



FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTIONS

Program Overview

December 2019

Thank you for your interest in Crossnore's Foster Care and Adoptions program!

Crossnore is one organization which operates on three sites in Avery County, Winston-Salem, and Hendersonville, North Carolina.

Crossnore School & Children's Home was established January 1, 2017 from the merger of The Crossnore School in Avery County and The Children's Home in Winston-Salem. The Crossnore School and The Children's Home each brought more than 100 years of serving children and families. The common vision brought the two organizations together under one name, one leadership team, and one mission:

**To grow healthy futures for children and families by providing
a Christian sanctuary of hope and healing.**

The Crossnore site in Hendersonville launched in January 2018 to provide foster care and adoption services to the region.

Foster Care and Adoptions Services

Crossnore School & Children's Home offers several types of foster care:

Family/Traditional Foster Care

Family foster care is for children and youth who need caregiving in a nurturing and safe environment. Youth may not be able to live with their biological families due to abuse, neglect, or having no viable caregiver.



The local county Department of Social Services (DSS) gets involved with a family following reports of abuse and/or neglect. DSS takes custody of a child/sibling set when it is determined they are unsafe in their homes and removing them is the only way to keep them safe. The child/sibling set is assigned a social worker from their county of origin who becomes the legal guardian.

The county DSS seeks licensed foster homes, reaching out to agencies like Crossnore, to find a home available for the child/sibling set. Children in foster care come from all races, backgrounds, and range in age from newborn to 21 years old. There is a great need for families who can serve multiple children in sibling sets.

Foster care is intended to be temporary, and every child will have a permanency plan so that each child's team is always working toward a permanent living option for that child.

When a child/sibling set enters foster care, the goal is to return the child/sibling set to their biological family whenever possible. After DSS has used reasonable efforts to support the biological family, if the biological family has not made the needed changes to keep the child/sibling set safe over the course of about a year, other permanency options may be explored. Other permanency options include guardianship with a relative or other court approved caregiver, adoption, or AAPLA (Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement), which is typically an option for older teens to help them transition to independence.

Therapeutic Foster Care

This service is for children/youth with mental health needs that cannot be met while in their own families. This is considered mental health treatment in a family setting. A therapist or psychiatrist must complete a comprehensive clinical assessment to determine that it is medically necessary for the child/teen to be in a therapeutic foster care program.



Children/youth may be in the custody of DSS, it may be a court-ordered service, or their biological parents may be voluntarily seeking treatment for their child. Although there are some younger children (pre-school and elementary-aged) who qualify for therapeutic foster care services, many are adolescents.

This family-based program helps youth succeed by having Treatment Foster Parents, youth, their families, and Foster Care Supervisors develop and maintain supportive and involved relationships. Treatment foster parents are trained to effectively use evidence-based behavior management strategies to support youth in their growth and change.

Therapeutic/Treatment foster parents are required to receive additional training. Ten additional hours of training are available during the pre-service training process,

and Crossnore will then provide additional therapeutic training opportunities after licensure. Therapeutic parents will meet higher expectations for documentation as well as coordination of services for the child/youth. The demand on therapeutic foster parents is higher, however the support provided by the agency is also higher.



Internal Respite Foster Care

Internal foster care respite is short-term foster care for children/youth who are already in the care of Crossnore School & Children's Home (CSCH) with another foster family. The length of time for respite may vary from hourly respite, overnight/weekend respite, or up to 30 days.

Respite may be requested by a foster family in need of a break, or the family may need to go somewhere where it would not be appropriate to take the child in their care with them. A child or youth may request respite if they need a break from their foster parents. Crossnore School & Children's Home staff may also incorporate administrative respite when staff determines the family and the child/youth in the home need a break from each other. Respite may be used as a strategy to preserve a child's placement.

Some foster families elect to be only a respite family. This is a great opportunity to help children when families are unable to make the commitment to caring for a child in their home full-time. Many other families both provide and use respite in addition to taking full-time foster care placements.

External/Community Respite Foster Care

Crossnore School & Children's Home provides community respite care for other foster care agencies, Departments of Social Services (DSS) or Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). These are short term respite (3-7 days) for a child/youth in the community. This type of respite is usually needed on an emergency basis.



Adoption Services

CSCH assists families in adopting through the child welfare system. We are a foster-to-adopt program, meaning that all our prospective adoptive parents become licensed foster parents.

