

## What is a Resource Parent? **It is you!**

The state of California has endeavored on a quest to renovate the current foster care system. In January of 2017 the state introduces Resource Family Approval Program also known as RFA. The new RFA program focus revolves more around the child. It takes all these current elements of foster parenting license, relative approval, and approvals for adoption and guardianship processes and combines this into one RFA program.

What does this mean for our resource children?

- More streamlined process that eliminates duplication of the existing processes.
- It brings unification of approval standards for all caregivers, regardless of the child's case plan.
- Includes a thorough psycho-social assessment, home environment check, and training for all families and relatives.
- It helps better prepare families physically and mentally to better understand the needs of displaced children in the resource care system.
- Allows more effective transitioning to a permanent home.
- Children are known as resource children and parents are known as resource parents.

The RFA process improves the way caregivers of children in resource (foster) care are approved and prepared to parent displaced children that may be permanently or temporarily. The QPI system helps to redesign child welfare organizations at the local level to better recruit, support and retain quality resource (foster) care who are well qualified and can effectively parent children and youth. Together they work to build the continuum of foster care placement options to better meet the needs of children in home-based family care.

### WHAT IS RESOURCE FAMILY PARENT?

Recent changes with California law has changed the term from foster parent to resource family parent. Triad Family Service is approved to now approve and manage resource families.

A Resource Family Parent is any individual, couple, or family who wants to provide care to a related or unrelated child (or children) who is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, or otherwise in the care of a county child welfare agency or probation department.

### Responsibilities and Reimbursement

The state, via the dependency court, and the child protection agency stand in loco parentis to the child, making all legal decisions while the resource parent is responsible for the day to day care of the child. The resource parent is reimbursed by the state for their services.

### RESOURCE FAMILY PARENT VS FOSTER PARENT

As of January 2017 California law has created a new classification. Instead of utilizing foster parent the state wants to start approving resource family. Which is new classification that now encompasses different types of care givers, such as foster parent and relatives.

So there is no major difference in the day to day care and responsibilities of a foster parent versus a resource family parent.

Resource family parent are still individual or couples that seek to provide day to day care for children that are under the care and or the court of other county or state agency. Resource family will include family member seeking care of their children that are in the care of the court and or other county or state agency.

### Resource Parents – What is that?

Resource parents are dually prepared to foster and adopt a child. This does not mean all foster parents adopt, but if they choose to do so, the pre-adoption process is already completed.

Resource Parenting or Family Foster Care offers a relationship with a child for a temporary period – a few weeks, months, or even a year or more, with the goal of helping the children reunite with their parents or with relatives. Family foster care is designed especially for children who have been separated from their parents typically because they have not been able to keep them safe or suffered from child abuse. That means you would show the children what it is like to live in a safe, nurturing family. Foster parents have a career in modeling! You can “give back” to your community, or perhaps your place of worship.

Resource-Adoptive Parents offer children a family to grow up in when they are unable to return to their birth parents. Children who are adopted have the same rights and privileges of birth children. Adopting a child who comes to you from the family foster care program changes many lives with a ripple effect – abuse and neglect cycles are ceased. Opportunities for change and happiness are many for everyone involved especially the children and you.

What are the qualifications to be a Resource parent?

Individuals and families who have the willingness, ability, and resources to meet the children’s needs have what we call “Our Core Competencies” (that means “knowledge and skills”) and there are only five:

Competency #1: Protect and nurture children. This means keep the children safe and help them feel valued and respected.

Competency #2: Meet their developmental needs. This means play with them, teach them social skills, help them go to school, learn through positive discipline, help them have a strong sense of their cultural identity, and provide medical care (which is paid for).

Competency #3: Support children’s relationships with their families. This means help the children with their feelings about their birth families, whether children have some contact, no contact, or a lot of contact with them.

Competency #4: Connect children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime. Resource families (prepared to both foster and adopt) help children transition to birth parents, relatives, or other foster-adoptive parents. Many resource parents adopt, which means you will be providing the safe, nurturing lifetime relationship, as the children you adopt grow up with you. However, please know that if you want to adopt, all children placed with resource families who want to adopt must, according to the law, be in family foster care status until after children’s parental rights are terminated.

Competency #5: Be a member of a professional team. Our Abrazo team of social workers will be consulting with you on how you will help us meet child welfare laws which require all of us to help children be safe, be well, and be connected to families where they can grow up safely and be contributing members of their communities.

