

HOW DOES FIA WORK ... Questions And Answers

1. How can my congregation or organization become part of FIA?

You can help by gathering a team of four to eight people who share your concern for the less fortunate and who would like to be part of the solution to the problems in our society. Invite them to meet and we will present the program and begin building a FIA team.

2. How does an FIA team-family relationship begin?

Initially two contact people meet the family. Within the first month, they in turn introduce the other team members to the family, usually during a social activity. It is imperative that the entire team meets the family during the first month, as this is when the tone of the team-family relationship is set.

3. How does a team of people relate to one family?

As the relationship develops, every team member sees what strengths he or she has to offer in helping the family to reach its goals. Each team member may choose to focus attention on an individual family member.

4. Are there expenses?

FIA is not a financial resource for its families. County and local resources should always be utilized first. There may be occasions when the team will agree it is appropriate to provide monetary assistance or gifts. In those instances, personal and congregational resources may be considered. FIA strongly discourages giving cash directly to families as it could create dependency.

5. What support does the FIA team receive?

FIA offers training in the use of County resources and in the helping skills you will need to work with a family. FIA also serves as liaison between the teams and County agencies. The FIA staff will help by providing direction, referrals, and follow-up support as needed. They are always available by phone and email. Your own congregation or organization will also be supportive in many ways.

6. What if there are problems or the match doesn't seem to "work out"?

Remember that it may take a couple of months for you to feel comfortable with one another as a team and with the family. An ongoing process of evaluation by your team and the family will determine whether or not continuation of this relationship is feasible and desirable. If a warm relationship has developed and steady progress is being made, you may very well want to continue this friendship for a year or even longer. The staff is available to mediate and to bring closure to the relationship when that time comes.

7. Can we expect that the family's problems will be solved in one year?

In the beginning, it will be important to address any survival needs that are present so that attention can then be focused on short and long-term goals. By the end of one year, significant improvements in the family's quality of life and growth toward self-reliance should be observed. There is a tendency to wish for changes to occur more rapidly than they probably will. Our humanness, as well as the humanness of the family we are assisting, will throw a curve from time to time.

8. How much time is involved?

The mentor time required will vary depending upon the circumstances and upon your availability and desires. Initially, there may be a flurry of activity if there are immediate needs to be addressed. Then, the action should simmer down to a very manageable level. Remember that you have your whole team for assistance and support.