

Help for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and Other Caregivers

Throughout Arizona, thousands of children come to live with their grandparents and other relatives when their parents can no longer raise them due to illness, domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, incarceration or other reasons. These kinship families provide love, care and a vital family connection for children. They often face challenges including the effects of the trauma experienced by the children, health issues for the caregiver, and financial and housing constraints because they weren't expecting to be raising children. This resource manual points to help available to kinship families to provide a strong and stable family for the children who need them.

This guide is compiled by:



www.AZChildren.org



www.AZGA.org



About Grandparents Raising Grandkids...

Research confirms what thousands of caregivers throughout Arizona know firsthand: Children do best with their own family members even when they can't live with their parents.

- More than 76,200 children in Arizona today are being raised by their grandparents for part of their childhoods.
- More than 1 out of 4 grandchildren in grandfamilies lives in poverty.
- 40% of the grandchildren are under 6 years old; 34% are between 6 and 11 years old; and 26% are 12 to 17 years old.
- 1 out of 4 grandparents raising their grandchild has a disability.
- 2 of 5 caregivers raising their grandchildren are younger than 60 years of age.
- 6 out of 10 grandparent heads of household are women.

Pathway 1: Kinship Foster Care Through the Department of Child Safety

If a child is placed with you by the Department of Child Safety (DCS) and the case is still open, you and the child are eligible for a variety of supports and services. Your Child Safety Specialist should provide you with information and forms to complete; if not, ask for them.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- **Unlicensed Kinship Foster Care.**

Caregivers will receive, at a minimum, a monthly clothing and personal allowance during the time the children are in an open DCS case. The payment is based on the number of days the children resided with the caregiver and ranges from \$0.63 to \$2.63 per day (\$19-\$79 per month) depending on the age of the child. Caregivers will receive a



billing statement each month which must be signed and returned to the Department of Child Safety to process the payment. Caregivers who are unlicensed may also be eligible for the Kinship (formerly grandparent) Stipend or TANF Cash Assistance (see below).

- **Licensed Kinship Foster Care.** Caregivers may choose to apply for licensure as a foster home. This does not mean that these caregivers must open their home to other children in the foster care system; however, they are required to complete training and pass a home inspection. In addition to the personal and clothing allowances discussed above, licensed caregivers receive a monthly “maintenance” payment which ranges from \$20.31 to \$28.89 per day depending on the age of the child. Rates as high as \$46.43 per day are paid for children who require higher levels of care, such as medically fragile children. One-time payments to cover special events may be requested from the Child Safety Specialist. Caregivers will receive a billing statement each month which must be signed and returned to the Department of Child Safety to process the payment.
- **Kinship (formerly Grandparent) Stipend - Unlicensed Kinship Foster Care.** Caregivers may be eligible for a \$75 per month per child stipend. To qualify, the caregiver’s income must be below 200% of the federal poverty level (**see CHART A1 on page 3**). The application is a simple one-page form (CSO-1266A) that requires only the name and date of birth of the children, contact information, and the caregiver’s signature. The application is available from the assigned Child Safety Specialist who will also submit it for processing.

- TANF Cash Assistance - Unlicensed Kinship Foster Care Relatives.** Caregivers may apply for assistance under the Kinship Foster Care Child Only criteria of the TANF Cash Assistance program. There is no family income limitation for unlicensed kinship placements – almost all unlicensed kinship foster families qualify for TANF Cash Assistance. The benefit level is based on the child's income only (which in most cases is zero). The maximum monthly benefit is \$164 per month for the first child, \$220 per month for two children, \$278 per month for three children, and increasing by \$57 for each additional child. The application is available from the DCS Child Safety Specialist who should also provide an information sheet entitled "How to Apply for Child-Only Cash Assistance (TANF) for Kinship Foster Caregivers." The application is also available online at www.azdes.gov in the Document Center (Application for Benefits – FA-001). The completed application should be returned to the DCS Child Safety Specialist who will code it as a kinship placement and submit it to the Department of Economic Security (DES) for processing. A DES eligibility worker will contact the caregiver to complete an interview.

