



FOSTER CARE – UBUNTU IN PRACTICE

Foster Care is defined as a statutory, substitute care for children who cannot be cared for by their parents in the short, medium and long term, while services are continued to be rendered to the parents in order to return the children to their care within a specific period.

Children can be placed in foster care of a relative or any suitable person by means of a statutory order that lasts for a period of two years, where after it can be renewed. This means that a child can only be placed in foster care through an order of children's court in terms of the Child Care Act, 1983, and that a child should also be first found to be in need of care by such a children's court. Most foster care placements last for several years and reunification services are offered to the biological parents to prevent the child from staying longer than necessary in foster care.

The person taking care of this child is called a foster parent and he/she is given the right to have temporary custody of the child. This means that while the foster care order lasts, the child will live with the foster parent who will make decisions about the ordinary daily upbringing of that child.

The foster parent also receives a foster child grant in respect of the child in his/her care, and he/she is often expected to allow the biological parents to visit and have access to the child to help make possible the eventual return of the child in the care of biological parents.

Foster care aims:

- to provide children with a sense of belonging
- protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with unconditional positive support and by meeting children's health, developmental, physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual and medical needs.
- meet the developmental needs of children by building self esteem, supporting ethnic-cultural identity, providing positive guidance, using appropriate discipline, being supportive of intellectual/educational growth, encouraging positive social relationships and addressing developmental delays.
- support, encourage and facilitate relationships between children, their parents and other family members and strengthen and preserve families and family relationships whenever it is in the best interests of the child.
- empower and strengthen children with the skills necessary to build healthy relationships and deal with life challenges effectively and
- reunite children with their parents as soon as possible.
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