



Safe Families *for* Children

a ministry of North Hills Christian Church

- ❖ [What is Safe Families?](#)
- ❖ [Video Testimony from a Host Family](#)
- ❖ [Our Personal Stories](#)
- ❖ [Ways To Be Involved](#)
- ❖ [FAQ](#)
- ❖ [How Will You Be Involved?](#)

What is Safe Families?

Safe Families for Children is a ministry that reaches out to families in crisis, whether it be loss of a job, a medical problem, drug addiction, or fleeing domestic violence. Many times, these families have no safety net to whom they can turn, and their children become at risk for neglect and abuse. In hopes of preventing the involvement of the foster care system, Safe Families for Children gives temporary care for their children, support they otherwise do not have. Often their relationships with family members are broken, or family members themselves do not have a safe environment where children could be cared for. Safe families is made up almost entirely of volunteers and works alongside local churches, an integral part of the ministry. The church has the opportunity to step in and become the spiritual extended family and give the support that so many are in desperate need of.

Families in crisis are referred to the Safe Families for Children program by community agencies, schools, hospitals and churches. Placing parents are given the opportunity for their children to stay with an approved host family, while still retaining full parental custody and rights. The goal of Safe Families is reunification and placing parents are guided through the process of getting the care and referrals they need, as well as setting up an appropriate time frame for how long their children need care. Most hostings in Northern California are anywhere from 3 days to 30 days.

The host family brings the child or sibling group into their home as a temporary part of their family, providing a safe and loving environment until the biological parent can get back on their feet. The work of the Safe Families ministry is not done solely by the host family ministering to the children, but by the entire church body as each do their part to enable and support the host family. The church comes alongside the host family to provide resources and assistance during the hosting, anything from clothing and toothbrushes, to meals provided, to babysitting. Counsel and encouragement is provided to both host family and placing parent throughout the whole process.

By extending hospitality to others in need, Safe Families for Children returns the church to its historic role of caring for the orphan and widow. This was one of the foundational ministries of the early church, and something that we have lost in our modern era. In present day, we have confused hospitality with entertaining. True biblical hospitality is defined as the love of strangers. This call is clearly expressed in Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9 and Romans 12:2. It is a call to make room in our busy, well-protected lives to minister to others and to help strangers. Welcoming these little children and their parents into our homes and lives can be risky and uncomfortable, but by doing so we are being given a powerful opportunity to live out the gospel and show the onlooking world that we are loving and compassionate, just as Christ has been to us.

Video Testimony from a Host Family

Please take a minute to watch this testimony from a host family from North Creek Church in Walnut Creek, CA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rbai73B7WRA>

Our Personal Stories

The Clark's Story

The Safe Families ministry is very near to our hearts. Having adopted children, our church sent myself along with another lady from the church to the Christian Alliance for Orphans conference in Minnesota. While we were there, we attended a breakout session called "Make Your Church the New Foster System". With both of us having adopted children through the foster system, we were intrigued. It was during this session that we heard about Safe Families for Children and the ways they reach out to and provide for families in crisis. We were instantly struck with how awesome this ministry sounded. While at the conference, we ran into a pastor from North Creek, also in Northern CA and the more we talked about it, the more we dreamed and prayed this would be something we could start in Northern California.

The Lord answered our prayers and along with the partnership of several churches, we have successfully launched the ministry and continue to it grow. Since the beginning, my husband and I have hosted 12 children of all ages and backgrounds. We love this ministry because it changes families lives, it teaches our children how to serve, and teaches us many other countless life lessons. It also forces us as a couple to fully rely on God. This is a whole church ministry where anyone young or mature can serve. Its God's people serving in one of the most practical way.

The Macachor's Story

We heard about Safe Families when Kathleen first introduced it at North Hills. Immediately we thought this was a ministry that makes so much sense. What a great way to reach out to our community and meet a true and urgent need, a real way to be an incarnation of the gospel. We breathed a little sigh of relief as we told ourselves that being a host family was not for people in our stage of life, just starting out as parents with no real parenting experience and no experience helping people in crisis. We were so happy to be involved donating diapers and formula, and prayed God would open the homes of those he would call to be hosts.

Over the course of the next couple years as North Hills began actively participating in Safe Families, the Lord put on each of our hearts, at separate times, the conviction that our family, our home, our things, and our time was not ours to grasp onto so tightly, but instead to be given up for the Lord to use as *He* saw fit. One of the biggest convictions came through watching a family like Troy and Kathleen. If their family circumstances had not held them back

from being a host family, there really was no excuse good enough, no barrier big enough that God could not work through.

So stepping out in faith, we began the process to be certified as a host family. At the time, pregnant with our second child, we both agreed that hosting was something that the Lord was calling us to eventually, but with a baby on the way, didn't know exactly when that would be. We didn't know the timing He had, but we knew He was asking us to be ready when that time arrived. As we went through the training process, the Lord only continued to confirm in our hearts the fact that our home and family could easily become an idol if we were not willing to sacrificially extend hospitality to these children in need.

