

# Providing Foster Care Is it for Me?

**Foster Parents are special people with a special job. They are people who can:**

- Find a place in their hearts and in their homes for a child in need.
- Accept the responsibility of caring for a foster child.
- Work as part of a team, with the child's best interests in mind.
- You may be just right for the job! It may be the toughest and most rewarding job you ever do.

**What qualities do Foster Parents have?**

Effective Foster Parents have a special kind of energy and love to share with others. They are also:

1. Good listeners.
2. Flexible.
3. Realistic.
4. Able to laugh.
5. Willing to work with others.

**Providing Foster Care . . . . Is it for me?**

- What kind of time commitment am I and my family willing to make in providing care for children in our home?
- What do I find interesting and enjoyable about children?
- Would disorder in my home bother me or other family members?
- How would I deal with emotional outbursts and disagreements among children?
- Am I strong and energetic - in good physical health - so that I am able to keep up with the fast pace of children?
- What kind of nurturing qualities would I have to offer as a Foster Parent?
- Am I self-confident in my parenting abilities to provide quality care for children?
- Am I and other family members willing to have our home life shared with others and perhaps become less private?
- Am I prepared to deal with my own children's feelings about sharing me, their home, and their personal belongings?
- What kind of considerations will I allow for myself to prevent burnout?
- How open would I be toward working with biological families, child protection workers, counselors, schools, medical personnel, etc.?

**Why should I learn about Foster Parenting?**

Because thousands of kids need foster care -- and you may be able to help!

As a Foster Parent you can provide:

1. Temporary care for kids. Some Foster Parents provide emergency care (usually for a month or less) until a plan for ongoing care is made. Other Foster Parents provide day-to-day care for a longer period.
2. Time for parents. Foster care gives parents the time they need to work out problems that made foster care necessary.

### **Who are the children needing foster care?**

Children are separated from parents for many reasons, including:

1. Physical or sexual abuse;
  2. Neglect or abandonment;
  3. Physical or mental illness of a parent;
  4. Death of parents;
  5. The child's emotional or behavioral problems.
  6. Chemical dependency or incarceration of parents.
- Children who need foster care come from all backgrounds. They are of every age, race, and religion.
  - Some have special needs. Some children need extra attention or specialized care because of: physical and/or mental disabilities, language differences, emotional or behavioral problems.

### **What do Foster Parents do?**

It's up to Foster Parents to:

1. Provide the basics, including food, clothing, and sleeping arrangements that meet State requirements.
2. Encourage positive relationships between the child and his or her natural parent(s).
3. Arrange for medical and dental care, as needed.
4. Protect the child from harmful situations.
5. Discipline in a positive way, by setting rules that are fair, consistent and appropriate.
6. Help the child to grow through educational, cultural and social experiences.
7. Work as part of a team.
8. Prepare the child to return home, or to live with relatives or adoptive parents, if a return home is not possible.

For further information on becoming a Child Foster Care Provider, please contact:

Jody Dahlen  
Otter Tail County Human Services  
530 Fir Avenue West  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
(218) 998-8191  
jdahlen@ottertailcounty.gov

# Notes From A Foster Mother



*“How can you do foster care? Simply love them and then let them go back to their birth families? I could never do that!”*

As a foster mom, I hear this all the time by well meaning people. Others seem to think we must be made of tougher material than the average parent. Well, it may surprise you that we are ordinary people just like you. Some of us have jobs outside the home. Most of us are married. Most of us have children of our own. But there are some single parent homes too. And like all people who have grown close to and loved another child, it is difficult to say goodbye. It is difficult for us to let go of someone who we have seen grow and change while they were living in our home.

When a social worker brings a new child into our home, there are some shaky times. Things are a little hectic as you adjust to this new arrival, and they adjust to you. It's important to be flexible, to slowly introduce the ways of your home. Before you know it, life has settled down into a comfortable routine and the awkwardness of the first few days are over. Then the child's worker calls and tells you when your foster child is going home. In between those times, there have been days of frustrations, days of joy, times of trouble, and times of great pride for the growth your foster child has taken. Love them? Oh, yes we do, with all our hearts. We have taken a stranger into our home and loved him/her as our own, always knowing that he/she belongs with the birth parents. One must always remember that to them, no matter what the circumstances that surround their placement in your home, the birth parents love is a true and natural bond one should never try to break.

