



Family Guide to Foster Care

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An introductory letter to families wishing to foster children of different ages and categories, in addition to children with disabilities. This guide contains a lot of information, whether legal or pertaining to social services directed to foster families within the legislative framework of foster care, as well as the various educational skills to deal with children and learn about the programs available with the Family Welfare Authority and other social stakeholders in the community.





Before

Foster Care





What is Foster Care?

An alternative care system that aims to motivate Emirati families to raise and nurture a foster child according to specific conditions, standards, and procedures, whereby the family meets the needs of the child and provides the right environment for their healthy growth by creating a balanced environment with equal rights and duties.

The child is monitored by social and psychological specialists from the authority to ensure that he or she is not exposed to any kind of abuse, exploitation, or neglect, and to ensure the psychological and social stability of the child within the family. Foster care also seeks to integrate the child into society as a good individual who contributes to the future development of the country.



It is worth noting that Foster Care is the accepted term in Arab and Islamic countries as an alternative to adoption within the framework of factors compatible with the principles of Islamic Sharia.



What are the challenges that the foster family should be aware of?

The work team responds to all inquiries and provides the necessary information to the families who wish to foster a child and makes them aware of the most important challenges they will face, including:

Mutual acceptance between the foster parents and the foster child (Especially for those who are past the nursing stage).

Achieving mutual harmony, especially in the early stages for foster care.

Acceptance of the foster child by the biological children and the extended family.

Difference in features and names and how to deal with them.

Jealousy between children and the ability of parents to deal with them.

Special challenges in acceptance by the surrounding society.

Challenges to complete integration (and tools to deal with them).

Challenges in school and education and tools to overcome them.

Exposure of a foster child to intentional or unintentional offense from their surroundings.

Feelings of dissimilarity felt by a foster child.

The child's acceptance of itself as a foster child rather than a biological offspring in the family.

The foster child living in harmony with his situation.

Challenges in being truthful with a foster child regarding his or her situation & helping them understand their past.

Special challenges with the delayed release of certificates.



How to Prepare for a Foster Child?



The family that has applied for foster care is subject to an initial training program to enable it to prepare for the reception the child. This training focuses on several pillars, including:



The terms of the agreement that define the relationship between the foster family and the Family Care Authority.



The rights of the foster child and the role of the foster family in granting the child all the rights stipulated in domestic and international laws.



The psychological and emotional needs of the foster child and how to satisfy them.



Challenges facing the foster family and how to deal with them.



Following child protection procedures, which include explaining and clarifying the follow-up mechanism and its importance, as well as educational schemes that apply to every child and include all aspects of his or her life.



The willingness of the family and the extended family to foster a child.



What should we know when fostering a child with disabilities?

Families applying to foster children with disabilities are made aware of the types of disabilities and the characteristics of each, and focus on raising their understanding of the special needs of the foster child through:



1

Preparation of the right environment



2

The rights of children with disabilities and how to protect them



3

Psychological and emotional needs of the child



4

Accepting the child as he or she is



5

Health care and therapeutic services



6

Appropriate qualifications for the task



7

Provide appropriate education in all its stages



8

Harmonization



9

Type of disability, tools to dealing with them, and partners prepared to provide support after fostering

How to introduce the concept of foster care to family members:



Members of the biological family are encouraged to discuss the topic of foster care prior to the arrival of the foster child, along with an explanation of its causes, and a request for support, if needed, from the relevant authorities.



Distributing roles among family members to make them feel a shared responsibility in the success of the fostering process.



Guiding the family on how to build a positive relationship with the foster child.



Organizing ongoing family meetings to advance the fostering procedures.

