



The Children's Institute

Amazing Kids. Amazing Place.

Adoption and Foster Care at Project STAR at The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh

Project STAR's mission is to promote the right of all children to grow in a safe, nurturing, lasting family. Founded in 1985, Project STAR offers adoption, foster care and intensive family support services for children with special needs. We provide the highest quality of service to children and families, especially those with physical, emotional and intellectual disabilities.

Every child needs a good home

At the very foundation of all of our child and family services is the idea of permanency. We want all children to grow in a safe, nurturing and lasting family. To achieve that, we've created services and programs designed to nurture, support and maintain families, especially those that include children with physical, emotional and intellectual disabilities.

Foster care and adoption services begin with a Resource Family

A Resource Family is an amazing gift to a child. We cannot express how thankful we are for these individuals, couples, and families who agree to take a child into their home and provide life-changing love and care. These families can be part of a child's life for a few days, weeks, months, or forever.



These are the ways that Resource Families can be a part of a child's life:

- **Adoption:** Commit to a child as a forever family and offer a place of permanence, security and love.
- **Foster Care:** Provide a place of security, care and love for a period of time.
- **Medical Foster Care:** Provide foster care with a medical component for a child in need.
- **Respite Care:** Provide a temporary home for a few days or a few weeks, so the child's family can have rest and a chance for renewal.
- **Emergency Shelter Care:** Provide a temporary home for a child needing immediate care.

We want our Resource Families to succeed and so we educate, train, support and advocate for them throughout their journey.

For more information please contact Katie Ashman, Foster Care Supervisor, at 412.244.3082 or kev@the-institute.org.

Steps to becoming a Resource Family

Step 1. If you are interested in becoming a Resource Family, plan to attend one of Project STAR's information meetings. We hold these meetings at least twice a month at various locations, and they are a great opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the parent certification process, waiting children and Project STAR, itself. Please RSVP by contacting Katie Ashman, Foster Care Supervisor, at 412.244.3082 or kev@the-institute.org.

Step 2. Begin the parent certification process. This important step includes 24 hours of family education and coursework designed to give our Resource Parents a better understanding of the realities they will encounter and the skills they will need to guide them through the journey. We offer these classes several times a year in Allegheny and Beaver counties.

Step 3. Complete the certification process. You will complete the education requirements and paperwork about yourself and your family as well as clearances and a medical exam. We will meet with you at your home for at least three home visits, and, after our foster care team gives their approval, we will develop your family profile. You will then review the profile with us to ensure that it is accurate, and we will certify your family.

What does it cost?

Because our commitment to children and government and private funding, Project STAR does not charge agency fees to families.

How long will it take?

The certification process usually takes at least three months, sometimes longer depending on the family.

What can I expect from Project STAR?

You will be assigned a qualified permanency specialist to help you through certification and to help you with matching. This person will provide you with ongoing support after placement.

Our STAR is growing stronger

Over the years, Project STAR's services have expanded to include all children and families in Western Pennsylvania, although children with special needs are still a major focus. For our efforts in providing this basic but essential need, Project STAR has won the Congressional Angels in Adoption™ Award (2005), the Adoption Excellence Award for Support for Adoptive Families (2004, United States Department of Health and Human Services), the Pennsylvania Department of Health Outstanding Provider Award for Services to Children and Families (2000), and the SWAN (Pennsylvania Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network) Hall of Fame Award for Child Specific Recruitment (1999).

Project STAR is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare as an adoption, foster care and private children and youth social service agency, is an affiliate member of SWAN, and maintains contracts with local, statewide and out-of-state counties for placement and family preservation/reunification services.