



AGENCY FAQs

Q: What is the agency focus of Embrace Florida Kids (EFK)?

A: We provide homes, hope, and healing to families, children, and youth impacted by abuse and neglect. We provide homes for children and youth in need through our foster care program and teen group home. Our Embrace Family Preservation program provides targeted, specific interventions for families who are at risk for having their children removed as well as with families working toward reunifying with their children. Our teen center provides mentoring and educational support services for youth impacted by the foster care system. Children served range in age from 0-21.

Q: What communities are eligible for services from EFK?

A: EFK has program offices and staffing in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties. Our parent company (United Methodist Children's Home/UMCH) also has programs that span the state of Alabama.

Q: How do children and families receive services from EFK?

A: We receive referrals from the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Families First Network (FFN). We are licensed through DCF, and contracted through FFN to provide our programs.

Q: How is EFK Funded?

A: Income and expense vary greatly from program to program, and some are self-funded. Collectively, FamiliesFirst Network contract dollars pay about 60% of what it costs to run the programs, and funding is always shifting and fluctuating. The remainder of our income is from donors and churches in Northwest Florida.

Q: How can I contribute to EFK Programs and Kids?

A: We have a variety of methods to accept your tax-exempt donation: Our Secure payment processing link has instructions for your credit card, EFT or check; through your financial institution, IRA contribution, and via Venmo. [Donate here.](#)

Q: How is the money designated?

All funds are considered unrestricted and for "Greatest Ministry Needs" unless the donor provides other instructions to restrict the gift for a specific location or program.

Q: What kind of Impact do you have in Northwest Florida?

A: Last year (2018)

- 15,121 days of foster care for 116 children and youth from Pensacola to Destin and Santa Rosa Beach.
- 2,469 days of care for 18 teen girls in foster care at our residential home in Milton
- 389 family members were served (92 families) through our intensive, in-home prevention and reunification treatment in all four counties



- 29 Teenagers in foster care received after school and summer care empowerment through our teen center in Crestview

Q: How is EFK staffed?

A: Locally, an average of 25 staff are living and serving Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties. We expect that number to grow in 2020 due to increased needs. All of our Florida program staff are managed by Regional Program Director, Charlotte Thomas {Link to her Staff page}

Program Managers: Each program location has a Program Manager with a background in social service and experience working with youth. The Program Manager is responsible for making sure of the needs of the youth are met, advocating for youth in their care, providing counseling and guidance, ensuring staff receive appropriate training, and ensuring that homes are safe and that children are receiving the care they need.

Youth Care Workers work in the home for several days at a time. Our Youth Care Workers teach our youth skills needed to become independent adults. They also transport youth to school, church, appointments, work, and other activities. Youth Care Workers cook healthy meals, lead devotions, help with homework, bandage cuts and bruises, administer medication, attend sporting events to cheer our youth on, assist youth in discovering their abilities, encourage youth, assist in problem solving, show love, and help them deal with the challenges of being a kid in the foster care.

Foster Care staff are responsible for training foster parents, providing support and feedback, arranging for foster parents to have much needed breaks (respite), ensuring foster families abide by licensing standards, matching youth to foster families, advocating for the needs of the youth, and recruiting new foster homes.

Q: How can I inquire about employment with EFK?

A: Employment inquiries may be directed to our Human Resources staff located at our corporate office. E-mail: hrdept@umch.net or call 1-800-239-3575.

Q: Do you need volunteers? How can I help?

A: Volunteers are limited at our program locations due to sensitivity, privacy, and safety issues. We do have many community advocates and supporters in our schools and churches who raise funds, collect necessary donations (for our foster families and our teens) provide tutoring, fellowship and social opportunities, and more. Monetary donations and estate gifts ensure we are able to continue our programs long-term. We are always in need of gift cards for entertainment and have a shopping list of desired items on Amazon [HERE](#).

