



CAREGIVER ASSESSMENT INFORMED CONSENT

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The informed consent is to provide you with important information about the home evaluation and approval process.

Caregiver Assessment

The caregiver assessment process uses observation, training, interviews, screenings, self-report forms and other documentation to develop a comprehensive written analysis about the parental protective capacity of prospective foster, adoptive or relative caregivers. The assessment includes a detailed life-span review of such things as your social, employment, family, health, legal, financial, and marital history. The key purpose of the assessment process is to utilize information gathered to determine if a home is a safe and suitable environment for the placement of children in foster care, and if prospective caregivers and household members meet the Safety and Quality Standards (SQS). Please review the SQS information which has been provided to you.

Screenings, Forms, Documentation and Verifications

You will be provided with an electronic packet of self-report forms as well as a list of screenings, verifications and documents that will be needed in order to complete the assessment. **The electronic packet is due within 7 days.** Failing to complete or provide any of this required information will delay your approval as a Foster parent or cause you to have to restart the assessment process towards becoming a Foster Parent.

Home Visits

There will be at least four home visits conducted. Each household member will be interviewed separately. Additionally, the couple, if applicable, will be interviewed together and the entire household will be interviewed together. We will also conduct at least one walk-through of the entire property (inside and outside). Each visit will last 2-3 hours.

Completion Timeline

The process for completion and **approval is a 6-12-week process.** Homes not approved within 90 days run the risk of having to start the assessment process over. It is important to follow the timelines provided.

Step 1: Complete a Home Safety assessment (within 10 days after receiving your electronic packet). This includes receiving Application, Questionnaire I, Live Scan, Consent for background checks, CPS screening, Drug screenings and home safety inspection.

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Step 2 Return all additional required documentation, register for IMPACT (within 15 days of Home inspection)

Step 3: Complete IMPACT training, be available for all home visits (ensure that all members of the family are available to be interviewed both together and individually).

Step 4: The home evaluator will complete a written assessment and review it with you. Please note there may be time where additional information is needed through this process. Please ensure you return this information in a timely manner to complete the approval process.

Upfront Fees

The process of becoming an approved Foster parent requires outside assessment which includes an FBI Background Check (everyone in the home 18 years and older), Drug testing (all household members 18 and over), DMV report for all drivers is \$6.00 each, CPR and First Aid (primary and secondary caregivers), and medical assessments. The average upfront cost per each caregiver is \$100-130. The average cost for each additional household member over the age of 18 is \$75-100. Babysitters must have the FBI Background Check which will cost \$45-55. The FBI Background Check fee will be reimbursed for the Primary and Secondary caregiver after completing 90 days of placement of a Georgia Hope Foster Child.

Note: Georgia Hope has certified drug testing collectors on site for a fee of \$25.00 per test.

Notification of Approval/Disapproval

Becoming an approved caregiver is considered a “mutual selection” process. This means that both the caregiver and assessor must agree that the fostering/adopting decision is in the best interest of children likely to be placed. An approval decision is therefore not a guarantee. You may decide to opt out of the process at any time by contacting the evaluator via phone and sending email. Whether approved or disapproved, you will be notified within five business days of the completion of the assessment. Initial notification may be made by telephone, immediately followed by a written letter. You may request an in-person meeting if you do not agree with the evaluator recommendation.

Information Sharing

Information gathered for the caregiver assessment is not confidential. It will be used to create the written narrative (home study) which will be circulated within the agency and the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) for purposes of placement matching. The study will become a DFCS record and therefore is accessible under the Georgia Open Records Act. Please review the DHS/DFCS Information Collection, Use and Disclosure Statement for Foster Caregivers for information on public records disclosure.

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Mandated Reporting

As a mandated reporter, if through the course of the assessment process it becomes known or I have reason to suspect that child abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred, I must immediately report this to DFCS Child Protective Services.

Assessor Availability

Your home evaluator can be reached either via phone or email. All calls and emails are generally returned within one business day.

