



**State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services**

**Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary**

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Impact the Life of a Child: Become a Foster Grandparent

Winnebago Mental Health Institute is looking for volunteers, age 60 and older to become a positive influence in the lives of children and youth in their community through the Foster Grandparent Program. Volunteers serve children in the greater Oshkosh area and focus on tutoring and mentoring children and adolescents to help them succeed in life and overcome challenges they may face.

“Dedicated seniors have made a difference in the life of a child by serving as a mentor, tutor or caregiver to children and youth with special needs,” said Winnebago Director Robert Kneepkens. “Foster grandparents strengthen communities by building bridges across generations.”

Winnebago Mental Health Institute encourages seniors to apply for the program if they are:

- 60 years of age or older
- Physically able and in good health
- Able to volunteer 15-40 hours each week
- Able to work with children who have educational or emotional needs
- Meet income eligibility and pass a background check
- Willing to accept supervision and direction

Funding for the foster grandparent program is provided by Senior Corps, a federal program of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Senior Corps reports that youth who have established relationships with a foster grandparent show improvement in their academic performance, self-image, school attendance and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors or get into trouble. The grandparents participating also enjoy the program.

“This is the best intergenerational program there is – it promotes better understanding to both the young and the old. I play games with the children, which is a great teaching tool. When we play word games, they increase their vocabulary and use of the dictionary. When we play cribbage, we practice math skills. I also teach them how to use strategy in various other games and to always play fair. Should they want to talk, I am a good listener. I love the children and what I do,” says Grandma Joanne, a Foster Grandparent at Winnebago.

Foster grandparents can serve in Oshkosh elementary and middle schools, UW-Oshkosh’s Head Start program, Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh, Waterwood School and youth units at Winnebago Mental Health Institute. On-going training is provided to help volunteers develop the skills needed to serve children with special needs. Foster grandparents receive reimbursement for transportation, a modest tax-free stipend, meals during service, annual physical examinations, and accident and liability insurance while on duty.

If you would like more information on Winnebago’s Foster Grandparent Program, please call Marilyn Clarenbach at 920-235-4910, ext. 2483. For more information on the statewide Foster Grandparent Program, please visit <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/aging/voluntr/GRANDPNT.HTM>

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