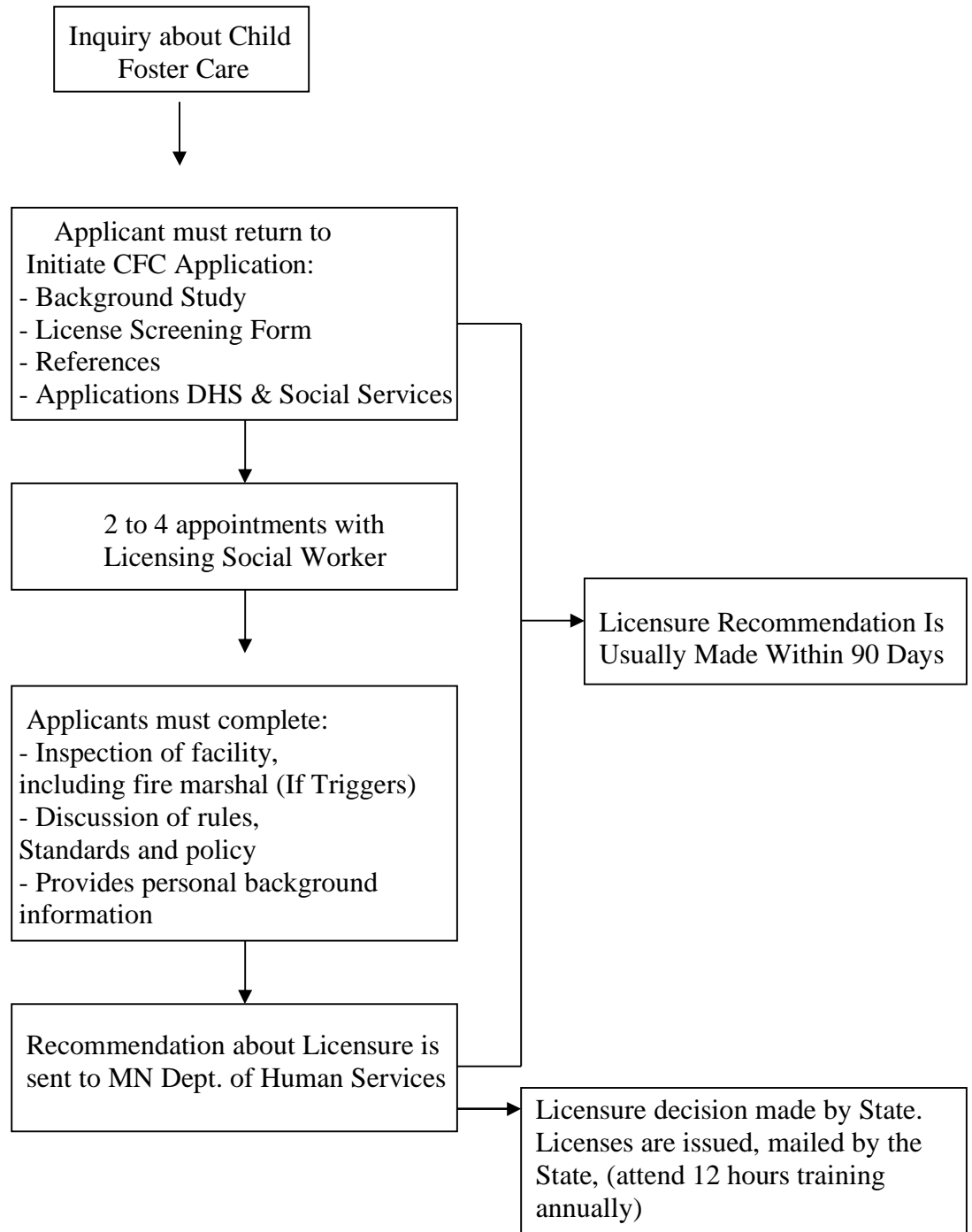
My children have the normal reactions any child would have if someone new entered their territory. They want to be friends and big sister and brother to the foster child. They have the same sibling rivalry that a normal family has. They complain once in a while that the “quantity” time isn't divided evenly. But when the foster child leaves, they are the first to say, *“When do we get another one?”*