Specialized Foster Care Home (SFCH) Program

Project SHIP (Specialized Homes for Independent Progress)

Georgia Hope Inc. also offers a Specialized Foster Care Program education to serve hard to place youth generally ages 13 years of age and older. These homes are **not group homes** but nurturing homes for youth in foster care with a strong emphasis on peer support. This program fosters an environment which allows youth an opportunity to define themselves using life coaching, other therapeutic resources and community supports. Youth are expected to develop coping and social skills along with emotional intelligence that support their transition to independence and adulthood. This program has special requirements over and above our traditional foster care program. These special requirements include:

- 30 hours of pre-service training inclusive of IMPACT
- 36 hours of annual foster care training for each caregiver
- Must have a secondary/back-up caregiver
- Experience working with children
- Non-traditional respite arrangements
- Automobile capacity of 4 or more
- No other children in the home and limited additional adult household members
- Scheduled home activities
- Increased access to the home
- Space for service professionals (Counselors, CSW, Case Manager, Behavioral Aides, Casa, Therapist, etc)
- Available technology including high speed internet, computer access, and working printer/scanner.
- Foster Parents must have job flexibility and/or work from home
- Willingness to accept "hard to place" youth

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- Out-of-Home Respite
- Participate in agency sponsored activities
- Complete detailed monthly reports
- Support and implement agency standard guidelines

To become a SFCH you must be willing to meet the special requirements listed above.

Welcome Aboard the SHIP!

FOSTER CARE ORIENTATION CHECKLIST 10.15.20

MISSION

Our mission is to take children from foster care to forever families while providing therapeutic services for their education, social development, mental health, and safety. Georgia Hope Inc provides displaced children with loving, caring, and stable, home in a therapeutic environment allowing for proper support and intervention while ensuring that they have a sense of belonging in a warm and nurturing environment for the purpose of developing a strong mind and esteemed character. Through creating extraordinary Foster parents through training and coaching Georgia Hope will contribute to the success of the family unit, brighten the future of the children, and impact the community at large. Georgia Hope's goal is to ensure permanency for all the children that we serve by providing temporary homes that support the children, their birth parents, relatives and/or adoptive parents.

PURPOSE

The purpose of Georgia Hope Inc. (GHI) is to provide love, quality care, guidance, discipline, and support with education objectives in a loving, healthy and nurturing foster home. Georgia Hope is a private, non-profit Child Placing Agency for foster care and adoption. The children we serve are aged birth to 18 years and are placed in homes regardless of gender, race, and religion. For adoption, GHI shall consider a child's racial, cultural, ethnic, and religious heritage to preserve them to the extent possible without jeopardizing the child's right for placement and care. Children will feel safe and develop relationships of trust, satisfaction and safety in our homes. This will be achieved through individual assessment and attention by our program staff of professionals to help our children develop, become self-sufficient and productive young people in the society.

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Please **initial** each box:

Initial Assessment

- _____ Georgia Hope Inc. (GHI) is a private, non-profit Child Placing Agency for foster care and adoption working with base level/traditional children, teen mothers, behaviorally challenged children and adolescents and medically fragile children between the ages of 0-18 years of age. Children may remain in care to age 21 years through the Independent Living Program.
- _____ Clients are referred through the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS).
- _____ **Children Served:** Children that are best served through GHI are base level or traditional children with little to no behavior challenges, teen mothers and/or pregnant teens, youth with moderate emotional and/or behavioral management problems such as aggressiveness towards inanimate objects, animals and/or people, including themselves. Delinquent behaviors such as truancy and running away, drug or alcohol problems, verbal aggression directed toward other persons; previous psychiatric hospitalizations and other restrictive placements, sexual acting out, destruction of property, substance abuse, personality disorders, suicidal behaviors or ideations, medical hindrances and learning disabilities. These items will be reviewed further during IMPACT Training.
- _____ To attain and maintain **Full Approval Status**, caregivers must:
 - (1) Demonstrate the maturity, fitness, skills and competency to successfully protect, nurture, and meet the developmental needs of children;
 - (2) Support the Agency's established case goals and permanency plan for child(ren) placed in their care;
 - (3) Be a US citizen or Permanent Legal Resident;
 - (4) Be at least 10 years older than the child to be placed, if married;
 - (5) Be at least 25 years of age, if unmarried;
 - (6) Have no substantiated Child Protective Services (CPS) history;
 - (7) Abstain from illegal drug use and prescription drugs and alcohol;
 - (8) Have sufficient income to maintain their family excluding the amount of the per diem received for any child(ren) in foster care.
 - (9) Obtain and maintain homeowner's or renter's and car insurance and auto insurance _____ The **verification** process includes several steps.

