



Frequently Asked Questions about Being a TFC parent to Unaccompanied Children

Have you ever thought about becoming a foster care parent or an adoptive parent, but are afraid to make a long-term commitment? Well, here is an opportunity to provide short-term care to a child or youth who has limited behavior issues, but needs the temporary nurturing environment of a caring adult until they can be reunited with their family. Being a Transitional Foster Care (TFC) parent can allow you to make the long-term commitment to a child as a foster parent or adoptive parent in the future.

Who are Unaccompanied Children?

An unaccompanied child (UC), by federal definition, are immigrant children who have not reached their 18th birthday and who either come to the United States without authorization or overstay their visa and are without a parent or legal guardian. Once in federal custody, the children are then referred to YFT by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The purpose of the service is to provide an array of services to the UC while YFT staff identify a family member or sponsor in the United States and facilitate a safe and timely release to that individual.

What is a TFC parent?

A TFC parent is a person who cares for children/youth who are not in their custody, like the children and youth who have entered YFT's Unaccompanied Immigrant Minor (UIM) program as a UC. TFC parenting is an opportunity to make a difference in a child's life during a time of crisis. TFC parents care about children and are willing and able to provide care and nurturing for the duration of the child's stay in the UIM program until they are released to a family member or identified sponsor in the United States. This is a temporary arrangement. TFC parents are asked to complete an application, submit to home assessments and attend training. TFC parents must demonstrate financial and emotional stability, responsibility and a willingness to work with the agency that supervises their home.

What is YFT's Unaccompanied Immigrant Minor (UIM) Transitional Foster Care (TFC) Program?

The Youth For Tomorrow's (YFT) Transitional Foster Care Services for Unaccompanied Children (UC), located in Bristow, Virginia, will provide Transitional Foster Care (TFC) beds for children under 13, sibling pairs, and pregnant and parenting teens. TFC beds will also be available to male and female children 14 to 17, but priority will go to the aforementioned special populations.

The children are referred to YFT by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) for care. The purpose of the care is to provide an array of services to the UC while YFT staff identify a family member or sponsor in the United States and facilitate a safe and timely release to that sponsor.

YFT will provide an array of services for UC's on our main campus in Bristow, Virginia. The services include group and individual counseling; educational services; medical services; recreation, leisure, life skills, vocational and acculturation activities; case management services; and family reunification and release services on YFT's main campus in Bristow, Virginia.

The primary goal of the UC TFC program is family reunification to a UC's legal guardian or identified sponsor who could be a close relative or family friend as identified by ORR. The target length of stay for a UC in basic TFC care is less than 30-35 days, but can extend to 95 days or more. YFT seeks to meet this length of stay goal, but only after assuring a safe release to a sponsor capable of caring and providing for the needs of the UC released into their care.

YFT TFC programs are licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services, and the program must meet licensing and ORR standards.

How long will the UC remain in my home?

The typical length of stay is 45 to 95 days, or longer. The length of time that a child stays in a home varies according to the plans for reunification with their family or sponsor in the United States. Children may be in the UIM program for a few days or a few months. The length of stay is influenced by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement and only when the release of the UC to a family member or sponsor is safe. If for some reason the child cannot be reunited with their family or a sponsor, YFT will address these issues and determine an alternative situation for the child. Placement is for as long as it takes to achieve a permanent placement for the child.

Why are UC placed in YFT's Unaccompanied Immigrant Minor (UIM) Transitional Foster Care (TFC) Program?

Youth For Tomorrow is committed to protection of the UC and family reunification. Every child is entitled to grow up in a permanent family. These children have arrived in the US without a parent or guardian while attempting to reach family or other sponsors in the US. The Transitional Foster Care program at YFT provides a healthy and safe environment for these children while they go through the process of reunification with their families. For younger children, sibling groups and teen moms living with a TFC family in a caring home may be the best environment for them while Youth For Tomorrow works to reunite them.

Who can be a TFC parent?

TFC parenting is a serious commitment. It requires giving the gift of unconditional love to children and youth who may never have experienced love of any kind and who may not know how to accept it. It also requires the TFC parent to be able to bond and attach to children quickly, but still be able to separate from those children when they are returned with their family or sponsor, and move to a more permanent family situation.

What is the first step in becoming a TFC parent?

You are encouraged to be informed. Gather information about TFC parenting, talk to other TFC parents. Then contact YFT's Foster Care Services office to sign up for their next TFC parent information session. There are a number of ways to get information about information schedules:

1. Contact YFT directly at 703-425-9200
2. Contact YFT through our website: www.youthfortomorrow.org.
3. Attend our monthly orientation session, from 3 to 5, on our Bristow, Virginia campus.

Should you decide that you do not have sufficient room in your home or that you are unable to provide full time care for another child in your home, we encourage you to explore alternative ways to support foster care such as referring a friend or family (see incentive below).

How do I become a TFC parent?

