

Q&A

How to become a foster family?

Spis treści

1. Where can a family declare their interest in being a foster families?..... 2
2. How the process of becoming a foster family looks like? What kind of steps have to take the families or carers to become a foster family? 2
3. How is the foster family assessment (evaluation) carried out? What is taken into account? What question are asked during the assessment? 3
4. How is the training of foster families conducted? 4
5. What institutions promote and manage training? 5
6. Is training for foster families paid? 6
7. How do families begin raising a child? What process are they going through (till assessment and training)? 6
8. How is a family chosen to raise a specific child? How is the match going?.. 7

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1. Where can a family declare their interest in being a foster families?

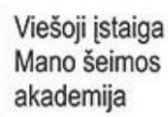
A person (or persons) interested in becoming a foster family report to the Foster Care Organizer in the place or city of their residence. The organizer of family foster care is an organizational unit of the city (or powiat) or the entity authorized to commissioned the implementation of this task. Usually the function of Foster Care Organizers in Poland is performed by the Municipal Social Welfare Centers or the District Family Assistance Centers. Sometimes happens that the Organizer of Foster Care in some Polish cities is a public benefit organization, e.g. an association.

2. How the process of becoming a foster family looks like? What kind of steps have to take the families or carers to become a foster family?

There are no clear guidelines of how the procedure of qualifying a person(s) to become foster parents should look like in Poland. Each Foster Care Organizer creates such a procedure. They based of course on the provisions of law, i.e. the Act on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care of June 9, 2011. In our city, people interested in being a foster parent first undergo an interview with the Director of the Municipal Social Welfare Center (or his deputy). During the interview, questions are asked whether the person(s):

- a) give a guarantee of proper performance of foster care,
- b) were not and are not deprived of parental authority and their parental authority is not limited or suspended,
- c) fulfill the maintenance obligation - in case that such an obligation towards them results from the enforcement order,
- d) are not limited in legal capacity,
- e) they are capable of taking proper care of the child, which has been confirmed by certificates that there are no health contraindications for performing the function of a foster family issued by a primary care physician,
- f) are staying on the territory of the Republic of Poland;

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g) provide adequate living and housing conditions enabling the child to meet his individual needs, including: emotional, physical and social development, proper education and development of interests, rest and organization of free time,

h) have not been convicted by a final judgment for an intentional crime or an intentional fiscal crime (certificate of no criminal record),

i) in the case of a non-professional foster family at least one person from family has a permanent source of revenue (which should be documented by presenting a certificate of employment and earnings).

If the interview is successful, the Foster Care Organizer visits the candidates' place of residence to check their housing conditions and discuss their motivation for becoming a foster parent. Next, the candidates are interviewed by a psychologist and take psychological tests to determine their aptitude and motivation for serving as a foster family and their parenting skills. After the interview with the psychologist and after analyzing the tests, an opinion on the candidates is prepared.

After a positive opinion of the qualifying persons, i.e. the director, social workers who checked the housing conditions and the psychologist, the candidates are qualified to undergo training.

3. How is the foster family assessment (evaluation) carried out? What is taken into account? What question are asked during the assessment?

Pursuant to the Act on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care, **the already functioning foster families are subject to assessment.** The foster families are assessed by the organizer of foster family care. The Foster Care Organizer performs the first assessment of the foster family or the family orphanage operator **no later than one year after placing the first child in the family.** Another assessment is made **one year after the first assessment**, and the next ones at least **every 3 years.** The assessment is issued in writing and the foster family or the family orphanage operator may submit objections to the president (or

starost) within 14 days from the date of receipt of the assessment. In case of a **negative final assessment** of the foster family or the family orphanage operator, another assessment is made **no later than within 6 months** from the date of such assessment. In case of **another bad evaluation**, the organizer of foster care **applies to the court to revoke the decision of placing the child in foster care**. As indicated in the introduction, such an **assessment procedure applies to already existing foster families**.

