



Helping Hands Serenity Homes

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I become a Helping Hands Serenity Homes caring provider?

A: To be considered as Helping Hands Serenity Homes caring provider, 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 caring provider. It takes total commitment on the part of your entire family. Our careful screening process helps you to determine whether this is right for you. This is a selective process. Not all applicants become Helping Hands Serenity Homes caring providers.

Q: What qualities should I possess to become a caring provider?

A: Our most successful caring providers are open-minded, dependable, honest, patient 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 caring provider 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 with our youth.

Q: Do I need any training or a license to be a Helping Hands Serenity Homes caring provider?

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: This varies based on the needs of the child and the circumstances of his or her placement. The length of time for a placement varies. Some children return home after only a few months, others after a year or longer. Sometimes children who are unable to return home become eligible for adoption. Other children may transition to other safe housing placements.

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 to 18). There's no typical child: some kids are stepping down from residential treatment, some have developmental delays, some have suffered severe trauma, some have never been required to follow the 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: Must I take any child you present to me?

A: No, before placement Helping Hands Serenity Homes will present you with available information about the child we believe "matches" your home. You may request additional information, and you may always accept or reject a child's placement. Saying "no" does not affect our willingness to call you about other children in the future. We respect your right to do what you think is best for your family. Once the child is placed in your home, it is our hope that you will work with our team to do whatever it takes to help stabilize the child and reduce further trauma.

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 pre-placement visits. In many cases, however, a child's need for a safe and caring home is urgent, and you won't be able to meet the child/teen until he or she arrives at your home.

Q: Do you offer financial compensation?

A: Yes, Helping Hands 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. Helping Hands does not have a minimum income requirement. 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 that they will be adversely influenced.

Q: Do I need to provide the child with his/her own bedrooms?

A: No. Children of the same sex are permitted to share bedrooms provided that the child you are providing care for has space for belongings and adequate privacy. Children are not allowed to share the same bed. Each bedroom must have a door for privacy and a window to allow for ventilation and a second means of escape in case of emergency.

Q: When & 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 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 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year to support and guide you. Life skills are taught to the youth in a group setting monthly. Staff also provide regular trainings to the foster parents. We recognize that the world is different than when many of us grew up. We provide information to keep our foster parents aware of how to help you youth navigate their environment.

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 that 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. At Helping Hands we recognize that sometimes placements fail despite everyone's best efforts. If the situation becomes unworkable, we can move the child to another safe home.

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 your foster children. We only allow appropriate, non-physical methods of discipline such as removing privileges, giving "timeouts" and using rewards, encouragement and praise for good behavior. Some of our discipline rules:

- 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 foster child
- No withholding family visitations

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

Q: Do children ever become available for adoption:

A: Yes. Sometimes, for various reasons, children are unable to return home and may have a court-ordered goal of adoption. Caring provider families are always given adoption consideration when a child in their home needs a permanent family.

Q: Can my family and friends visit my home when a child is placed in my home?

A: Yes, Helping Hands encourages you to make your friends and family aware of your decision to become a caring provider and respect the privacy of the 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 caring providers 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 in placement must be registered in school. Home schooling a child in placement is prohibited.