of Birth Parents** Rights of birth parents in Dependency proceedings include the right to be represented by an attorney or represent themselves in Court. Included is the right to receive formal notice of all legal proceedings regarding their child or youth, including notice of the Agency's recommendation for all placement changes for their child or youth. Until parental rights are terminated, birth parents have a right to visit with their child or youth. Child welfare workers are often given discretion by the Court to arrange for visitation. The Court may order limited, supervised, or no visitation under certain circumstances. The birth parent has the right to object to and contest any recommendations made by the child welfare worker with which they do not agree. In some cases, a trial/contested hearing may occur. The birth parent has a right to appeal termination of their rights.

**No Services Cases** Under certain circumstances, when the Court orders out-of-home placement for a child, NO Family Reunification Services are ordered. If adoption is the best permanent plan for the child or youth, the Agency is directed to begin adoptive planning for the child or youth. Visitation with the birth family may still occur on these cases, up until the termination of parental rights is ordered by the court.

**Adoption Homestudy** All Adoptive applicants must first complete the foster care licensing process. Regardless of their relationship to the child, families interested in adoption must complete an assessment which includes a thorough review of the family's medical, employment, social, emotional, criminal, relationship/marital history, and home environment as required by law. The adoption homestudy worker explores the family's motivation and interest in adoption and gets to know the family. Paperwork is required of the family. The results are documented in a written report.

# Am I Ready to be a Resource Parent?

Circle “Y” for yes and “N” for no after each statement

below to help you determine if you can foster or adopt a child today!

**1. I have enough room in my home for a foster child.** You must have enough bedroom space for a foster child. A foster child may share a bedroom with your child or with another foster child, but there are rules that apply to age and gender of the children who will be sharing the room. The foster child may not share a bedroom with any individual over the age of 18. Also, an adult or child cannot move out of their bedroom and sleep on the couch to make room for the foster child.

Y N

**2. I am physically and emotionally capable of caring for children.** Being a parent can be demanding! You must be healthy and emotionally stable to care for our children. You will be asked to complete a physical exam and you will be interviewed by our staff to assure your overall health can handle having a foster child join your family.

Y N

**3. I have never had a case with the Department due to abuse or neglect.** If you have had an open case with this Department in the past, you may not be able to become a Resource Parent and we will review our records to be certain. This includes substantiation of abuse and neglect or if your child was placed in foster care.

Y N

**4. I have an adequate income to meet my current family needs.** While you do not have to be rich to be a foster parent, you must have enough income to meet the needs of your own family. You will be asked to provide proof of income to assure this fact.

Y N

**5. No adult in my home has ever been convicted of a felony.** If you or any adult residing in your home has been convicted of certain criminal offenses, you cannot be a Resource Parent. Each adult member of your household will have to submit their fingerprints to the Department of Justice.

Y N

**6. I can commit to attending 24 hours of mandatory training to be a Resource Parent.**

All Resource Parents must receive PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education) training to prepare them for the adventure of fostering or adopting a child that has been abused or neglected.

**Y N**

**7. I am willing to join a team in helping to send a foster child back to the home they were removed from when it is safe to do so.**

We know that all children want to be with their family of origin and the parents of these children deserve the chance to remedy the issues in their homes that led to their children being removed. This requires a team effort and you would be one of our most valuable players!

**Y N**

**8. I am open to considering adopting a foster child if that child cannot safely return to the home they were removed from.**

We know that children who grow up in foster care do not do as well as children who benefit from being a permanent part of a family, and that means adoption is the next best option for our children. Remember, you will be the most consistent person in their life, they will grow to love you and you will love them. You are the next best option for giving that child a permanent home!

**Y N**



*Photographed by Courteney Coolidge for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

**Important Phone Numbers and Website Information**

**Recruitment, Development & Support Resource**

Parent Phone Line.....(510) 259-3575

Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline.....(510) 259-1800

Central Index .....(510) 268-2002

Foster/Adoption Licensing Unit.....(510) 780-8944

Post Adopt Program Information.....(510) 268-2422

Alameda County Foster Parent Association.....(510) 430-0942

**[www.alamedasocialservices.org](http://www.alamedasocialservices.org)**

**[www.pathwaytohome.org](http://www.pathwaytohome.org)**



*Photographed by Eduardo Acorda for The Bay Area Heart Gallery*

Resource Parent  
Phone Line

**(510) 259-3575**



[www.alamedacountysocialservices.org](http://www.alamedacountysocialservices.org)

*Every Child Deserves a Family!*