



Helping Hands Serenity Homes

Domestic Shelter Home Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How do I become a Helping Hands Serenity Homes shelter home parent?

A. To be considered as a Helping Hands Serenity Homes shelter home parent, you must meet the eligibility criteria. The application process involves background checks, scheduled visits to your home, and trainings. Also during the application process staff members must gather paperwork, interview all the family members, inspect the home for safety, and fully explain the responsibilities of being a shelter home parent. It takes total commitment on the part of the entire family. Our careful screening process helps you to determine whether this is right for you. This is a selective process and not all applicants become Helping Hands Serenity Homes shelter home parents.

Q. What qualities should I possess to become a shelter home parent?

A. Our most successful shelter home parents are open-minded, dependable, honest, patient, culturally sensitive, and willing to learn new parenting styles for children with different needs. Having a flexible schedule, being tolerant of change, and demonstrating the ability to follow our guidelines are all important qualities for success. Being able to accept the temporary nature of being a shelter home parent will better prepare you for the transitions that will occur. If you are a creative problem solver, a good listener, and have a sense of humor, you will develop strong connections to our youth.

Q. Do I need any training or a license to be a shelter home parent?

A. Yes, you will be required to be licensed, and we will provide everything you will need including orientation to the program, ongoing trainings, regular in-person support, 24-hour on-call support availability and other tools to help you learn and develop your skills along the way.

Q. How long will a child stay in my home?

A. Children will stay approximately 30 days with their shelter care parents.

Q. Where will the child I provide care for come from?

A. Children are placed through the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) from across the state. They may enter your home directly from their family's home, another safe home, or from a more restrictive setting such as a residential facility.

Q. What kind of kids will you place in my home?

A. The Helping Hands Serenity Homes program places children age 9-18. Some children are stepping down from residential treatment, some have developmental delays, some have suffered severe trauma, some have never been required to follow rules, some have built walls around themselves to keep out the hurt, and some have lost their beloved homes and families. Most will be connected with additional supports while in your care. It won't be easy to help a child who has known such pain, but we will train you extensively on how to handle the specific needs of each child. We do serve pregnant and parenting teens, and as a caregiver you can play a key role in breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect by teaching positive parenting skills.

Q. Will I get to meet the child before he or she is placed in my home?

A. Sometimes, if time permits, we can arrange for a pre-placement visit. In many cases, however, a child's need for a safe and caring home is urgent, and you won't be able to meet them until they arrive at your home.

Q. Do you offer financial compensation?

A. Yes. Helping Hands Serenity Homes provides compensation to cover all the needs of the youth, including but not limited to: food, clothing, shelter, medical co-pays, transportation, recreation, and allowance. Based on IRS laws it should not be considered income. There is no minimum income requirement to become a shelter home parent. However, your income must be earned and should be sufficient to meet the financial needs of your family.

Q. How will my own children be affected?

A. All children are influenced by behaviors and attitudes of other people, whether these individuals are friends at school, neighbors, or children receiving care through our program. If your children understand your expectations and have a sense of appropriate behavior and values, it is unlikely they will be adversely influenced.

Q. Do I need to provide a child with his/her own bedroom?

A. In some cases, yes. Our children can only share a bedroom with other children in the Helping Hands Serenity Homes program. Children must be the same sex. So if you are providing care for two females

through our program they can share a bedroom. Otherwise, they must be provided their own private bedroom.

Q. When and where do children visit with their families?

A. When the goal is to eventually reunite the family, visits are crucial to help the child maintain a sense of belonging and identity. Visitation schedules vary and may be scheduled once a week or once or twice a month. Visits are generally held in a supervised location. Your involvement in these visitations is completely optional beyond assisting with transportation.

Q. What kind of help and support will I get?

A. Helping Hands Serentiy Homes maintains frequent, consistent contact. You will have weekly in-home visits with your case manager. During those visits, you will discuss the youth's progress in the home, at school, and address any concerning behaviors. We have a therapist on staff for youth who need individual therapy. For emergencies, we are available 24/7 to support and guide you. Life skills are taught to the youth in a group setting monthly. Staff also provide regular trainings to the shelter home parents.

Q. What if I'm overwhelmed or I can't handle a child's problem.

A. With ongoing open communication, we hope it does not get to this point. So that you don't get overwhelmed we provide ongoing training and 1:1 support to address any areas of need you may have. We also provide respite care as needed.

Q. What forms of discipline am I allowed to enforce?

A. Your current parenting style will determine how much of an adjustment you will need to make to follow our guidelines. Our policies and guidelines are designed to protect both you and the child. We only allow appropriate, non-physical methods of discipline such as removing privileges, giving timeouts, using rewards, and encouragement and praise for good behavior. Some of our discipline rules include:

- No physical punishment
- No withholding meals, clothing or shelter
- No verbal abuse or name-calling
- No threats to have a child removed
- No physically strenuous work or exercise solely for punishment
- No allowing other children to punish the shelter care child
- No withholding family visitations

If staff discover any of these methods are being used, the shelter home family will be re-evaluated as a member of our team.

Q. Can my family and friends visit my home when a child is placed there?

A. Yes, Helping Hands Serenity Homes encourages you to make your friends and family aware of your decision to become a shelter home parent and respects the privacy of the child/children placed. We require all frequent visitors complete background checks and the fingerprinting process for the protection of the children and your family.

Q. Can I maintain a career while having a child in placement?

A. Yes, most of our shelter home parents work. However, it is important to remember that you must have flexibility in your schedule and be able to provide adequate time and support to each child. Like your own children, you will be responsible for attending teacher conferences, medical appointments, and transporting the children to recreational activities. Sometimes our children have difficulty adjusting to the new situation. This may display itself as negative behaviors in school. You need to have the flexibility to go to school for emergencies such as that.

Q. Does the child need to be enrolled in school?

A. All school-age children must be registered in school. Home schooling a child is prohibited.