



FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Wesley Spectrum Services helps children and families 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.

We are seeking individuals who are willing to open their hearts and homes to children who need a safe place to live. Children who must leave their families need to be placed in a loving and nurturing home, where they will receive the necessary support and structure to help them grow into independent self-sufficient adults.

Philosophy and Purpose

Children who are abused or neglected may need a safe, temporary place to live. Wesley Spectrum's foster care and adoption programs provide homes for children in need. Through our array of services and strong community partnerships we can help these children and their families gain strength and thrive in their communities.

At Wesley Spectrum Foster Care and Adoption Services, we believe that all children who need of out-of-home care should be afforded the least restrictive setting possible. We strive to recruit diverse adoptive and foster homes to maintain the child's cultural identity while providing him or her with a safe and nurturing environment to thrive and grow.

Eligibility

Wesley Spectrum welcomes individuals who wish to make a difference in the life of a child. We look for warm, caring people with diverse backgrounds so a child can live in a home where his or her personal and cultural identity is nurtured. Our foster care/adoptive homes include traditional and non-tradition two parent families, and single-parent families. Foster and adoptive parents receive intensive, ongoing training so they can understand and help these children.

Individuals wishing to be adoptive and foster care parents should be:

- ♦ Loving and caring
- ♦ Flexible, with a sense of humor
- ♦ Eager to nurture a child's development
- ♦ Committed and not easily discouraged

The Department of Public Welfare oversees the approval process for adoptive and foster families. Their guidelines require that these individuals:

- ♦ Are at least 21 years old

- ♦ Pass criminal and child abuse background checks (Act 33 and 34 clearances)
- ♦ Pass a home inspection
- ♦ Complete a certification process

Accreditation and Licensure

Wesley Spectrum is accredited through the Council on Accreditation. We are licensed through the Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth, and Families and Mental Health to provide out-of-home care for children in need. Wesley Spectrum is a member of Pennsylvania's adoption network, the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN). We partner with county child welfare agencies in various counties. We are specifically licensed for medically needy children.

The Need

About 14,000 children in Pennsylvania are in the foster care system. Many of these children — particularly males, African-American children, youth over age 8 and sibling groups — are in need of permanent families. We place medically needy children, older children and sibling groups. Some of our families are dually licensed for both foster care and adoption, to promote continuity in the child's placement setting. We also recruit families to care for children with specialized medical, behavioral, and/or emotional needs.

Referral

We have 42 fully-certified foster care families, some of which have been with us for 20 years. Many of our foster families recruit and recommend new families, and serve as mentors to new foster parents. All children are referred to Wesley Spectrum Foster Care by Children, Youth and Families and other child welfare agencies.

Recruitment and Training of Resource Families

Prospective foster parents will receive an information package and application to complete. During the application phase, we will



Strength to learn, to live, to love

maintain regular contact with you to provide support and answer any questions you may have.

Foster and adoptive parents complete an initial 40 hours of pre-service training, along with 18 hours a year of ongoing training to maintain current state certifications. Those who care for children with specialized medical, behavioral, or emotional needs are required to complete 7 hours of additional training specific to the child. These sessions will give you a solid foundation to enable you to care for children who may have been exposed to abuse and/or neglect. CPR and first aid training is also required. When training is complete, the home study, home safety inspection and other assessments are finalized.

We arrange pre-placements visits when possible, so a child and prospective foster family can meet and determine their suitability to one another. At times, children enter foster care on an emergency basis and are placed into families trained to support children on an emergency basis.

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 and family. We work hard to match each child with a family that can provide for the child’s individual needs.

Wesley Spectrum uses Kid-Centered Measurement to gauge a foster child’s progress toward his or her individual goals, academically, socially and behaviorally. Advocates, along with any counselors and therapists, provide regular feedback on progress toward treatment goals.

As a foster care parent you are a vital member of the child’s Permanency Team, working with Wesley Spectrum staff, birth parents and others to help a child secure a stable living arrangement. Children remain in a stable home environment, even as the level of service changes.

Adoptive families are supported by the child’s advocate counselor and foster family, birth parents (if suitable) and others to help a child adapt to a permanent family. Parents can use planned respite services and have access to 24-hour emergency support.

Foster and adoptive parents also benefit from the range of services that Wesley Spectrum offers to promote family stability: mental health treatment, special education, drug and alcohol services, counseling and other supports.

Funding Foster Care

Wesley Spectrum Services contracts with county child welfare agencies to cover all foster care costs. Foster parents receive a daily stipend to cover utilities, food, clothing, travel, and recreation activities. Foster children get medical assistance and are eligible to receive free or reduced lunches at school.

Funding Adoption

Post-Permanency services for adoptive families are available directly through SWAN and provided by Wesley Spectrum. (As an approved SWAN affiliate, we receive funding through SWAN for SWAN referred adoption services.) An adoptive family can refer directly to Wesley Spectrum for these services, which can be funded either through SWAN, medical assistance, or other private pay arrangements.

Outcomes

Only when they have a safe place to live and strong support, can children grow and learn to their full potential, becoming productive individuals who contribute to their communities. Foster and adoptive parents make this possible. 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.

Contact Information

Annette Gross M.S.W.
Director of Foster and Adoption Services
6117 Broad Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-342-2302
or 1-866-773-2326
Fax: 412-362-9807
agross@wesleyspectrum.org

Other offices located at:

521 Plymouth Street
Greensburg, PA 15601
Phone: 724-832-3600
Fax: 724-832-7786

26 South Main Street
Washington, PA 15301
Phone: 724-222-7500
Fax: 724-222-5215

