

LIVINGSTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE BODY

Health and Human Service Needs FACT SHEET

No. 3

Foster Parenting in Livingston County May 2008

Who are Foster Parents? Foster parent is the term generally used to refer to adults who are licensed by the state or other designated agency to provide a temporary home for children whose birth parents are unable to care for them. To become licensed in the State of Michigan parents are required to have a home study, background checks, and training.

What are the Overall Needs Related to Foster Parenting in Livingston County? Annually, Livingston County has an average of 19 children who are removed from their families and are in need of foster parents. There are many more children who once removed remain in foster care for an extended period of time. Many of these children are able to be placed with relatives, but there are still children who require a safe, nurturing, patient, positive home environment outside of their immediate family while safety concerns are addressed with their biological family.

2007 data from the Livingston County Department of Human Services regarding children and families involved with the foster care system indicates:

- On average there were 51 licensed foster homes in Livingston County.
- The majority of licensed foster homes are in the Howell and Brighton school districts.
- On average, 82 children were in foster care placements every month.
- The average age of children in foster care was as follows:
 - 30% were aged 0-5
 - 24% were aged 6-12
 - 20% were aged 13-17
 - 7% were aged 18-19
- There is an average of 21 Livingston County children in foster care whose goal is adoption.
- On a monthly basis there are approximately 4-6 children placed outside of the community due to lack of available homes in the county.

- In September 2007 the breakdown of licensed foster homes by school district was as follows:
 - Brighton – 10 homes
 - Fowlerville – 6 homes
 - Hartland – 3 homes
 - Howell – 14 homes
 - Pinckney – 7 homes
 - School districts surrounding Livingston County – 11 homes

What are the Specific Needs for Foster Parents in Livingston County?

Livingston County has been very successful recruiting new foster homes over the past several years. Many of these new homes were licensed to only accept infants or young children. **There is still an immediate need for foster homes for older youth, teens with challenging behavior or a history of delinquency, and sibling groups.** The goal is to maintain youth in their school district when possible; therefore homes are needed in each of the five school districts in Livingston County. Housing youth outside of the county can be much more costly and does not provide the stability that these youth need. Additional foster homes in Livingston County willing to provide stability and support to these youth are desperately needed.

What are the Services and Supports in Livingston County to Assist Foster Children and Parents?

The local Foster, Adoption, and Kinship Services Workgroup (FAKS) of the Livingston County Human Services Collaborative Body regularly discusses needs of foster families and develops supports to meet those needs. Current supports offered to licensed foster families include:

- individual mentoring for foster parents
- monthly support groups
- family activities including a summer picnic and annual recognition dinner
- respite support
- quarterly training

Information on these supports can be located at: www.co.livingston.mi.us/hscb and selecting FAKS. There is also a local hotline for families interested in becoming foster parents – 517-548-0233.

What can the Community do to Help? Foster parents for older youth and sibling groups are desperately needed. Call the FAKS hotline to receive information on fostering in the county. Other ways to assist in this effort include:

- Become a licensed foster parent for older youth or sibling groups
- Donate your time to assist foster families and youth develop life skills (budgeting, cooking, basic car repair, etc.), transportation to appointments and services, and general mentoring
- Sponsor a child to attend a summer camp
- Donate money to the FAKS fund which is used for immediate needs of foster families and children
- Join the FAKS workgroup of the Human Services Collaborative Body to assist in planning to meet these needs