Step 1: Orientation (The process you are currently completing.)

Step 2. Background Clearances/Home Safety Assessment
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Step 3. Home Visits and Interviews of family members

Step 4. IMPACT FCP (23-hour foster parent certification training)

MAPP is also acceptable. GHI certifies it's foster and adoptive parents through IMPACT FCP.

- _____ **Background Checks:** Each family member in the home over 18 must complete an FBI fingerprint and background check. (The upfront fees for FBI fingerprint is \$45-55. This fee is reimbursable for Primary and Secondary Caregivers after 90 days placement of a GH foster child.)
- _____ **Medical:** All adults and children in the home must have a medical exam. Adults and children ages 16 and older must have a TB test prior to certification. If you are taking medically fragile children or children 0-2 all household members should have flu and pertussis shot.
- _____ **Transportation:** Foster parents are required to have dependable transportation and submit copies of a Georgia driver's license and current automobile insurance (declaration page). Foster parents are responsible for transporting children to weekly therapy, medical and dental appointments, family visits (if necessary), support groups, court, family team meetings, etc. Foster children must be transported to receive a medical evaluation within 72 hours of entering your home.
- _____ **Full-time foster parents** may work outside of the home, although must provide plans for being with foster children on holidays from school/work, at times of illness/injury or suspension. Special stipulations for Specialized Foster Care Homes*.
 _____ A **back-up care support** person should be secured to support your foster care journey, i.e. friend, neighbor, babysitter, relative. (Must have required background clearances.)
- _____ **Home Visits:** The home certification process will include several home visits of the applicant's home to assess compliance with State regulations. GHI will conduct a home study and interview all members of the household prior to certification. GHI will interview all adult children not living in the home. Once certified, Agency case workers will make monthly visits to your home for safety, compliance and to meet with foster children placed in your home. Agency case workers will be working with the children in the home for a minimum of 15 hours per week.
- _____ **Capacity:** Foster families can foster up to 6 children without a capacity waiver with the exception of DeKalb or Fulton county.
- _____ **Living Space:** All children must have their own bed (in place prior to placement), dresser (can be shared), closet space, light, space available to complete work and at least 80 square feet of personal living space. If two children are sharing a bedroom, the room must be at least 100 square feet. Adults (18+) cannot share a bedroom with a child.
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- _____ **Septic Tanks:** Homes with septic tanks and/or wells must be inspected prior to placement of children and annually, at the applicant's expense by the health department in the county of residence.
- _____ **If fire hazards are noted** at the time of the Health and Safety Assessment, a fire inspection will be requested through the fire department in the applicant's county of residence. Homes will be equipped with smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers on each level of the home.
- _____ **Hazards:** All alcohol, firearms and medication (prescription and over the counter) and dangerous chemicals (labels with "keep out of reach of children") must be **locked** up at all times while foster children are placed in the home. It is recommended that no alcohol be consumed in front of foster children. All Foster care homes must maintain a smoke free environment.

