

## **Frequently Asked Questions: Becoming a Foster Parent**

### **How many foster care programs do you offer?**

Hearts & Homes offers two comprehensive foster care programs: Family Ties Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) and Damamli Foster Care and Independent Living Program for teen mothers.

### **What is the difference between the two foster care programs?**

**Family Ties TFC:** TFC is a specialized program for children newborn to 21 years of age (average age ranges between 13 and 17 years old) with emotional, behavioral, educational or psychological needs who are unable to live with their biological families for a variety of reasons. Children live with a specially recruited, screened, trained and licensed foster family in the family's home. Social workers, clinical staff, and the therapeutic foster parent work together as a treatment team to provide a therapeutic environment supporting the child in their journey to achieve increased emotional stability.

**Damamli Mother-Baby Program:** Damamli is a foster care and independent living preparation program for pregnant teens and teen mothers between the ages of 16 and 20. Damamli's three-phased support system provides mothers with the opportunity to raise their children with a specially recruited, screened, trained and licensed foster family in the family's home. Once the mothers are prepared to live on their own, they are transitioned to a supported independent living apartment and/or an independent living apartment.

### **How do I know which program is best for me?**

All of the adolescents who benefit from our programs present a unique set of needs. If you decide to become a foster parent, you will meet with our staff to discuss which program best fits your lifestyle and meets the needs of our children.

### **How do adolescents arrive at Hearts & Homes?**

Adolescents are referred to our organization from The Department of Social Services (DSS) and The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS).

### **Do I have to live in a house to be a foster parent?**

No. Our primary goal is to place children in a safe and appropriate environment. Home ownership is not a requirement as long as your home meets regulatory standards.

**Do the children have to have their own room?**

Rooming regulations are different for each program:

**TFC:** Two children may share a room if they are the same sex and no more than 5 years apart in age. Each child must have his or her own bed, closet space and drawers for personal storage. Children are not permitted to share a bedroom with an adult.

**Damamli:** Each pregnant teen or teen mother must have her own room. A teen mother may share a room with her baby until the baby has reached 6 months of age. Once the baby is 6 months old or older, he or she must move into a separate room.

**Do you have to be married to be a foster parent?**

No. All dedicated, qualified parents are considered when applying to become foster parents.

We have many single parents and nontraditional families as foster parents.

We do have a current need for households with 2 or more residents. If this sounds like you or someone you know who may be interested in becoming a foster parent, please contact us.

*Note: All foster parents must meet all licensing (COMAR) and agency standards.*

**Does my spouse have to become licensed, too?**

Yes. Married foster parents must both be licensed.

**Do I have to be employed to be a foster parent?**

You do not need to be actively employed to become a foster parent. However you must be able to prove sufficient income (stipend received from Hearts & Homes is not included in this amount).

**How many children may I parent at one time?**

**TFC:** Up to two therapeutic children are permitted per home, pending space availability and client need.

**Damamli:** One child is permitted per home.

**What are the specific requirements necessary to become a foster parent?**

To become a foster parent, you must:

- Be 25 years of age or older
- Possess a valid driver's license and have reliable transportation with working seatbelts.
- Hold a criminal record free of violent or abusive crime or any crime against a child and have no felony convictions within the past 5 years
- Be in good physical and mental health
- Not be currently licensed as a foster parent with another agency
- Not provide daycare or house boarders
- Be available to attend continuing education training courses and keep all paperwork and certifications current to remain in compliance with state and agency regulations.

**What are the specific requirements of the foster parent's home?**

The foster parent's home must have adequate living space to accommodate the child or children. It must be in good condition and able to pass fire and health department inspections.