NO Lifetime Time Limits. The lifetime limits that apply to most TANF Cash Assistance cases do not apply to children in foster care.

CHILD CARE

The Department of Child Safety will pay for full- or part-time child care if the caregiver is working, attending school, or unable to care for the child for a portion of a 24-hour day due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition. The Child Safety Specialist will authorize the payments and provide additional information. Unlike other child care subsidies, there are no copays and no waiting lists for Department of Child Safety child care. Children between the ages of 3 and 5 are also eligible for Arizona Head Start. (See www.AZHeadstart.org or call 1.866.363.6484 to find a local Head Start class.)

CHART A1

2017 Federal Poverty Guidelines Upper Income Limit (Monthly Income)				
Family Size	100%	130%	165%	200%
1	\$1,005	\$1,307	\$1,658	\$2,010
2	\$1,353	\$1,759	\$2,233	\$2,707
3	\$1,702	\$2,212	\$2,808	\$3,403
4	\$2,050	\$2,665	\$3,383	\$4,100

MEDICAL/DENTAL COVERAGE

The Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program (CMDP) program provides medical and dental coverage for all children in foster care, including children in unlicensed kinship placements. There is no separate eligibility process – children who come into foster care are automatically enrolled in CMDP. Once the child transitions from foster care to permanent guardianship or adoption, returns to the parent, or ages out of the foster care system, CMDP is no longer available; however, the child may be eligible for Traditional AHCCCS or KidsCare depending on family income. The caregiver with whom the child lives must complete and submit an AHCCCS application (see www.healtharizonaplus.gov).

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Regional Behavioral Health Agencies (RBHA). Children in foster care receive behavioral health services through one of the RBHAs. Information should be provided at the time the child came to live with the relative. A listing of resources for kinship placements can be found at: <http://bit.ly/kinshipresources>. If you are in need of crisis services and unable to get timely assistance, call AHCCCS Customer Support at 602.364.4558 or 800.867.5808.

OTHER SUPPORTS

- **Respite.** Licensed foster homes can access 144 hours of respite per fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). Additional respite may be available through the RBHA or through the local Area Agency on Aging.
- **Free school breakfast and lunch.** Children in foster care are eligible for free breakfast and lunch at schools that provide those meals. The Kinship Stipend is not considered as income when completing the eligibility forms.
- **SNAP (formerly Food Stamps).** The income limit for SNAP is 130% of the federal poverty level. SNAP eligibility and benefits are based on the entire household.
- **Child Safety Seats.** Seats are available through the Department of Child Safety. Caregivers should notify their case specialist.



Pathway 2: Informal Kinship Families (No Involvement with The Department of Child Safety)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- **TANF Cash Assistance.** Caregivers may be eligible for a maximum monthly benefit of approximately \$164 per month for the first child, \$220 per month for two children, \$278 per month for three children, and increasing by \$57 for each additional child. Unlike unlicensed foster care placements, two major eligibility criteria must be met. The first is that the **household** income is at or below 130% of the federal poverty level (**see CHART A1 on p. 3**). (Note: This is a higher income threshold than that used when children are residing with their parents.) If the household income criteria is met, then the benefit amount is determined using the **child's income only**. In most cases, of course, the child will have no income.

Note: Caregivers and any minor children living at home may be included in the TANF Cash Assistance benefit; however, the household income level threshold used is 100% of the federal poverty level. In addition, the income of all the individuals for whom Cash Assistance is being requested is considered in determining the benefit amount.

- **Lifetime Time Limit**. The 12-month lifetime limit for receiving TANF Cash Assistance **does** apply if the children were not placed with the caregivers through the Department of Child Safety. However, extensions may be approved under a variety of circumstances, including the caregiver being age 60 or over or caring for a disabled child or other family member. Information regarding applying for an extension is provided with the notice that benefits are being terminated.

