

## Foster Care Facts



### **District Young People in Foster Care**

Total: 2,242 (as of March 31, 2009)

Gender: 49% female, 51% male

Age: 21% < age 6, 19% ages 6-11, 36% ages 12-17, 24% ages 18-21

Non-relative family foster homes are the top care setting, with 55% of foster children/youth

### **Need for Foster Homes in the District**

Although the DC Child and Family Services Agency has access to 1,200 licensed foster homes in the Washington metropolitan area, only 36% are in the District. Most District children and teens in care are in Maryland, away from family, friends, their usual school, and other familiar surroundings. The goal is to increase non-relative foster homes in the District from 440 to 500 or more over the next 18 months. There is a need for more District-based foster parents willing to take teens, sibling groups, children with mild to moderate physical disabilities, and children of all ages on short notice in emergency situations.

### **Basic Qualifications to be a Foster Parent**

- District resident
- At least age 21
- Married or single
- Financially supporting own household
- Sufficient space in house/apartment for children to sleep separately from adults
- Physically and mentally healthy
- No history of child abuse/neglect or criminal convictions

### **Highlights of Support for Foster Parents**

- Free pre-service training, screening, and licensing
- Free in-service training—many options to gain or improve parent skills
- Payment for room, board, clothing, day care, education, and medical/other services for foster children
- Regular social workers visits to the child, coordination of services, and advocacy with schools and other service providers
- Visits/assistance from a Family Support worker assigned exclusively to foster parents
- Participation in meetings as a valued member of the team serving the child
- Identification of scholarships and other financial support for foster youth interested in higher education
- Short-term approved respite care to give foster parents a break
- Connection to local foster parent organizations and support groups

### **National Perspective**

May is National Foster Care Month. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), the U.S. had 496,000 children and youth in foster care in FY2007 (most recent year for which data are available). This was the first year since DHHS began collecting data that the number of children in care dropped below 500,000. About 46% of these children were in non-relative foster homes (as opposed to kinship homes or group homes and other institutional settings). Of the 51,000 adoptions from public child welfare systems in FY07, 59% were by foster parents. The National Foster Parent Association estimates that in 2001, the U.S. had about 155,000 licensed non-relative foster homes.