Be aware of children's rights (Wadimah Law):

The foster family must be aware of children's rights laws, whether international or local, including:

- The basic rights of the child such as the right to life, the right to parentage and identification papers, and the right to express an opinion.
- The family rights of the foster child such as providing the requirements of family safety – best practice in guidance, counseling and development, getting to know the biological parents and maintaining personal relationships with them in the event they are acquainted, while observing the applicable laws
- Health rights such as giving the child the opportunity to obtain all the health services provided by the state and periodic check-ups for the child among others.
- Basic rights, such as the right to grow
- Social rights such as providing a standard of life necessary for the physical, mental, psychological and social development of the child, the right to equal treatment with other children, the right to alternative care for a child deprived of a family environment, and the status of the foster family is the ideal alternative in the absence of the biological family.
- Cultural rights such as the right to possess knowledge and the means to innovate, and the right to participate in the implementation of recreational, cultural, artistic and scientific programs compatible with his age and with the public order.
- Educational rights such as the right to education, equal access to educational opportunities, the promotion of the child's participation in making decisions that pertain to him or her, and preserving his or her dignity when making decisions or when developing programs.
- Highlighting prohibited acts towards children, such as exposing them to any arbitrary interference or illegal measures in their lives, family, home or correspondence, harm to their honor or reputation, and economic exploitation or employment in any risky activity.



During

Fostering



Fostering Steps

Foster Care is discharged by a ministerial decision that supports the rights of a fostered child, and accordingly there are several stages that the concerned families are required to be aware of when fostering, including the following:



Review of systems and policies and family fostering procedures



Receiving requests from families wishing to foster and opening a family file by completing an application to foster a child accompanied by required documents.



A study of the requests of the family wishing to foster and making sure they meet the terms and conditions.



Start the foster family with the requirements of the final fostering.



Notify the family of the approval and begin the process of introducing the foster child to the foster family.

Requests for foster care are handled as follows:



Receiving requests from families wishing to foster and opening a family file by completing an application to foster a child accompanied by required documents.



In the event that the application is accepted and the required conditions are met by the foster family, the family is officially notified of the approval.

If the application is accepted and the conditions to be met by the foster family are fulfilled, then:



If fostering is approved, the following measures are taken:



Inform the family of the approval to foster.



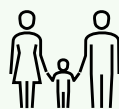
Hold meetings between the child and the foster family under supervision of the concerned department to ensure the extent of compatibility between the two parties.



The signing of official documents, training and support packages for the foster family, and the completion of procedures for handing over the child by the concerned department.



The foster family will receive all of the official documents pertaining to the child (certificate of vaccination, a health card, issuance of a fostering certificate, and other supporting documents if any).



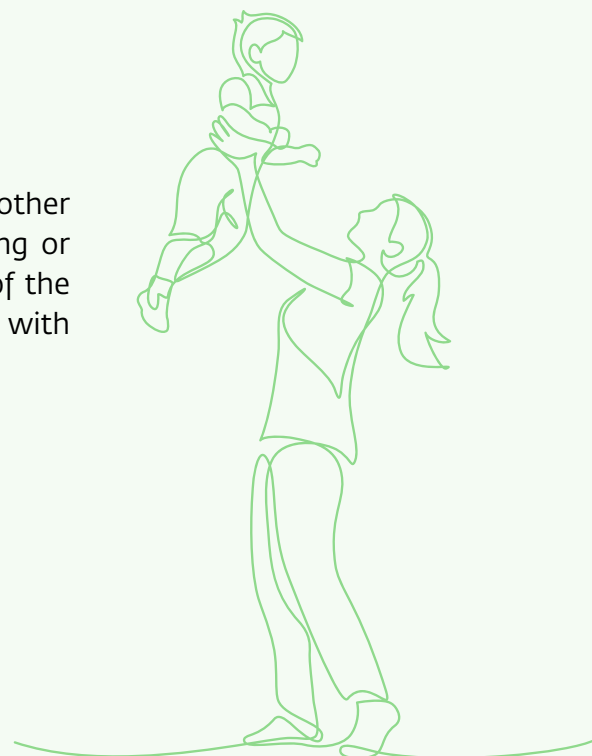
The child is handed over to the foster family on a temporary basis for a period of six months and may be extended for a further six months based on periodic follow-up reports until it is approved for permanent foster care.