Love them and let them go? Yes, it sounds hard, and it is. Any maybe it's not for everyone, but does it take a special kind of superhuman quality? I don't think so. Everyone, if they look deep enough will see that they too can find room to love another child for a little while. What are the rewards? The smiles, the hugs, seeing the growth in your own children as they share and care for someone who has less than them. But one of the biggest rewards for me is in knowing that it took so little of my time to reach out, love, care and make it better for a child – our greatest asset on earth.

So amongst the tears and the worries of letting go to an uncertain future, is love and strength in knowing that we have touched a life and made it better by just being here.

# CHILD FOSTER CARE LICENSING PROCESS





## **Will you care for the children?**

**Information for  
permanent resource families,  
foster families and  
adoptive families in Minnesota**





## **Minnesota children need families to love and care for them**

When children can no longer live safely with their families, another family gives them love and care through foster care and adoption.

Foster and adoptive parents provide the stability children need. Day after day, foster and adoptive parents' dedication, commitment and efforts make a profound difference in the lives of children and their families.

## **All children need a permanent family**

Most children in out-of-home care have been abused and neglected. They have been traumatized. Some are coping well, given the circumstances, and others are in great emotional pain and may show that through their behavior.

Some of these children have physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. These special needs may keep them from making friends, coping with emotions, feeling successful in school and feeling like a member of a new family.

Of all the children in out-of-home care, most are older children or sibling groups who need to be placed together. Few are young children or toddlers.

All children have one thing in common: they want to be part of a permanent family.



## **Minnesota is committed to finding permanent families for children**

Permanency for children means a safe and stable home in a timely manner. Permanency planning simultaneously develops two plans for children: a plan for safe reunification with their parents and, if reunification is not possible, a plan for a permanent placement away from their parents.

National studies have shown that multiple moves for children from family to family create a predictable set of problems that will adversely affect children's lives as adults. Minnesota county social service agencies, working with families, must make timely decisions to secure permanent homes for children.

Most children are reunited with their parents or relatives quickly. When this is not possible, children need families to commit and care for them for a lifetime. Foster care is a temporary solution; long-term foster care is not a guarantee of a permanent family for children.

## Children need ordinary people to do extraordinary things

In the past, adoption and foster care agencies clearly defined families as either foster parents or adoptive parents. These roles are constantly changing to meet children's individual needs. In the past, foster families were told they could not adopt; now foster parents are encouraged to adopt.

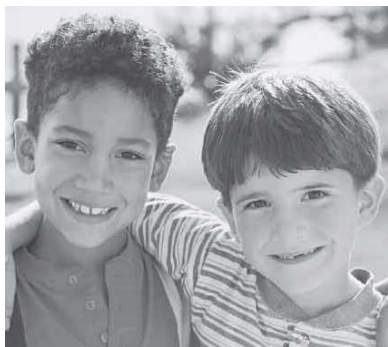
Families care for children as:

- permanent resource families
- foster families
- adoptive families.

**Permanent resource families** are foster families who provide immediate care, love and nurturing for children. They actively work towards reunifying children with their families while committing to the possibility of adoption if reunification cannot take place. It is traumatic for children to move from family to family so they need resource families to provide their care.

The role of permanent resource families is challenging: to love children as their own; support, meet and relate to children's parents; and adopt children if they cannot safely return home.

Without permanent resource families, children will continue to move from one family to another.