Additionally, we love to get an invitation to speak at your civic clubs, church groups, etc. Every invitation to speak is an opportunity to gain support from a new segment of the community. Contact us at 1-833-EFK-KIDS or info@EmbraceFLKids.org to learn more about getting involved!

Q: Is EFK a new agency in Florida? How long have you been serving kids in foster care?



Our parent company (UMCH) was established in 1890 to provide services to abused, neglected, and abandoned children. What started out as an orphanage in Summerfield, AL, has grown to include a wide spectrum of foster care and family preservation programs in both Alabama and Florida. Our history here in Florida started in the 1970s; with both foster care services and a group home for teen girls in Pensacola (now located in Milton). Our timeline of Florida activity can be found:

- 1974: Our Embrace Milton Girls Home, located in Milton, FL, has five staff who live and provide care 24/7 to six teenage girls ranging in age from 12-17. Group homes are a placement option for many teens. Some teens stay in a group setting until another placement opportunity (relative care, family foster care) is available while others prefer staying in a group setting until they can return to their parents or until they turn 18.
- 2005: Our Embrace Foster Care office, located in Pace, FL, contracts with Families First Network (FFN). This program has grown to include the recruitment, training, and licensing of families and homes in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties. We have four staff who serve an average of 30 families and we anticipate the number of families we serve to grow.
- 2014: Our Embrace Teen Center in Crestview opened in 2014. The program was developed to ensure youth and caregivers have access to services to ensure stability of placements and enrichment activities. This gap caused financial and safety hardship for caregivers, leaving our teens vulnerable. Staff offer tutoring, mentoring, and serve as an additional advocate and support member for the teens. Additional activities include learning valuable life skills, learning appropriate relationship skills/boundaries and expectations, and enjoying social and service opportunities.
- 2016: Our Embrace Family Prevention program started serving Florida families referred to us from Department of Children and Families First Network. Currently, our program serves up to 28 families at a time. Services last between 3 and 4 months. We anticipate growth in 2020 based on a perpetual waiting list. This program yields a 95% success rate of keeping families intact safely with no recurrence of abuse.

FAQS ABOUT EFK CHILDREN, YOUTH, & TEENS

Q: How many children does EFK serve?

A: In 2018 EFK served 550 children, youth and family members, providing 18,000 days of care.

Q: How many kids and family members are in each program?

A: Six teens at a time live 24/7 at our residential/group home location. Our Embrace Foster Care program serves 30-50 children and youth each month. Our Embrace Family Preservation program currently works with 28 families at a time (new families every 90-120 days). The Embrace Teen Center works with an average of 10-15 teens and their families at any given time.



Q: How do the kids leave our programs?

A: Kids leave our programs in a variety of different ways. Some youth are only with us for a brief period of time while arrangements are made for them to move on to placements with friends or family members. Other youth are reunited with their parents after their parents are able to demonstrate their ability to safely parent again. Some of our kids in foster care are adopted by their foster parents. Many youth remain with us through high school and leave to live independent lives. It is our goal, no matter how long a youth is with us, to do as much as possible to prepare youth for independence.

Q: Do you stay in touch with kids after they leave the program?

A: Yes! Our kids call to let us know how they are doing, what is new in their lives, and when major life events occur. We are sometimes able to help out financially when our youth experience an unexpected crisis or life event. We also track children for one year, post discharge, to identify any follow up needs or issues.

Q: Does family reunification happen often?

A: Family reunification happens frequently within the child welfare system. Sometimes reunification occurs with extended family members rather than with parents. We are supportive of reunification when it occurs. Our programs work with the child/youth and the biological family to help the child/youth during this transition.

Q: Do kids visit with their family members?

A: Family visitation is conditional. Everyone involved must abide by all court orders. The court mandates what type of visitation is appropriate for each family. Some kids are able to visit their family members with few limitations, other kids may only see their family when a court-approved supervisor is in place to oversee the visit, and some youth are not allowed contact with their parents for safety reasons. As much as possible, siblings are placed together. When they cannot be placed together, sibling visitation is encouraged as frequently as possible.

