



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT of CHILD SAFETY

February 26, 2024

Service Request Process:

When submitting a service request in Guardian, please include what services are needed in the narrative (i.e. home assessment, kinship navigation, foster care licensing, etc.). If additional KSS related services are needed, like KSS Courtesy Supervision or KSS Guardianship Annual Review, please submit all service requests related to the child together to ensure they are all assigned to the same agency. Please include information in the narrative in regards to whether the kinship caregiver previously worked with an agency and if the child is in a kinship placement, fictive kin placement, or a licensed foster home. This will ensure assignment of the referral to the same agency previously working with the kinship caregiver, for continuity of care for the family.

The following documents should be associated with the service request:

- Home Safety Checklist, CSO-1014A.
- Any other supporting documentation or pertinent information.

Kinship Support Services

Description of Service

DCS believes that kinship care is the most preferred and healthy setting for children who cannot remain safely in their home of origin. When children are with kinship caregivers, there is reduced trauma and children are able to thrive. In these circumstances, kinship care is achieved through ongoing support by enhancing the knowledge and skills of families, prior, during and post a child being in out of home care.

The Department's goal of this service is to further increase the number of children in kinship homes, improve the supports required to stabilize living arrangements and assist families in navigating the child welfare system while caring for children placed in their homes. The Department is a "kin first" organization and kinship caregivers should be "ruled in" and not out as placement resources. Kinship caregivers should be supported and aided in removing barriers to having kin placed in their homes. The Department should continually revisit kinship caregivers who may have been previously ruled out as potential caregivers to see if prior obstacles have been or could be resolved.

The purpose of this service is to support kinship caregivers from the time the kinship resource is identified through reunification, adoption or guardianship. The support shall include but not be limited to: home assessments, ongoing family support before and after placement, monitoring of home environment, initial and ongoing training, retention efforts, initial and renewal licensing, and initial adoption certification and extensions.

KSS service requests include Kinship Navigation, Home Assessments, Foster Care Licensing, and if applicable, Adoption Certification, Courtesy Supervision, and Guardianship Annual Review Report.

Kinship navigation is provided concurrently with Home Assessment and licensing process and continues until case closure. Kinship caregivers are encouraged to become licensed for increased supports and stability of children residing in kinship homes. The Office of Licensing and Regulation (OLR) has introduced kinship waivers, reduced the requirements for kinship caregivers to become licensed and created an expedited path for kinship caregivers to become licensed.

Should a kinship caregiver need to become certified to adopt as outlined in A.R.S. § 8-105 or as necessary for families who previously had guardianship, a referral can be made to a KSS agency and the agency will complete the adoption home study and submit it to DCS and the designated court in each county within the designated timeframes required by the courts.

Should a kinship caregiver be granted legal guardianship, a referral can be made to a KSS agency and the agency will complete the Permanent Guardianship Annual Review Report, upload the report to Guardian and submit to the Courts, and attend and participate in the court hearing. The new referral will be matched to any existing KSS agency who may have already been working with the kinship caregiver.

Eligibility

All kinship caregivers should be referred at the time the kinship resource is identified and/or within 24 hours of when an emergency placement of a child is made. Multiple kinship resources can and should be referred at the same time providing multiple options for children requiring out of home care. In addition, there are benefits of having additional family members participate in the home assessment and/or licensing process as support for the primary kinship caregiver. Please refer to DCS Program Policy Chapter 4: Section 3 Kinship Care for clarification on who is considered to have a kinship relationship with a child and the difference between a relative and fictive kin.

Referrals should be made for existing kinship caregivers who were identified or received placement prior to the implementation of KSS on 2/1/2024 but would benefit from kinship navigation services, additional supports or becoming foster care licensed. If the kinship caregiver already had a kinship home assessment, they will not have to complete another one, they will simply continue to move forward with supports and ideally towards licensure. If a kinship caregiver is already connected with a KSS agency or a KSS agency previously completed the kinship home assessment, that agency can be matched to the kinship caregiver by including the agency information in the narrative of the service request.

Kinship caregivers who express interest in becoming foster care licensed should be referred.

Kinship caregivers who need to become certified to adopt should be referred.

Kinship caregivers who are granted legal guardianship or have a pending annual guardianship review hearing should be referred.

Children placed in kinship homes needing courtesy supervision services should be referred. (note: courtesy supervision of children placed in foster homes, group homes or who are non-minor dependents is not part of the KSS service array).

Time frames for Outreach, Engagement, Assessment, & Services

Within 1 business day of referral receipt the KSS provider makes concerted efforts to have the initial telephone contact with the kinship caregiver to begin providing services.

Within 3 business days of referral receipt:

- The KSS Providers conducts their first home visit with the kinship caregiver.
- During the initial visit the KSS Provider will:
 - ▶ Describe KSS services.
 - ▶ Discuss licensing benefits and begin process for licensure concurrently with the Home Assessment.
 - ▶ Encourage and assist the kinship caregiver and household members with obtaining fingerprint clearance cards.
 - ▶ Provide an overview of resources and kinship navigation.
 - ▶ Initiate the kinship home assessment.

Within 3 business days of learning of a need the KSS Provider will:

- Notify the DCS Specialist of any additional needs of the children identified by the kinship caregiver, such as appointments, necessary services and resources (e.g., counseling, medical, dental, employment, etc.); and
- Assist the kinship caregiver in meeting the need.

