

Making Homes Available For Our Children “24-7”

What is “24-7”?

As part of our **Family Matters** reform effort, the Department of Family Services, with the support of our foster parents, is excited to announce “24-7” – a major push to ensure that homes are available and prepared to receive children and youth 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

The kinds of crises that require children to be removed from their homes aren’t limited to—and often don’t happen during—standard business hours. Having a safe and supportive family available no matter the time of day or night makes all the difference to a child experiencing this level of trauma, loss and separation.

We already have foster families who accept late night placements and help us to make sure children are placed in a home as quickly as possible.

As recently as January 3, we had a family accept a placement at 8:30 pm. They ensured that a young infant spent the night with a nurturing and attentive family. We want all children to have this opportunity.

Support for Families

We are taking a number of steps to make sure foster families have all the support they need to make these placements successful, including:

- Having staff members available to reach out to relatives and foster parents 24 hours a day, with the capacity to readily identify available homes.
- Working with licensing staff to ensure that prospective foster parents are licensed quickly and smoothly, and that existing foster families’ licenses are renewed as necessary.
- Ensuring that transportation is available to get children to a foster home any time of day or night.
- Ensuring that childcare is available right away for working foster parents.
- Providing foster parents with emergency supplies of personal items for children of various ages.
- Offering ongoing support to foster parents and kin who take in children on short notice.
- Providing quick-turnaround training for these families.

In late January, we will launch a new training program, “The First 48 Hours,” to help prepare foster parents to receive children into their home any time of night or day. The training will offer insight into the reactions and needs of children of different ages and developmental stages when they are removed from their homes and will help foster parents develop the skills to support, comfort and care for them during this particularly stressful time.

Stay tuned for more details on the dates and times for this training and on our 24-7 effort!

Hear from Current Foster Families

There are already foster families here in Clark County who receive placements during non-traditional hours. A few have been kind enough to share their experience and insights with us.

One foster parent is a teacher whose schedule only allows him to take placements later in the evening. He says the best advice he can offer is to stick to your routine as much as possible. He knows the child usually has a regular bedtime, and since he has to be up early, he also has a set bedtime. That first night of placement, he tries to adhere to those bedtimes as much as possible. While this will not always happen according to plan, the effort to create some sense of normalcy that first night has really worked for this foster parent.

He also believes it is important for children to have a level of comfort in their new home. He makes sure to take them through the entire house and introduce them to the pets. This helps to ease the transition and give them a sense that it is now their home, too.

Another foster parent shared that in the almost two years she has been fostering children from birth to age 5, the best practice she has is making sure to always have some basic necessities around the house. After having to scramble for the first couple of placements, she now always has an inventory of diapers, formula, and spare clothes to ensure she can bring the child right home.

Late night placements can be difficult for both the caregiver and child, but it is the little things that can make all the difference. The same foster parent remembered bringing a child home and stopping on the way to get a quick meal. She said sitting there and sharing the meal with the child that first night calmed both of their jitters and gave them a positive memory from the start that they still cherish.

We know that children are much better off when they are placed in a nurturing home as quickly as possible. It may not always be easy or convenient, but you have the power to make this difficult time a bit easier for a child in need of comfort and security! This is why we are asking for “24-7” families.