



nightlight®
healing homes foster care program

Foster Care Program Description: Georgia



GENERAL INFORMATION

Nightlight Christian Adoptions believes that every child deserves a loving, permanent family. When you decide to become a foster parent, you provide a child in need with a safe and stable family environment, whether that is for two nights, six months, two years, or permanently. Children, right here in your community, are waiting for the security of your love and leadership. Life for these kids can be uncertain and chaotic. At Nightlight, we are seeking parents who have the compassion to love and the courage to care for them. Our expert team will equip you with trauma-informed training and guide you each step of the way. You can help a child discover and achieve all they are meant to be!

Families applying to Nightlight's program will pursue either foster care or adoption. *Foster care* is a temporary placement allowing birth parents to work on a case plan addressing the issues that created the family separation. If the birth family cannot remedy the situation, a permanent placement such as adoption or guardianship may be sought. Georgia is not a "Foster to Adopt" state, as the primary goal for children in foster care is reunification. Families interested in solely adoption will be classified as *adoptive parents*, as the biological family's rights have been terminated. If you are interesting in fostering a child or sibling group where the state expects adoption to be the goal, it will still be considered a "legal risk" placement, and neither Nightlight nor Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) can guarantee that will be the final result, as the case plan for any child can change at any moment. Foster families must be committed to the goal of reunification with the biological family. Families also open to adoption if the state determines reunification is not in the child's best interest are needed as well. If you are interested in adoption, there are anywhere from 300-500 children in the state of Georgia who are legally available for adoption and waiting for their forever family.

CHILDREN AVAILABLE

- Children that have experienced abuse and/or neglect
- Sibling groups
- Children with special, medical and/or emotional needs

- Children's ages typically range from 6-17 (*major need*)
- Less frequently younger children are available, ages 0-6

ELIGIBILITY TO FOSTER OR ADOPT

First and foremost, applicants interested in fostering must be willing to partner with the biological family of the child in their home to support the goal of reunification. Applicants must be at least 25 years old, or married couples with both being 21 years of age or older. Singles or married couples are eligible to apply to become a foster parent. Couples must be married for a minimum of two years. Foster parent applicants must complete a home study, pass all background checks, and be able to complete all required paperwork and education successfully. Applicants must meet all Safety and Quality Standards outlined by the DFCS and the Office of Provider Management (OPM). These standards include, but are not limited to, safety requirements related to the storage of firearms, medications, cleaning supplies, etc.; vaccinations for those under 18 years of age; well-water/septic tank checks; water safety; etc. ***Applicants must also live within 60 miles of Nightlight's office in Athens, Georgia.***

GENERAL PROCESS

This is a very general overview of the process for the foster care and adoption programs. Each situation is different and the exact timing of services will vary depending on the case, the caseload of the state, and the child's specific needs.

1. Attend an Information Meeting
2. Apply to Nightlight Christian Adoptions
3. Complete all required paperwork
4. Complete 24 hours of state required IMPACT training, including CPR/First Aid
5. Complete Nightlight home evaluation, home safety inspection, and required education
6. Nightlight submits completed licensure packet to DFCS/OPM
7. DFCS/OPM decides whether to approve the family's home
8. Become matched with a child needing a placement
9. Nightlight completes regular home visits to provide ongoing support and education
10. DFCS/OPM also visits (*planned and unannounced*) the child and the home to coordinate the plan of care/transition with the foster parent
11. Foster parent cares for the foster child as their own, including transporting to school and medical appointments
12. Foster parents transport the child to biological family visits**
13. Foster parents can attend court hearings
14. Judge periodically reviews case
15. Complete 15 hours of required training every year
16. Annual home study visit and paperwork updates are required**
17. License renewed every year by DFCS/OPM through Nightlight**
18. Judge will determine if child's case plan will lead to reunification, adoption, or guardianship**
19. Foster parents will prepare for reunification or adoption**

** Depending on the specific case, these steps may not be applicable to families pursuing *adoption* only (birth parents' rights have been terminated *prior* to placement) **

REFERRALS/MATCHING

When matching a child with a foster or adoptive family, the child's specific needs are taken into consideration. Some children may do best in a home with other children, some may not. Some may require a two-parent home, while others may thrive in a single-parent home. The wait time to receive a referral of a child depends on several factors, the number of children available, the child's specific needs, and the criteria of the foster/adoptive family are the three main factors. Your wait can be decreased significantly if you are open to an older child (age 5+), a child of any race, and if you are open to special needs (physical, emotional, or behavioral).

