

# Foster Care Licensing for Kinship Caregivers



## What is kinship care?

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) uses the term “kinship care” to refer to the full-time care of a child by relatives and suitable others. “Suitable others” is used to refer to unrelated kin. Kinship care provides unique benefits for children, and it can include some unique challenges for the relatives and unrelated kinship caregivers who provide care. DCYF is committed to supporting you as you care for your kinship child. This resource provides information about getting licensed.

## Why should I be licensed to care for my kinship child?

Kinship caregivers are strongly encouraged to be licensed; however, it is not a requirement. Being licensed provides additional support including a monthly reimbursement of costs associated with caring for a child experiencing foster care. If you are a relative to the child in care, you may also qualify for some licensing exemptions in order to become licensed. Read on to learn more about the benefits of getting licensed.

- Kinship foster parents are assigned a Licensing Division worker who can assist with questions and other needs throughout your child’s foster care journey.

- All caregivers have access to excellent training available through our partners at the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, but kinship caregivers can access training specifically designed for their unique experience.
- Foster care reimbursement provides the greatest amount of ongoing financial support DCYF can offer. These reimbursements are at a higher rate than the grant available through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. The rates as of July 1, 2021, are:

Foster Care Reimbursement Basic Rate	
Age of Child or Youth	Monthly Reimbursement Per Child
0 to 5 years	\$672.00
6 to 11 years	\$796.00
12 and older	\$810.00

TANF Maximum Benefit	
Household Size	Total Monthly Reimbursement
1	\$417.00
2	\$528.00
3	\$654.00
4	\$771.00
5	\$888.00

Foster care reimbursement rates may be higher depending on the level of care the child needs.

- The Foster Parent Reimbursement and Liability Plan may assist with paying for damages or injuries caused by a child placed with you that are not covered by private insurance.
- Extended Foster Care (18 to 21 years) allows foster care reimbursement to kinship foster parents providing care to youth over 18 who choose to remain in foster care to assist with the transition to adulthood.

## What training is required?

- First Aid/CPR
- Blood Borne Pathogens
- Licensing Orientation
- Caregiver Core Training



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## Is financial assistance or other support available for the licensing process?

Reading and thinking about these requirements may sound overwhelming. Getting licensed is a process, and our goal is to support you through the experience. Licensing Division staff can help remove barriers to licensing by purchasing items that are required such as lock boxes and fire extinguishers. Do not hesitate to ask your Licensing Division worker for assistance if this is a concern.

The Caregiver Retention, Education and Support (CaRES) program is available to support you throughout your kinship foster care journey, too.

Visit: [alliancecarescommunity.org](http://alliancecarescommunity.org) or email [alliancecares@uw.edu](mailto:alliancecares@uw.edu) to learn more!

## Wait! I want these kids to go home to their parent(s). This isn't supposed to be a long-term placement, so why should I go through this whole process?

We support you in wanting your kinship child to go home. In fact, reunification is our first and primary goal, but we know that sometimes a parent may need more support or time to learn new skills. Even if you think your kinship child will be placed with you for a short period of time, we encourage you to get licensed and begin benefiting from the supports available through licensing.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who can apply to be a foster parent?

Persons from all racial/ethnic/cultural and religious backgrounds, renters and homeowners, persons who identify as LGBTQIA+, persons with any education level, all are welcome to apply!

### Are there income requirements to be a licensed kinship foster parent?

Yes. We evaluate your financial situation during the home study process, and we know that kinship caregivers encounter unique and unexpected financial challenges when they decide to care for a kinship child. We want to ensure that you can meet the financial needs of your family without relying on the foster care reimbursements. Exceptions may be made to this requirement for kinship caregivers.

### Do you have to be a US citizen to become a licensed kinship foster parent?

It is not a requirement to obtain US citizenship to become foster licensed. However, you or a co-applicant on the license must have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) in order to receive foster care reimbursement.

## Can I be a kinship foster parent if I have a criminal background?

Having a criminal history does not automatically disqualify a person from becoming a foster parent. All foster parents must pass a criminal background check that includes FBI fingerprinting. In some instances, an additional review of criminal history may be required.

