

To qualify as a LGBTQ affirming foster or adoptive parent the following criteria below include some of the general characteristics and qualities Children's Services is actively seeking:

- Be able to provide a safe, loving, and LGBTQ affirming home.
- Be able to mentor and provide care and guidance to children on a daily basis.
- Provide more than just hope and a potential future.
- Understand you are making a life-long difference in the life of a child.
- Remain patient and committed when caring for children.

Some additional requirements for becoming a LGBTQ affirming foster or adoptive parent include:

- Be in good health. Prospective parents must be healthy enough to effectively care for a child and are required to submit medical clearance forms signed by a licensed and registered physician.
- Are at least 21 years old to foster, and at least 18 years old to adopt.
- Maintain a working telephone.
- Live in a space that meets the State's health and safety standards, and that can comfortably accommodate a child (or children). Foster or adoptive parents can live in apartments and houses, and can rent or own their homes.
- Have a source of income that demonstrates you have the financial resources to care for yourself and other members of your family who already reside in the home.
- Pass required background checks. In every foster and adoptive home, each member of the household (age 18 and older) must be fingerprinted and complete a clearance from the State Central Register for Abuse and Neglect.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED A REFERRAL TO AN AGENCY CONTACT:

The WISH Recruitment Line

You can do so by logging on to Administration for Children's Services' website at www.nyc.gov/foster and follow the links under "Become a Foster or Adoptive Parent." Local inquirers can call 3-1-1 or the reach the WISH Recruitment Line at (212) 676-WISH (9474), Monday-Friday, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm.

Inquirers outside of New York City can call (877) 676-WISH (9474).

The LGBTQ Web Portal

The Administration for Children's Services LGBTQ web portal contains basic information for prospective LGBTQ affirming foster or adoptive parents, along with relevant policies, best practices, resources, and much more that can be found here: www.nyc.gov/acs/lgbtq.

Additionally, you may contact the Office of LGBTQ Policy and Practice directly with any specific LGBTQ incidents or inquires by emailing: LGBTQ@acs.nyc.gov.

LGBTQ AFFIRMING FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS NEEDED



The Administration for Children's Services is committed to ensure all children and youth in our care are placed with supportive families that can provide a safe, loving and permanent home where they can thrive and succeed.

For children and youth who identify as LGBTQ—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning—the challenges of facing discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity often compound the significant needs of young people who are involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

Children's Services has made it a priority to improve the quality of services for LGBTQ people, and through a collaborative effort with community advocates and contract providers, developed LGBTQ-related policies to clarify that commitment.

WHAT IS AN LGBTQ AFFIRMING HOME?

An LGBTQ affirming home is one where foster parents welcome all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) children and youth into their homes, and encourage them to live authentically in all aspects of family life. It is also a place where all children and youth are treated with respect and dignity, and foster parents diligently work to meet their children's specific needs.

As an Affirming Foster Parent, you will:

- Encourage your LGBTQ child to speak openly and honestly about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity with family.
- Welcome your LGBTQ child to participate in all family activities authentically.
- Invite your LGBTQ child's friends and/or partner to your home and to family events and activities.
- Work with your community groups (i.e. faith and/or social community groups) to become supportive of LGBTQ family members or find supportive community groups that welcomes your family and LGBTQ child.

In addition to encouraging LGBTQ children and youth to live openly, as an affirming foster parent, you can provide respect and dignity by:

- Treating your LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ children equally.
- Requiring other family members, including extended family members and close friends, to respect your LGBTQ child.
- Expressing affirmation and acceptance when your child tells you or when you learn that your child is LGBTQ.
- Believing your child can have a happy future as an LGBTQ adult.

FOSTER PARENTS WORKING TO MEET THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF LGBTQ YOUTH

For children and young people that identify as LGBTQ, "coming out" is a complex process of understanding, accepting, and valuing one's identity. This development includes both exploring one's identity and sharing that identity with family members, friends and loved ones. Many LGBTQ young people begin to understand their sexual orientation or gender identity during adolescence. Most grow up with the awareness that they are somehow different, and with some unclear ideas about what that difference might be.

The Administration for Children's Services works with foster parents to create and maintain an open, safe, and inclusive environment to diligently work to meet specific needs of LGBTQ youth.

As an affirming foster parent, you can meet your LGBTQ child's needs by:

- Talking with your LGBTQ child about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- Supporting your child's LGBTQ identity even though you may feel uncertain.
- Advocating for your LGBTQ child when they are mistreated because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- Seeking assistance from a case planner or agency representative as needed to advocate for your

LGBTQ child with respect to school bullying, accessing competent medical/mental healthcare, identifying support groups, etc.

- Bringing your family to LGBTQ organizations and/or events.
- Connecting your LGBTQ child with an LGBTQ adult role model to show them positive options for the future.
- Supporting your child's gender expression, or the way they communicate their deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, or neither.
- Communicating regularly with the case planner and inform them of any issues, concerns or barriers to meeting the specific needs of your LGBTQ child as they occur.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE AS A LGBTQ AFFIRMING FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT

Becoming a LGBTQ affirming foster or adoptive parent is an extraordinary opportunity for outstanding individuals. The Administration for Children's Services actively recruits highly committed, loving, and LGBTQ affirming foster or adoptive parents from varied backgrounds and experiences. LGBTQ children and youth, like many other young people in Children's Services care, come from many different demographic backgrounds and experiences, and need the most qualified and LGBTQ affirming prospective parents to come from similar backgrounds and experiences.

When thinking about becoming a prospective parent, you should first and foremost consider whether you can make a positive impact on a child's life; provide a safe and loving home; take interest and mentor a child on some of the pressures they face; and help them grow into productive young people.

While there are many misconceptions about being a foster or adoptive parent; (i.e., a foster parent needs to own rather than rent an apartment, be partnered or married to someone from the opposite sex, have had prior parenting experience, etc.), here are the facts; eligibility to become a foster or adoptive parent is not limited by race, religion, gender identity, marital or partnership status, or sexual orientation.