



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Manual

Subject:	741.1 Licensure of Kinship Foster Families
Chapter:	Foster Family Licensing & Support
Effective Date:	07/21/2016
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application:	Child Welfare Services Staff

PURPOSE STATEMENT:

Placement with a child's biological family members, adoptive family members, or other kin can provide a source of stability and security during the child's time in foster care and can minimize the trauma of removal. Such placement can occur (1) prior to foster care placement through safety planning, (2) during foster care placement through licensing of such homes, or (3) as a form of discharge from foster care through adoption or guardianship. This section sets forth the policies and procedures for licensing kinship caregivers as placements during a child's stay in foster care.

POLICY:

1. When a child has been removed from his or her home and is in the care, custody, or guardianship of the agency, the agency shall first attempt to identify kin who would be appropriate for placement before seeking other foster placement alternatives.
2. When placing a foster child with kin or when DSS is contacted by a person interested in becoming a kinship caregiver for a specific foster child, it is the responsibility of the agency to inform the prospective kinship caregiver that he or she may apply to become licensed as a foster parent and may be entitled to payments and services upon licensure.
3. The agency will assist kinship caregivers with the application for license process.
4. If the prospective kinship caregiver is licensed by the agency to provide foster care services and placement is made, he or she may receive payment of the full foster care rate for the care of the child and any other benefits that might be available to foster parents, whether in money or in services
5. The agency shall give preference to the kinship caregiver over a non-related placement.
6. An expedited assessment must be completed for those situations in which the court has ordered a child into an unlicensed relative's home.
7. The agency will continue to make efforts to finalize legal permanency for children placed in kinship foster families, and will educate kinship foster families on an

ongoing basis regarding the mechanisms available to finalize legal permanency.

PROCEDURES:

1. For identification and engagement of kinship caregivers, refer to [510.3 Family Visitation Policy](#).
 2. For assessment and licensure of kinship caregivers, refer to [740: Intake and Background Checks](#). Kinship caregivers shall be licensed and managed in the same manner as are other foster families, with the exception of waivers of non-safety standards on a case-by-case basis.
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1. If the Family Court orders that a child is to be placed in an unlicensed relative's home:
 - a. the child's Foster Care Case Manager shall coordinate with the DSS Attorney to ensure that:
 - b. the court is aware of DSS's policy requiring foster children to be in licensed placements;
 - c. the court order contains language giving the agency the authority to remove the child in the event that the agency finds that it is contrary to the welfare of the child to remain in the home;
 - d. the court order reflects that the agency objected to the child being placed in an unlicensed placement.
 - e. the child's Foster Care Case Manager shall arrange for an expedited assessment to be completed.
 - f. if a kinship caregiver does not wish to become licensed, CW Staff shall complete assessments of the home as set forth in [Chapter 2: Intake](#) and [Chapter 3: Investigations](#).

DOCUMENTATION:

- ♦ Contacts with kinship foster family
- ♦ Correspondence with agency staff and other professionals ♦
- Copy of home study
- ♦ If applicable, copy of court order placing child in unlicensed home

COLLABORATION:

- Initial Licensing Coordinator & Team Leader
- Foster Family and Licensing Support Coordinator & Team Leader
- Foster Care Case Manager & Team Leader
- DSS Attorney
- Family Court

REFERENCES:

Legal Citations:

- 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a)(19): relative preference
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-730: expedited placement of a child with a relative
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2320: kinship foster care
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-2330: relative foster care