

NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA SUPREME COURT

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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Rise in Youth in Foster Care Means Increased Need for Volunteer Foster Care Review Board Members

PHOENIX – State law requires that a volunteer board of everyday citizens review the case of every child who is placed in an out-of-home care. These reviews are done every six months. The rapid increase in the number of children in out-of-home placement – more than 18,000 youth under the age of 18 – has resulted in a critical need for volunteers to serve on Foster Care Review Boards (FCRB).

“We currently have more than 100 vacancies in Maricopa County and 250 statewide that we need to fill with new or returning board members,” Caroline Lutt-Owens, Director of Dependent Children’s Services at the Arizona Supreme Court said. “There are many ways to help youth in foster care, even if you are not able to take in a foster child. If you have compassion for children and a willingness to help, we will provide free training as well as mileage and meal reimbursement for official meetings of your assigned board.”

Lutt-Owens said that the boards strive to reflect the racial, ethnic, economic and social characteristics of the population. She stressed the need for diversity and hopes that members of Arizona’s minority communities will step up and volunteer.

Each FCRB is made up of five citizen volunteers who advise juvenile courts on progress toward achieving a permanent home for children involved in a dependency action. According to the federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, states are required to conduct independent case reviews and make determinations in four key areas:

- safety, necessity, and appropriateness of placement

- case plan compliance
- progress toward mitigating the need for foster care
- a likely date (target date) by which the child may be returned home or placed for adoption or legal guardianship.

There are more than 130 Foster Care Review Boards statewide translating to nearly 700 positions. Each board handles approximately 100 children and new boards are formed as needed.

Each board meets once a month for six to eight hours. Some boards may meet less frequently, based on case volume. About a week before the meeting, a packet will arrive that contains each child's case information that will be reviewed on the meeting day. In addition, volunteers spend six to eight hours reviewing case information in preparation for the board meeting.

“The need for volunteers has never been more critical,” Lutt-Owens said. “We are hoping that faith-based organizations, senior communities, service clubs, and community organizations will help us spread the word and help us recruit volunteers.”

How to Apply for the Foster Care Review Board

- Request and complete an [application form](#). The applicant must have fingerprints taken and a thorough background check will be conducted.
- Volunteers are appointed by the presiding juvenile court judge in each county.
- Appointments are usually for three years but can be for a shorter duration if the appointment is to fill a vacancy.
- The volunteer must complete a one-day new board member orientation within six months following appointment and complete six to eight hours of continuing education each year.

For additional information on the Foster Care Review Board, visit the website at www.azfcrb.org or call our Phoenix Office at (602) 452-3400 (toll free 1-866-320-1959), or our Tucson Office at (520) 388-4300 (toll free 1-866-558-1791).

For more information about Arizona's judicial branch, visit www.azcourts.gov, or follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).