



## Frequently Asked Questions



### ? Will children placed in my home have behavior issues?

Possibly, but not necessarily. Trauma can influence a normally well-behaved child to behave poorly, and can influence a child with behavior problems to behave better. Some children may display behavioral problems as a result of the chaos in their lives, while others may astound us with their calm and composure. It's impossible to predict how the child will behave. A majority of the children we serve do not have behavioral issues, like those associated with foster care because the children not been abused or neglected. We also do not accept any children that have extreme behavioral issues, mental health diagnosis or any past behavior of sexual misconduct or inappropriate touch. Those children are referred to other organizations that are more prepared and trained to help.

### ? What type of situations do the children come from?

The children come from families that are experiencing a crisis of some sort. Such crises might include financial problems, unemployment, an medical emergency and homelessness. In other cases, children come from families in which the parent needs time to heal physically or emotionally, or is recovering from a drug or alcohol addiction. Some children come from families in which the mother is being abused. Still other families are thrown into crisis when a parent is remanded to a correctional institution for a period of time. While these and other kinds of crises are traumatic, they also offer the opportunity for positive personal and familial transformations. Acceptance of the child into Better Families is based on whether a family is available to care for that child when placement is being requested. Some Better Families are able to accept sibling groups and parenting/ pregnant teens.

## ? What type of contact will the host family have with the biological parent?

Biological parents maintain full custody of their child, and are encouraged to participate in decisions regarding their child's care while they address whatever issues led to the instability in their lives. (Similar to co-parenting) Each parent is connected to a "Family Advocate" which provides accountability, support, guidance and has professional oversight by Better Families staff.

Our aim is to facilitate a partnership relationship between volunteers and the biological parent(s), in which the host family becomes a kind of "extended family" for the family in crisis.

We encourage host families to maintain a relationship with the family even after the placement ends, if possible.



## ? What ages of children does the Better Families program serve?

While the Host Family can provide placements for newborns through adolescents (0-18), there will be a concentration on the younger and most vulnerable children (ages 0-6). We also have a need for school-aged children between the ages of 6-12 years old. If children are in school, we work with the school system to set up a bus to keep the children in their same school since placements are very short term.

## ? What is the background of the children placed in a Host Family?

These are normal children coming from sometimes very difficult circumstances. Each child will respond to the situation differently, depending on their personality and coping skills. Some may show little response to the circumstances in their lives, while others may be deeply affected.

Note that the children placed by Better Families are not believed to be victims of abuse and neglect. If they were, they would instead have become wards of the state and not eligible for this project.

Over **60%** of our referrals come from DCF and over **98%** of our families stay together. There are a few situations where a family may make poor decisions while Better Families is involved which could lead to the state needing to shelter the child or make another placement arrangement.



## ? How long does a child typically stay with a host family?

The average length of stay is about six weeks, but placements usually last from two days to a year. The Better Families team makes every effort at the time of placement to estimate the length of stay. Factors include the severity of the family's crisis, the willingness and ability of the biological parent to address the issues involved in the crisis, among others. When we call for a placement, we will know approximately the amount of time the family will need to get through their crisis and reunified with their children.

## ? Can the host family adopt the child?

The goal of the Better Families project is to reunite children with their biological parent in a home that is more stable and healthy, in part, because of the contribution of the Better Families intervention. Currently, **98%** of all families in the project come back together, often in the most stable environment they've ever known. If, however, the biological parent loses legal custody of their child(ren), host families have the opportunity to become a non-relative placement for the child(ren) as your potentially pursue getting licensed as a foster parent.



## ? Is there financial assistance?

Better Families does not provide any monthly stipends or financial support similar to foster care. If the host family's church is a partnering organization, we connect families to their faith-based coordinator, which will connect them to families and resources within the church to help with needs for the children. Our children normally come with WIC or can get on WIC which would assist with formula and food for young children. Children will also come with Medicaid or we can get them or Medicaid or connected to one of our health providers that will cover those financial costs. Better Families does have donated car seats, pack n' plays and other gently used child items that can be loaned out to families that are hosting. We also work with an array of community partners that can help provide diapers, clothing and other essential needs that the child may have when coming into your home. If the child is referred by DCF, they can write us a daycare voucher that can be used at any participating early learning coalition daycare providers. We also have several private daycares that offer spots to children are served through Better Families for Children. Since this isn't foster care and the parents are voluntarily placing their children, the children normally come with belongings and the parents try to provide as much as they can to the hosting family.



**Our 24/7 on-call telephone number  
for intakes and after-hours assistance: 239-470-2733**