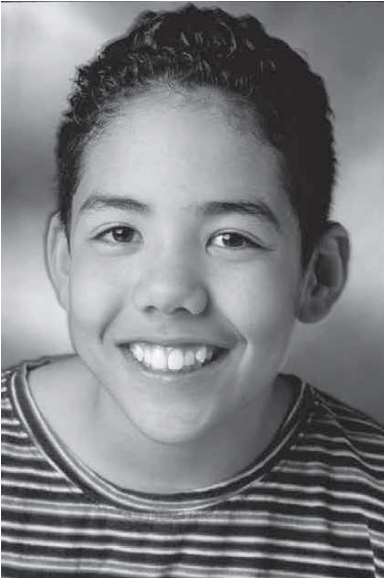
**Foster families** are families who are willing to commit to caring for, loving and nurturing children for a short time. Foster families provide emergency care to children who must be removed from their homes immediately for their safety. Foster families provide temporary care, until children can be safely reunified with their parents, or until a permanency plan is put into action. Foster families also provide respite care to give children's parents or caregivers a brief break from their daily parenting routines.

The role of foster families is to share parenting with children's families and work with county social workers to ensure children have a safe, permanent family.

**Adoptive families** are permanent families who love, nurture and care for children for a lifetime. They legally and emotionally bring into their families children not born to them. Children will have adoptive families' names and the same legal rights as their new families' birth children. After a court approves an adoption, adoptive parents will receive an official decree and birth certificate with their names listed as parents.

The role of adoptive families is to feed, clothe, house and educate adoptive children in the same way as birth children. Adoptive children need the same love and understanding. Adoptive parents must also affirm adopted children's personal history.





## All kinds of families can care for Minnesota children

Foster and adoptive parents come from backgrounds as diverse as the children they care for in their families. Some are married; some are single; some own a home; some rent; some are grandparents; some are parents with young children, adolescents or grown children; some hope eventually to adopt children. A diverse group of foster and adoptive parents are needed to reflect the diversity of children who need care. The characteristics these parents have in common are a love for children, an ability to commit to challenges and a desire to make a difference in children's lives.

## Supports are critical to successful families

Foster and adoptive families are provided with training and support to help meet the unique needs of children in their care. This begins with orientation and continues with ongoing training and professional supports. Types of supports available to foster and adoptive families include health coverage, financial assistance and other social services.

Families experience significant changes as they open their home to other children. It requires a considerable amount of time and energy to learn and understand the complexity of parenting these children. Families work with a team to care for children; the team could include social workers, therapists, court representatives, family members, school professionals and others.

## Will you care for the children?

If you are interested in more information about caring for children as a permanent resource family, foster family or adoptive family, call your local county social service agency or (866) MNKIDS8 (866) 665-4378 or visit the Web site: [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org).

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by contacting us at (651) 431-4671 (voice). TTY/TDD users can call the Minnesota Relay at 711 or (800) 627-3529. For the Speech-to-Speech Relay, call (877) 627-3848.



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Child Safety and Permanency Division

PO Box 64944

St. Paul, MN 55164-0944

[www.dhs.state.mn.us](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us)

## Foster care: Temporary out-of-home care for children

Children who cannot safely remain in their homes may be placed temporarily in family foster care or a group residential facility. In Minnesota, approximately 10,475 children and youth experienced out-of-home care during 2023. On an average day, there were approximately 6,150 children and youth in out-of-home care, based on preliminary 2023 data.

### Children enter foster care for a variety of reasons

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During 2023, approximately 4,225 children and youth entered out-of-home placement. The most common reasons for removal from their homes were:

- Caretaker drug abuse (27%)
- Allegations of neglect (14%)
- Allegations of physical abuse (11%)
- Child mental health (9%); these were largely voluntary placements for children 12 years and older.

### Placement options available for children

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As part of an effort to preserve family connections while children are in foster care, 63% of those in family foster care on any given day were placed with relatives in 2023. Removing children from people they love and environments that are familiar to them can be traumatizing. When children must leave their homes, placement with relatives is considered first. Whenever possible, children are placed in their community and continue to attend their home school. Children may be placed in:

- Emergency foster care when removed from their homes by law enforcement. This immediate care may be provided through emergency relative placement, a nonrelative foster home, or a shelter facility.
- Foster homes licensed by county, Tribal or private agencies. Family foster homes, including relatives working to become licensed, offer a temporary substitute home until children can be safely reunified with their families.
- Programs in home settings where supportive services are provided by staff.
- Residential programs that offer intensive treatment for children with serious mental health and behavioral needs, often as a result of trauma.
- Permanent homes, preferably with a relative, through adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody when reunification is not possible.

