

## Introducing Safe Families for Children (Family Friend) Letter & Application for Parent/Guardian

Dear Parent,

Safe Families for Children pairs families who have limited social connections with volunteers from the community who can offer friendship and support during difficult times. Safe Families coordinates with churches across the city to find people who are interested in volunteering their time and skills to befriend and support families in crisis, so that families can stay together. We call these volunteers Family Friends.

Family Friends are people who willingly and without pay offer their friendship to a parent who is facing challenges and needs support. A Family Friend will help parents to broaden their social networks and support systems because we know this is a crucial protective factor in strengthening families. Family Friends befriend, mentor and support parents through their crisis, helping parents to feel empowered and capable of making their home a stable and safe space for them and their children. The Family Friend role is very flexible and the volunteer is able to offer support according to their skills, interests and availability. Family Friends can offer one or more of the following:

- Moral support, friendship and encouragement to parents/guardians in difficulty.
- Sharing parenting tips and development of parenting strengths & skills.
- Supporting parents/guardians in accessing services that they need.
- Advocating with/for families if they need help voicing their concerns or needs to other agencies.

Our volunteers live throughout New York City and they have all been screened and approved. Every Family Friend is supervised by a Family Coach. The Family Coach coordinates the team, making sure that the parent, child, and Family Friend(s) all have the resources they need to thrive. Parents who have received assistance through Safe Families have had struggles such as: homelessness, being overwhelmed, depression, health problems, unemployment, domestic violence, unexpected pregnancy and previous child welfare involvement.

In order to get started, we need you to fill out a few forms. These give our staff some information about you and your children that may be very important for them to know. We only share information with our volunteers that is pertinent to the relationship. Once a Family Friend is found, we will make arrangements to have you and the volunteer connect over the phone and then in person.

### **Other things you should know about Safe Families for Children:**

- Getting involved in Safe Families for Children is entirely voluntary. So if you wish to cease our support at any time, you can do so.
- You can contact the Safe Families for Children team with any questions or information. You can contact us @ 646-907-3039 or P.O. Box 380439 Brooklyn, NY 11238.

We hope you will consider Safe Families for Children. SFFC Family Friends will do what they can to help you get where you want to be. Call us anytime.

Sincerely,

Safe Families NYC

## Parent Rights & Expectations

1. It is understood that you are making this Family Friend arrangement voluntarily (non-coerced). You have a right to withdraw from the relationship whenever you like. Should you determine that you are not ready for this level of commitment, you are welcome to reapply at any time.
2. You have a right to receive supportive coaching and referrals from SFFC Family Coaches.
3. You are expected to complete a self-evaluation & assistance checklist at intake & review these documents during your first meeting with your Family Friend and Family Coach in order to set goals for the next 6 months that you will work on while paired with your Family Friend. At the end of the 6 month period, you will complete a reassessment and determine next steps with your Family Friend and Family Coach.
4. Parents must be willing to commit to meeting with their Family Friend in person 2-4 times/month. This may include meeting in the family's home or in public places.
6. You have a right to have information regarding you and your family kept confidential, though please note that information will be shared as needed amongst the team of volunteers supporting you and with the Safe Families staff team. The Family Friend and Family Coach also keep some records about our involvement with you. The initial application you completed and any notes are kept and stored on a secure online database.
7. If there are other professionals or agencies working to support you or your child, we do ask that you agree to information sharing between Safe Families and them in order that we can all provide the best, safe support for you.
8. If you want your SFFC volunteer to provide childcare at any point for your child, you will need to complete a separate child care application.
9. If you are unhappy with the help provided to you or your child or have any questions or concerns about your Family Friend, please contact your Family Coach to inform them.
10. SFFC staff are typically available from 9am to 5pm daily. You can reach them at 917-589-0314. Your Family Coach will let you know his/her availability.
11. It is important to note that all Safe Families for Children team members are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect.