Conditions for applying for foster care:

- The family must be Emirati Muslims residing in the country.
- The family must consist of two spouses, neither of whom is less than twenty-five years old.
- Neither of the spouses must have ever been convicted of a crime involving dishonesty or dishonor.
- Evidence that the spouses are free of infectious diseases, or psychological or mental disorders that affect the health and wellbeing of the child through a report issued by an official medical authority.
- The family be able to support its members and the foster child financially
- The family undertakes to treat the child well, to raise him or her in a good manner, and to take care of his health, education and protection.
- The concerned committee may recommend, according to the law of unknown parentage, the fostering of a child by a Muslim female citizen residing in the country of not less than thirty years of age who is not married, divorced, widowed, or her husband was absent from her intermittently, and who would be able to support the child financially.
- It is permissible to foster a child under the age of eight if there is a foster family or a foster mother who wishes to foster a child over two years old, if all the criteria and conditions for foster care are met through the family interview, psychological tests, home visits, and extended family interview.



The concerned committee has the right to add any other conditions or to amend some conditions for accepting or rejecting a fostering request to ensure the interests of the child remain consistent with the legislation in force and with the approval of the Director General Authority.





After

Fostering





After fostering, foster families may face some challenges in dealing with the child, especially related to emotional aspects as well as the process of coping with it.

- Usually, a foster child asks about his true family, and, although it is difficult to be candid with the child, it is a crucial issue and there are many ways that a foster family can help a foster child get acclimated with his new situation.



Introducing the child to the fostering is essential to building a relationship with the child, so that if the parents' names differ, the relationship would remain the same.



Encouraging the child and family members to discuss the topic of fostering and the difference between the foster family and his biological family.



Organizing regular activities with lots of events to celebrate fostering and making it a happy occasion.



Planning events and activities that focus on forming memories and family relationships with the new family.



Building relationships with other foster families to share experiences and challenges.



There are tools from the welfare authority to support families in this matter.

- Children and youth learn best through repetition and dialogue about the differences between a biological family and a foster family.
- Helping the child to talk about the subject in his own words and to explain in his own way without interference, through open-ended questions such as: What do you think of the difference between a biological home and a foster family? Or what's the biggest difference now that you're a foster child)
- Help him or her connect the similarities in different situations in their lives to help them adapt and interact positively with their foster families.
- There are a number of changes in the situation that affect the child and these need to be discussed with the child.



Helping the child understand his or her past:

When children and youngsters remain outside the care of a family for an extended period, they may lose their recollections of people and events, as well as the ability to remember the past clearly, as in: who are they? Where do they live? These questions also apply to people they previously met, their schools, memories about their favorite things like games, toys, etc. This may have a negative impact on their lives, and the foster family can help the children to recall and understand their experiences from their previous lives so that their past becomes clear to them. It helps them to regain their positive experiences and thus have the ability to understand and regain their self-esteem.

