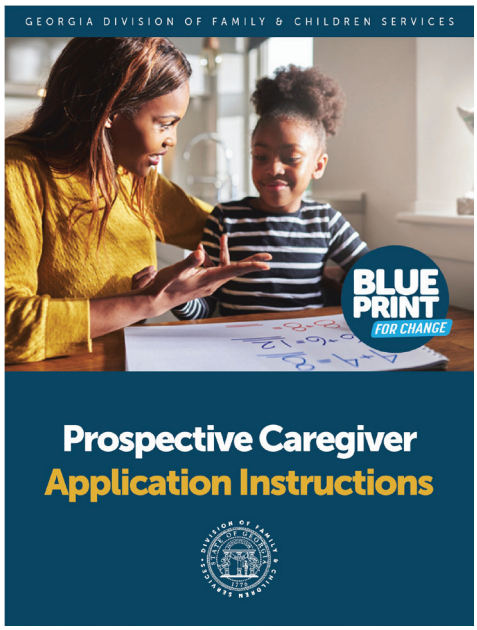
GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES

# Prospective Caregiver Application Instructions




## WELCOME!

Welcome, prospective caregiver!

Thank you for your expressed interest in serving Georgia's children.

This document contains the **instructions** for completing the Prospective Caregiver's Application.

The forms to be filled out are in the document called The **Prospective Caregiver's Application**. Enclosed in that packet are the forms you'll need to complete to initiate the approval process.

A Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Specialist from your region should be contacting you within 7 - 10 business days. They will collect the completed **Prospective Caregiver's Application** packet from you and provide you with additional information regarding the next steps, as well as answer any additional questions.

We look forward to partnering with you. Thank you for making the decision to **Change the BLUEPRINT of a Child's Life!**

**The Division of Family & Children Services**

## Prospective Caregiver Onboarding Pathway

**1. LISTEN**

Select and attend an "Information Session" either via webinar or in person to learn what it means to serve as a caregiver.

**2. APPLY**

Complete your Initial Application Packet and return it to your local Caregive Recruitment and Retention Specialist.

**3. TRAIN**

Complete IMPACT Pre-Service training, the required training for all caregivers

**4. COMPLETE FAMILY EVALUATION PACKET**

This includes additional evaluation tools, medical exams, drug screenings, and other assessments. Some of these items may be completed while you're in IMPACT Pre-Service Training.

**5. COMPLETE HOME STUDY**

Participate in a family assessment process.

**6. HOME APPROVAL**

Your home will be approved by the Division for a particular number of children within an age range determined by the results of your overall assessment.

**7. WELCOME THEM HOME**

You are now prepared to receive the call from the Division when a child is in need of a safe and nurturing home.

Please visit our website at www.fostergeorgia.com to learn more about out caregiver types, information sessions, and upcoming IMPACT Pre-Service Training dates in your area.

## Caregiver types

The DFCS caregiver service model is called Partnership Parenting. Partnership Parenting is a trauma-informed shared parenting model between caregivers and birth parents that is designed to keep parents parenting while their children are in out-of-home placement. By keeping parents connected and involved with parenting their children, permanency can be achieved faster, the trauma of placement can be reduced for children, child and parent bonds are preserved, and parents have the opportunity to demonstrate an increase in their parental protective capacities.

Below is brief description of each caregiver type. Please review and discuss with your family which role you believe is ideal for you. You are encouraged to refer back to these caregiver types when completing the application **Prospective Caregiver's Application** packet.

### Partnership Parents (PPs)

PPs are foster parents who provide temporary homes for children in foster care. They are expected to work in partnership with birth families and act as parenting mentors whenever possible. PPs share parenting responsibilities with birth parents through "parenting opportunities." Parenting opportunities are any favorable times, occasions, or conditions that allow a parent to safely teach, support, nurture, discipline, care for, or guide children.

### Relative Partnership Parents (RPPs)

RPPs are foster parents related by blood, marriage or adoption to children placed in their homes. They provide temporary homes for their relative's children who are in foster care. They may also serve non-relative children. RPPs follow the same approval process as regular PPs and have all the benefits and responsibilities associated with being a PP, including full foster care per diem reimbursement. RPPs have the same expectations as PPs.

### Adoptive Parents

Adoptive parents are "forever families" who make a lifelong commitment to a child. They serve children whose birth parents' parental rights have been voluntarily surrendered or terminated by a court, thus making the child legally free for adoption. Adoptive Parents may also be relatives in which case they are called Relative Adoptive Parents.

### Adoptive Parent-Legal Risk Parents

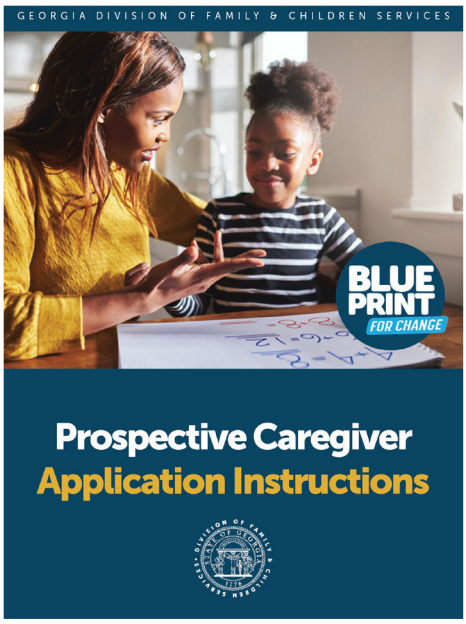
Adoptive Parent - Legal Risk Parents are adoptive parents who accept for placement children who are not completely legally free for adoption and thus, legal risk exists in accepting the placement.