#### Minimum Requirements

May be married or single

May or may not, have children of their own at home

May live in a house or apartment

Must be at least 18 years old

Must have a working telephone always.

Must have an automobile in good mechanical condition

Must have automobile insurance

Have a valid California's license

No Convictions other than minor traffic violations

Able to support child for the first 30 days of placement

Live within a two-hour drive from Fresno County

#### CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The certification procedure begins when the foster parent application has been completed and submitted, and ends when the Agency agrees that training has been accomplished and the state of the premises is consistent with State of California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing (Title XXII Regulations).

The process of certification will take 1-2 months, depending on the amount of time required to process fingerprints and the amount of time required to bring the family home up to standards. Agency personnel will be available for support and aid as you move through each stage in the procedure.

The agency reserves the right to dismiss an applicant at any time during the initial pre-certification process. The following is a list of requirements by the Agency and State of California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing requirements that a family must meet to become approved:

1. A completed and signed application.
2. Eighteen (18) hours of pre-certification training.
3. Department of Justice /Child Abuse Index/FBI Clearances/Megan's Law, LIRS and Laars for: All adults living in the home of 18 years of age.
4. Photo Identification California Driver's License, California State ID, or Passport
5. Copy of Social Security Card
6. Copy of Current California Driver's License For each adult living in the home who is authorized to drive placed children.
7. Copy of DMV Printout For each adult living in the home that will be driving placed children.
8. A Copy of Automobile Liability Insurance All automobiles used to transport placed children, owned by the certified family, must have automobile liability insurance coverage always.
9. Vehicle Safety. Vehicle safety inspections are required for each approved family owned vehicle that will be used to transport placed children.
10. Pools and Jacuzzis. Pools must be properly fenced or covered according to Title XXII Regulations and Jacuzzis must be locked.
11. First Aid and CPR. Adults living in the home are required to complete CPR and First Aid certification and are required to renew the certification before expiration.
12. A First Aid Kit must be stored in the home along with the current first aid manual.
13. Health Screen. A physical exam and TB test must be submitted for all adults in the home. It must indicate that no disease or physical condition exists that would interfere with the ability to care for children. The agency will only accept an original copy stamped and signed by the medical provider/office.
14. Fire Extinguisher. A type 2A 10BC or larger, must be visible and mounted in an accessible area of the kitchen. The Agency will check to make sure it is charged always.
15. References. Three (3) character references are required.
16. Financial Statement. Income will be evaluated to estimate the family's ability to support the financial needs of themselves.
17. Adequate Space. Bedroom space and beds must be present at certification. Infants may share the foster parent's bedroom until they are two years of age. A bedroom whose access is only through another room, as opposed to a hallway, will not be used.
18. Capacity. Homes may not exceed a total of six children, under the age of 18, resource or otherwise living in the home.
19. Home Compliance Check. The premises must adhere to Title XXII regulations, including the storing of toxins and medications in locked locations, ensuring that guns and ammunition are stored and locked separately, and fireplaces are screened. An agency representative will visit your home to ensure that all safety regulations comply prior to your approval. Home Compliance Checks will be conducted on a quarterly (every 3 months) basis after the initial date of approval.
20. Criminal Record Statement. All adults in the home are required to complete the Criminal Record Statement prior to certification and before obtaining Live Scan Services (Department of Justice Clearances/FBI/Child Abuse Index).

#### RECERTIFICATION

Certification is good for one year, after which time recertification is required. When the Agency reapproves a resource family, they will make sure the home is in accordance with the standards as described above. In addition, the resource family must complete no less than 12 hours of training during the first year of certification & no less than 12 hours thereafter and provide the Agency with evidence to this effect. The Agency

will also consider the family's ability to provide for the needs of children and to cooperate with the Agency and Department of Child Protective Services. Resource parents will be required to submit paperwork that is necessary for an annual recertification.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF A FOSTER PARENT

Tolerance for your own feelings: You accept that you will sometimes like, love or even dislike the child. You understand it is the behavior you do not like, not the child, and the behaviors can be changed.

