

What else should I know?

- » The Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court judge will be informed about potential kinship care providers.
- » Initial placement with a kinship care provider during a protective services investigation does not guarantee the child will remain with them. The local department of social services and the judge consider many factors in determining which living arrangements are in the child's best interests.
- » Preferential consideration for having the child placed will go to a biological parent who has not harmed the child, then relatives who come forward to be a resource to the child.
- » Most children return to their parents' care within 12 months if the circumstances have improved.



HOW CAN I BECOME AN APPROVED FOSTER PARENT?

- » Apply to become a foster parent at your local department of social services.
- » Work with a Family Services Specialist on a mutual family assessment (also called a home study), including a safety inspection.
- » Consent to criminal background and child abuse/neglect record checks, which are required for all adult residents.
- » Complete the local department of social services' required training for foster parents.
- » In many cases, local departments can place a child immediately in your home.



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KINSHIP CARE

Exploring Options for
Relatives and Close Family
Friends to Care for Children



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Kinship care is a way for Virginia's children to stay connected to family when they are unable to live with their parents due to illness, incarceration, housing instability, and/or abuse or neglect. Relatives and other important people in their lives (such as neighbors, godparents, family friends, etc.) can sometimes become their primary caregivers (also called "kinship care providers"). Kinship care can reduce trauma, promote stability, and maintain family and cultural connections.



KINSHIP CARE OPTIONS

The kinship care provider may be able to:

1. Care for the child for a temporary 90-day period in the Parental Child Safety Placement (PCSP) Program while the child's parents work toward reunification. This voluntary program allows the child to live with the kinship care provider, while their parents retain custody and legal rights to their child. Financial support may be available; speak with your family service specialist.
2. Receive custody of the child from the court. The kinship care provider can then make decisions for the child such as school enrollment and medical procedure approvals and seek support from local and state agencies on behalf of the child.
3. Be approved as a foster parent by the local department of social services if they meet Virginia's approved setting standards. The child can live with the kinship care provider and receive monthly payments based on the child's needs, while remaining in the custody of the local department of social services. For children in foster care who cannot return home, there are two paths for kinship foster parents to become permanent caregivers for children:
 - a. Adopt the child if the court terminates the rights of the child's parents.
 - b. Become the permanent legal custodian and receive monthly financial support for the child's needs through the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP). When adoption and return home are not options, this option allows the kinship care provider to become responsible for making decisions about the child's school, medical care, contact with other family members, and therapeutic services.

If the child was not placed with the kinship provider but was in foster care immediately prior to the kinship care provider receiving custody, the provider may be eligible for monthly financial support through the State Funded Kinship Subsidy Program.

Is kinship care right for me?

Consider the following questions before agreeing to become a kinship care provider:

- » How might kinship care affect my relationship with the child's parents and extended family?
- » How will this impact my own family, and do I have their support?
- » Do I understand the circumstances surrounding this child's removal from the home?
- » Will I be able to set limits with the child's parents?
- » Will I be able to support this child to return home or offer them a permanent home if necessary?
- » Will I need assistance to meet the mental and physical needs of this child?