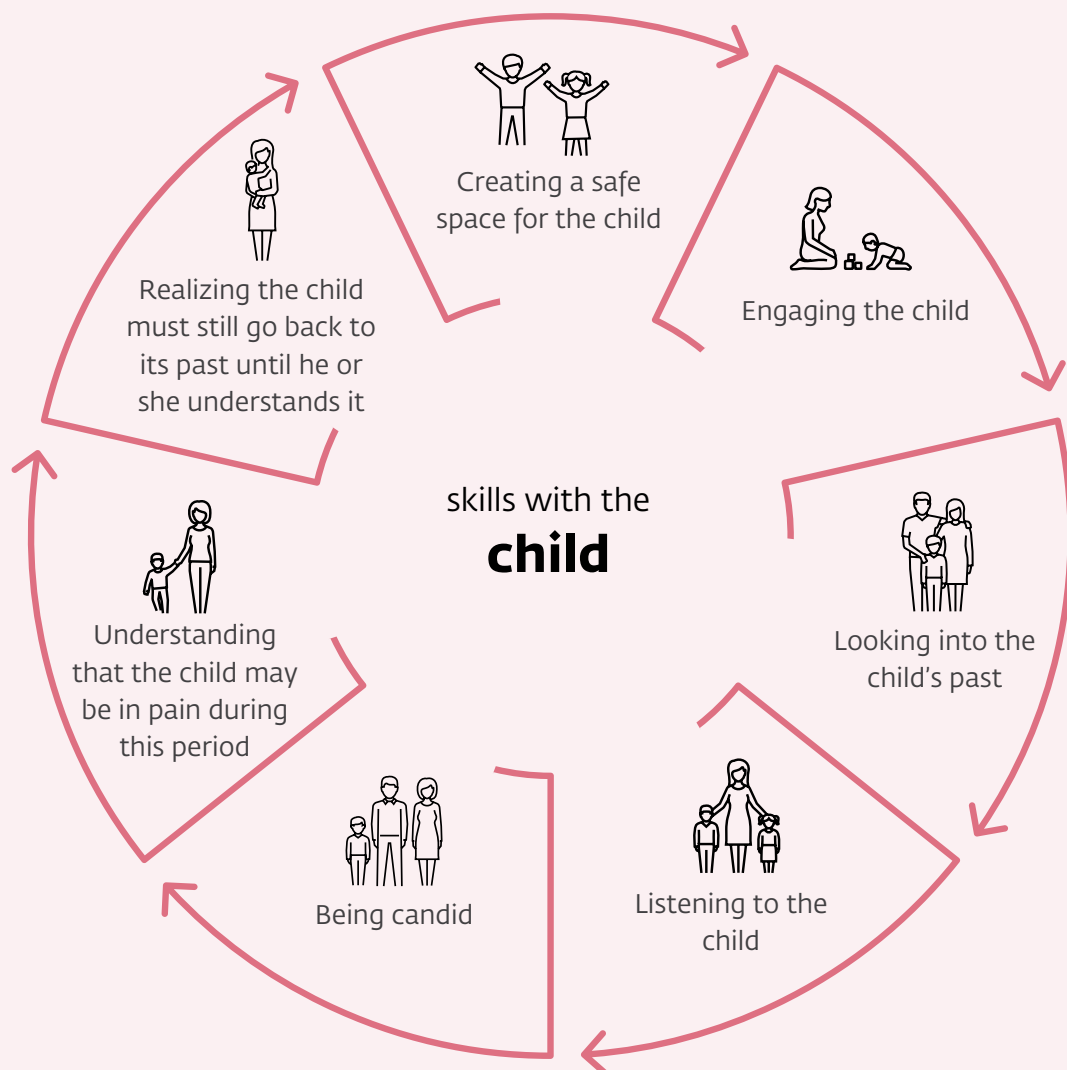
One of the most important things that help the child have a sense of belonging with the family into which he is moving are happy new memories that the child can build on toward the stage of adulthood.

Children's response to the following questions:

Depending on the stage of development of the child's condition and his reaction, the family can help him overcome the trauma of the past and the permanence of positive feelings is achieved.

- Who am I? Identity question
- What happened to me? A question related to trauma and loss.
- Where will I go? Relationship question
- How will I get there? Relationship question
- When will I know who I belong to? A question related to security and communication.

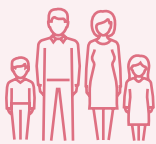
The family must use the following skills with the child:



One of the most important roles supported by the Family Care Authority is to support families in how they deal with these questions and to support families in caring for foster children.



