



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES



Virginia's Foster Home Approval Process

When children enter foster care, the local department of social services assumes custody and must make every effort to reunite the child with his/her parent(s). Identifying a family to care for children who enter foster care, who allow them to remain in their community and connected to natural supports, is critical in reducing the trauma that children experience as the result of placement outside of their homes. Whenever possible the local department should engage relatives and other adults who understand how to support children and their families in order to place children with Kinship Foster parents who possess a specific understanding of how to meet their physical and emotional needs. Children may be placed with Kinship Foster parents by the local department of social services at the time of removal or at any point while the child is in foster care. While Kinship Foster Parents must meet approval standards and complete background checks to ensure eligibility, waivers may be granted to allow for immediate placement of children. If kinship foster parents are not immediately identified, the local department may place the child with a foster family who has met all standards for approval. All foster families work with the local department of social services to ensure that the children's connections to their families are prioritized, while providing a safe and nurturing home to allow children to begin to heal for the trauma that they've experienced.

In order to become a foster family, applicants must attend an orientation to gain insight into the physical and emotional needs of children in foster care and the role of foster families in Virginia. If prospective foster families choose to pursue approval they must:

- **Submit an application to their Local Department of Social Services or Licensed Child Placing Agency**
- **Engage in a mutual assessment process that includes 27 hours of training, and an assessment of the applicant's competence in meeting the emotional and physical needs of children in foster care and supporting reunification with their parent(s)**
- **All adult household members must submit National Fingerprint Criminal History checks to identify any crimes that serve as barriers to approval along with a search of the Virginia Child Protective Services Central Registry**
- **All adult household members must submit the results of physical examinations and Tuberculosis screenings or tests**
- **Any household member who will transport children must submit to Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) checks**

[For more information:](#)

Virginia Department of Social Services Constituent Services

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