TFC parent certification follows mandates set by Virginia law, Licensing requirements and YFT/ORR policy. The following requirements must be fulfilled prior to an individual or couple being certified to provide care for UC. Individuals or couples must:

- Complete the PRIDE pre-service training.
- Be cleared through State Police and FBI criminal records checks. (Applies to all adults living in the home.)
- Be cleared through State Central Registry for Child Abuse and Neglect.
- Obtain a physical examination, including a tuberculosis test for all family members.
- Be in agreement not to use Corporal Punishment. (i.e. any physical punishment inflicted in any manner on a child 's body.)
- Provide at least 3 references.
- Allow all members of the family to be interviewed.
- Home must meet environmental, health and fire safety requirements.
- Have a care plan for each child placed in the home if individual/couple work outside the home.
- Participate in an individual home study.
- Agree to complete initial 30 hours of training and annual 20 hours of in-service training.

What are the basic qualifications for becoming a TFC parent?

- 21 years of age or older
- Single, married, or divorced
- Have adequate space for a child
- Have an income adequate for own family/to be financially stable
- Own or rent adequate housing
- Have adequate transportation
- Good physical and mental health
- Ability to work as a team with YFT's case managers and therapist
- Ability to keep the child health and safe in your home

What are the requirements for becoming a TFC parent?

Although foster care regulations vary from state to state, the requirements in Virginia are:

- Age 21 or older
- Criminal background check
- Family stability
- Character references
- Regular source of income
- Home safety inspection
- Family home study/assessment

What are YFT's expectations of TFC parents?

TFC parents are expected to do for the UC the things they would do for their own child:

- Maintain confidentiality regarding the UC and the situation that led to them being in our care.

- Ensure the child gets to YFT every day for school and for medical and dental appointments.
- Be available to meet with YFT staff and the child on the day of intake
- Take the child to community activities and recreational activities on the weekends and when school is out.
- Inform the child's case worker of events occurring with the child.
- Provide regular meals to the child when in your care.
- Purchase clothing with allotted board payment.
- Support the child's reunification with family or a sponsor in the U.S.

Will I have to work with the child's family or sponsor?

Yes. You may have to work with the child's sponsor. The goal for a child placed in the Youth For Tomorrow' custody is to achieve safety and permanency as soon as possible, which includes working with the child's family member and parent towards reunification. This includes regular phone calls with the family on the weekends and evenings. All family visitations will take place on YFT's campus.

Will I be paid to be a TFC parent?

Monthly board payments are made to certified TFC parents to reimburse for the cost of caring for a child. Board payments are to help meet the daily needs of the child for shelter, food, clothing, allowance and incidental expenses. Board payments are determined by the child's age. The child's health and dental needs are covered by ORR.

Are there any incentives to being a part of YFT's UIM TFC Program?

Yes. Once you complete the training and take in your first UC, YFT will pay you \$500. If you refer a friend or family member who becomes a TFC parent, YFT will pay you \$1000. In addition, YFT has staff who can support the family 24/7 from our Bristow, Virginia campus.

Will I get to choose the UC for my home?

Unfortunately, no. But, YFT will do its best to match the UC with TFC family who can best meet the child's needs. Some TFC parents prefer to work with teenage children, while others do better with young children. You, however, will be able to specify the age and gender of the child you prefer.

Can I choose the age of the UC?

Yes. However, be aware that there are many children needing out of home care and that through experience and training, you may find that you are most effective in caring for a specific age group or a range of ages. Families for children and youth under age 13, sibling groups and teen moms are currently in the greatest need.

I am a single person. Can I become a TFC parent?

Yes. Single persons and married couples are generally accepted as TFC parents.

I understand that most UC are foreign born and primarily from Central America. I do not speak Spanish or any other language. Can I still be a TFC parent?

Yes. YFT have multiple resources that parents can use to communicate with the UC. These resources will be made available to you during the initial orientation process.

What type of support do TFC parents receive?

Each family or child is assigned a case manager who is responsible for providing support to each family. Supportive services (respite care, training, crisis lines, etc.) are provided by the licensing agency. Support is also available through state and local associations.

What about medical, dental and counseling services for UC?

All of the medical, dental and counseling services are covered by ORR and will be coordinate when the child is on our main campus in Bristow, Virginia during the school day.

As a TFC parent, can I work outside the home?

Yes. However, if the UC is sick, the TFC parent often is responsible for providing supervision in their home. YFT TFC staff can explain how the TFC parent can identify other family members and friend to support them when there is an emergency.

Who pays for the UC's clothing?

TFC parents receive a reimbursement which is intended to cover the cost of food and clothing. Most of the UC's clothing will be issued at admissions by YFT.

Do I have to own my own home?

No, however you do have to have space for a UC, according Virginia licensing requirements.

Do UC have to have their own bedroom?

In most cases, UC can share a bedroom with another child of the same sex.

I don't have any furniture for the UC, and I understand there are other requirements for my home to be in compliance. What help can YFT provide?

YFT will assess each situation, but will be here to assist new TFC parents with ensure their home is ready for the UC during the admissions process.

Can I adopt a UC in my home?

No. The goal is to reunify a child with his/her family or a sponsor in the U.S. Many families are interested in both fostering and adopting. They agree with the agency that the needs of the child come first. In most cases, this means that they help prepare children for reunification with their family or sponsor. However, being a TFC parent prepares you for adopting a child or being a foster care parents where opportunities for adopting a child who fails to return to a family member can occur.

Can I take the UC on vacation with me?

With permission of ORR who will be approached by the UC assigned case manager for permission.

Where can I get more information?

YFT's Foster Care Services at **703-425-9200**