



How to Become a Foster Parent in North Carolina

A step-by-step guide to the licensing process with Baptist Children's Homes



If God has been stirring something in you about foster care, the question that usually comes next is a practical one: *what does this actually involve?*

Here is the honest answer, start to finish. Becoming a licensed foster parent through Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina takes about **four to six months**. It involves 30 hours of training, at least three home visits, background checks, and a significant amount of paperwork. It is not a fast process, and that is on purpose. Children who have already lost a great deal deserve homes that have been carefully prepared.

None of it is meant to be intimidating. Every family who walks this road walks it with a licensing worker beside them.

Who This Guide Is For

Whether you are exploring foster care for your own family, a pastor walking alongside someone who is, or a caseworker handing this to a family who asked "what is the process?" this guide lays out every step in plain language. Feel free to share it.

First, an Honest Conversation About Reunification

Before anything else, we talk with every family about the goal of foster care. It may not be the goal you are expecting.

Reunification is always the first goal. The purpose of foster care is to care for a child while their family works toward bringing them home. Adoption *can* come out of foster care, but it is not what foster care is for.

We say this plainly and early, because we never want to give a family false hope. If your heart is specifically set on adoption, foster care may not be the road, and it is far better to know that now than four months in. That



is not a discouragement. It is the beginning of honesty between us, and honesty is what this work runs on.

Considering adoption instead?

If adoption is where you sense God leading your family, that is worth exploring directly rather than hoping it happens through foster care. Read our companion guide, **The Christian Adoption Process in North Carolina**, at bchfamily.org/blog.

1 Application, References, and a First Visit

Baptist Children's Homes is a Christ-centered ministry, and our process reflects that from the very first step.

What You Will Submit

- **An application** from both adults in the home
- **A pastoral reference.** We will ask about your faith and where you worship. One pastoral reference covers both applicants, and it is required before we can approve you for class.
- **Three personal references each.** Each adult provides three of their own, separate from the pastoral reference.

Your First Home Visit

Once your application and pastoral reference are in hand, your licensing worker visits your home *before* training begins. This is not an inspection to catch you out. It is so that if something needs attention, like a water hazard, a safety fix, or a change to a bedroom, you find out now, while you still have months to take care of it. No surprises. That is the whole point.

2 Training, Paperwork, and Getting to Know You

Once you are approved for class, North Carolina requires **30 hours of training**. We break that into **ten weekly sessions of three hours each, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Classes are typically hosted by a partner church that provides **a meal before class and childcare during it**, because we know exactly what a weeknight looks like when you have a family.

What Happens Alongside Training

- Background checks and fingerprinting
- **MARS training** (Medication Administration in Residential Settings)
- A fire inspection of your home
- **A 16-page foster parent questionnaire** for each parent

That questionnaire is more personal than the page count suggests. It asks about your background, where you come from, and how you handle conflict and hard seasons. It is not a test. It is how we come to know you well enough to place a child in your home with confidence.

Visits and Interviews

- **Three home visits** total are required, including the first one



- **One office visit** for interviews. We talk with everyone in the family, including your children.
- Additional visits may be scheduled depending on your family's situation

If that sounds like a lot of attention, it is. We would rather know you well than know you quickly.

3 Submission and State Review

When training, visits, and paperwork are complete, your licensing worker compiles everything into a **roughly 20-page licensing document**, gathers all required state documentation, and submits the packet to the state of North Carolina.

- The state has **30 business days** to review your submission
- If corrections are needed, resubmission can add **another 30 days**

Then comes the part nobody loves: waiting. It is a good season for prayer, and for getting a bedroom ready.

So How Long Does This Really Take?

Four to six months, start to finish, and a good portion of that timeline is genuinely in your hands. Your licensing worker will move as quickly as you are willing to move. Some families turn in every form by the last night of class. Others take their time, and that is completely fine. There is no penalty for going at the pace your family actually needs. This is not a race. It is preparation.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take to become a foster parent in North Carolina?

About four to six months from application to state approval. Much of the timeline depends on how quickly the family completes paperwork and training.

How many hours of foster parent training does North Carolina require?

Thirty hours. Through Baptist Children's Homes, this is delivered as ten weekly three-hour classes, usually with a meal and childcare provided by a host church.

Do I have to be a church member to foster through BCH?

Baptist Children's Homes is a Christ-centered ministry, and a pastoral reference is required as part of the application. We will talk with you about your faith and your church home during the process.

Can I adopt a child I foster?

Sometimes, but adoption is never the goal of foster care. Reunification with the child's family always comes first. Families who feel specifically called to adopt should explore the adoption process directly.

How many home visits are required to become a licensed foster parent?

Three at minimum, including one before training begins. More may be scheduled based on your family's circumstances.

Do both parents have to complete the foster parent training?

Yes. Both adults in the home complete the application, references, questionnaire, and all 30 hours of training.

What is MARS training for foster parents?

MARS stands for Medication Administration in Residential Settings, the certification required to safely administer medication to children in your care.



What happens after I am licensed as a foster parent?

Your licensing worker stays connected with your family. Licensing is the beginning of the relationship, not the end of it.

What to Have Ready Before You Call

None of this is required to start a conversation. It simply helps you picture what is ahead.

- The names of both adults in the home who will be applying
- Three people who can serve as personal references for each adult
- Any questions about bedrooms, space, or safety in your home
- Your church home and the name of your pastor
- A sense of which weeknights your family could protect for ten weeks
- Whether anyone in your household has questions or concerns

Taking the First Step

You do not need to have it all figured out, or a perfect house, or a perfect family. You need a willingness to begin a conversation.

1-800-476-3669 | hello@bchfamily.org | bchfamily.org/fostercare

Pastors and caseworkers: you are welcome to print and share this guide with families in your care.