Fundamentals of candor with a foster child regarding his situation



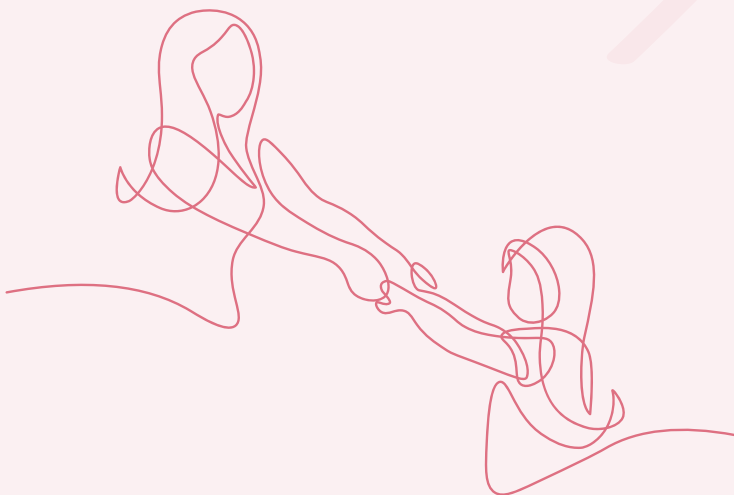
The issue of candor regarding the foster child's situation must start from the first stages when he or she is received into the family. It is difficult for a family to start, but the more that honesty is used in the early stages, the less risk there is that the child will close in on themselves.

The foster family must make sure that candor is not difficult for the child in his or her early years, as the difficulty may result from the mistaken belief by the family that can hurt the child's feelings, so it is necessary to maintain candor and openness in this step

Pay attention to the important rules:

- Candor and not resorting to stories that are far from reality by the foster family in knowing the difference between the biological family and the foster family will begin with questions – why is my name different, why is my appearance different form, who am I? etc.
- In any case, it is not correct to mention his biological family in a bad or derogatory manner, which may cause hatred and malice toward his biological family, and its impact may reflect on the foster family. The foster family should always improve the image of the biological family for the child, and that will be clear to the child because they may learn something about their situation.
- Pay attention to the situation while giving any information to the child, whether as a story or information about him or her, as it is necessary to focus on the body language: the stronger it is, the more it will reflect on the child; and if it seems weak, it may cause fear, anxiety and tension in the same child. So here it is necessary to reassure the child and be the voice of the a loving, positive and strong foster parent who supports their words by caressing the child's head tenderly in addition to embracing him.

- The period of preparation to inform the child of his situation begins at the age of three, taking into account individual differences and the awareness of the parents. The foster parent should respond to stories that are close to his situation, in addition to there being complete agreement and harmony between the foster parents. How can one tell these stories without fear or hesitation, and with strength, positivity, tenderness and containment when adding any information to bring the child closer to his reality? The best story to remember in this regard is the story of our Noble Prophet, upon him be the best prayer and peace, when the Lady Halimah al-Saadia, may God be pleased with her, nursed him, even though his mother was still alive, and there are many stories dedicated to this.
- Actual candor begins in kindergarten, when the child begins to recognize the difference in his name, and this may be the first entry point to telling him or her his reality whereby the foster parent begins explaining that her heart chose him or her and loved them, and it may be that she nursed them or that they were nursed from her mahrams, as well as the relationship and extension of the family to the child.
- When the child asks about his real mother, and often they will not ask about their fathers, this is where the foster family begins to speak of the child's biological family in a positive manner. They must emphasize to him or her that circumstances beyond their control prevented them from being with them, while getting the child used to praying for the mother, and all the positive feelings instilled in the child towards her will be reflected in the nurturing family.
- When the child asks about the names ascribed to him, it should be explained that they are names given by the authority until his identification papers are extracted.
- Some children are reluctant to engage in discussion or dialogue in this regard, and here the situation may cause concern. So, the foster parent must take advantage of opportunities and situations to prompt dialogue, and it may be disturbing when these anxieties are expressed in the form of anger, stubbornness, or behavior that the family cannot explain.
- From the real experiences of families regarding candor, there may be questions from the family's children about the sudden arrival of a foster child in the family's life. Therefore, it is necessary to follow the same rules mentioned above until there is a consensus of information so that the child is not harmed in the future, and it is necessary to prepare the family's children in advance before fostering.
- While following the previous steps, the family should consider individual differences to accommodate the child and avoid pressure, or to give the child the information casually as it is important to be comfortable when raising the topic and avoid a formal approach.