Once Approved

- _____ **Upon Approval** you will attend a welcome meeting where you will receive the Foster Parent Manual and review company detailed policies and procedures.
- _____ **Training:** All foster parents must complete 25 hours of training annually. Secondary foster parents must complete 15 hours of annual training. Training is **required monthly** through GHI monthly training meetings held at the Agency office and online. **CPR & 1st Aid along with Water Safety training must be completed prior to approval and must remain current throughout the duration of the foster care process. CPR & 1st aid is not included in the 25 hours of annual training requirement. CPR & 1st aid can now be obtained online at [National CPR Foundation](http://www.nationalcprfoundation.com). Water Safety Training can be found online at <http://www.onlinewatersafetycourse.com/>. Specialized Foster Parents will require 36 hours of annual training for both primary, secondary, and backup caregivers.**
- _____ **Reimbursement Rates:** Per diem for a base child is based on the child's age: 0-5 years \$27.80, 6-12 years \$29.99 and 13-18 years \$32.62. Children with higher designations receive between \$35-80 per day. The per diem is paid effective the date of actual placement. Pre-placement visits are not reimbursed. Specialized foster care homes can receive between \$7,000-\$10,000 per month serving a minimum of 4 children.
- _____ **Insurance:** Medicaid/Amerigroup covers GHI foster children for all medical and dental needs.
- _____ **Changes in the Home:** GHI staff must be notified immediately of any and all changes to the foster parent's household composition. This is required throughout the duration of the foster parent's contracted service with GHI. **This also includes persons moving in or out including adult children, visitors and relatives.**
- _____ **Case Workers:** A GHI (agency) Case Worker will be assigned to each foster home for ongoing development, training and support. Your GHI Case Worker will be your first line on communication for concerns
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and issues concerning your home or your foster children in care. Case Workers will be required to make **scheduled and unannounced visits** at least bi-weekly to your home. Phone contacts may also occur weekly from the Case Worker and/or compliance specialist.

- _____ **Documentation:** Foster parents are required to maintain daily documentation (daily medication administration, progress reporting, case plans, goals, etc.) on each foster child in the home. Documentation will be submitted by the 1st of the month.
- _____ **Support groups** and training will occur on a monthly basis or as needed.
- _____ **Reimbursement:** Monthly reimbursements are received on the 20th of each month. Payments are disbursed through direct deposit. Specialized foster care homes will receive reimbursement twice a month.

Payments are disbursed by the 20th and the end of the month via direct deposit.

- _____ **Respite:** Respite services are available and recommended for GHI parents. Respite will include the opportunity to take 10 nights per year paid foster care with 30-day advance notice. For Specialized Foster Care Homes, foster parents agree to take respite outside of their home. Paid respite with a 30-day notice for SFCH will receive respite vacation pay and a bonus of \$500 annually.
- _____ **Foster Parents as Advocates:** Foster parents serve as advocates for the children that are placed in their home ensuring that foster children are enrolled and attend an educational and/or vocational program, attend therapy, maintain contact with birth families, etc.
- _____ **Discipline:** Corporal punishment is prohibited in disciplining children in foster care this includes spanking, slapping, pinching, demeaning a child, locking a child in a room, etc. Further policies and procedures on this topic is further discussed during IMPACT training.
- _____ **Corporal Punishment:** GHI has a zero-tolerance policy for corporal punishment and/or physical restraint. GHI employees are mandated reporters. Should a foster parent use corporal punishment the foster home may be placed on a corrective action plan pending investigation. **A substantiated case will result in the closure of the foster home and the inability to work with children in any capacity.**

_____ **Reporting:** Foster parents are required to report critical incidents immediately to GHI either by calling the office or calling your Agency Case Worker. The Case Worker will immediately staff the incident with the GHI Supervisor or Director to ensure all safety precautions have been taken. If the incident consists or a suicide

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attempt or death, the Case Worker will contact the DFCS Case Manager or DFCS Supervisor immediately. If the critical incident includes an allegation of abuse or neglect, GHI will notify DFCS immediately. For all other incidents, the Case Worker will contact the DFCS Case Manager and licensing department within 24 hours. The critical incident must be documented and emailed or faxed GHI immediately following the incident. GHI will make appropriate reports to DFCS and Licensing by the next business day following the incident. Incident reporting will be reviewed during IMPACT training.

- _____ **Office Hours:** In any situation that you are not sure on how to handle, one of GHI's most valuable support service staff is always there by phone to assist you. The normal business hours in the office are Monday-Friday 10:00 am-4:00 pm. After hours, please contact your Caseworker by cell phone or the on-call phone.
- _____ **Grievances:** All grievances should be reported directly to the agency Case Worker or the Case Workers Supervisor. The matter will be discussed, and a response will be provided to you in writing within 3 days. If the matter needs to be addressed with the Director, the response time is 5 days. If the matter needs to be brought to the Board of Directors, the response time is 7-10 days.

