

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will a child in the Safe Families project typically have a lot of behavior problems?

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.

What type of situations do the children come from?

The children come from families that are experiencing a crisis of one sort or another. Such crises might include financial problems, unemployment, medical emergencies or families facing 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 SFFC is based on whether a family is available to care for that child when placement is being requested. Some Safe 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. Each parent is connected to a "Volunteer Coach" which provides accountability, support, guidance and has professional oversight. 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 Safe Families serve?

While the Safe Family for Children Project can provide placements for newborns through adolescents (0-18), there will be a concentration on the younger and most vulnerable children (ages 0-6).

What is the background of the children placed in a Safe 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. Please note that the children placed by Safe 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.

How long does a child usually stay with a host family?

The average length of stay is about twenty-eight days, but placements can last from several hours or up to a year. The Safe 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.

Can the host family adopt the child?

The goal of the Safe Families ministry is to reunite children with their biological parents in a home that is more stable and healthy, in part, because of the contribution of the Safe Families intervention. Currently, 96% of all families 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 you potentially pursue getting licensed as a foster parent. At times, parent may choose to place their children up for adoption and we refer the families to a local private adoption agency to pursue that path and make those arrangements.

Do I receive any financial support?

Unlike foster care, our host families do not receive any type of financial assistance or monthly stipend to care for children. Since Safe families is voluntary and preventative, many of our children do come with basic items when they arrive to your home. Host Families are also connected to their church ministry leads, which will help provide

additional support and material goods that might be needed to care for the child. Safe Families is also connected to many community partners that can offer 'care packages' and other essential items to families that are caring for children in their home. With these supports in place, caring for children in your home does not require a large financial burden.

What about Medical, Dental and Formula for infants?

A majority of our children are covered under Medicaid and there are no 'out of pocket' expenses for the child's medical or dental needs. We are able to obtain the Medicaid information at the time of intake and if the parents do not have Medicaid, our case coaches quickly assist the families in getting that set up. We also have several community doctors and dentists that are willing to see our children without Medicaid at no expense to the host family. Children under the age of 5 will often have WIC, which will cover the child's formula and other nutritional needs. If this has not been set up, the case coach will assist the parent in getting WIC set up within a week of placement. We also have several community partners that are willing to donate formula and baby food for families that are hosting children through this ministry.

What about Daycare and Summer Camp?

As a ministry we have the opportunity to serve various different needs and situations within our community. Some of the children that we serve are already enrolled in daycare or the parents have a voucher and can get daycare set up. If DCF is referring the family, they can write a daycare voucher for the host family to use while they are caring for the child. We also have several daycare and summer camp partners that are willing to offer scholarships to children that are being served through this ministry. We do at times have children that will not come w/ childcare and will require a stay at home parent or the host family to make private childcare arrangements for the child. At the time of intake, our directors will determine whether or not daycare is available and will present that information when they are reaching out to families to potentially care for the children.

What if the child goes to a school that is far from my home?

Under the McKinney Vento Act, all children that are hosted through safe families are considered homeless and the school will set up a bus to transport them to their assigned school. At the time of placement, the SFFC director will reach out to the school and make a request for a bus to be set up to accommodate the child. Normally this takes between 3-5 business days to get set up. During that time that child would need to be

transported to their school until the new bus schedule is set up. If a host family cannot transport, we will look upon other volunteers in order to see if anyone can help assist during that 3-5 day window. The school district will also provide, backpacks, school supplies and school uniforms to children are being hosting through Safe Families for Children.

What if the parents try to sue me or a child destroys my property?

Safe Families for Children has put a lot of time and energy in ensuring that all our paperwork covers the basics and is designed to help protect our program and our volunteers from potential lawsuits. In addition to our paperwork, all of our volunteers are covered under our Liability Insurance. Out of 28,000 hosting's nationally, we have never had to use this insurance but it does give us peace of mind as we serve families in crisis within our community.