



FOSTER CARE

Children and families with education, mental health and family support needs are searching for a better quality of life. Wesley Spectrum Services helps them to become independent, responsible and caring members of the community by providing an array of high quality special education, mental health and family services. These services give children and families the strength to learn, to live and to love, resulting in stronger families and stronger communities.

Philosophy and Purpose

Children who are abused, neglected or dangerous to themselves or others may need a safe, temporary place to live. Wesley Spectrum's Foster Care program places these children with temporary foster parents who have intensive, ongoing training so they can understand and help these children. Their diversity allows us to support each child's cultural identity. We can help medically needy children and tap into a range of mental health and family support services that help children and families.

Without foster care parents, more children would be lacking family guidance, in danger or homeless. Only when they have a safe place to live and strong family bonds, can children grow and learn to their full potential, becoming productive individuals who contribute to their communities.

Eligibility

We place children from birth to age 18 who are in custody of Children, Youth and Families (CYF), another children's agency or Juvenile Court. We are licensed for medically needy children and also place older children and sibling groups, and children with behavioral and/or emotional issues. We operate foster care in Allegheny and other Southwestern Pennsylvania counties.

Availability

We have 42 foster care families who are fully certified. We provide emergency placements and long term placements. A child's desires and preferences are considered when possible. If space is not available, CYF will refer to another agency. All eligible children and families are treated equally without favoritism.

Referral

All children are in custody of a child welfare agency and are referred through CYF. Anyone who feels a child or family is in danger should contact their county agency. Children's participation is not necessarily voluntary.

Intake

Our master's level intake coordinator will review the child's situation, gathering information from advocate counselors,

doctors, courts and parents, to determine the child's needs. An advocate counselor and supervisor will take over the placement, arranging pre-placements visits when possible, so a child and prospective foster family can meet and consider each other. This can take up to a month, which allows the child to make a good transition. Children are also placed quickly in an emergency.

Funding

Wesley Spectrum Services contracts with CYF which covers all foster care costs. Foster parents receive a daily stipend to cover living expenses. Foster children get medical assistance and free lunches at school. Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) will also help subsidize adoption services.

Accreditation and Licensure

Wesley Spectrum is accredited through the Council on Accreditation. We are a member of the Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN), and licensed by the Department of Public Welfare and Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. We partner with child welfare agencies in various counties. Some of our foster homes are dually licensed to promote continuity and permanency in a child's placement setting.

Treatment Approach

Wesley Spectrum Foster Care achieves the best outcomes for each child by basing our decisions – every step of the way – on what is best for this individual child. We call this Kid-Centered Decision Making and it encompasses Kid-Centered Planning, a Kid-Centered Environment and Kid-Centered Measurement.

In our Foster Care program, the Individual Service Plan outlines the child's emotional, physical, familial, educational and recreational needs and goals, a holistic approach to Kid-Centered Planning. When we match the needs to a suitable family, we create a Kid-Centered Environment that is a stable home, focused on a child's needs, in which the child can remain in regardless of the level of services received.

Each child has a Wesley Spectrum advocate counselor who provides counseling in a long-lasting relationship, helping the child, birth parents and foster parents feel valued and supported.



Strength to learn, to live, to love

Each counselor works with up to 10 children, meeting with them twice a week or more. Once children begins to trust adults and build relationships, they can begin to deal with their problems, learn and grow.

Kid- centered planning and measurement is at the core of our service delivery process. Each month, we review a foster child's progress toward the goals of his or individual service plan, which cover educational, medical, special treatment needs and a permanency goal. We update those goals every three months.

Foster Parents

Wesley Spectrum's Foster Care program is dependent on caring, fully certified foster parents. All foster parents receive an initial 40 hours of training over three months, along with 18 hours a year of ongoing to maintain current state certifications. Those who care for special needs children receive an additional 7 hours training in therapeutic skills. This allows them to understand and care for children, keep them safe and nurture their development. Their diverse backgrounds allow a child to live in a home where his or her personal and cultural identity is nurtured.

Services

In addition to recruiting and training foster care families, Wesley Spectrum Services provides ongoing support services to both foster care families and their children. Advocate Counselors arrange for therapy, regular visitation with birth families when appropriate, educational advocacy and special education placement. Foster children receive health and dental care and join their foster families in community-based activities. Foster parents can use planned respite services and 24-hour emergency support.

Individual Resident Treatment Foster Care is available to children (up to 18 years old) who have specific mental health needs. Referred by county mental health or another appropriate agency, these children must meet medical necessity requirements. Payment is provided by county mental health departments or insurance. Foster parents in this program receive extra training to care for these special children, who receive mental health treatment. Because these are dual-licensed host homes, children can stay with the same foster family when their status changes.

Outcomes

Only when they have a safe place to live and strong family bonds, can children grow and learn to their full potential, becoming productive individuals who contribute to their communities. The ultimate outcome of our Foster Care and Adoptive Services is to help the child achieve their permanency goal.

At discharge, goal attainment, length of stay and changes in the mental health functioning of the foster child (pre/post scores on the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale) are measured to determine the overall impact of the service. Wesley Spectrum Services also collects data on whether discharges were planned or unplanned and if the client was discharged to a more, the same or a less restrictive setting.

We conduct satisfaction surveys with the child, the birth parents and the foster families to determine if the child's quality of life has improved. We also measure the quality of the foster family's experience, providing any additional training and support needed to enrich current and future placements. This outcome data is then aggregated across cases and used to help us improve the quality of our services.

Discharge

When leaving our program, the majority of our foster children return to their birth parents, move in with a relative or are adopted by their foster parents. Some achieve independence, often staying in touch with their foster families for many years. We work with the child and birth family through this transition, easing fears and helping to prepare for permanence. If a child returns to the foster care system, we try to reunite him or her with the original foster parents. Adoptive or birth families can benefit from the many services that Wesley Spectrum offers to promote family stability.

After Care and Follow Up

During the discharge process an aftercare plan is developed which recommends any services or community resources that may be needed post discharge.

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