

Want to foster? Want to adopt? Want to foster to adopt? Confused by it all?? You are not alone. We have tried to provide a little further explanation in the information below. However, if you would like to speak to someone regarding the foster/adoption process, please call our office at (888)828-3555 and we will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Let's start with adoption. Adoption from foster care takes place when the parental rights of a foster child's biological parents have been terminated. Termination of parental rights is a lengthy process. Since it is always better for a child to remain within their family of origin if it is a safe and nurturing environment, judges typically like to give biological parents every opportunity to step up and become the person they need to be in order to parent their children. That being said, termination of parental rights does happen and at that time, children become legally free for adoption. Every effort is made to identify an adoptive family for a child before termination of parental rights occurs. Our state strives to prevent children from being in "permanency limbo" where their parents' parental rights are terminated without having a forever family in place to help them through the trauma of permanent separation from their biological parents.

Moving on to foster care, foster care is intended to provide a temporary safe, loving, nurturing home for children when they cannot safely live with their biological parents. Often, the duration of a foster placement is very short...just a few days until a suitable relative placement can be found. Sometimes a placement can last several months or even a year while the birth parents work toward achieving the parenting and personal goals set forth by DSS. And then, in extreme situations, the biological parents' rights are terminated and the child becomes available for adoption. As stated previously, termination of parental rights is a lengthy process and very often, actually over 70% of the time, children in foster care are adopted by their foster parents.

This brings us to the ever-confusing term "foster to adopt." Unfortunately, "foster to adopt" is a legal term in South Carolina. As a legal term, it is defined as:

- A family's goal is to adopt a child or sibling group.
- This family does not intend to foster random children who come into foster care.
- This family is waiting to be matched with and selected for a child or sibling group.

However, as stated above, if circumstances seem to be leading toward TPR, the search for an adoptive resource a.k.a. forever family, often begins before TPR takes place. In this situation a family is matched with and selected for the child, and in order to place the child "pre-adoptively" with the family a foster home license is issued to the selected family. This does not mean this family begins "fostering" in the traditional sense. It simply means that the child(ren) may be placed in the home legally while waiting for the adoption finalization.

Therefore, when you are beginning the foster home licensing journey with a GOAL OF ADOPTION, you are considered FOSTER TO ADOPT and will go through the ADOPTION APPROVAL PROCESS and wait to be matched with, and selected for a child.

If you are planning to foster children temporarily and you are open to the possibility of adopting a foster child in your home should that child become legally free for adoption, you are simply becoming A LICENSED FOSTER HOME...and if the situation arises where a child in your home becomes available for adoption, you simply complete the necessary steps to become approved at that time...and, while logically, this seems like the term "foster to adopt" would apply, in SC, it doesn't. 😊