WORKING WITH BIRTH PARENTS

Birth parents have the right to have visitation with their children while they are in foster care. Children in foster care also have the right to have visitation with their biological family. You may be required to transport your foster child to a visitation. Nightlight *requires* that foster parents (including those with a "legal risk" placement) be open and supportive of the birth parents while they work to regain custody of their children, a value of Nightlight and DFCS that is referred to as "partnership parenting". This openness allows for you to provide answers to your foster child, minimizing their loss of relationships by maintaining and celebrating the child's connections with *all* the important people in his or her life. Openness also empowers you in parenting your foster child, by providing knowledge about their family history. During the licensing process, you will learn of the many positive aspects of working with the birth families.

COST

There is no program fee for the Georgia foster care program; however, each foster parent is required to pay for their criminal clearances, Prepare and Enrich assessment, and any updates to meet the state home safety standards. The estimated costs are between \$169.25-\$1252.75, depending on factors such as additional household members and necessary out of state clearances required. Nightlight does not pay for the required clearances for a family's identified babysitters. For additional fee information, please see Attachment A.

ATTACHMENT A
 NIGHTLIGHT® CHRISTIAN ADOPTIONS
 GEORGIA FOSTER CARE PROGRAM– FEES AND ESTIMATED COSTS

PROGRAM FEE	COSTS	TOTALS	NOTES
Application Phase		\$0	<i>No fee for foster parents</i>
Match Phase		\$0	<i>No fee for foster parents</i>
Placement Phase		\$0	<i>No fee for foster parents</i>
Total Program Fee		\$0	

COSTS (ESTIMATED)	COSTS	TOTALS	NOTES
Expenses			
<i>Home Study</i>	\$0.00		<i>No cost for foster care home study (updated annually)</i>
<i>Parent Education/Training</i>	\$35-100		<i>Estimated cost of required education</i>
<i>FBI clearance per adult</i>	\$50		<i>Applicants pay at the time fingerprint appointment is scheduled (updated at least every 5 years)</i>
<i>GBI clearance per adult</i>	\$49.25		<i>Applicants pay at the time fingerprint appointment is scheduled (updated at least every 5 years)</i>
<i>Prepare & Enrich assessment per couple</i>	\$35		<i>Required for home study</i>
Potential Additional Expenses			
<i>FBI per additional adult in household</i>	\$0-\$50		<i>Required for anyone 18+ in the household. Applicants pay at the time fingerprint appointment is scheduled (updated every 5 years)</i>
<i>GBI per additional adult in the household</i>	\$0-\$49.25		<i>Required for anyone 18+ in the household. Applicants pay at the time fingerprint appointment is scheduled (updated every 5 years)</i>
<i>Central Registry checks (out of state)</i>	\$0-\$20		<i>Required for any state where you have lived in last 5 years</i>
<i>DFCS home safety standards requirements</i>	\$0-\$800		<i>Septic tank/well water inspection, gun safety, pool safety, etc.</i>
TOTAL ESTIMATED EXPENSES			
GRAND TOTAL	\$169.25-\$1252.75		<i>Estimates may be higher. Range depends on factors such as the number of states you have resided in the past five years and if there are additional adults in your household.</i>

Although we strive to maintain a predictable fee schedule, unexpected increase in our costs may necessitate an increase in fees. Therefore, fees may be increased upon 90-day notice.

Please initial this page that you have received a copy of this List of Fees and Estimated Costs.

Date: _____ **Foster Parents:** _____