



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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County steps up recruitment efforts to meet growing need for child foster homes

On any given day in St. Louis County, approximately 500 children are living in out-of-home placement. That's a 25 percent increase from 5 years ago. With more children than ever in need of foster care, St. Louis County is working to recruit foster parents who are able to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children.

New videos are now available featuring foster parents and county employees who support and train foster families. These videos highlight the challenges and rewards of caring for foster children, as well as the resources available to help foster parents. The videos and other information about the licensing process are available online at stlouiscountymn.gov/childfostercare.

“Children need to feel safe and nurtured in order to learn and grow,” said Jessie Schunk, Professional Development Coordinator for St. Louis County Child Foster Care. “Our first goal is to keep children at home with the parent, but when that is not possible then we need a wide variety of foster parents to provide a stable caring environment until that child can be safely reunited with his or her family.”

St. Louis County faces particular challenges because of its large geographic size and diverse population. Because of this they are working to recruit adults over the age of 21 from throughout the county. Foster parents can be single or married and of any culture, religion or economic class – in fact, diversity among foster parents is being sought in order to better meet children's diverse needs. Whenever possible, the county first looks to a child's extended family to provide care. If that's not an option, then children are placed with foster families. The county tries to keep children in their

community, near their family, their home school district and community connections. For older children this is especially important as it allows them to remain connected to their support systems and the social activities they value.

“Being a foster parent is not for everyone,” said Schunk. “We try to give people as realistic expectations as possible. Children in foster care typically have experienced some type of neglect, abuse or other family crisis. They have needs based on those experiences and may have behaviors related to those experiences. Foster parents make a huge difference by providing stability, affection, consistency and nurturing.”

Foster care placements may be as short as a few days or could last several months or longer. During that time, St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services engages and supports the child’s family so they can safely reunify. In most situations, foster families will have contact with the child’s family.

For more information about child foster care, visit stlouiscountymn.gov/childfostercare or call (218) 749-9793 or toll free (800) 450-9777, ext. 7793.

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