

Family Support Services FAQ

Q. What is Family Support Services?

A. Family Support Services (FSS) is a short-term system of best practices for families with children in the foster care system. It efficiently combines in-depth assessments, collaborative decision-making, and superior care to produce better results than traditional foster care, including higher rates of family reunification, shorter lengths of stay, and reduced foster care costs. FSS is typically used when children are initially placed in foster care, although it's also been beneficial when foster children disrupt from their foster home, or as a respite resource for families.

Q. Who decides which children receive FSS?

A. Social Services

Q. What is the role of FSS in relation to Social Services?

A. Social Services manages each case and approves service, safety, and permanency plans. FSS provides direct care, assessments, and transportation, and makes recommendations for services that the child and/or family may need beyond the child's stay in FSS. FSS also helps by informing long-term placement decisions made by Social Services.

Q. Who else is involved in FSS?

A. Any support that might be an asset to the family's reunification progress, including: extended family, family supports, foster families, mental health professionals, school professionals, and health care providers.

Q. What are the hours of operation?

A. FSS is available to receive children 24/7, and welcomes families on nights, weekends, and holidays.

Q. How many children can FSS serve at a time?

A. We have designed FSS to be for as few as three and as many as 14 children at a time. We will work collaboratively to meet the Social Service agency's specific need.

Q. How long do children stay in FSS?

A. The average length of stay is 17 days.

Q. What best practices are used?

A. Best practices are incorporated into all aspects of FSS. They include:

- Comprehensive assessments
- Trauma-sensitive care and treatment
- Ecologically focused care
- Family meetings
- Solution-focused therapy
- Frequent visitation

Q. How does FSS help children?

A. Through maintaining the stability and continuity of significant relationships, children are in constant contact with people and things that children typically lose when they're placed in foster care. Children attend their "home" school, attend previously scheduled appointments, and continue to participate in recreational and social activities in the community.

Q. How soon and how often can families visit their children?

A. The goal of FSS is to have a visit within 24 hours of the child being placed, and daily thereafter. Visits happen in a family-friendly environment, and various levels of supervision are provided based upon the needs of the family.

Q. How often are family meetings held?

A. Within 72 hours of placement, a family meeting is held with parents, family supports, service providers, Social Services caseworkers, and program social workers. A schedule of future meetings is then established based upon the unique needs of each family and their situation.

Q. How can FSS help to reduce foster care costs?

A. Best practices lead to better long-term outcomes. Children spend an average of 40% less time in foster care if they go through FSS than if they go through a typical foster care setting.

Still have questions?

Fill out our inquiry form at elmcrest.org/familysupport to speak with an Elmcrest representative.