



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT of CHILD SAFETY

April 16, 2021

Engage family members in decisions about the child's living arrangement:

- Define key terms. Don't use unfamiliar jargon or acronyms.
- Be clear and honest about the process for evaluating the kinship home, including the need for background checks and discussion of sensitive issues.
- Explain your obligation to ensure safety for the child; that an alternate living arrangement may be sought if the safety plan or visitation plan is not followed. Ask the family about their ability to follow the safety plan and parenting time plan.
- Communicate frequently with kinship caregivers to keep them informed about court orders and permanency planning.
- Not every relative/kin can provide a home for the child right away. These individuals may be considered in the future and can stay connected through visits or other contact.
- Empower the caregiver with information regarding Reasonable and Prudent Parenting practices, located in the DCS Program Manual, Chapter 4: Section 11.

Assessing and Supporting Kinship Families Providing Placement

Kinship care can reduce the effects of trauma by providing familiarity and stability

- Children with kin may experience fewer placement changes.
- Kinship care often allows children to maintain their normal routines and relationships, at home and at school.
- Sibling groups often remain together.
- Birth parents can more easily remain involved in the child's life. When appropriate, kinship caregivers may coordinate and supervise visits with parents and other family members.
- Kinship care can be less traumatic for parents, and help them retain their dignity.
- Kinship caregivers facilitate the development of positive self-image, self esteem and identity for children. Children continue to feel a sense of belonging, worth, history and value to others when they remain with kin.

Be aware of impacts to the household and identify ways to support the family's physical and emotional health.

- DCS involvement brings many strangers into the family – people with unfamiliar requirements and decision-making authority. Be patient with occasional mistakes. For example, caregivers may forget to notify DCS of changes in the home, or may tell one member of the child's team something but forget to tell others.
- Kinship caregivers often feel pressure from family members; loyalties are questioned and relationships may suffer. Have empathy and listen.
- Kinship caregivers take in children during a family crisis and have not had time to prepare. Provide information about how trauma can effect child behavior, and information on caring for a child who has experienced trauma. Visit www.neurosequential.com/nmt and www.triplep.net for information, training and parenting programs.
- Kin may be hesitant to let DCS know when they are struggling for fear of losing the children. Give them permission to ask for help if they find they are getting overwhelmed. Offer respite as an opportunity to practice self care.
- Kinship caregivers may not want neighbors or other family to know about the involvement of DCS with their immediate family.
- Kinship caregivers have limited training. Take the time to explain the new language, DCS policies, court proceedings, and the many professionals who will be involved in the case.
- Many families go through challenging times. Do not assume kin have the same struggles as, or are the cause of, their relative's struggles. Kinship caregivers can still strongly care for the parents. Be mindful of their relationship with the parents.
- Schedule a visit as soon as possible after the child is placed with the kinship caregiver. Explain how often you will be visiting the home and what you will expect from the caregiver at each visit. For example, that you will need to speak with the child alone and receive medical, dental, and school updates.

Statewide Community Kinship resources:

Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation, www.affcf.org, provides assistance in funding enrichment/extracurricular activities.

Boost a Foster Family, <https://boostafosterfamily.org/>, provides assistance with home safety supplies such as smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, rabies vaccinations, pool safety equipment, etc.

Arizona Kinship Support Services, www.ArizonaKinship.org assists kinship caregivers with identifying community resources in Tucson at 520-323-4476 and in Maricopa County at 480-748-9269.

The Grandparent Ambassadors, www.azga.org, is a support network for grandparents raising their grandchildren. Phoenix Metro and Apache Junction: 602-456-0762, Southern AZ: 520-222-6085; and Northern AZ: 602-663-7876

The CarePortal, www.careportal.org connects the needs of caregivers with local churches to fill the need.

Questions?

Contact the Statewide Kinship Coordinator at 602-255-2600.

Visit the Kinship Care Policy, Chapter 4: Section 3.