1. Commitment: You must parent the child not because of reward, gratitude or good feeling. You have made up your mind to do it no matter how it turns out.
2. Problem solving skills: You can solve problems in terms of how the whole family functions. This allows for adjusting to needs of each family member and cuts down on fault, blame or scape-goating.
3. You refuse to be rejected by the child: You are usually the one the child chooses to reject, but you refuse to accept the rejection and keep on giving to the child.
4. Caringly intrusive: You continue to be involved in the child's business because you are the parent and this how you "protect and care of the child".
5. Solid boundaries: You convey to the child that, "I care about you, accept you, but I will not let you do whatever." You are a family with a minimum of family rules and the rules exist for the well-being of the family.
6. You measure success in progress toward goals rather than in achieving goals: You are happy with small successes and have long since given up hope that the child will be perfect, and when you gave up your quest for perfection you felt relief not sadness.
7. Acceptance of differences: You think the differences in a child make them special. You are accepting and understanding of the child's history and abilities.
8. You consider change: You realize the child spent years developing these problems and it will take a long time to solve them.
9. Communication: You have positive interaction with your own children, friends, and neighbors and can listen, ask questions, clarify issues, identify feelings and understand double messages. You don't whine, moralize, lecture, ridicule, scold, complain or judge.
10. You can share parenting: You accept the relationship the social worker the placement worker and the birth family has with the child. You can share the child with all the other in their life.
11. You are of your own family needs: You make time and opportunity for your family to express themselves and have you to themselves.
12. You are a loss expert: You can understand the child's feelings of loss and the behaviors that will come from the loss.
13. A sense of humor: You can laugh at yourself, your children, the agency, the social worker, the placement workers, and the ludicrous situations you find yourself in. If you cannot laugh, the only alternative would be to cry.

GENERAL CHILDREN'S FUND - Monetary donations will be used to purchase those items that a child may wish but may not be affordable by their foster parents. This may include, music instruments, school year books and graduation expenses, books, athletic uniforms, boys or girls' organization uniforms or memberships, etc.

We want to encourage positive social skills in our children. Given the opportunities of participating in community and social events that other children have, they too, will gain positive experience and build good self-esteem during a very difficult time.

HOLIDAY FUND - In December of each year, the agency staff puts together a festive holiday party for our children. Each year we reach out to anyone who is interested in sponsoring a child by purchasing a gift from their "Wish List."

#### RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESOURCE FAMILIES

Resource Parents:

- Provide daily care and nurturing of children in foster care;
- Advocate for children in their schools and communities;
- Inform the children's caseworkers about adjustments to the home, school, and community, as well as any problems that may arise, including any serious illnesses, accidents, or serious occurrences involving the foster children or their own families;
- Make efforts as team members with children's caseworkers towards reunifying children with their birth families;
- Provide a positive role model to birth families and
- Help children learn life skills.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCE CARE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the basic requirements, foster parents must:

- Have adequate sleeping space.
- Allow no more than 6 children in the home including your own children or children for whom you provide day care.
- Agree to a nonphysical discipline policy.
- Permit fire, health and safety inspections of the home.
- Vaccinate all pets and maintain the vaccinations on a yearly schedule.
- Obtain and maintain CPR/First Aid Certification and maintain and update every two years.
- Obtain TB testing as required by the local Health Department for adult household members.
- attend 12 hours or more of training each year to re certify.

### RIGHTS AND REONSIBILITIES OF APPROVED (FOSTER) PARENTS

- The RIGHT to be treated with consideration and respect by agency staff;
- The RIGHT to a supportive relationship from the agency;
- The RIGHT to receive reimbursement for the children in their care in a timely manner;
- The RIGHT to be trained in the role as members of a team;
- The RIGHT to give input into the decisions regarding the child in their care and to be treated as a member of the team in developing case plans for the child;
- The RIGHT to a clear explanation or description of their role as foster parents and the role of the child's family and the agency;
- The RIGHT to receive pertinent information about the children in their care;
- The RIGHT to be informed of any grievance procedures or access to any appeals process should they wish to appeal the agency's policy, regulation, or plan for a child in their care;
- The RIGHT to continue their own family patterns and traditions;
- The RIGHT to refuse to accept a child into their family if they feel they cannot meet the needs of the child or the placement will affect the well-being of the foster family;
- The RIGHT to be notified of any Court Action, Administrative Review, or Foster Care Citizen Review Board Hearing concerning a child in their care. Per Statue; the Judge makes the decision regarding a foster parent attending a court hearing;
- The RIGHT to be included in the permanency consideration for the child who is in the foster family's care;
- The RIGHT & RESPONSIBILITY to advocate for children in their care;
- The RESPONSIBILITY for the day-to-day care and nurturance of the child;
- The RESPONSIBILITY for keeping the agency informed of any changes in the child's life and in the foster parent's household;
- The RESPONSIBILITY to respect a child's biological family, traditions, culture and values;
- The RESPONSIBILITY to gain further knowledge and expertise regarding the care of the children by attending on-going foster parent training;
- The RESPONSIBILITY to work cooperatively with agency staff as members of the child's team; and
- The RESPONSIBILITY to ensure a child's health and safety needs are met.