## Can I be a kinship foster parent if I had a CPS case?

Having a past CPS case does not automatically disqualify a person from becoming a foster parent. DCYF will review your CPS history and assess whether the information may compromise a child's safety and well-being.

Any adult living in a potential foster home must:

- Complete a Washington State Patrol background check
- Complete FBI fingerprinting

Youth ages 16 and 17 in the household must complete a Washington State Patrol background check or FBI fingerprinting if they have lived outside of Washington in the last three years.

## How long would my kinship child stay in my home as a foster child?

It depends on the particular child and the parents' situation. A child may stay in care a few days or several months. With all children in care, permanency is always a priority. Permanency for a child could include returning home, adoption, guardianship, or long-term foster care (in rare circumstances).

## How does DCYF support the children's parents through this process?

Reunification is the process of actively working with parents to address issues that brought their child into care so the family can come back together. Children need safe, stable, quality care during this time. It is important for the child to stay connected to their family. Most children experiencing foster care have regular court-ordered family time with their parents. Children and parents need to have regular contact to stay connected and work toward children returning home safely. The child's caseworker will work with you and the child's parents to decide the location and time of family time. The court decides the level of supervision and family time plan developed (frequency and location). The child's caseworker will work with kinship caregivers to ensure family time is manageable and meets the needs of the children, their parents, and the caregivers that support them.

### Can children share rooms?

Most children may share bedrooms. They must have a separate bed and children of the opposite gender can only share a room if they are under six years old. Some children cannot share bedrooms because of supervision needs. There are various circumstances that impact the ability to share rooms. These are case-specific and will be addressed with the child's caseworker. Children age 6 and above need to share a room with the same gender child. In certain cases, there may be exceptions to this rule depending on the circumstances of all children.

### What are the rules or requirements about smoking?

Smoking is not allowed in the living space of any foster home or facility caring for children, or in any motor vehicles used for transporting children. Adults may smoke outdoors away from children.

### What discipline options do I have for a kinship child experiencing foster care?

No forms of physical punishment are allowed. DCYF stresses positive discipline, creating structure and boundaries, and having natural consequences combined with warmth and caring. You will receive training during the licensing process on appropriate forms of discipline. Kinship foster parents are encouraged to utilize positive discipline methods, assisting the child with coping skills and the ability to navigate their emotions. There is also ongoing training support once you become licensed.

### Can we take our kinship child with us on vacation?

Yes, but if the travel will be more than 72 hours or out-of-the-country the kinship foster parent will need prior approval from the child's caseworker. It is essential that the kinship caregiver communicate the travel plans with the caseworker to ensure that the travel does not impact family time and other obligations necessary for the children placed in their care.

### Can my kinship child be left with others, such as a babysitter, for short periods of time?

Yes, foster children can be cared for by others, caregivers must be 16 years of age. Background checks and CPR/First Aid are necessary for those who care for the children on a regular basis. Respite care is also an option for families who need additional support. It is important that the kinship caregiver maintain good communication with the child's caseworker, keeping them informed of the child's and kinship caregiver's needs.

### Who can explain the licensing process and support me during my kinship child's foster care experience?

The Caregiver Retention, Education and Support (CaRES) program is available to support you throughout your kinship foster care journey. CaRES can explain the licensing process, too.

Visit: <https://alliancecares.org> or email [alliancecares@uw.edu](mailto:alliancecares@uw.edu) to learn more!

## When I am ready to turn in my home study application, who do I send it to? Or, if I have questions about an application, who can I contact?

**Region 1:** [R1LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:R1LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov)

**Region 2:** [R2LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:R2LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov)

**Region 3:** [R3LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:R3LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov)

**Region 4:** [R4LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:R4LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov)

**Region 5:** [R5LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:R5LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov)

**Region 6:** [R6LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:R6LicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov)

**Spanish-Speakers:** [EspañolLicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:EspañolLicensingDivision@dcyf.wa.gov)

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