## Family foster homes are urgently needed

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Many Tribal Nations, counties, and private agencies have a shortage of family foster homes and are urgently seeking additional families to be licensed to care for Minnesota’s children. Specific needs vary by agency, but in general, there is a particular need for homes:

- Able to keep sibling groups together
- Interested in caring for youth ages 14-21, who make up more than one-quarter of children in foster care
- With expertise in or willing to learn to support children with trauma and other mental health needs
- Able to meet the needs of youth in terms of culture, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and family languages spoken
- Reflective of the ethnic and racial diversity of children in foster care, who in 2023 were:
  - 39% white
  - 26% two or more races
  - 19% American Indian/Alaska Native
  - 14% African American/Black
  - 2% Asian/Pacific Islander
  - 10% Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, of any race
  - From homes that speak a variety of languages. English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong are the most frequently listed primary languages.
- Supportive of LGBTQ2S+ youth
- Able to mentor minor parents and support them in caring for their children.

Foster families provide critical temporary care and nurturing to children in crisis. They come from all walks of life and may be single, married, partnered, with or without children, renters or homeowners. Foster parents play a role in recognizing the trauma children may have experienced and help give them the structure, nurturing and stability they need.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services website outlines the [steps to becoming a foster parent](#). Those interested can contact their Tribal or county social service agency, or a private agency, for more information about their needs for homes.

## Supports available to meet children’s needs

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Foster parents receive initial training prior to placement and ongoing training while licensed to help prepare them to meet the needs of children in their care.

All foster parents receive the same supports, including foster care maintenance payments and other services to help meet the needs of children in their care. Agency staff arranges for Medical Assistance or other coverage for medical, dental, mental health and vision care for children in foster care. If a child in foster care needs additional services, agency staff help determine options and eligibility for services.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services provides funding for training and support services statewide. For more information, visit [Foster Adopt Minnesota](#) and refer to [Permanency support services for adoptive, foster and kinship families DHS-4925 \(PDF\)](#).

## Most children reunited with parents or achieve permanency with relatives

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For children who left out-of-home placement during 2023:

- 55% resided with a parent or legal guardian
  - 51% were reunited with their parent or guardian from whom they were removed
  - 5% resided with a parent who was not the caregiver from whom they were removed
- 27% achieved permanency living with relatives
  - 14% through transfer of permanent legal and physical custody
  - 10% through adoption or Tribal customary adoption
  - 3% were living with other relatives
- 8% achieved permanency through adoption or Tribal customary adoption with unrelated individuals
- 8% reached the age of majority
- The remaining children left foster care for reasons such as transfer to another agency (1%), running away from placement (1%) and death (0.1%).

## Disproportionality in Minnesota's foster care system

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Younger children, children from rural counties, and children of color and American Indian descent are disproportionality represented in the foster care system. Of the children in foster care during 2023:

- Approximately 65% were living in Greater Minnesota (outside the seven-county metro area)
- Approximately 22% were under 3 years old
- American Indian children were approximately 16 times more likely than their white counterparts to experience out-of-home care; those of two or more races were eight times more likely; Black children were approximately twice as likely; and Hispanic/Latino children were twice as likely.

## Resources

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Below is a list of available resources.

- [Foster Adopt Minnesota Fostering Network webpage](#)
- The department's [Foster care webpage](#)
- The department's [Child welfare data dashboard webpage](#)



For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to [dhs.info@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.info@state.mn.us), call 651-431-4671, or use your preferred relay service. ADA1 (2-18)

## **Child Foster Care MN Statutes, Laws, and Rules**

For a list of the statutes for child foster care, go to the following website link:

**<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/pubs/>**

You can also find the latest updates to the MN Statutes, Laws and Rules by going to this website. For Child Foster Care, these are the Statutes and Rules to search for:

Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245A

Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245C

Minnesota Rules, parts 2960.3000 to 2960.3340

**It is the responsibility of the license holder to know the requirements of their license.**

If you have any questions, please call Jody Dahlen, Child Foster Care Licensor, Social Worker at (218) 998-8191 or email at [jdahlen@ottertailcounty.gov](mailto:jdahlen@ottertailcounty.gov)