Training: You will attend approved parent training to learn more about the children available through the Department of Children and Family Services to assess your strengths in parenting children. The classes also boost your knowledge and confidence to meet the challenge of taking children into your home and to be sure you are ready to follow through on the commitment. The state minimum standards require that prospective approved families also complete the following training's or certifications.

- Universal precautions training.
- Psychotropic medication training.
- Certification in both First Aid and infant/child/adult CPR.
- Trauma training.

### Family Home Study

A caseworker will visit you in your home. The purpose is to discuss your personal history, family interests and lifestyle, childcare experiences, the types of children you feel would best fit in your home, and your strengths and skills in meeting the children's needs.

### What is a home study?

The home study (for adoption purposes it is also known as the Pre-Adoptive Home Screening) is used in assessing the home for children's safety and available space. All homes must meet standards enumerated in the minimum standards and guidelines by the state and the county. The home study is designed to elicit information on a variety of issues including:

- Motivation for wanting to foster or adopt.
- Health status.
- Marital and family relationships.
- Applicants feelings about their own childhood and parents including any history of abuse and/or neglect.
- Opinions about discipline.
- Sensitivity about abused and neglected children.
- Sensitivity towards birth families.
- Sensitivity about different socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural groups in relation to their ability to maintain the ethnic identity of a child from a different background.
- Feelings about maintaining sibling relationships.
- Expectations of children in foster care.
- Family's ability to work with specific kinds of behavior and backgrounds.
- Documentation on the number, age and sex for whom the home is approved.

Applicants are informed by Abrazo whether their home was approved and the reasons for the decision. Families who have successfully completed the assessment process and are determined able to meet the needs of the children in foster care are approved.

Can approved families adopt? Yes! Many families are interested in both fostering and adopting. They agree with the Abrazo that the children's needs come first. In most cases, this means helping prepare children for reunification with their birth family, mentoring the birth parents. When termination of parental rights is in the children's best interest and adoption is their plan, then foster parents who have cared for the children will be given the opportunity to adopt. Dual certification of parents to both foster and adopt speeds up the placement process, reduces the number of moves a child makes, and allows relationships to evolve with the initial placement process. Nearly half the adoptions of children in foster care are by their foster families.

### What does Abrazo Foster Family Agency provide to its Resource Families?

- Personal assistance throughout the approval process.
- 24 hours on call support services.
- Monthly financial reimbursement that covers expenses such as transportation, food, clothing, personal care, activities, allowance, and school needs.

- On-going training to provide our resource families with the tools to continue to be successful.
- A resource family support group (Foster Parent Association) that meets monthly.
- Respite care to give resource families a break when needed.
- Liaison between resource families, county officials and other parties involved.

What does Abrazo Foster Family Agency provide to the children in placement?

- Independent Living Skills Program for teens.
- Educational support.
- Informal individual and family counseling.
- Lifelong connections.

What do you mean by the word “motivation” for wanting to become a resource parent? Typically, people who want to become resource parents are individuals with big hearts who genuinely love children. Unfortunately, this is often not enough to be a successful resource parent. Children who enter foster care probably have been seriously abused and/or neglected. As a result, children in foster care need a person or family who is able and willing to deal with the behaviors they often develop in response to the abuse or neglect. If a person has unresolved losses in their own life, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to parent in an objective way. Sometimes the foster child will trigger painful memories in the adult with an unresolved issue. This does not mean that you will be unable to serve children in some way, but it may mean the providing 24-hour parenting will not be helpful for you or any foster child at this time. These concerns are discussed throughout the training and evaluation process. The decision to become a resource parent is a mutual decision that occurs over the time of the training and home study process.