MEDICAL/DENTAL COVERAGE

Traditional AHCCCS or KidsCare. Children who are not supported by their parents may qualify for either Traditional AHCCCS or KidsCare. The caregiver's income is not considered **if** the child is not claimed as a dependent on the caregiver's tax return. If the child **is** claimed as a dependent, the caregiver's income plus the income of a spouse and all other individuals claimed as dependents by the caregiver is considered. KidsCare has a higher income threshold than Traditional AHCCCS (200% of the federal poverty level) and requires monthly premiums. An electronic application (Health-e Arizona Plus) is available online at www.healtharizonaplus.gov. To find a community assistor who can help complete and submit the application, go to www.coveraz.org/connector.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Regional Behavioral Health Agencies (RBHA). Children who are enrolled in AHCCCS (either Traditional or KidsCare) are eligible for behavioral health services through their local RBHA. Caregivers having difficulty accessing services can contact AHCCCS customer service at 602.364.4558 or 1.800.867.5808 for assistance.

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

Caregivers may qualify for child care assistance under one of two categories. The Department of Economic Security, Child Care Administration, determines eligibility; the application is available online at www.azdes.gov in the Document Center.

- **TANF Cash Assistance Participants.** Caregivers participating in TANF Cash Assistance (not only for the child who has come into their home but also for their own minor children) are eligible for child care assistance if the caregivers are working, attending school, or unable to care for the child for a portion of a 24-hour day due to physical, mental, or emotional conditions. **No** waiting list exists for this category of child care. Child care is also extended to victims of domestic violence and families experiencing homelessness.
- **Low-Income Working Families.** Working caregivers with incomes up to 165% of the federal poverty level may apply for child care assistance through the Department of Economic Security (**see CHART A1 on page 3**). Most of the time there is a waiting list. Families qualifying under the low-income working families category are required to pay a copay that ranges from \$1-\$5 per day for full-day care (part-day care is half).

Because the state reimbursement rate has not been updated in 14 years, the child care provider may charge an additional amount to fill the gap.

OTHER SUPPORTS

- **Respite.** Children receiving behavioral health services through one of the RBHAs may qualify for respite. Some respite may also be available through the local Area Agency on Aging.
- **SNAP (formerly Food Stamps).** The income limit for SNAP is 130% of the federal poverty level. SNAP eligibility and benefits are based on the entire household.



Permanent Families

The goal for children who have come into the foster care system is to connect them with a permanent family, either by returning to their own homes or by moving to a permanent guardianship or adoptive family. Caregivers may be eligible to be

either a permanent guardian or to adopt the child. Many factors go into these decisions. The information below concerns financial and medical coverage pertaining to guardianships completed through the Department of Child Safety or as an alternative to a child coming into foster care and to adoptions completed through the Department of Child Safety or private adoption agency.

PERMANENT GUARDIAN

While parental rights are not severed, the permanent guardian has sole decision-making authority regarding the child. A monthly stipend may be provided for those permanent guardianships when the Department of Child Safety was involved with the placement. The parents may also be ordered to pay child support and those payments are a factor in determining the amount of the guardianship subsidy.

- **Medical/Dental/Behavioral Health Care.** Guardians have the option of including children in their own insurance policies or applying for AHCCCS. Children who have been placed with a permanent guardian through the Department of Child Safety automatically meet the criteria for AHCCCS, which includes dental and behavioral health services, but they must make an application to AHCCCS. Children placed with a permanent guardian but not through the Department of Child Safety may be eligible for Traditional AHCCCS or KidsCare depending on family income. The

guardian with whom the child lives must complete and submit an AHCCCS application (see www.healtharizonaplus.gov).

