

ACPs ensure the child's safety and will notify foster parents if a child experiences an accident, health problem or changes in appearance or behavior. In the event the ACP has concern for the child's safety or the child experiences a serious incident, the provider will call the child's worker or the TFI hotline to report the incident or concern and obtain support. ACPs will only release a child to his or her foster parents, other people approved by the foster parents or the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Qualifications

ACPs must be at least 18 years of age and pass background checks. If providing care in their home, they must have an approved walkthrough. An ACP can provide care for no more than 12 hours a day until approved by TFI and DHS.

Foster parents as ACPs

Foster parents may be used as ACPs if they have sufficient bed space in their home. They must be approved by DHS to act as an ACP, even though they are an approved foster home.

Sharing information

Only share information the ACP needs to know to keep the child safe and their needs met during the time of care. TFI's Respite Foster Care Information Sheet should be used to share this information and is required for overnight stays. This form can be obtained from your TFI worker or at tfifamilyconnections.org/foster-family-resource-page.

Identifying possible ACPs

ACPs can be a relative, friend, church member, coworker, coach, etc. Contact your TFI worker if you have difficulty identifying a possible ACP.

FOSTER *hope* FOSTER *love* FOSTER *care*



You provide the loving home and family a child needs and deserves.



*Thank you for making a difference in the life of a child as a TFI alternate care provider. If you have any questions please call **866-543-9810**.*



Family Connections
tfifamilyconnections.org

TFI Family Connections is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization that provides experience, compassion, quality services and care for the children and families we serve.



FOSTER PARENT GUIDE *to alternate care providers*



An alternate care provider, or ACP, is an approved adult or family who is willing to provide temporary care of foster children for a foster parent. ACPs choose when they are able to take children and can provide care in the foster parent's home or in their own home if all adults in the home are approved. Foster parents may have up to three ACPs – these people are always the first source of respite for foster parents.

The ACP plays an important role in preventing foster parent burnout and reducing stress levels. They provide support to foster parents and help protect children by providing a safe place to stay when foster parents need a break. ACPs provide an informal type of respite care, which is very helpful when foster children have difficult to manage behaviors or when foster parents are going through a very stressful time. This also provides foster children with an additional supportive adult in their lives.

TFI Family Connections 

Tips for a successful respite weekend

Notify your TFI worker of the dates and location in which an ACP is providing care to your foster child. The worker will notify the child's DHS worker.

Help the ACP get to know your foster child. Try to arrange a visit between your foster child and the provider ahead of time to avoid further trauma. Even a phone call can help a child feel more comfortable with going to a respite home. While sometimes this is not possible, notably in emergency cases, it is strongly encouraged, especially for children with attachment issues.

Contact the ACP. Discuss each of the following:

- Clarify drop off and pick up dates and times to prevent misunderstandings about the schedule.
- Identify any appointments, including visits. It is unfair to spring this on a family at the last minute. If they are unable to make these appointments, you may need to choose another provider or speak with the child's DHS worker about rescheduling the appointments. If conflicting schedules mean visits may be missed, it's in the birth family's best interest to search for another provider. If this is impossible, contact the child's DHS worker to reschedule immediately. Remember, visits are the heart of the reunification process.
- Discuss the child's needs and routines. This includes information regarding medical needs, like prescriptions and known allergies.

Prepare a respite care packet for each child.

This can be done well ahead of the visit.

- Write the child's name on a gallon size storage bag. Use separate bags for each child.
- Fill out the Respite Foster Care Information Sheet and place in the bag. TFI policy indicates this form must be completed.
- Add a copy of the DHS Placement Agreement which has the medical authorization and child's medical card number.
- Include a copy of the child's last physical.
- Add medication to the packet just before taking the child to respite and update appointment information. If the ACP is watching the child in your home, show the ACP where the medication is located.



Pack accordingly. Include enough clean clothes, diapers, wipes and formula for the length of stay.

- Pack extra underwear and socks.
- For infants and toddlers, too many diapers and wipes are better than not enough. It's unfair to expect the ACP to purchase more items because they were not given a sufficient supply to get through the weekend.
- Let young children pick out a special toy or stuffed animal to help them at bed time.
- Consider putting together a small scrapbook or photo album. Include pictures of the child's birth family, foster family, friends and pets.

When dropping off your foster child, let the respite provider know of any last minute information or changes.

During the respite, be available to the ACP in the event there is a crisis or emergency for the child, just as you would for anyone caring for your non-DHS custody children.

When picking up your foster child, make sure you have the child's medication, respite care packet, belongings and the completed Respite Foster Care Information Sheet.

- Find out if anything occurred during the respite that should be reported to DHS or TFI.
- Turn in a copy of the completed Respite Foster Care Information Sheet to your TFI worker.