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# Notice of Privacy Practices

(Effective Date: November 2016)

**This notice tells how private information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get this information. Please review it carefully.**

## Why do we ask for this information?

- In order to determine whether and how we can help you, we collect information:
  - To tell you apart from other people with the same or similar name
  - To decide what you are eligible for
  - To help you get medical, mental health, financial or social services and decide if you can pay for some services
  - To decide if you or your family need protective services
  - To decide about out-of-home care and in-home care for you or your children
  - To investigate the accuracy of the information in your application
- After we have begun to provide services or support to you, we may collect additional information:
  - To make reports, do research, do audits, and evaluate our programs
  - To investigate reports of people who may lie about the help they need
  - To collect money from other agencies, like insurance companies, if they should pay for your care
  - To collect money from the state or federal government for help we give you.
  - When your or your family's circumstances change and you are required to report the change (see Client Responsibilities and Rights – DHS-4163)

## Why do we ask you for your Social Security number?

We need your Social Security number to give you medical assistance, some kinds of financial help, or child support enforcement services (42 CFR 435.910 [2006]; Minn. Stat. 256D.03, subd.3(h); Minn. Stat.256L.04, subd. 1a; 45 CFR 205.52 [2001]; 42 USC 666; 45 CFR 303.30 [2001]). We also need your Social Security Number to verify identity and prevent duplication of state and federal benefits. Additionally, your Social Security Number is used to conduct computer data matches with collaborative, nonprofit and private agencies to verify income, resources, or other information that may affect your eligibility and/or benefits.

You do not have to give us the Social Security Number:

- For persons in your home who are not applying for coverage
- If you have religious objections
- If you are not a United States citizen and are applying for Emergency Medical Assistance only
- If you are from another country, in the United States on a temporary basis and do not have permission from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to live in the United States permanently
- If you are living in the United States without the knowledge or approval of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

## Do you have to answer the questions we ask?

You do not have to give us your personal information. Without the information, we may not be able to help you. If you give us wrong information on purpose, you can be investigated and charged with fraud.

## With whom may we share information?

We will only share information about you as needed and as allowed or required by law. We may share your information with the following agencies or persons who need the information to do their jobs:

- Employees or volunteers with other state, county, local, federal, collaborative, nonprofit and private agencies
- Researchers, auditors, investigators, and others who do quality of care reviews and studies or commence prosecutions or legal actions related to managing the human services programs.
- Court officials, county attorney, attorney general, other law enforcement officials, child support officials, and child protection and fraud investigators
- Human services offices, including child support enforcement offices
- Governmental agencies in other states administering public benefits programs
- Health care providers, including mental health agencies and drug and alcohol treatment facilities
- Health care insurers, health care agencies, managed care organizations and others who pay for your care

- Guardians, conservators or persons with power of attorney
- Coroners and medical investigators if you die and they investigate your death
- Credit bureaus, creditors or collection agencies if you do not pay fees you owe to us for services
- Anyone else to whom the law says we must or can give the information.

### **What are your rights regarding the information we have about you?**

- You and people you have given permission to may see and copy private information we have about you. You may have to pay for the copies.
- You may question if the information we have about you is correct. Send your concerns in writing. Tell us why the information is wrong or not complete. Send your own explanation of the information you do not agree with. We will attach your explanation any time information is shared with another agency.
- You have the right to ask us in writing to share information with you in a certain way or in a certain place. For example, you may ask us to send health information to your work address instead of your home address. If we find that your request is reasonable, we will grant it.
- You have the right to ask us to limit or restrict the way that we use or disclose your information, but we are not required to agree to this request.
- If you do not understand the information, ask your worker to explain it to you. You can ask the Minnesota Department of Human Services for another copy of this notice.