ADOPTION SUBSIDY

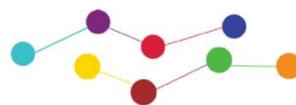
Children who are adopted from the Department of Child Safety as well as children adopted through a licensed private agency may be eligible for a monthly subsidy until the child reaches age 18 or graduates from high school. DCS must determine that special needs exist such as disabilities, emotional disturbances, or age six or older at the time of application. The subsidy amount is negotiated with the adoptive family based on the needs of the child and generally mirror licensed foster care rates.



- **Medical/Dental/Behavioral Health Care.** Adoptive parents have the option of including the children in their own insurance policies or applying for AHCCCS. Children who are eligible for the adoption subsidy are automatically eligible for AHCCCS but must complete and submit an AHCCCS application (see <https://www.healtharizonaplus.gov>). AHCCCS enrollment includes dental and behavioral health care.
- **Respite.** Respite services may be authorized by DCS if the services are related to the child's special needs identified on the adoption subsidy agreement. Prior authorization is required and all other resources must be used or denied prior to approval. See the Department of Child Safety's website (www.azdcs.gov) for additional information.

More information is available for foster families and some resources for kinship families.

Visit www.azfamilyresources.org.



Arizona Family Resources

English | Español

The screenshot displays a grid of service categories on the Arizona Family Resources website. Each category is represented by a colored circle with an icon and a brief description:

- Search:** Search the site using keywords to find content.
- Basics:** General information about Foster Care (Who should I expect to hear from?, What do I do next?).
- Medical:** Information on the medical needs for children in care (Chis, Immunization, Behavioral Health).
- Education:** Information about foster children in school (Registration, Documentation, Child Care).
- Legal:** Information about the foster care legal process. (Court process, What are my rights?).
- Resources:** External support resources (Child care, How to get documents, Financial Assistance, Emotional Support).
- Local:** Local resources sorted by Arizona County (Child care, Clothing, CASAs).
- Emergency:** What to do in the event of an emergency.

At the bottom of the grid, there is a link: [View the calendar of events](#)

CHART A2

COMPARISON OF FINANCIAL BENEFITS

DISCLAIMER: Determining financial eligibility for state programs often includes calculations that deduct expenses or disregard income. The income limits identified in this document do not include those calculations. Caregivers are advised to check with the Department of Child Safety and/or the Department of Economic Security.

	Informal Kinship Families (non-DCS)	Unlicensed Kinship Placements (DCS)	Licensed Foster Families (DCS)
Financial Assistance	<p>TANF Cash Assistance (\$164/month for first child, \$57 for each additional child) for 12 months. Households with gross income above 130% of the federal poverty level are ineligible .</p> <p>Potential for extension to 24 months if there are no sanctions. Additional extensions are available for caregivers age 60 or over or caring for a disabled child or other family member.</p> <p>No clothing and personal allowance subsidy; no stipend.</p>	<p>Clothing and personal allowance subsidy between \$19 and \$79 a month depending on child's age.</p> <p>\$75/month/child Kinship Stipend for families with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level.</p> <p>TANF Cash Assistance "child only"- \$164 for first child, \$57 for each additional child. Time limit does not apply.</p>	<p>Clothing and personal allowance subsidy between \$19 and \$79 a month depending on child's age.</p> <p>\$628-\$919 monthly payment per child depending on age of child.</p> <p>Higher rates are paid for children with special needs that require higher levels of care.</p>
Child Care Assistance	Waiting list for working families with low incomes (165% of federal poverty level).	Available – no waiting list	Available – no waiting list
AHCCCS/ Behavioral Health	Available when family income is below 200% of the federal poverty level.	Available to all children	Available to all children
Parent Training and Support	Depends on what's available in the community.	Primarily what's available in the community; DCS Child Safety Specialist may be available but no access to the training or supports licensed foster families receive through the licensing agencies.	DCS Child Safety Specialist, Foster Home Licensing Staff, ongoing training.

¹ The DCS fee schedule is based on a daily rate; monthly amounts shown are based on a 30-day month.

² Higher rates may be approved for children with special needs or who are medically fragile.

³ One-time payments for special needs such as school supplies or graduation expenses may be available.