4. How is the training of foster families conducted?

Basic training for candidates for non-professional and professional foster parents takes place using the workshop method and **lasts about three months**, including 10 hours of internship. There is no single leading training program for candidates for foster parents in Poland. Each training entity creates its own program, however, it must be compliant with the regulation and approved by the appropriate minister. According to this document, the number of hours of basic training for non-professional foster families may not be less than 60 teaching hours. However, in case of training for professional foster families and those running a family children's home, the number of training hours is additionally increased to at least 20 teaching hours. After completing the training, the candidates receive a training completion certificate, which is not tantamount to obtaining a qualification certificate, which entitles the candidates to perform the functions of non-professional, professional foster family and family children's home. Most of the training for candidates for foster parents is based on the national training program "Family" and the global PRIDE program.

The “Family” Training Program is a nationwide educational program. It is intended for candidates to perform the function of a non-professional or professional foster family, to run a family orphanage and for directors of family-type care and educational institutions. The extended program is also used as part of preparing **trainers** to conduct training for candidates for foster care and the **staff of organizers of a foster family environment**, i.e. people working with children and families, including employees of care and educational institutions, **employees**

of powiat family support centers, **organizers** foster family care, **social workers**, **family assistants** and others.

The **aim of the training** is to **prepare candidates** for foster care and to **acquire by people working** for the child and the family **the skills of strengthening and supporting the family**, both the natural family of the child and the foster family (related to the child, non-professional, professional foster family, people running family orphanages and family-type care and educational facilities).

Training according to the “Family” Training Program:

- provides participants with information about foster care and enables them to understand the child's needs and their own abilities and needs in relation to working as a parent/ foster caregiver,
- helps participants to take up or continue caring for a child with greater awareness of certain educational, organizational and other difficulties and their impact on the entire family system, i.e. household members and extended family,
- makes them aware of the need to cooperate with the natural family of the child as well as institutions and persons acting for the benefit of the child and the family,
- it creates an opportunity to get to know the candidates better, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their motivations and educational qualifications.

5. What institutions promote and manage training?

Mainly the institutions that promote and manage training for foster families are the organizers of foster family care. In addition, the subject of trainings for candidates for foster parents and trainings increasing skills and competences for already existing foster families are also dealt with by private entities, associations or foundations acting for the benefit of the child and the family



6. Is training for foster families paid?

Training for candidates for foster parents or already existing foster families organized by organizers of foster family are free of charge.

7. How do families begin raising a child? What process are they going through (till assessment and training)?

The method of assessing the already functioning foster families has already been described in detail in point 3. Moreover, the family foster care coordinator remains in constant contact with the foster family through visits to their living environment. These visits take place at least once a month and more often if necessary. Pursuant to the Act on the Supporting the Family and System of the Foster Care, the organizer of foster care assesses the situation of a child placed in a foster family and in a family children's home in order to:

- ✓ determining the current family situation of the child,
- ✓ analysis of applied methods of working with children and families,
- ✓ modifying the child's support plan,
- ✓ monitoring the adoption procedures of children with a regulated legal situation allowing for adoption,
- ✓ assessment of the child's health and current needs,
- ✓ assessment of the legitimacy of the child's further stay in foster care,
- ✓ inform the court about the need to place the child in an institution operating on the basis of the provisions on the education system, medical activity or social assistance.

The child's situation is assessed by the organizer of foster care at a meeting with the participation of:

- foster family or running a family children's home or director of the care and educational facility and coordinator of the care and educational facility,
- family foster care coordinator or tutor,
- a pedagogue ,

- a psychologist,
- the right family assistant,
- a representative of the adoption center,
- the child's parents, with the exception of parents deprived of parental authority.

Representatives of the following persons may be invited to participate in the session on the situation of a child placed in foster family custody, in particular: the court having jurisdiction over the place of residence of the foster family or the family orphanage operator, the competent powiat family support center, social welfare center, police, health care, educational institutions and social organizations statutorily dealing with family and child issues, as well as people close to the child.

Assessment of the child's situation should be carried out as needed, however, in the case of children under 3 years of age, at least every 3 months, and in the case of older children, at least every 6 months.

After assessing the child's situation, the organizer of family foster care formulates a written opinion on the child's life situation, its functioning and health, and the legitimacy of its further stay in foster care, and then submits it to the competent court.

8. How is a family chosen to raise a specific child? How is the match going?

The process of selecting a child for a foster family is an individual matter for each family. The organizer of foster care, assigning a child to a foster family, analyzes factors such as the child's age, sex, health condition and the fact that the foster family has their own biological children.