Must resource parents accept all ages of children? No. during the home assessment process, resource parents will discuss with the Agency Social Worker what age and sex they prefer. Placements are made within their age range.

How does a resource parent receive help if problems arise with the child? An Agency Social Worker is assigned to each child placed with the Agency. Abrazo social workers are available to their foster parent’s 24-hours a day 7-days a week in times of crisis or emergency. Foster care works best when the resource parent and the Agency Social Worker are a team focusing on the needs of the child. It is advisable to develop a strong support network of family, friends, and professionals to help care for any foster child.

How long does a foster child usually stay with a resource family? Some children may only stay overnight, and others may stay for extended periods of time. There is no definite length of time a child may be in your home. The goal of foster care is to reunite families. Generally, biological parents have from six to 24 months to achieve stability leading towards reunification.

What about a child’s clothing needs? Few if any foster children come with adequate clothing unless they are moving from a previous resource home. When they enter foster care, the county will provide a small emergency clothing allowance however the resource parents will initially be responsible to purchase necessities.

How often do foster children visit their parents? Children will have frequent and predictable visits with their birth families. Initial visits are generally supervised in safe locations such as the Abrazo FFA office or the CPS offices. Visits will continue by Court order unless they are found to be contrary to the physical or mental well-being of the child. Visits typically take place 1 to 2 times a week for 1-2 hours each visit.

Can a foster child go on vacation trips with a resource family? Yes. Resource families are encouraged to accept a child as one of the family and trips are a great opportunity to do this; they are also wonderful learning opportunities for the foster child. However, trips need to be worked out well in advance with the County Social Worker so as not to interfere with Court dates or special events with the biological family. Permission to travel

must be granted by written permission of the birth family or by Court authorization. Out of state travel does require a signed Court Order.

Can resource parents work outside of the home? Yes. Placement of a child in your home however, may depend upon your availability to transport and participate in visitation and frequent therapy needed by the child. Some children with severe attachment issues may require a stay-at-home parent.

How many children can a resource parent care for? Foster care regulations require that there be adequate space for each child. The number of children that you could be approved to foster would depend upon the size of your home, your own family size, and the specific needs of each foster child in your care at that time. California regulations state that the maximum number of children in your home including birth, adopted, foster and guardianship can be no more than six. California regulations also state that no more than two of those children should be under the age of two unless there is additional help in the home. Children who are sexually aggressive towards other younger children or who are experiencing intense emotional stress may require solitary placement. The level of need of every foster child is the primary consideration in determining the number of children placed in a resource family home.

6 steps to take on the pathway to becoming a Resource Family:

**Step 1 – Attend Orientation and Complete Application** The orientation is an informal meeting for you to learn about the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process, ask questions and decide about becoming a Resource Family.

**Step 2 – Complete Background Checks** An RFA Intake Worker will arrange for you to submit electronic fingerprints (called Live Scan) and assist you with any additional information necessary to request a criminal background clearance.

**Step 3 – Attend Pre-Approval RFA Training** Prospective resource parents are required to attend 12 hours of pre-approval RFA training. This RFA training program will provide you with valuable information about the foster care system, the needs of children, and what it means to be a Resource Family. You will be provided information on how to register for training by the RFA Intake Worker. You will also need to complete CPR and First-Aid certification.

**Step 4 – Complete Home Environment Assessment** A RFA Social Worker will schedule a time to meet with you and your family in your home. They will make sure your home passes a basic health and safety inspection and provides a suitable environment for children in the foster care system.

**Step 5 – Complete Psycho-social Assessment** A RFA Social Worker will schedule an appointment with you and your family to begin the Psycho-social Assessment process. This assessment will assist in determining your readiness to provide a safe and stable home environment for children who cannot safely live with their own families. The purpose of this assessment is to discuss your family's personal history, interests and lifestyles, childcare experiences, the types of children you feel would best fit in your home, and your strengths and skills in meeting the children's needs.

**Step 6 – Approval and Placement** Once you have completed the above steps, you will make a decision about the number, ages, and behaviors of the children that you feel you are prepared to accept into your family home. You will then receive a Resource Family certificate of approval. Once approved, you will be contacted by our social workers to discuss the foster or adoptive placement of a child or children who match your preferences. Additional services to support you in meeting the child's needs (such as monthly financial and medical assistance, child care, respite care services, support groups, etc.) are available.