### Resource Parents (RPs)

RPs are a hybrid of foster parent and adoptive parent. They act as both PP (temporary foster care placement) and are willing to become the adoptive parent (permanent family) for the child. Children placed with RPs have a concurrent permanency plan, meaning that two permanency goals are being pursued simultaneously. At least one of the permanency goals is adoption with the RP named as the permanency resource, RPs must we able to concurrently fulfill the roles of being a PP and an adoptive parent. An RP may also be a relative in which case they are called Relative Resource Parents.

## Congratulations, you have now completed the Information Session!

We are hopeful that you received the necessary information to support your family's decision on becoming a resource for children in foster care.




You are now ready to fill out the forms that can be found in the **Prospective Caregiver Application** packet and begin the process. (See the cover of that packet to the left.)

- **Forms Received Via Email -** If you received these forms via email they may be completed electronically for your convenience. However, you may also print and complete them manually. Should you decide to complete the forms manually we ask that you print legibly.
- **Forms Received In-Person -** If you received these forms after an in-person Information Session you may complete them manually. However, we do request that you write legibly. These forms can also be provided to you electronically.

## Prospective Caregiver Application

- **The application can be completed once for the entire family.** The application must be signed by the Primary and Secondary Caregivers.

In addition, the Primary and Secondary caregiver must each, individually, complete the **Live Scan Finger Print Application Form**. *The primary caregiver can complete the attached version and sign it digitally. The secondary caregiver will be sent the Live Scan Form separately for completion and signature.*

Your family will be assigned to a Regional Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Specialist (CRRS) to support you through the application process. The CRRS will contact you to discuss the application packet, provide additional information regarding the next steps, as well as answer any other questions.

You must complete the application and return it within 10 business days (which will essentially be 2 weeks since we do not count weekend/holidays). Your application will not be considered complete until original signatures have been obtained.

Thank you for making the decision to **Change the BLUEPRINT of a Child's Life** and join us as we build a State of Hope!

## DHS/DFCS Information Collection, Use and Disclosure Statement For Foster Caregivers

*This collection, use and disclosure statement explains how and why the Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services (DHS/DFCS) collects, uses and may disclose personal information on foster caregivers. The term foster caregiver includes DHS/DFCS foster parents, relative foster parents, relative caregivers and Child Placing Agency foster parents. This statement is provided along with the DHS Notice of Privacy Practices.*

### DHS/DFCS

DHS/DFCS is the lead child welfare agency for Georgia. In addition to developing and supporting its own foster caregiver homes, DHS/DFCS contracts with private organizations known as Child Placing Agencies (CPAs). CPAs develop and support their own foster caregiver homes. CPA foster caregiver homes that are used as a placement for a child in foster care are however held to the same standards, expectations and practices as DHS/DFCS foster caregiver homes which includes being covered under the provisions and requirements of this disclosure statement.

### Collection and Use of Personal Information

DHS/DFCS is charged with the safekeeping of children and ensuring their well-being. One way this is accomplished is by ensuring that foster caregivers and their household members are thoroughly screened and assessed at initial approval, subsequent re-evaluations and throughout foster caregiving service. Ongoing screening and assessment is accomplished through information collection. Information is collected in many different ways including from criminal history databases, child welfare information systems, self-report forms, observation, interviews, meetings and participation in training.

### Paper and Electronic Data Storage

The official child welfare case record for Georgia children and families is the DHS/DFCS GA SHINES system. Information may also be stored in paper files. DHS/DFCS as the state's lead child welfare is federally required to have a **S**tatewide **A**utomated **C**hild **W**elfare **I**nformation **S**ystem or SACWIS. A SACWIS is a comprehensive automated case management tool that serves as a state's "official case record". Therefore information gathered by DHS/DFCS or CPAs on foster caregivers and their household members must be stored in the GA SHINES system.

With limited exceptions, only DHS/DFCS employees have access to GA SHINES. State laws as well as employment policies and procedures govern the behavior of DHS/DFCS staff as it pertains to the appropriate access and use of case record information. CPAs do not have direct access to the GA SHINES system and therefore utilize the GA SCORE [1] system to store foster caregiver's information. Information in GA SCORE is manually retrieved by DHS/DFCS and transferred to GA SHINES.

### Public Records Disclosure

Georgia's Open Records Act (ORA) (O.C.G.A 50-18-70(b)) provides citizens broad access to those records and documents of state operated public agencies which are public records pursuant to the ORA. DHS/DFCS's records, except where exempted by law, are subject to public disclosure. Foster caregiver information in GA SHINES or in DFCS paper files are public records not expressly exempted, and therefore, subject to disclosure. Additionally, records prepared or maintained by a private entity in cooperation with public officials, or contemplating the use of public resources and funds are considered public records and are also subject to the ORA. In sum, this means that foster caregiver information whether contained in DHS/DFCS's or a CPA's paper or electronic records is subject to public disclosure. Information not subject to disclosure would be information violating privacy and security requirements or confidentiality laws related to Child Protective Services investigations. Medical records are not required to be disclosed under the Open Records Act.

For more information about the ORA, please consult legal counsel or visit Georgia's First Amendment Foundation at www.gfaf.org.

[1] GA SCORE is a data system used by DHS/DFCS to monitor the work of CPAs and Child Caring Institutions (group homes).