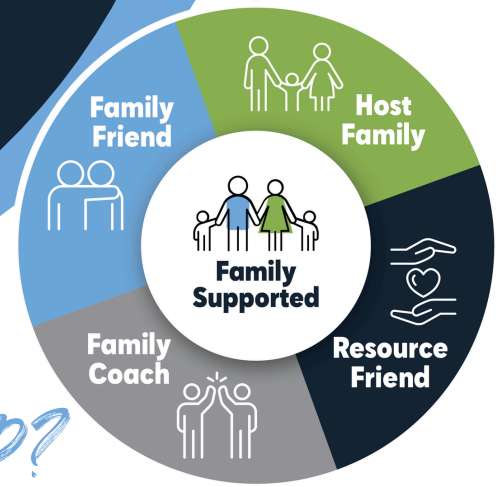




Safe Families for Children

FAMILY FRIEND

FACT SHEET



WHAT IS A FAMILY FRIEND?

THE FAMILY FRIEND is a trustworthy and caring individual, willing to wrap support around a Host Family or offer extended family-like relationships to a parent who is facing various challenges. They offer practical and emotional assistance, supporting and encouraging them to envision and achieve their desired goals. The goal of a Family Friend is to journey with the parent until their situation has begun to stabilize, helping to begin to establish solid parenting skills and a safe home environment for their own children. Some Family Friends may provide daytime childcare at a host home or parent's home, or assist with transportation. Family Friendship can extend beyond that to include weekend hostings and respite opportunities. We strongly encourage all families to contemplate becoming Host Families, enabling them to serve in these respite opportunities.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **PROVIDING** friendship and support to a parent in crisis
- **CONNECTING** with parent on a regular basis
- **COMMITTED** to supporting parent for the pre-agreed timeframe of the assignment
- **ENGAGING** in active listening and open communication to discuss issues the parent may be facing

- **HELPING** the parent envision goals he/she can work toward
- **COACHING** the parent informally, ensuring the children are a frequent topic of conversation
- **UPDATING** the **Family Coach** regularly
- **PROVIDING** babysitting, meals, encouragement & support, mentoring of children, transportation, etc. to the **Host Family**.



WHAT IS A
FAMILY FRIEND?

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS

- Real-life **EXPERIENCE** as a parent/grandparent or the ability to demonstrate experience of **UNDERSTANDING** family life and parenting or children and their needs
- **FRIENDLY**, welcoming personality, good listener, sensitive to the parent's ups and downs
- **WELL-ORGANIZED** and **PUNCTUAL**, in order to make and maintain appointments – note there is no guarantee parents themselves will be organized or punctual
- **CONNECTED** to the community of a local church that has agreed to support SFFC volunteers
- Have own **TRANSPORT** – it may be useful to have a vehicle suitably equipped for children
- Willing to "GO THE EXTRA MILE" and to problem-solve when unforeseen situations arise
- Happy to **RECEIVE** supervision, direction, and constructive feedback from your Family Coach
- Be in **FULL AGREEMENT** with the vision and values of Safe Families for Children, which has a clear ethos of expressing Christian compassion and hospitality toward those in need.



Children **SAFE** Families **TOGETHER**

ASPECTS OF THE FAMILY FRIEND ROLE



Many of the parents SFFC works with lack self-confidence and carry feelings of failure or guilt. Asking for help is a big step for them. It's imperative we reinforce asking for help is a positive step toward success never an admission of failure. By getting involved, you can help them recognize that with the appropriate support and encouragement, they can create a healthy home for their children by addressing certain issues. With consistent contact, a Family Friend can help parents find purpose, make positive changes, build on their strengths, and feel confident!

Ultimately, the Family Friend is helping the parent in order to improve the outcomes for the child. The role of Family Friend will need to be undertaken with great sensitivity and compassion seeking to listen, not judge or patronize. Care must be taken to enable the parent to be the best parent they can be, recognizing that it may not align with the parenting style of the Family Friend. Focusing on a parent's strengths while helping them find ways to deal with stresses and challenges, will be important.



SFFC is established in partnership with other services, such as health, education, and voluntary sector agencies that work with people affected by substance misuse, domestic violence, debt, etc. The Family Friend can help direct parents to the most appropriate source for help and, if needed, support them in taking the first steps of engagement.

At an informal level, a Family Friend can assist a parent in expressing their opinions on matters that are relevant and significant to them, such as communicating with a social worker. Acknowledging that some parents may find it challenging to articulate their concerns and opinions to others in a suitable manner, the Family Friend can effectively facilitate this process.



There are circumstances when a family being assisted by SFFC does not need full overnight hosting for their child but does need daytime or evening care. For instance, when a single parent needs to attend a weekly group like AA or Alpha, the Family Friend could be in an excellent position to provide support by taking care of the child, either at their own home or the child's home.

On occasion, issues of transport arise that cause practical difficulties for either the Host Family or the parents. For example, if a child placed with a Host Family continues to attend a school/daycare that is a few miles away from the Host Family home, help in taking the children to or from school may be critical. Transport help may also be required to support a parent for an appointment or job interview.



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