- Be sensitive to the caregiver's language, roles, and parenting expectations. Take advantage of interpretation and translation services if needed.
- Take time to understand the family dynamics, the role the caregiver has played in the family prior to taking the children, and how that might have changed. For caregivers who have been parenting the child prior to DCS involvement, it may take time to adjust to DCS making certain decisions.
- Provide information to the kinship caregiver about the court process, the different types of hearings, court procedures and meetings the caregiver may attend, such as CFTs and TDMs. Help the caregiver understand what their role is for each.
- Ask caregivers if they have any questions or concerns about DCS discipline policy, and whether it is different from how they discipline today

Consider DCS history, criminal history, immigrant status, and the physical environment of the home in relation to the particular child's safety and best interest.

- The kinship caregiver must be able to act as the responsible adult. See Identifying Responsible Adult(s) to Implement Protective Actions section in the DCS Program Manual, Chapter 2: Section 4.
- If the home does not have a pool fence and the child is under age five, consider and document how the following may impact the kinship caregiver's ability to keep the child safe when making a decision:
 - ▶ alternative safety measures in place (door locks, door/pool alarms, securely locked windows, etc.);
 - ▶ the mobility and development of the child;
 - ▶ city and town ordinances, which vary across the state;
 - ▶ the length of time needed to secure the pool fence - Connect the caregiver with community resources such as Boost a Foster Family (boostafosterfamily.org) if there are financial constraints to obtaining a fence;
 - ▶ safeguards on other exit points in the house (windows, bedroom doors, doggy doors, etc.) that could provide the child with access to the pool;
 - ▶ confidence in the caregiver's ability to monitor the child
- Undocumented relatives can be considered for kinship care. Follow procedures outlined in Chapter 2: Section 4 to conduct a background check as part of the kinship caregiver assessment.
- A DCS Hotline report does not prevent a caregiver from becoming placement. When a potential caregiver or household member is named in a DCS Hotline report of child abuse or neglect, review the information and discuss the following considerations with your supervisor:
 - ▶ if prior involvement was as a result of a teen's behavioral health needs and how that may not impact the ability to provide for the child currently in need of care (child is under five, does not have behavioral health needs, etc.);
 - ▶ length of time since the reported event or circumstance;
 - ▶ ages of the children involved;
 - ▶ patterns of behavior indicated from the record;
 - ▶ nature of the maltreatment;
 - ▶ degree to which the potential kinship caregiver participated in the maltreatment;
 - ▶ whether the perpetrator is still in the home; and
 - ▶ extent of verified rehabilitation, if applicable.
- When a potential caregiver or household member has a criminal history, they may still

be considered when they qualify for a Level One Fingerprint Clearance Card or the offense is appealable as outlined in Chapter 4: Section 3. Review the information and discuss the following with your supervisor:

- ▶ nature of the criminal offense, including if the offense was against a child;
- ▶ length of time since the criminal event;
- ▶ patterns of behavior indicated by the criminal record;
- ▶ whether the individual is currently on probation or parole;
- ▶ whether legal proceedings were initiated as a result; and
- ▶ the severity of the incident and whether there was a safety threat to a child.

Children have better social and mental health outcomes when their caregivers can access a wide variety of services.

- ▶ Provide kinship families with information on licensure or connect them with the Recruitment Response Specialist at 1-877-543-7633, option 3 or by visiting www.azdcs.gov. Becoming a licensed foster parent provides the maximum financial support, in addition to the other resources and supports provided by a licensing specialist.
- ▶ Connect kinship caregivers with community resources listed in this practice guideline or at www.azdcs.gov to provide them with needed items and information on support groups and training.
- ▶ Provide the monthly clothing and personal allowance, and additional allowances (clothing, school expenses, etc.) in a timely manner.
- ▶ Inform the caregiver that TANF “child only” Cash Assistance does not count the caregiver’s household income when determining the benefit, and can be received concurrently with the Kinship Stipend. All unlicensed kinship caregivers qualify for TANF and the application must be submitted by the DCS Specialist.
- ▶ Share the DCS Sponsored website, www.azfamilyresources.org, which provides resources for caregivers including an FAQs section.
- ▶ Encourage kinship caregivers to sign up for the AZ Families Thrive Newsletter at <https://dcs.az.gov/foster-and-adoption/foster-adoptive-parent-newsletter> for information on upcoming trainings and support groups.
- ▶ Provide the kinship caregiver with the DCS Warmline phone number, 1-877-7633, option #3.

Adapted from: Child Welfare Information Gateway (2018). “Working With Kinship Caregivers” Washington, DC: Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.