We finally hosted our first two children when our daughter was 15 months old and have been doing it since, as often as the Lord allows. It is challenging more often than not, but such an opportunity to grow in our own sanctification as well as teach our children what it truly means to serve.

Ways To Be Involved

Host Family

A host family opens their home to children in order to give parents the opportunity to work through a crisis without the threat of losing parental custody. Its temporary short-term commitment that provides long-term results for a family in crisis.

Family Friend

A family friend encourages and strengthens a host family so that they may thrive throughout the duration of their hosting. Small things like dropping off diapers, babysitting, or carpooling can make all the difference.

Family Coach

A family coach is assigned to each host family. The family coach will visit regularly and serve as a support to the host family as they encounter the joys and struggles that come with opening their home to a child. The family coach also helps facilitate relationship building with the placing parent offering support and resources.

Ministry Lead

The ministry lead is the main liaison between the Safe Families for Children office and his or her church community. The ministry lead is responsible for encouraging volunteers to support one another in the shared mission of serving families who come to SFFC for help.

Frequently Asked Questions

What ages of children does Safe Families serve?

Children hosted are newborn to 18, but the majority of kids hosted are under age 6.

How long does a child usually stay with a family?

Length of stay is on a case by case basis, and can but usually last between 3 days to one month. After 30 days, the case situation can be reevaluated to see if more time is appropriate.

What are the requirements to be able to help with babysitting?

If the host family parent is present, anyone is able to come visit and help out with children, at the discretion of the host family. Someone interested in serving through babysitting (when the host family parent will not be present) will need a background check by being fingerprinted with Safe Families or through North Hills Children's Ministry.

What is the process to get certified as a host family?

To become an approved host family, you will need to fill out an application form, submit references, have background checks for all adults in the home performed via Live Scan, and have a home assessment and interview with a SFFC social worker. You will also need to view online training materials. The process is much simpler than getting a licence for foster care.

How often does a host family host children?

A host family can host as often as they choose. When a parent requests help, the Safe Families office sends a mass email to all host families. Any host family available for that hosting responds and then the SFFC office places the child or children with the best fit. It is up to your family to decide if you are willing and able to host at that particular time.

Do I need to have a spare room in my house to be able to host?

No, you do not. Children are able to sleep in the same room as your own children. Unlike foster care, they are also able to sleep on a cot, or pull out couch if needed.

What is the liability while hosting kids?

Parents retain full custody of the children while being hosted, but sign a caregiver's authorization affidavit as well as a waiver of liability. The national Safe Families organization also has liability coverage.

What are some of the biggest challenges and blessings to being a host family?

Many of the kids come from very different backgrounds than your own family has experienced, and often a different type of parenting than your own. These differences can manifest themselves as conflicts in many areas including manners and behavior, getting along with others, and trouble adjusting to authority depending on each child's situation. Even in the most physically and mentally exhausting times, hosting these children in crisis always proves to be an opportunity to allow the Lord to sanctify us. It also gives families an amazing opportunity to be in ministry together as a family.

How does the church come alongside the host family?

We see this ministry as a group effort. The host family is enabled to host because other families from the church, who aren't in a position to host, are able to help out with things like running to the store for diapers or groceries. They help by carpooling to school and babysitting so that the host family can still participate in other commitments they may have. They can arrange a playdate or bring over a meal. Coming over to do an activity with the kids such as an art project or game is so helpful, giving the host parent a free moment to take care of household responsibilities, or spend some needed one on one time with their own kids. The options are as diverse as the abilities and gifts God has given each of us!

What type of contact does the host family have with the biological parent or guardian?

Biological parents maintain full custody of their child, and are encouraged to communicate with their children during the hosting. Parents are free to phone the children or set up a visit, when

possible, at a neutral location. Our aim is to facilitate a partnership relationship between host families and the biological parents, in which the host family becomes a kind of “extended family”, a relationship that ideally continues even after the hosting to help provide physical and spiritual stability for the family in crisis.

How Will You Be Involved?

If you are interested in taking the next step to be involved with the Safe Families for Children ministry through North Hills Christian Church, please contact Amy Macachor or Kathleen Clark. We are happy to help walk you through the preparation process for any of the opportunities to serve. Our prayer is that the Lord will raise up enough host families, coaches, and family friends so that we will be able to reach out with the love of Christ to our own community in Vacaville. The need is great, and our call to biblical hospitality cannot be ignored. How will you open your heart and home?



Safe Families for Children

I want to open my heart and home by:

Becoming a Host Family

Temporarily hosting a child in your home

Becoming a Family Friend

Provide support to host families through meals, services, and donation of goods

Becoming a Family Coach

Provide support to host families and placing parents