Importance of periodic health exams



Instructing the foster mother on the importance of periodic visits to the doctor, including:

- Conduct a thorough medical exam.
- Measurement of weight, height, growth and nutritional status.
- Ensuring healthy motor development, awareness and skills during the early years.
- Giving preventive vaccinations for childhood diseases at the specified times.
- Early detection of common childhood diseases and taking the necessary remedial and preventive measures.
- Detecting high-risk cases in children and referring them to specialized doctors.
- Providing health education for the mother.



Providing the foster mother with the following general advice:

- Not neglecting a sick child and promptly taking him to the doctor.
- Only a good team at the clinic or health center can diagnose diseases and health problems that affect children.
- Early detection and treatment of diseases and health problems helps increase the chances for the child's healthy growth and development.
- Diagnosing diseases or health problems may require more than one visit.

Foster mother's guide is to periodic exams



Eye examination:

It is a necessary examination that is carried out periodically, as weak vision has a decisive impact on the learning ability and achievements of the child, especially at an early age. The vision test includes both visual acuity and field of vision test.



Hearing test:

Examination should be done periodically, especially since any hearing impairment makes it difficult for the parents to get to know him.



Vaccinations:

The mother must adhere to the basic childhood vaccinations found in the immunization booklet approved by the state, and it is better to not be late for it or to merge the jabs, for every vaccination has a specific time and duration. The vaccination program includes the Hepatitis B vaccine, which is given directly after birth, then at the age of one month, and then at the age of six months.

"Pentavirus vaccine" against polio, the influenza B bacterium (which causes meningitis), diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus, are given in four doses at the age of two months, four months, half a year and one year.

The "triple vaccine" against rubella, mumps and measles is given at one year of age, and two doses of the hepatitis A vaccine are given at the age of eighteen months and two years.



Vitamin analysis:

It is necessary to conduct a periodic analysis of vitamins because many of the symptoms that afflict children such as poor concentration, lack of sleep, lethargy and laziness may be caused by a deficiency in specific vitamins.



Dental examination:

It is important for parents to know that children at the age of six months are developing permanent teeth. Therefore, it is important to visit the dentist twice a year to check the progression of plaque and cavities and ensure early treatment of this problem. This prevents the spread of cavities and avoids complex and costly treatments.



Examination of growth and development:

The stages of a child's normal growth and development is one of the most important things that the parents should take care of. Growth is an important indicator of the child's health status, and to assess whether the child's growth rate is healthy his or her weight and height must be constantly monitored. Therefore, periodic and accurate measurements of height and weight must be carried out, with a record of the measurement date, which helps draw the child's growth trajectory. The deviation of the growth trajectory from a healthy trend can be a first indication of the presence of general diseases or hormonal disorders. Early detection of disease or hormonal deficiency and appropriate and early treatment enables the child to continue his healthy growth.



Nutrition:

Every mother should take care to feed her children well, so a qualitative study is necessary of the child's nutrition according to his or her activities and his efforts to avoid obesity, especially if the child is inactive, or to avoid any harm if the child is very active. Here the quality of food varies from one child to another, therefore, it is advisable to consult an expert in nutrition.



Orthopedic examination for immunization of children:

There is no need to have a periodic examination by an orthopedist, unless you discover a problem in the child's stability or his movement. Once a child has been diagnosed with scoliosis, or the presence of deformities in the back that raise concerns among the parents, it is recommended that they are taken for an examination and assessment of the position of the spine.



Blood analysis:

It is an analysis that detects any possible disease, or even malnutrition or any dysfunction in the body's vitality.



General Examination:

It is an exam that follows up on the physical and mental growth of children and its compatibility with their ages. This is to ensure the safety of the various organs, especially the vital and brain functions.