Most adoptions are truly foster to adopt in that foster families welcome children in their home while their plan is still reunification and allow the case to progress. If the child eventually becomes available for adoption, that family may desire to become the adoptive family, which is usually ideal. Recent national statistics tell us that about 70% of foster children who are adopted are adopted by the people who have been fostering them. As far as how often adopting becomes an option, national data from 2017 reported that about 49% of children in foster care are reunited with their parents and 24% were adopted.

Many families ask about taking pre-adoptive placements only, as they would like to have less likelihood of a child leaving their home. There are two categories of pre-adoptive placements.

- Legal risk placement: Child's permanency plan is adoption, but parental rights have not been terminated, so the parents still can work toward reunification.
- Child is legally free: Parental rights have been terminated and child is available for the adoption process to begin.

Families can request to be matched only with legal risk/legally free children/youth. In North Carolina alone, there are over 2,500 children waiting to be adopted. However, it is important to know that children in the foster care system who are waiting for adoptive homes are often older, are part of sibling groups, or have higher levels of need in some area. Additionally, referrals for adoptive placements are less frequent than foster care placements.

Whether a child/sibling set comes to a home for foster care placement or for pre-adoptive placement, Crossnore requires families to foster a child for 6 months prior to adoption. This allows families to have the greatest support during the adjustment period. North Carolina requires a minimum of 3 months however this process generally takes much longer than this.





Qualifications for Foster/Adoptive Families

- Be at least 21 years old.
- Pass a home safety inspection and fire safety inspection.
 - Crossnore staff will complete an environmental safety inspection.
 - The local fire inspector will need to complete a fire safety inspection.
- Have a stable income.
 - The prospective family must demonstrate that they have dependable income and that their expenses are less than that income, showing financial ability to add a child to the household.
 - Applicants will submit proof of income, assets, and liabilities.
- Pass extensive criminal and child abuse record checks.
 - We value honesty. All applicants are advised to be forthcoming about any criminal history, even if it is not expected to show up on a background check.
 - Crossnore and North Carolina foster home licensing do not expect perfect people, but there is an expectation of learning and growing from past experiences, taking responsibility for choices, and demonstrating stability and high moral standards currently.
- Be in good physical and mental health.
 - An applicant's primary care provider will need to examine and assess that applicants are physically and mentally in sufficient health to care for a child.
 - Each member of your household will need this physical examination.
 - Any ongoing conditions may require more detailed assessment and explanation from the provider.
- Complete all pre-service training.
- Recommendation by Crossnore to be a foster home.
 - The training and licensing process is called "mutual selection." Foster parent

applicants will assess their strengths and needs to make an informed decision about becoming a foster/adoptive family. Crossnore staff will also provide feedback on strengths and needs and assist the family in deciding if fostering/adopting is right for their family.

- There is no marriage/relationship requirement. However, prospective families must wait at least 1 year following a significant change in the household (marriage, divorce, birth of child, death of family member) before applying to be a foster family.



Foster Home Licensing Process

1. The first step to working with Crossnore is to complete our program application and meet with Foster Care staff for an interview. Following receipt of your application and your interview, staff will contact you to inform you with the status of your application.
2. Complete our pre-service training. The training is a big commitment, and it is important to prioritize attending all trainings. We consistently hear from families that they really enjoy the training classes and are impacted by what they learn.
 - We provide 30 hours of foster parent training for licensure as required by the state. This is an excellent curriculum called TIPS-MAPP.
 - Other required trainings include Safety-Care (crisis prevention and de-escalation), Medication Administration, and CPR/First Aid, and all are included in the pre-service schedule.
 - Ten additional hours of training are required for therapeutic licensure.
3. Complete licensing paperwork, background checks, home visits, and inspections.
 - You will work with a Licensing Specialist who will guide you through the process.
 - Included is an overview of licensing assignments and what to expect during home visits with agency staff.
 - There will be at least two home visits to assess the safety of your home, as well as spending time talking individually with each applicant and with family members about their personal history and their suitability for fostering children.
4. Licensing staff compiles information on your family and submits your foster home application to the state, who approves, denies, or requests additional information about each application.
 - NC Foster Home Licensing typically responds to applications in 1 – 3 weeks.

- For families who are diligent about paperwork and the process, it is possible to be licensed in about 3 - 4 months from beginning the pre-service class.