## Safe Families for Children: Parent Information

Name of referred parent/guardian:	Preferred Language?	Date:
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**Parents/Legal Guardians Contact Info:**

<b>Name:</b>	DOB:	Cell Phone:
Address:	City/State:	Zip:
Email Address:	Occupation:	Race/ethnic background:
<b>Name:</b>	DOB:	Cell Phone:
Address:	City/State:	Zip:
Email Address:	Occupation:	Race/ethnic background:

**Parents' marital status:**

married    
  separated    
  divorced    
  unmarried    
  other    
  both parents maintain custody

**Child/Children**

Name:	DOB:	Sex:	Ethnicity:	Grade:
Name:	DOB:	Sex:	Ethnicity:	Grade:
Name:	DOB:	Sex:	Ethnicity:	Grade:
Name:	DOB:	Sex:	Ethnicity:	Grade:

*What is the reason for seeking a Family Friend through Safe Families for Children?*

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*What is challenging about parenting right now?*

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*What are your goals to be able to maintain a healthy, stable home environment?*

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*What do you hope will be different for you and your family as you begin a relationship with a SFFC Family Friend?*

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**Parent's Background**

*Who is in your household?*

*What is the family's religious preference?*

*What makes your family strong (Your strengths/special skills)?*

*Your weaknesses/family problems?*

*Are there any extended family members (parents, grandparents, etc) living in the area?*

*Do you have other close friends or neighbors?*

*What are the current services you are receiving?*

*Do you have any medical or mental health concerns?*

*Have you ever been involved with ACS?      Yes      No      Please explain:*

*Have you ever been in drug or alcohol treatment?    Yes                      No    Please explain:*

**I have had these experiences (optional):**

Rape	Sexual abuse	Physical abuse	Domestic violence
Homelessness	Suicidal thoughts	Abuse alcohol	Used drugs
Mental health counseling	Financial problems		

**I struggle with these emotions (optional):**

Sadness	Loneliness	Depression	Nervousness
Fears	Anxiety	Anger	Guilt
Emptiness	Hopelessness	Helplessness	

If there is anything else you would like to share, please do so here:

## Child's Information

### General Information

Are your children receiving services from other agencies? Yes    No	If yes, who and what agencies?
Caseworker's Name:	Phone # :
Caseworker's Name:	Phone # :

### Health and Development

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Do any of your children have any special needs?  
Child(ren)'s name: \_\_\_\_\_ Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do any of your children have any medical or mental health conditions/concerns?  
Child(ren)'s name: \_\_\_\_\_ Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do any of your children have current academic or behavioral problems?

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Discipline in the home includes:  
 Time out    Talking about behavior    Reward/loss of privileges    Spanking    Other

How difficult are you finding it to manage your children's behaviors:  
 Very difficult    Somewhat difficult    Fairly manageable    Mostly manageable    Very manageable

How often needed and how effective?

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*Check off any assistance that would be helpful for you during your time with Safe Families for Children.*

### **Parenting**

- Basic infant care
- How to calm a crying baby
- Activities to encourage my baby's (child's) development
- Seeing/meeting my baby's needs
- Building confidence as a parent
- Keeping up with shots/medical care
- How to teach my child(ren) to respect others and learn 'right from wrong'
- Preparing my children for school
- How to help my child(ren) do better in school
- Getting out of the house with child(ren)
- Disciplining my child(ren)
- How to use time outs
- How to provide structure and routines for my child(ren)
- How to set limits with my child(ren), how to say "no" and stick with it

### **Assistance/Referrals**

- Financial Counseling
- Legal assistance
- Food stamps/WIC
- Employment
- Handyman/house needs to be fixed
- Preschool/Head Start
- Meals
- Reading/literacy/tutoring
- Medical Assistance
- Housing Assistance
- Education (GED/College)
- Mental healthcare/counseling
- Advocacy with other agencies
- Accompaniment to appointments
- Occasional babysitting
- Cleaning/organizing
- Parent support and activity groups/outing
- Community support (church, friends, etc)

### **Supplies**

- Baby supplies (diapers, wipes, etc)
- Toys/books
- Baby clothes
  - Size \_\_\_\_\_
- Children's clothing
  - Size \_\_\_\_\_
- Adult clothes
  - Size \_\_\_\_\_
- Couches/chairs/furniture
- Crib/Beds
- Kitchen appliances
- Pots/pans

### **Personal support/Help**

- Support, someone to talk to or call when overwhelmed
- Spiritual support
- Assistance with drug/alcohol problems
- Managing feelings (stress, anger, etc)
- Managing difficult relationships
- Managing Depression
- Family planning, birth control
- Time Management
- Feeling better about myself
- Co-parenting Support

## Parent/Guardian Consent for Safe Families for Children Family Friend support

I have read or have had shared with me the letter Introducing Safe Families for Children to me and I agree with the Safe Families policies and procedures outlined in it.

I have read or have had shared with me the Parental Rights and Expectations letter and I agree with the Safe Families policies and procedures outlined in it.

I understand the voluntary nature of the support provided through Safe Families for Children and the principles of encouraging my strengths to help me care for my children. I understand that either I, or my Family Friend may cease involvement at any time.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian (*signature*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*please print*