



Turn home life around for a kid you know.

STEP IN FOR YOUR KIN: KINSHIP CARE 101

When children and teenagers need a safe place to call home temporarily or permanently, those who are closest to them can step in as kinship caregivers and make a world of difference. At-risk youth who can depend on family or close family friends in their time of need can successfully adapt to new home environments that maintain the sense of familiarity and stability they are accustomed to.

What exactly is kinship foster care?

Knowing that removal from home is stressful for children, the first choice for temporary placement is with “kin” or “fictive kin,” those who have a “family-like” relationship with the child. Therefore, kinship care is the full-time care, nurturing, and protection of children by their relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with a child or teenager.

Why is kinship foster care needed?

Kinship care is a positive way forward and provides some of the best possible outcomes for children and youth who are temporarily displaced due to unsafe living conditions. Staying with a family member or a close family friend can help ease the trauma associated with being removed from their homes. In some cases, kids are able to stay in their current schools and childhood neighborhoods as well as maintain connections with family and friends close by. Additionally, youth who are placed with those familiar to them are more likely to successfully adapt to their new homes whether they remain temporary or become permanent.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

**For more information, contact your
county department of social services or visit
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/kinshipcare>**

TELL ME MORE ABOUT KINGAP.

The Kinship Foster Care and Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) offers financial assistance and Medicaid for youth determined to be in a permanent family setting and unlikely to obtain permanency through reunification or adoption. Licensed kinship caregivers willing to provide a permanent home for youth in their care may be eligible for KinGAP.

BASIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

- 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 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.

But don't I have to be licensed to be a caregiver?

With kinship care, licensing is not a requirement to step in for a child in need. It's common practice for youth living in unsafe situations to temporarily stay with relatives or "kin." Sometimes families can work out these arrangements on their own without involving the child welfare system. Other times, the system does get involved.

It is important to note that kinship caregivers who choose to become licensed foster parents qualify for monthly financial assistance to help care for a child/youth. Additionally, licensed kinship caregivers may qualify for the Kinship Foster Care and Guardian Assistance Program (KinGAP). If there's a strong possibility you may become a permanent caregiver for a child in need, licensing is recommended.

But wait, kinship care is only temporary, right?

In some cases, kinship care is a temporary solution until it's deemed appropriate for a youth to be reunified with their birth parents. In fact, reunification is the preferred outcome when a child is temporarily removed from their home. If reunification with birth parents or adoption are no longer options for children and teens, legal guardianship with kinship caregivers may be an option.

What are my responsibilities 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 or "kin" becomes the legal guardian, social services no longer have legal custody of the child/youth. Legal guardians can reach out to social services for support as needed. As the legal guardian of a child/youth, some of your responsibilities will include:

- *deciding where the child/youth lives and goes to school.*
- *ensuring the child/youth's educational, medical, dental, mental health, and social needs are being met.*
- *making decisions about the child/youth's future on the child/youth's behalf.*



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