

CHILD WELFARE UPDATE

Title:	Kinship Caregiver Payment Program
Publish Date:	July 14, 2021
Effective Date:	July 1, 2021
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Background Information:	<p>Background Information: The Iowa Department of Human Services' (DHS) Kinship Caregiver Program is a Family First Initiative inspired program, which aims to keep children in the safe care of kin and fictive kin.</p> <p>This program provides temporary financial support while the kinship caregiver pursues full foster parent licensure. The Kinship Caregiver Program will achieve the following for kinship caregivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote immediate placements with relatives and fictive kin • Offer financial support to remove financial barriers for relative caregivers • Put relatives on a path to licensed foster care, to receive additional payments and supports for the children in their care • Increase stable placements with relatives and fictive kin to promote permanency <p>The Kinship Caregiver Payment Program is a time-limited payment specifically for kinship caregivers. This is an automatic payment so kinship caregivers are not required to complete an application to receive this payment. A kinship caregiver will receive a monthly payment of \$300 for each child who is court ordered into their care. Payments are monthly and may start as soon as two months after the child is placed into the kinship caregiver's home and continue for up to six months.</p>

	<p>Stakeholder Engagement: Various internal stakeholders were engaged in the development of this program including representatives from DHS policy and field operations. The Recruitment, Retention, Training and Support (RRTS) contractors were also engaged in discussions regarding the development of this program.</p> <p>Reason for the Change: Historically, a child who needs to be placed away from home for protective reasons is court ordered to shelter, family foster care, or relative care (among others). Unlicensed relatives and kin received no payment to care for the child, whereas licensed placements receive a daily payment. Whereas payment is not the reason a caregiver takes a child, many cannot afford the added expense of one or more children. A modest monthly payment could make the difference between children remaining in their community of origin as an alternative to entering stranger foster care.</p> <p>Kin caregivers often express that they feel forgotten about after receiving children since the agency assumes they will simply take on the care of the children without any additional support.</p>
<p>What Is Changing:</p>	<p>What Is Changing: Effective July 1, 2021 a kinship caregiver will receive a monthly payment of \$300 for each child who is court ordered into their care for a period of up to six months.</p> <p>Who Is Impacted: These changes will positively impact kinship caregiver families across the state. These changes will also impact stability of children by supporting the kinship caregivers.</p>
<p>What Is Not Changing:</p>	<p>Provide a brief summary of aspects of the policy, practice, initiative, or contract that will not be impacted by the implemented changes:</p> <p>The RRTS contractors will continue to provide the services as specified within the current RRTS contract and the current process for placement and reimbursement for licensed foster care placements will not be impacted.</p>
<p>Expected Benefits:</p>	<p>Indicate the positive outcomes that are expected as the result of the change:</p> <p>When children are placed with kin/fictive kin, a parent’s existing relationship with the caregiver can be a tremendous asset. Research demonstrates that placement with kin supports a number of improved outcomes for children. Data suggests children in kinship foster care experience better:</p>

- Behavioral development
- Mental health functioning
- Placement stability
- Increased rates of reunification; and
- Lower rates of lateral moves

Placing children with kinship caregivers helps to maintain family connections and cultural traditions that can minimize the trauma of family separation and relieve the anxieties that come with traditional foster placements. This creates a safe space while parents get the help they need to enhance their caregiving skills. Kinship care can be a lifeline for both children and parents, as placement with a family member can create a sense of belonging for a child and comfort for a parent in knowing the child is not with strangers.

Kinship caregivers will be offered the supports of a Recruitment, Retention, Training and Support (RRTS) caseworker to explain the benefits of becoming a licensed foster parent and get them started in the process. There is no cost associated with the licensing process or to any of the supportive services.