Additional Foster Parent Responsibilities:

- _____ **Activities:** Foster parents are required to engage children in activities at least monthly to include movies, skating, summer camp, nature walks, sports, ILP program workshops, etc. Children in care are required to receive a "normal life" while in foster care. Specialized foster care homes are required to create and post a monthly calendar of activities and events in the home and participate in Georgia Hope planned events.
- _____ **Education:** Foster parents are required to be an active participant and advocate in the education of their child in care, reviewing report cards, attending IEP meetings, exploring tutoring opportunities, attending parent teacher conferences, exploring post-education opportunities i.e. college, vocational school, work, etc. Remember, we are not succeeding, if our children are failing.
- _____ **Technology:** Foster Parents are required to have a computer (laptop) and printer with scanning capabilities. Computers must be available for use by school-age children. Parental controls are required.

Additional Specialized Foster Responsibilities

- _____ **Emergency Respite:** SFSH foster parents agree that the emergency respite where the foster parent does not leave the home, the foster parent agrees to allow the respite provider to stay in the home to care for the children in care.
- _____ **Discharges or removal of child** SFCH foster parents agree that they will provide a 30 day notice for the removal of a child from the home due to behavior concerns and participate in all forms of placement stability meetings.



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- _____ **Closure of Foster Home:** SFCH foster parents agree to provide a 30 day notice in the event they choose to close their home in which children are in placement.
- _____ **In-Home Therapeutic Team:** The SFCH foster parent understands that the in-home therapeutic team can/will consist of the agency case worker, in-home therapist, life coach, behavior aide, mentor, CASA worker, etc. This team is available to provide therapeutic services and supportive services for the children placed in the home. They are not caregivers for the children and should not be left without a foster parent or secondary caregiver ie. back-up support in place.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

By signing the below, I acknowledge that I have attended Orientation to become a Foster Parent at Georgia Hope Inc. I understand both the Informed Consent, Orientation Checklist as well as reviewed the Foster Care Orientation Checklist. I reviewed:

The Assessment Process and Requirements for Approval		Background clearance process and upfront fees		Home Safety Requirements		Timeline for approval	
Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
FP requirements after approval		Foster Parent responsibilities		Discipline Policy		Reimbursement rates and dates	
Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary

I (Primary), _____ (Secondary) _____ attended the GHI orientation on _____ (date) and understand the policies as outlined above. This orientation certificate is valid 1 year from the date of signature.

Primary Signature _____ Secondary Signature _____

Address _____

Primary Phone _____ Secondary Phone _____

Primary Email _____ Secondary Email _____

Orientation Leader (1) _____ Date _____



IMPACT FCP Pre-Service Training Letter of Intent

Dear Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parent,

Thank you for attending the IMPACT Orientation for Foster and Adoptive Parenting with Georgia Hope, Inc. (GHI). During the orientation you were given information on the mission, roles and responsibilities, permanency planning, children in care, supportive services and the Foster and Adoptive parent certification process.

The IMPACT Orientation began the mutual selection process. Mutual selection means that Georgia Hope and prospective Foster and Adoptive families work together to establish open communication and trust. The ultimate goal of the mutual selection process is making a shared and informed assessment decision about your ability to be a Foster or Adoptive parent.

Your next step is to return this letter to your orientation leader. Please indicate below whether or not you have decided to continue your path toward Foster or Adoptive parenting.

Whatever your decision, your interest in Foster or Adoptive parenting with Georgia Hope is sincerely appreciated.

Date of Orientation: _____

Primary Name _____ Secondary Name _____

Primary Phone: _____ Primary Email: _____

Secondary Phone: _____ Secondary Email: _____

I am interested in being a Georgia Hope **Foster, Adoptive or SFCH** (*circle one*) Parent.

_____ Within 6-8 weeks _____ Within 6 months _____ Within 1 year

No, I am not interested in being a GHI Foster, Adoptive Parent or SFCH at this time because

However, please contact me about any other ways that I may volunteer.

Primary Signature _____ Secondary Signature _____