Additional Information

There is a helpful foster parent orientation video at NCSWlearn.org. The orientation takes about 30 minutes and discusses becoming a foster parent in North Carolina. Completing this orientation is a requirement before beginning training but will also be a great starting point as you explore fostering.

Cost

There are no agency fees for becoming a foster parent.

Some requirements do have associated fees, including background checks (varies \$5-\$30), fire inspection (typically around \$50), driving records (approximately \$10), and a physical exam. Foster Parent Applicants should be prepared to cover these fees. Amounts will vary depending on applicant location and number of background checks required, such as if the applicant has lived in other states. Your licensing specialist can assist you with estimating the total fees.

You may be required to make adjustments in your home for safety, which will be at your expense.

Post-Licensure

Once your license has been approved by the state, you will transition from your Licensing Specialist to a Foster Care Supervisor. Foster families are primarily in contact with their Foster Care Supervisor going forward. Foster Care Supervisors (FCS) directly supervise foster parents to provide support, guidance, and ensure that client's needs are being met. FCSs are foster parents "go-to" resource for any questions or concerns, and any support needed.

Once a family is licensed, they are eligible to receive referrals for children needing foster care or adoptive placement. For family foster care placements, county DSS agencies contact agencies like Crossnore when they have a child or children needing a foster home. The foster family's FCS contacts them to provide information on the child for the family to consider. The foster family decides if they would be open to having the child placed in their home. The county DSS chooses a family out of those who have agreed to be open to placement. Many family foster care placements happen on an emergency basis, meaning there is likely not an opportunity for the family to meet the child before deciding if they will be open to placement.

For therapeutic placements, the treatment is a planned service, and so there will typically be an assessment meeting between the child and the family. Clinical

information if available on the child. Both the family and the child/youth will have the opportunity to agree to or decline placement, as age appropriate.

For pre-adoptive placements, referrals may come from DSS agencies, from within Crossnore, or families may inquire about children whose profiles are available online. The referral and transition process will be determined by several factors. The family's supervisor and the adoption specialist will support the foster-to-adopt family in this process.

Once a child is placed in the home, the foster family will have a variety of commitments in addition to the day-to-day caregiving of the child. Included with this packet is an overview of the Foster Parent commitments for families working with Crossnore.

We have single working foster parents, two working parents, and homes in which one parent stays at home. All have been able to foster successfully. While families of all kinds can make fostering work, it is important to think ahead of time what adjustments you'll need to make with work and other obligations in your life. We encourage families to talk with your employer(s) early in the process about your plans to foster. opportunity to agree to or decline placement, as age-appropriate.

Financial Support

While fostering, there is a monthly stipend to help cover the costs of caring for the child. This stipend is not considered income, but as reimbursement. For family foster care, these rates are set by the state of North Carolina.

- 0 – 5 years: \$475 per month
- 6 – 12 years: \$581 per month
- 13+ : \$638 per month

For therapeutic foster care, the amount of the stipend increases with experience, but begins for Level II placements at \$1100 per month. The step-down Level I is \$1000 per month.

Some families use the stipend to cover the increase in their grocery expenses and bills. Other families are able to place the entire stipend in an account set aside for the child. Most families are somewhere in between. Crossnore does expect that foster families will provide an age-appropriate allowance to children out of this stipend, as well as cover the cost of field trips, participating in sports activities, etc.

Daycare expenses are often covered by DSS vouchers, provided the county budget allows, when the foster parent(s) are working. Foster parents are required to pay the application fee to the daycare if applicable, DSSs will not reimburse for this expense.

Moving Toward Adoption

If a child in your home becomes eligible for adoption, our Adoptions Specialist will complete a Pre-Placement Assessment for your family and will support you in adopting the child in your home.

Adoption fees, such as the filing fee, are typically reimbursable through the state following the adoption finalization for children in foster care.

Why Crossnore School & Children's Home?

Our Foster Care and Adoptions staff bring years of experience in child welfare combined with a personalized, compassionate approach in our work with children, families, and foster families.

Your assigned Foster Care Supervisor will work extensively with your family and any child in your home. Our Foster Care Supervisors have manageable caseloads that allow them to be accessible to you on a regular basis. Additionally, Crossnore has the benefit of an array of services that are open to the children in our care, including outpatient therapy and psychiatric services as needed.

We are thankful for your heart for helping children! We also appreciate your time in considering partnering with Crossnore to make a difference in the life of a child. Please contact us to get additional information or to take the next step.