



SUPPORTING & ENCOURAGING PLACEMENT WITH RELATIVE CAREGIVERS

SUMMARY

Kinship placements allow children in the child welfare system to be placed with family members or other caring adults close to them. This can greatly improve their experience in foster care, keeping them closer to their communities and loved ones. While there are benefits to kinship care for the child, kinship caregivers may also face challenges, which can sometimes prevent or disrupt placement.

BACKGROUND

When a child is removed from their home, they can be placed in a foster home or a group facility, but the preferred placement is with someone with whom the child already has a strong relationship. This is called kinship care.



What Is a Kinship Caregiver?

There are several qualifications needed for someone to serve as a kinship caregiver. They must have:

- A significant relationship with the parents or child;
- A shared history during which the caregiver has observed the child's development; and
- Knowledge of the child's family composition, dynamics, experiences and values.

The kinship caregiver is not required to be related to the child. A kinship caregiver who is not related to the child is known as a "fictive" kinship caregiver. Individuals who could be kinship caregivers include grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents, family friends, counselors or teachers. In FY 2023, approximately 34% of children in foster care in Texas were placed with kinship caregivers.¹

Benefits to Children

There are many benefits for a child when they are placed with a kinship caregiver rather than placed in a traditional foster home. These benefits include:

- The child will experience less trauma and have a greater feeling of stability;
- Sibling groups are more likely to stay together;
- The child is more likely to remain within their community of origin, typically allowing them to remain in their school and maintain connections to their cultural identity; and
- Once a child in kinship care exits the foster care system, they are less likely to re-enter.²

Barriers to Kinship Care

While there are significant benefits to kinship care, kinship caregivers also face many challenges, which can sometimes prevent or disrupt placement. Challenges include:

¹ https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Data_Book/Child_Protective_Services/Placements/Substitute_Care_on_Aug_31.asp.

² Source: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/Services_to_Kinship_Caregivers_Resource_Guide.pdf.





Childcare: Subsidized childcare may be available for kinship caregivers but can take a long time to organize and is dependent on the caregiver's employment status, the age of the child and what other assistance the caregiver receives.³

Licensing Challenges: Kinship caregivers can get licensed by the state, which makes them eligible to receive many more benefits, including significantly more financial assistance. These benefits also include more robust case management to help them access services, manage challenging behavior, etc. However, the process to become licensed is time consuming, requiring at least 20 hours of annual training, an in-depth home evaluation, a fire inspection and greater caseworker involvement. This enhanced scrutiny can deter kinship caregivers from pursuing a foster care license despite the additional benefits offered.⁴ Texas has the opportunity to create a simpler, kinship-specific licensing process, which should alleviate some of these concerns.⁵

POLICY POSITION

Texas CASA supports funding and policies that further support and encourage placement with relative caregivers.

Texas CASA Supports:

1. Legislation, riders or budget items that will increase the daily reimbursement rate for kinship caregivers
2. Increased funding for concrete services
3. Decreased requirements and expanded funding to allow kinship caregivers to have access to childcare and respite care
4. Implementation of new licensing standards for relative or kinship foster family homes in Texas

If you have questions or concerns related to this or any other Texas CASA legislative priority, please email: publicpolicy@texascasa.org.

³ Source: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/cps/files/CPS_pg_8235.asp.

⁴ Source: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/adoption_and_foster_care/get_started/requirements.asp.

⁵ Source: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/policy-guidance/im-23-07>.

