

FACTSHEET

3: Foster Care

Baby dumping means rejecting and throwing a baby away after birth and exposing it to danger and death. Almost every month there are reports of baby dumping in the media.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture with the support of UNICEF and the Legal Assistance Centre asked the public WHY baby dumping is such a problem in Namibia and HOW the government can address it. Overall, the results showed that people want more information about what to do if they are pregnant and do not want the baby. Several publications have been produced to provide this information. This factsheet provides information about foster care.

What is foster care?

Foster care is when a person outside the family takes care of a child for a temporary period until the child can either return home or be placed for adoption. Sometimes a child will live in foster care for many years, possibly even until the child becomes an adult.

When you place your child in foster care, you are still the parent of your child. You still have legal rights and responsibilities towards your child. However you will not make the day-to-day decisions about the care of your child.

If I would like to place my child in foster care what should I do?

If you would like to place your child into foster care you should contact a social worker at the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. The social worker will give you more information. The social worker will talk to you to help you decide if foster care is the right option for you and your baby.

If you decide on foster care, the social worker will take your case to a magistrate at the Children's Court after your child is born. If the magistrate is satisfied that foster care will be in the best interests of your child, the court will make a foster care order. The order will explain how the responsibilities for your child will be divided between you and the foster parents. The order may say when you can visit your child, if you choose to do this. The order will say how long your child will live with the foster parents before the case is reviewed. Your child

will then go to live with the foster parents. The court will re-examine the situation from time to time, so see if the arrangement continues to be in your child's best interests.

If you decide at a later stage that you would like to take care of your child yourself, you can ask the court to cancel the foster care order. The social worker will help



Illustration: MGEQW-UNICEF Best Start manual



decide if you are ready. The court will then review your case.

If you and the other parent are not married and you want to place your child in foster care, the parent who is the guardian of the child must give permission. The other parent does not have to give permission. If you are married, because parents have equal guardianship over their children, one parent can give permission on behalf of you both.

Foster care grants

Foster parents can apply to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare for a grant. This grant is paid to any person who cares for a child who is not their own, provided that they have an order from the Children's Court to show that the child has been placed in their care. As of 2012, the foster care grant is N\$200 per child per month.

What is kinship care?

Kinship care is when a relative or a close family friend takes care of the child for a temporary period until the child can either return home or be placed for adoption. If a relative or close family friend is caring for your child and wants to access the foster care grant, you must go through the same process as for placing your child in foster care with a stranger. This requirement will probably change when the Child Care and Protection Bill becomes law.



You can contact the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare for more information on foster care. You can also speak to a private social worker about this option.