

FOSTER CARE AND BEYOND: KINSHIP FOSTER CARE AND GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE

WHAT IS KINSHIP FOSTER CARE?

When a child/youth in North Carolina comes into foster care, whenever possible, they will be temporarily placed with a relative or kin. We refer to this type of placement as **kinship foster care**. In North Carolina, **kin** can be related to the child/youth by birth or can have demonstrated a “family-like” relationship with the child/youth, such as a close friend of the family or the child/youth’s foster parent. Kinship caregivers are the preferred resource for a child/youth who must be removed from their home because this placement maintains the child/youth’s connections with their families.

WHAT IS LICENSED KINSHIP FOSTER CARE?

Kinship caregivers may choose to become licensed foster parents, which qualifies them for monthly financial assistance to help care for the child/youth. Without a license, this support is not available. The licensing process includes a 30-hour training, a home study, and criminal background checks for all adults in the home. Although the licensing process takes time and there are some expenses connected with the process, a child/youth placed with a licensed kinship caregiver will qualify for monthly financial support. In addition, licensed kinship caregivers may qualify for KinGAP, so kinship caregivers who might become permanent caregivers should consider becoming licensed.

WHAT IS LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP FROM FOSTER CARE?

If reunification with birth parents or adoption are no longer options for a child/youth in foster care, legal guardianship is another way for a child/youth to find a permanent home. Guardianship is considered when the child/youth’s best interests are to stay connected to their birth parents and extended family, and permanency cannot be achieved another way.

WHAT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY AS A LEGAL GUARDIAN?

Legal guardians are responsible for the day-to-day care and supervision of a child/youth placed with them. Legal guardians have the same responsibilities as a parent. Once a relative becomes the legal guardian, social services no longer has legal custody of the child/youth, and will not be involved in the family’s life, unless the family reaches out to social services for support. As the legal guardian of the child/youth, some of your responsibilities will include:

- Decide where the child/youth lives and goes to school;
- Ensure the child/youth’s educational, medical, dental, mental health, and social needs are being met; and
- Make decisions about the child/youth’s future on the child/youth’s behalf.

WHAT IS KINGAP?

The Kinship Foster Care and Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) offers financial assistance and Medicaid for youth who are determined to be in a permanent family setting and unlikely to obtain permanency through reunification or adoption. Licensed kinship caregivers and licensed foster families willing to provide a permanent home for the youth in their care may be eligible for KinGAP. See basic eligibility requirements for more information.

Basic Eligibility Requirements for KinGAP:

A child/youth has been removed from his or her home and placed in the custody of a county child welfare agency (i.e. foster care)

The court has determined that reunification and adoption are not options for the child/youth.

The child/youth has been placed in the licensed home of the prospective legal guardian for a minimum of six (6) consecutive months.

The youth is at least 14 years old **OR**
The child is a younger sibling of a 14+ year old and is being placed in the same guardianship arrangement.

The prospective guardian has a strong commitment to permanently care for the child/youth.

A Guardianship Assistance Agreement has been signed by both the guardian and the agency prior to guardianship being awarded.

CONTACT YOUR COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR MORE INFORMATION OR VISIT:

[HTTPS://WWW2.NCDHHS.GOV/INFO/OLM/MANUALS/DSS/CSM-78/MAN/SECTION%201700.PDF](https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/info/olm/manuals/dss/csm-78/man/section%201700.pdf)