Q: Do the kids participate in after-school programs?

A: Our kids are encouraged to participate in after-school programs such as athletic teams, band, clubs, and other interests. EFK desires to help our youth find their passion and to experience new things. However, the cost of these activities is not funded by local or state agencies, and is only possible through the generous donations from the community. {Donate [HERE](#) Button}

Q: Are the kids involved in a church?

A: Unless they request to attend a church of another denomination, kids in group care worship in a United Methodist church near their group home. They are encouraged to participate in age appropriate activities such as small groups, UMYF meetings, recreational activities and service projects. Kids in family foster homes usually attend church with their foster parents.



Q: How do you provide spiritual care?

A: Spiritual care is provided in a variety of ways. As EFK staff interact with kids they have many opportunities to discuss spiritual matters with them. Though EFK does not require kids to attend church, they are encouraged to do so. Each Sunday, EFK staff at our Embrace Milton Girls Home take the kids to a local Methodist Church in the community that welcomes them into the church body and its various activities. An annual mission trip also provides our staff and kids with powerful spiritual formation experiences.

FAQs FOR POTENTIAL FOSTER PARENTS

Q: What is foster parenting?

A: Licensed foster parents provide temporary care for children who have been removed from their biological family due to abuse, neglect or abandonment until those children can safely return home or achieve another permanent outcome.

Q: How do I become an EFK foster parent in Florida?

A: Our Embrace Foster Care office is located in Pace, FL and licenses homes in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties. The first step required is a seven to ten-week foster parent training class. The licensing process includes an application process, intensive background checks and home safety assessment. A licensing worker makes a minimum of two visits to your home to complete family interviews, health inspections, and a fire inspection. All foster homes must comply with the minimum standards for foster homes as mandated by Department of Children and Families (DCF). Interested applicants should send an email to: programs@EmbraceFLKids.org.

Q: How long does it take to become a licensed foster care home?

A: A variety of factors and circumstances determine the length of the licensing process. It can take three months or longer depending on completion of background checks, medical clearances and required certifications, the availability of training, and location of the foster home.

Q: What is respite care and how do I get licensed?

A: A respite care home allows foster parents a break from caregiving Responsibilities by providing short term care of children who are already placed in a foster home. Duration of respite care varies from one day to two weeks. A respite care home must be a fully licensed foster home.

Q: What are disqualifying factors?

A: Some disqualifying factors include violent crimes, drug related crimes, felony thefts, a DUI in recent history, currently on probation, verified findings of child abuse, your own children adjudicated dependent by the court.



Q: What is the role of a foster parent?

- A:**
- Help children cope with separation & loss
 - Build healthy relationships
 - Use age appropriate discipline
 - Build self-esteem and give positive guidance
 - Support cultural identity and religious practices
 - Transport children to medical, dental & counseling appointments
 - Enroll children in school/daycare
 - Attend meetings pertaining to the children
 - Work with service providers (caseworkers, therapists, medical personnel)

Additionally, Foster parents have varying participation in the following:

- Transporting children to and from visitations
- Notifying parents of medical appointments & school activities
- Sending pictures, school work, art work to parents
- Notifying parents of special events (ball games, plays, etc.)
- Supervising visitations

Q: What about daycare/after school care?

A: A referral is made to Early Learning Coalition when the child is placed in your home. It is Dependent on funding through Early Learning Coalition; however, Childcare is currently available for children through age 8.

Q: What about board payment or a stipend for foster care parents?

A: Foster parents receive a monthly payment for care of the children (approx. \$15/day). This payment is a reimbursement, not a salary. It is nontaxable, not considered a source of income for income tax purposes.

Q: What about clothing expenses?

A: This is an additional payment distributed twice a year (April & August). Children ages 0-4 receive \$100, Children ages 5-17 receive \$150.

Q: Are the children eligible for medical and other assistance while in my care?

A: Medical/dental and counseling is covered by Medicaid. The children are eligible for WIC assistance.