

What are my rights as a Kinship Caregiver?

- To receive respect and courtesy from the agency's representative
- To have the option to apply for TCA and other benefits or become a Licensed or Restricted Foster Parent;
- To discuss the permanency plan with the worker and speak to any concern regarding the committed child
- To request and receive (when available), assistance with supportive services such as day care, in-home aide services, and emergency assistance; and
- To decide whether or not you want to be a foster parent

What Can You Expect from BCDSS?

The worker will assess with you any needs the children may have so that a plan of action can be put into place.

Services we provide include but are not limited to the following:

- Counseling and guidance in resolving family or parental problems that are currently preventing the return of the child to their parents
- Medical Assistance for the children
- Visiting and monitoring the home to make sure that the children receive age-appropriate supervision and care from the kinship caregiver
- Assistance and support in assuring that the children are placed in an appropriate school setting that will address their needs
- Information and referral to services and resources that will help the family meet its needs;
- Social and emotional support for the parents, children and kinship caregiver

Contact Us

To learn more about the many benefits of becoming a Kinship Care provider to a child in need, call

410-685-8231

For more information, visit our website:

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/bcdss-kinship/>

Please sign to acknowledge receipt of this Kinship Care brochure.

Primary Caregiver Name:

Primary Caregiver Signature:

Date Signed:

To contact the Child's Caseworker and Supervisor at any time, call 410-361-2235



Kinship CARE

Strengthening and Preserving Family Ties



What is Kinship Care?

For generations, families have temporarily stepped in for parents under stress to make sure the children have a familiar and loving environment. This practice is referred to as kinship care.

Kinship caregivers include relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, adult siblings, cousins, etc) and non-relatives who have a close connection to the youth or parents (godparents, neighbors, teachers, domestic partners, biological parents of a child's sibling, church members/spiritual teachers).

Whenever possible, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS) first seeks to place children who enter foster care with relatives or other trusted adults who know and love them. Kinship placements can reduce the trauma children experience being separated from their parents.

What is the Goal of Kinship Care?

The goal of kinship care is to ensure that children remain in a safe and stable environment with people they are familiar with when they are unable to live with their parents. If children cannot return to their birth parents, BCDSS will work with the kinship caregiver to become the permanent legal guardian either through adoption, legal custody or guardianship.

How Does BCDSS Support Kinship Caregivers?

Placement with someone who the child already knows is less stressful for the child, so BCDSS prefers to place children with relatives when possible and works to support the families who step up to care for their own. As a kinship caregiver for a child in foster care, you are entitled to several benefits and services.



Become a Restricted Resource Provider (Foster Parent).

Kinship caregivers can become approved BCDSS Resource Providers. We can answer your questions and support you through this process. To learn more about the foster parent requirements, **call the BCDSS Welcome Line 410-685-8231** or visit <https://dhs.maryland.gov/bcdss-kinship/>

There are many benefits to becoming a restricted foster parent, including:

- Financial help to assist with the child's needs and living expenses
- Ongoing education to help you address the child's physical and emotional needs
- A dedicated home worker who will support your transition to become a full-time caregiver
- Peer supports through the Maryland Resource Parent Association

For kinship caregivers who do not become restricted foster parents, BCDSS can help you access other DSS benefits and supports:

- **Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA):** "Child only" grant is available to eligible children and their kinship caregivers (no adult is included in the grant).
- **SNAP (aka Food Stamps):** Provides nutrition benefits to supplement your family's food budget.

Apply for TCA and SNAP online at <https://mydhrbenefits.dhr.state.md.us>, or in person at BCDSS, or call 1-800-332-6347

Other benefits you may be eligible for include:

- **Child Care Subsidies:** Eligibility is based on the caregiver's income. Apply online at <https://maryland.mendixcloud.com>, or call 1-866-243-8796
- **Social Security Survivors Benefits or Social Security Income:** Certain children may be eligible for Social Security Survivor's Benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). **Apply online at www.socialsecurity.gov, or call 1-800-772-1213**

What are the Future Plans for the Child?



Foster care is a temporary arrangement which gives children a sense of safety and stability. However, many kinship placements last longer than expected.

It is important to plan for the long-term just in case the child cannot return to their parents quickly. Once a child enters foster care, BCDSS immediately begins working with kinship caregivers, parents and children to develop a permanent plan for the child to ensure that the child does not stay too long in foster care.

A child's permanency plan identifies the final plan once children leave foster care, and it will depend on many factors but could include:

- Return home to parent(s)
- Adoption by a kinship caregiver
- Legal custody or guardianship by a kinship caregiver



What is Your Role as a Kinship Caregiver?

A kinship caregiver plays a very important role in a child's life. You can help provide a sense of stability and normalcy during a time of confusion for the child. As a kinship caregiver, having a partnership between you and the parents are key to supporting the child.

BCDSS expects kinship caregivers to do the following:

- Respect and support the birth parents' relationship with their child by co-parenting and working in partnership to help the child return home
- Keep the assigned worker updated on the child's progress
- Participate in Family Involvement Meetings (FIM)
- Ensure that children are registered in school and work with the school on their behalf
- Ensure that the children are taken to preventive health care visits (initial health screening and comprehensive exams) and follow-up treatment as necessary
- Work with the department to fulfill the terms of the services agreement, which includes visits with the parents and siblings, and planning for the child's future