Measures to protect the foster child



Physical safety in terms of ways to prevent injuries in the home, car, environment, bicycles, bathroom, swimming, and choosing an appropriate car seat among others.



Emotional safety in terms of biological family relationships, especially with siblings, competition between siblings (which should be talked about and discussed in the fostering environment), and how to manage children's emotions.

With regard to physical safety, the protection specialist ensures the availability of a safe environment to preserve the safety and security of the child in accordance with what is stated in the Children's Rights Law, such as:

Taking all necessary precautions to prevent contamination and the spread of diseases, and employ appropriate measures to deal with injuries and illnesses.



Taking preventive measures and health guidance, especially in the areas of the child's health, nutrition, benefits of nursing, prevention of diseases and accidents, and the harms of smoking, and setting the necessary policies and programs in this regard.



Taking the necessary measures to prevent and protect children from the use of narcotics, intoxicants, stimulants and all kinds of substances that affect the mind and any activities that contribute to their production, trade or promotion.



Supporting the school health system in the field of prevention, treatment and health counseling.



Taking the necessary measures to prevent infectious, dangerous and chronic diseases, and providing the necessary vaccinations and immunizations.



Developing programs to train workers in the maternal and child health sector.



Psychological care, including the development of the child mentally, socially and linguistically



Taking the necessary measures for early detection in children to diagnose cases of disabilities and chronic diseases.



The foster family is also instructed and trained to prevent domestic accidents in terms of:

- **Choking Accidents:** Do not leave small objects or foods within the reach of the child - Do not leave coins or small pieces of paper, strings and accessories within the reach of the child, or any kind of candy, as well as toys and small foods such as olives, pistachios, pen caps, hairpins, etc. - Watch your child when he or she eats his meals and when playing - Keep plastic bags out of reach of children.
- **Protecting the child while he sleeps:** Put the child on his back - making sure that the child's bed matches protection requirements - The child's clothing must be appropriate for his size. Keep the child's bed free of toys and objects that may lead to suffocation, prevent pets from entering the child's room.
- **Protecting the child from drowning accidents:** Do not leave the child alone in the bathtub, even if you have taken all safety precautions, so do not move far from him or her, and do not answer the phone while the baby is in the bath.

- **Protecting the child from falling:** Do not leave the child sitting on high tables such as a dressing table, without supervision. Always take the child with you if you have to stay away, even for a short time. There are practical tips you must follow when changing the child's clothes, the most important of which is: prepare in advance whatever you may need, keep diapers, clothes and other items within reach of your hands while placing the child in front of you as you change them. Your movements will be more precise to get his or her attention easier when using a highchair. Always make sure the child is well secured in their seat, so always use a chair with an indicator (that complies with the requirements protection). Regularly use a belt between the legs and close the belts, and do not leave your child unattended. Install protective barriers at the top and bottom of stairs. Teach the child to ascend and descend stairs, and do not let the child climb or descend stairs alone until he learns how to hold well. Do not let the child climb on a chair alone near an open window or on the balcony, and do not put furniture or anything the child can climb on under the windows or on the balcony. If possible close the window openings with a protective system and make sure the child cannot climb or pass through the barriers.
- **Poisoning incidents:** Always put medicines in a medicine cabinet - home pharmacy - so that it is high and out of reach of children and closed. Do not leave medicines in your handbag, on the table, or on the floor. Explain to your child the dangers of medicines and warn him or her not to take them. Practical tips for giving medicine to your child: Abide by the doses of the medicine prescribed by the doctor, as well as the intervals between each dose; always read the prescription supplied with the medicine; do not give the medicine to your child as candies in order to get him or her to accept it; do not give medicine to your child without a prescription.
- **Burning accidents:** Before placing the child in the bathtub make sure that the water temperature is approximately 37 temperature; it is advisable to install protection devices on the water taps, if possible, in order to adjust the water temperature. Do not leave the child alone in the bathtub, as this may expose them to drowning, or burning themselves by opening a faucet hot water. Keep the child away from hot electrical appliances, and never leave the child alone in the kitchen. It is preferable that the oven door be insulated against heat, and guard cooking utensils and hot equipment after using them. Prevent the child from getting close to incendiary objects such as heating devices, electric lamps, heaters, irons and others. Do not leave matches or lighters within the reach of the child. Never leave burning candles within the reach of children. Do not leave a child near a heater or grill, and never light a heater or grill with alcohol.
- **For electric shocks:** Teach the child not to touch or play with electrical plugs and explain to him the dangers that may result from that in a manner that is appropriate to his or her age. The plugs must be installed in a place far from floor level and should be covered with a lock. Do not leave any electrical connection on after use. Do not overload the electric circuits. Never leave exposed electrical wires or open electrical installations (plugs, circuit breakers, etc.) It is preferable to install a cut-off system at the nearest circuit (separator for high sensitivity) if possible.
- **Various accidents:** Avoid other accidents such as by being gentle with the baby, the handling of doors and table corners around the child, choosing appropriate toys for the child, the danger of animals, while playing outside, In the car, for safety in the car, put the child in the car seat. Ensure that the child is carries the E mark in accordance with his age and weight, and for prevention, follow the following procedures: always secure the belts tightly, even for short trips. Never leave the child alone in the car or the pool.



