



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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Foster Care: A Fact Sheet for Prospective Muslim Families

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)

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What are the rewards of providing foster care for a Muslim child?

- Experience with children from another culture and a greater appreciation for how other cultures view the world
- Deeper knowledge of ones own culture, beliefs, attitudes and values
- A unique opportunity for growth as you share your life with a child in need
- Knowledge that you have provided security to a child and strengthened his or her self-confidence, which helps to diminish some of the effects of fear and trauma
- An opportunity to live and practice a basic tenet of Islamic beliefs

What is needed from foster families?

- An interest in Muslim children from another culture and the desire to nurture their Islamic faith
- An interest and ability to provide long-term foster care
- Willingness to accept and support a young person whose primary ties remain with his/her culture and biological family
- Open-mindedness and sensitivity to religious and cultural differences
- School districts with resources to educate a young person with limited English capabilities
- Willingness to participate in the licensing process, orientation, and training in foster care

Must foster parents accept any child for care?

The placement must be comfortable for the child and the receiving family. Stability of the placement is a goal. It is not desirable to have the child move from home to home. If you prefer to only foster Muslim children and think that a certain age or gender of a child may make a difference in your being able to provide a loving, nurturing home, then you should indicate this to the agency.

Where can I get more information?

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) can provide more information on foster care for unaccompanied refugee children.

If you are in Washington, D.C.; Boston; Grand Rapids or Lansing, Mich.; Fargo, N.D.; Philadelphia; or Seattle, contact LIRS's children's services unit at 410/230-2757.

If you are in Phoenix; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Jackson, Miss.; Newark, N.J.; Rochester or Syracuse, N.Y.; Richmond, Va.; Or Tacoma, Wash., contact USCCB's children's services specialist at 202/541-3114

For information on domestic foster care and a list of state contacts, visit the Casey Family Programs National Center for Resource Family Support website at www.casey.org/cnc.

“We get calls for Muslim foster families, for Muslim children...and we cannot place them. When everyone says no, that means they are placed wherever the state can place them. That will be within a culture and religion that is foreign to them. Every day they are within a non-Muslim home diminishes their religious identity.”

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Foster Care

A Fact Sheet for Prospective Muslim Families



LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICE

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While it is not easy to think of any child being separated from his or her parents, the reality is that children of many religions and ethnicities do find themselves in need of foster homes. There are many reasons why a child may need foster care—separation from parents while fleeing persecution as refugees, illness or death of a parent, or abuse or neglect on the part of a parent. Muslim children are among those who may need the safety and nurture of a foster family that can provide love and care during a difficult time in a child's life.

Islam and Foster Care

Islam, like other faiths, has a strong tradition of supporting children who are without their parents.

Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) was an orphan.

“And did He (Allah) not find thee (Muhammad, pbuh) an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)? And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent. Therefore treat not the orphan with harshness. (93:6-9)

The Holy Qur'an includes multiple references to orphans.

“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; To spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask....” (2:177)

“Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good—to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet)....” (4:36)

Did you know?

- Of the current worldwide refugee population numbering 14.9 million, it is estimated that as many as 5 percent may be unaccompanied minors, i.e., those children who are completely alone or those who are separated from their parents, but attached to their extended family or other adult caregivers. *Source: World Refugee Survey 2002, U.S. Committee for Refugees*
- There appears to be an increasing number of Muslim children in need of Muslim foster homes throughout the United States.
- Over 500,000 children in the United States currently reside in some sort of foster care placement. *Source: www.bridgewater.edu*
- Placements in foster care have sharply increased over the past ten years.
- There has been a steady growth in the number of reports of child abuse and neglect over the past forty years. In 1962, 10,000; 1974, 60,000; 1980, 1.1 million; and 1999, almost 3 million. *Source: www.casey.org*
- To use New York as an example, many children in foster care are children of color or come from low-income homes, immigrant-headed homes or homes whose culture may differ dramatically from mainstream child rearing practices and expectations. *Source: New York State Office of Family and Children, CCRS Report, April 2000*
- In 1995 a half million children were wards of the state. This is an increase of 25 percent from 1990. Four in ten of these children can expect to remain in foster care for more than two years; many will experience multiple foster care placements. *Source: www.bridgewater.edu*

What is refugee foster care?

Refugee foster care is temporary shelter with trained and licensed foster parents who provide safe, supportive homes for refugee youth traumatized by war. It is the goal to help these children heal while they are assisted in working toward an independent, self-sufficient adulthood in the United States. *Refugee children are not eligible for adoption.*

What are the basic requirements for foster parents?

- A signed application/release of information form
- A completed criminal background and children's protective services record check for all family members over the age of 18
- A signed statement of health, by a physician, for all members of the household
- Written personal references
- Willingness to provide the licensing worker with personal information
- Willingness to cooperate with agency policies regarding transportation, discipline, religion, confidentiality, and more
- Adequate and safe living, bedroom, and play space for children
- A working telephone in the home
- Willingness of all family members to accept the foster child into their family
- Willingness to meet state and agency foster parent training requirements
- Willingness to participate in administrative reviews and case planning