Time frames for Outreach, Engagement, Assessment, & Services ~continued

Within 3 business days of first contact with the kinship caregiver (when a child is already placed) or within 3 business days of a child being placed the KSS Provider will assist the kinship caregiver in completing a TANF application.

15 business days prior to the annual guardianship hearing the KSS Provider will upload the Guardianship Annual Review Report to Guardian and submitted to Court.

Within 10 calendar days of the Courtesy Supervision monthly visit the KSS Provider will upload the Child and Caregiver Visitation Field Guide to Guardian.

Within 10 business days of permanency being achieved the KSS provider will complete and upload a Closure Report to Guardian.

Within 30 business days of referral receipt the Kinship Home Assessment is uploaded to Guardian.

Within 60 calendar days of completing the home assessment, if the caregiver is not selected as the living arrangement or chooses not to be licensed as a support for the caregiver, the KSS Provider shall complete and upload a Closure Report to Guardian.

KSS benefits kinship families in many ways.

- Provides Kinship Navigation support from the time of referral through permanency or referral closure regardless of the path of the caregiver (unlicensed, licensed, adoptive). The goal of kinship navigation is to preserve placements, eliminate hurdles, and achieve permanency while facilitating partnerships between the kinship caregiver, DCS, and the service provider community in order for families to learn about, find, and use programs and services that meet their own needs and the needs of the child.
- Completes a Strength Needs Cultural Discovery (SNCD) with the kinship caregiver to create a Family Support Plan (FSP). Family Support Plans should be updated as needs/barriers are identified; goals are met; household composition, placement, or case plan changes are made.
- Assists the kinship caregivers in completing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Application for Child-Only cash assistance.
- Assists the kinship caregiver in gaining access to other DCS, DES and/or community services (e.g., subsidized housing, SNAP, etc.) for which the family may qualify.
- Assists the kinship caregiver with accessing behavioral health services, if applicable.
- Assists the kinship caregiver with ensuring children are enrolled in school and their educational needs are met.
- Notifies the DCS Specialist of additional needs of the children identified by the kinship caregiver, such as appointments, necessary services and resources (e.g., counseling, medical, dental, employment, etc.).
- KSS providers complete Incident Reports on behalf of the kinship caregiver, when needed.
- Highlights the benefits of foster care licensing and provides an expedited path to licensure. Assists the kinship caregiver with kinship waivers. Assists with preparation for the Life Safety Inspection and remediation of any deficiencies.

- Assists the kinship caregiver with maintaining safety standards in the home.
- Assists with scheduling appointments for fingerprinting and follow up with kinship caregiver and household members to ensure fingerprints were completed. Ensure families denied fingerprint clearance cards submit for a good cause exception and assist with the process until good cause is granted. In the interim, if an adult household member is unable to obtain a fingerprint clearance card the family may qualify for a DCS approved waiver.
- Assists the kinship caregiver with accessing the Provider Portal. Explain and demonstrate the DCS Foster Care Invoice and Provider Portal. Assist the kinship caregiver with any ongoing billing issues. Assist the kinship caregiver with requesting bed rate increases, if applicable.
- Provides the kinship caregiver a review and copy of the Kinship Foster Care Booklet, the Go-To-Guide, and Kinship Resource List.
- Educates kinship caregiver on reunification goals and permanency options for children in care.
- KSS Providers may participate in the Child Family Team (CFT) meetings, attend court with the kinship caregiver, participate in Team Decision Meeting's (TDM) and other structured engagements with the Department, system partners, birth parents and other activities that support the permanency goal for each child placed with licensed or certified kinship family.
- Discusses the adoption certification process and assist in obtaining certification when necessary.
- Assists the kinship caregiver with applying for adoption subsidy or guardianship subsidy when applicable.
- Provides timely education, specific skill building and coaching to kinship caregivers to ensure they are able to adequately meet the needs of children in their care and kept up to date on current best practices.
- Provides childcare for pre-service and ongoing training when requested.
- Provides ongoing supports on an as needed basis for DCS-referred families that previously had guardianship and are being referred for certification only.
- Intercedes for the kinship caregivers to reduce conflict or stress between the kinship caregivers and any parties involved.

KSS reports that will be uploaded into Guardian will include:

- Kinship Home Assessments.
- Kinship Foster Care License.
- Family Support Plans.
- Case Closure Summaries.
- Child and Caregiver Visitation Field Guide (when referred for Courtesy Supervision).
- Guardianship Annual Review Reports (when applicable).
- Adoption Certification Studies and Order of Certification (when requested and applicable).
- Case Notes (when applicable).

Frequency of contact

At least monthly for the first six months and then quarterly thereafter. More frequently as necessary based on the needs of the kinship caregiver and child.

If referred for Courtesy Supervision, visits will continue monthly and not transition to quarterly.

A team of Kinship Support Specialists within Foster Supports at DCS will facilitate service delivery to families. These specialists will act as mediators and monitors between KSS providers and DCS and help make connections to resources and problem solve hurdles when they arise.

Communication between DCS and KSS providers informs every one of the kinship caregiver's progress and provides a timely response to identified concerns while continuing to coordinate services.