Emotional toxicity in terms of (familial relationships, especially between siblings, or what we call sibling rivalry).

Instructions for the foster family on how to handle the children and focus on the following aspects to achieve harmony between all family members and between the foster child and the biological children:



Do not compare the children in any way, and do not differentiate in treatment between them. Constantly affirm that they are equal and that there is no difference between them.



Enhance children's self-confidence and strengthen their freedom of expression.



Use the method of calm dialogue and persuasion and never resort to violence in any way.



Emphasize that the family with all its members is one entity, they have mutual responsibilities, they seek one goal, everyone should do their part, and no child in the family is marginalized.



Use different reinforcement methods and rewards.



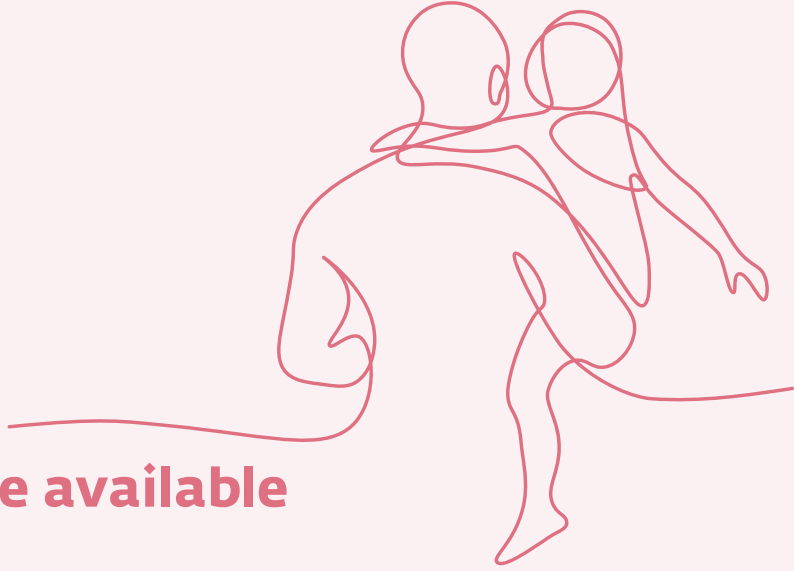
Raise children to love cooperation, giving, generosity, and not infringing on the rights of others.



The foster family must work on the emotional satisfaction of all its members and not discriminate between the foster child and the biological child.



Training parents to manage their emotions and feelings, especially if the family has a child that is nursing.



What support facilities are available in the emirate?

You can benefit from all government institutions that support children's healthy growth, such as:



You can benefit from all programs offered in each institution according to the individual needs of each child.

