

CEDARS

Here for kids. Here for families.



6601 Pioneers Blvd. Ste. 1
Lincoln, NE 68506
402-434-5437 CEDARSkids.org

FOSTER CARE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

CEDARS Foster Care program is designed to serve children birth through 18 years of age, whose needs can be met in a structured, nurturing, foster home environment. We facilitate growth in clients and families through the coordination of psychological, medical, educational, vocational, and recreational services. Crisis intervention services are offered to foster parents and foster care youth 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

CEDARS Foster Care is contracted through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and is a registered provider through the Office of Juvenile Probation. Youth are referred to CEDARS Foster Care by DHHS or Probation when it is determined that a child cannot safely remain at home. Children who are referred by DHHS are wards of the state, with DHHS serving as their legal guardian. For youth referred by the Office of Juvenile Probation, their biological parents remain the legal guardians and maintain all legal rights. As such, the parents of youth on Juvenile Probation must consent to all services and must be kept informed of their child's progress while in foster care. Regardless of the referral source and who serves as the child's legal guardian, it is important to maintain open communication and actively engage the biological parents for all youth in foster care.

CEDARS primary obligations are to recruit, train, and license foster families; support foster homes to prevent placement disruption; and to assist with youth's readiness for visits with biological families and permanency.

CEDARS is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

FOSTER HOME TYPES

CEDARS supports traditionally licensed foster homes. Traditionally licensed homes are individuals who meet the requirements and complete the training to become a foster parent. These individuals take placement and provide care to children previously unknown to them. Once a family has been licensed, CEDARS will work with the home and DHHS to match them with youth in need of a traditional foster home.

OFFICE LOCATIONS AND STAFFING

CEDARS Foster Care program operates primary office locations in both Lincoln and Omaha. The Foster Care team consists of a Service Director, Program Director, multiple Assistant Program Directors, a Foster Parent Engagement Coordinator, and Foster Care Specialists responsible for licensing of foster homes and ongoing support of foster homes and the youth being cared for in those

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homes. Foster Care Specialists are the individuals going into the foster homes who conduct licensing and support activities. Foster Care Specialists (licensing) are responsible for ensuring the foster home is in compliance with all DHHS and public health regulations. The Foster Care Specialist (licensing) will complete a home study assessment with the family, gather all needed paperwork, and keep a detailed file on the family. They will ensure that any updates needed to the home study are completed in a timely manner, including address changes, changes to household members, etc. The Foster Care Specialist (licensing) will update the home study and relicense the home every 2 years. Foster Care Specialist (support) are responsible for supporting the foster home once they are caring for a youth in their home. The Foster Care Specialist (support) will meet in the foster home with the youth and foster parents anywhere from once a month to once a week depending on the needs of the family. The Foster Care Specialist (support) is responsible for ensuring that the youth's needs are met, including medical, mental health, educational, spiritual, and cultural needs. They will provide the home with community resources when needed and keep a detailed file on the youth while they are in CEDARS care. The Foster Parent Engagement Coordinator's main job function is to get out into the community, attend events, and spread the word regarding the need for foster homes. They will talk with individuals who are interested in becoming a licensed foster home and help them through the process of an initial home visit and getting signed up for pre-service training. The leadership team reviews referrals for youth in need of foster care and reach out to foster homes to try to find a placement for that youth. The leadership team will act as a liaison between the foster home and DHHS to get any questions answered and ensure we are making good matches when placing youth. The leadership team consists of the Foster Parent Engagement Coordinator, Assistant Program Directors, Program Director, and Service Director. They work together to ensure the success of the program. The Assistant Program Directors oversee the Foster Care Specialists and Foster Parent Engagement Coordinator. The Program Director oversees the Assistant Program Directors and the Service Director oversees the Program Director.

ADOPTION SERVICES

CEDARS Foster Care does not actively recruit adoptive parents. When people call to inquire about foster care and/or adoption, they are interviewed to gauge their intentions of providing foster care and/or adoption. If it is determined after this initial interview that they are only interested in adoption, they are referred to www.adoptionnebraska.com for additional resources. If they are interested in foster care with the possibility of providing permanency, CEDARS will conduct an initial prescreening on the home, determine if they have satisfactory background checks, and determine if they are suitable to start training classes. If the home meets all these initial requirements, they will be invited to attend our foster parent training, NTDC. NTDC is a mutual selection process in which CEDARS will spend ten weeks getting to know the families and determining if they meet our standards for providing care. This will also allow the foster parent to finalize their desire as a family to provide foster care.



CEDARS Foster Care program writes adoption home studies for:

- Youth who have resided in the CEDARS foster home for at least six (6) months.
- Families who are foster parents with CEDARS and are being served in our program.

CEDARS will not complete home studies for families seeking to complete adoptions for children not currently placed in a foster home through CEDARS. This is subject to change based on policy changes within DHHS.

CEDARS Foster Care program will not:

- Participate in relinquishments or termination of parental rights as this is the responsibility of DHHS.
- Complete ICPC's or be in charge of monitoring ICPC's completion with other agencies as this is the responsibility of DHHS.
- Participate in conversations about adoption subsidies or promise the foster parents that they will receive a subsidy as this is the responsibility of DHHS. All questions about subsidies will be directed to the assigned DHHS Case Manager.

Preparing the Adoptive Parents for Adoption

Prospective adoptive parents will participate in an orientation with their assigned CEDARS Foster Care Specialist as well as the DHHS Case Manager that will include the following:

- An overview of the lifelong process of adoption and its meaning;
- The process for completing an adoption;
- The needs of children awaiting adoption;
- Benefits and responsibilities of openness in adoption and the range of openness as discussed in NTDC;
- The DHHS Case Manager will discuss the availability of adoption subsidies.

Prospective adoptive parents are prepared for adoption through education, training, information, and support provided by the CEDARS Foster Care Specialist in conjunction with the DHHS Case Manager that address the following:

- Attachment and bonding;
- Possible impacts of adoption on the family;
- Changing roles and relationships from foster youth to adopted youth;
- Maintaining connections with the child's community;
- Child development and parenting techniques;
- Raising a child of a different race, ethnicity, culture, or religion;
- Caring for a child with special needs if applicable;
- Helping a child cope with separation and loss.

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Much of this information is provided during the initial NTDC training to prepare families for foster care and adoption. Additional training and information are available on an ongoing basis. The CEDARS Foster Care licensing specialist who completes the adoption home study will also train each prospective adoptive home on the Seven Core Issues of Adoption during the adoption home study process. This training covers the concepts of loss, rejection, guilt and shame, grief, identity, intimacy, and mastery and control. A CEDARS therapist can also help facilitate this training or be available for additional counseling and consultation if needed.

When a child is placed with a potential adoptive home prior to termination of parental rights and CEDARS is aware that the foster home would like to adopt, CEDARS will:

- Inform the prospective adoptive parents of the risks involved;
- Assist with the child's transition into the home by offering preplacement visits;
- Provide accurate information on the needs of the child.

INDEPENDENT AND TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES

CEDARS foster parents frequently provide independent living skills training to youth preparing to transition to adulthood. On occasion, certain foster homes can provide an "independent living" experience for youth placed in their home who are nearing aging out, with the youth having a greater amount of autonomy than youth in a typical foster placement.

CEDARS also operates the Bridges Transitional Living Program, which is a separate program operated by our agency. Youth whose age, needs, and situation align with the target population of that program are frequently referred to that program, allowing for a warm handoff within our agency as youth transition from Foster Care to Transitional Living.