### **What are our responsibilities?**

- We must protect the privacy of your private information according to the terms of this notice.
- We may not use your information for reasons other than the reasons listed on this form or share your information with individuals and agencies other than those listed on this form unless you tell us in writing that we can.
- We must follow the terms of this notice, but we may change our privacy policy because privacy laws change. We will put changes to our privacy rules on our website at: <http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfservlet/Public/DHS-3979-ENG>

### **What privacy rights do children have?**

If you are under 18, when parental consent for medical treatment is not required, information will not be shown to parents unless the health care provider believes not sharing the information would risk your health. Parents may see other information about you and let others see this information, unless you have asked that this information not be shared with your parents. You must ask for this in writing and say what information you do not want to share and why. If the agency agrees that sharing the information is not in your best interest, the information will not be shared with your parents. If the agency does not agree, the information may be shared with your parents if they ask for it.

### **What if you believe your privacy rights have been violated?**

If you think that the Minnesota Department of Human Services has violated your privacy rights, you may send a written complaint to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to the address below:

Minnesota Department of Human Services  
 Attn: Privacy Official  
 PO Box 64998  
 St. Paul, MN 55164-0998

Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, ask your worker or call the number below for your language.

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ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية لترجمة هذه الوثيقة، اطلب ذلك من مشرفك أو اتصل على الرقم 1-800-358-0377.

သတိ။ ဤစာရွက်စာတမ်းအားအခမဲ့ဘာသာပြန်ပေးခြင်း အကူအညီလိုအပ်ပါက၊ သင့်လူမှုရေးအလုပ်သမား အားမေးမြန်း ခြင်းသို့ မဟုတ် 1-844-217-3563 ကိုခေါ်ဆိုပါ။

កំណត់សំគាល់ ។ បើអ្នកត្រូវការជំនួយក្នុងការបកប្រែឯកសារនេះដោយឥតគិតថ្លៃ សូមសួរអ្នកកាន់សំណុំរឿង របស់អ្នក ឬហៅទូរស័ព្ទមកលេខ 1-888-468-3787 ។

請注意，如果您需要免費協助傳譯這份文件，請告訴您的工作人員或撥打 1-844-217-3564。

Attention. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide gratuite pour interpréter le présent document, demandez à votre agent chargé du traitement de cas ou appelez le 1-844-217-3548.

Thov ua twb zoo nyeem. Yog hais tias koj xav tau kev pab txhais lus rau tsab ntaub ntawv no pub dawb, ces nug koj tus neeg lis dej num los sis hu rau 1-888-486-8377.

ဟ်သ့ၣ်ဟ်သးဘၣ်တၢ်က့ၢ်. ဝဲန့ၣ်လိၣ်ဘၣ်တၢ်မၤစၢၤကလီၤလၢတၢ်ကကျိးထံဝဲဒၣ်လံာ် တီလံာ်မိတခါအံၤန့ၣ်,သံက့ၢ်ဘၣ်ပုၤဂ့ၢ်ဝိအပုၤမၤစၢၤတၢ်လၢန့ၢ်မ့တ မ့ၢ်ကိးဘၣ် 1-844-217-3549 တၢ်က့ၢ်.

알려드립니다. 이 문서에 대한 이해를 돕기 위해 무료로 제공되는 도움을 받으시려면 담당자에게 문의하시거나 1-844-217-3565으로 연락하십시오.

ໂປຣດຊາບ. ຖ້າທ່ານ ທ່ານ ຕ້ອງການການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປເອກະສານນີ້ພໍ, ຈົ່ງຖາມພະນັກງານກຳກັບການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອຂອງທ່ານ ຫຼື ໂທໂປທີ່ 1-888-487-8251.

Hubachiisa. Dokumentiin kun bilisa akka siif hiikamu gargaarsa hoo feete, hojjettoota kee gaafadhu ykn afaan ati dubbattuuf bilbilli 1-888-234-3798.


Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в устном переводе данного документа, обратитесь к своему социальному работнику или позвоните по телефону 1-888-562-5877.

Digniin. Haddii aad u baahantahay caawimaad lacag-la'aan ah ee tarjumaadda qoraalkan, hawlwadeenkaaga weydiiso ama wac lambarka 1-888-547-8829.

Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para interpretar este documento, comuníquese con su trabajador o llame al 1-888-428-3438.

Chú ý. Nếu quý vị cần được giúp đỡ dịch tài liệu này miễn phí, xin gọi nhân viên xã hội của quý vị hoặc gọi số 1-888-554-8759.

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