



Kinship Care

When a child must be removed from his or her home, caseworkers first try to place the child with a family member or close family friend. This is known as kinship care, and it represents the most desirable out-of-home placement option for children who cannot live with their parents. Kinship care offers family preservation and the greatest level of stability by allowing a child to maintain his or her sense of belonging and by enhancing the child's ability to identify with his or her family's culture and traditions.

Kinship care can be a temporary or permanent arrangement in which a relative or nonrelative adult who has a long-standing relationship with the child and/or family takes over the full-time substitute care of that child when the parents are unable or unwilling to do so. In many cases, kinship caregivers are grandparents. It has been estimated that nearly 9 percent of all children in Ohio are being raised by kinship caregivers.

Kinship care includes relationships established through an informal arrangement, legal custody, guardianship order, foster care placement or adoption. Regardless of the type of arrangement, the kinship caregivers' voluntary commitment to devote their lives to the children in their care is a courageous, life-changing decision.

Ohio offers two programs for kinship caregivers: the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program and the Kinship Child Care Program. To apply for either of them, contact your county public children services agency or county department of job and family services. To find your local agency, visit jfs.ohio.gov/county.

Kinship Permanency Incentive Program

The Kinship Permanency Incentive Program is designed to support kinship caregivers in their decision to make permanent commitments by helping defray some of the costs of caring for children. Eligible caregivers receive a one-time payment to reduce the costs of the initial placement. They may receive up to seven subsequent payments every six months to support the stability of the child's placement in the home. Participation in this program does not prevent families from also receiving child-only Ohio Works First cash assistance. To be eligible, a kinship caregiver must have:

- Legal custody or guardianship of the child on or after July 1, 2005.
- A gross family income of less than 300 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Kinship Child Care Program

The Kinship Child Care Program can help eligible kinship caregivers pay for child care. Those eligible can select a child care provider licensed and contracted by the state, and the child can then receive child care services at no cost. To be eligible, a kinship caregiver must:

- Be related to the child by blood, marriage or adoption or have legal custody or guardianship of the child.
- Have a gross family income of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

The Ohio Resource Guide

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services publishes an extensive guidebook for kinship families called "Relatives Caring for Children: Ohio Resource Guide." To obtain a copy, call 1-866-886-3537 (option 4) or go to www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/ and search for JFS 08146.