

# Kinship Manual

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services



## Kinship Care



*For generations,  
extended families  
have played  
significant roles  
in the rearing of  
children.*

### Kinship Manual

Welcome to Kinship Care. Thank you for opening your heart and home to a child who has come into the state's care due to abuse or neglect.

This booklet is provided to you by Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). CPS is responsible for:

- ◆ conducting civil investigations of reported child abuse and neglect;
- ◆ protecting children from abuse and neglect;
- ◆ promoting the safety, integrity, and stability of families; and
- ◆ providing permanent placements for children who cannot safely remain with their own families.

This booklet will help you learn what to expect while you are caring for a child who is in CPS's legal custody due to abuse or neglect.

### What Is Kinship Care?

For generations, extended families have played significant roles in the rearing of children when parents are having a difficult time. Referred to as kinship care—or relative care—in CPS, these caregivers provide children the benefit of more stability of care when they can't live with their birth parents.

Your willingness to take a child into your home shows a great deal of commitment and love. We understand the additional child in your home will create challenges and role changes that will impact your family. We are here to

help by offering the support you may need in adjusting to your additional family member.

### How does a child come into Kinship Care?

When children have been abused or neglected, DFPS may remove them from their homes to ensure their immediate safety. The court system is required to consider a temporary placement with a relative and asks the parents to provide DFPS with contact information for relatives who may be able to at least temporarily care for the child.

When placing children, the court considers their needs the most important consideration. All the parties involved in the decision making process may identify a kinship placement as the most appropriate as a result of a Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) conference. The placement may be court ordered, usually after DFPS completes a home assessment. The agency will try to take into account the parents' desires about the care provided to their child whenever possible. If placement with a relative is not available or appropriate, the child may be placed in foster care.

### What are the Benefits of Kinship Care?

- ◆ Provides love and care in a familiar setting;
- ◆ Provides parents with a sense of hope that children will remain connected to their birth families;
- ◆ Enables children to live with people they know and trust;

## Kinship Care



*If the judge does not return the child to the parents, he or she may decide to place the child with a relative or close family friend if that person is appropriate, available, and willing to help.*

- ◆ Reinforces a child's sense of cultural identity and positive self-esteem;
- ◆ Helps a child make and sustain extended family connections;
- ◆ Continues lifelong family traditions and memories;
- ◆ Supports the child in building healthy relationships within the family;
- ◆ Supports the child's need for safety and well-being; and
- ◆ Creates a sense of stability in the life of a child.

### What needs to happen before the child can live with me?

The kinship care placement must be in the child's best interest, and be court ordered. In order to do this, the child's CPS worker or contract worker must complete a written assessment of the home that addresses the caregiver's ability to safely care for the child and report back to the court. This assessment will include criminal history and abuse/neglect history checks on all household members 14 years of age and older.

### What am I expected to do?

Kinship caregivers have the following responsibilities:

- ◆ Make a commitment to provide a safe and loving home for the child;
- ◆ Sign and follow a written agreement with DFPS, in which you agree to

clearly defined expectations and responsibilities;

- ◆ Provide services for the child as outlined in the child's service plan;
- ◆ Communicate with DFPS on an ongoing basis so you can support the stability of the child's placement;
- ◆ Work closely with DFPS staff to plan a permanent living arrangement for the child; and
- ◆ Request information about the child from the caseworker that will help you provide care for the child.

### What court actions can take place?

The case may involve a number of different kinds of court proceedings, including:

**Emergency hearings:** If children are removed from their parents' care without a court order, the court will schedule a hearing for the next working day. This hearing allows the judge to learn why children were removed from their home and to decide if there is a good reason to keep the children in the state's care (also known as "substitute care") until the adversary hearing.

**Non-emergency hearings/Show Cause hearings:** In some circumstances, DFPS may remove children from their parents' care by first seeking a court order from a judge prior to their physical removal. This may happen when the current circumstances do not warrant an emergency removal.

**Adversary hearings:** The court holds an adversary hearing within 14 days of

## Kinship Care



*Caseworkers are the people you usually talk to about the child in your care.*

removing children from their parents. At this hearing, the judge decides whether to return children to their parents or if the children would still be at risk of continued abuse or neglect in their parents' care. If the judge does not return the children to their parents, the judge may place the children with a relative or close family friend if that person is appropriate, available, and willing to help. Otherwise, the judge will place the children in foster care.

**Status hearings:** The court holds a status hearing within 60 days of placing the children in foster or kinship care. This hearing ensures that parents have a family service plan and understand they must follow the plan in order for the children to return home.

**Permanency Court Reviews:** Five months after the first adversary hearing, the court will review the parents' progress on meeting the requirements of the DFPS' family service plan. Prior to the hearing, DFPS must submit a "permanency report," which outlines the agency's view of the parents' progress and make a final recommendation on the plan for permanency for the child. The court may issue any additional orders it deems necessary. The court holds additional permanency reviews every four months while the case is in temporary legal status. Within 12 months after a child comes into DFPS care, the court will issue an order to either return the child to the parent or give permanent custody to a relative, a close family friend, or DFPS. On rare occasions and if circumstances warrant, the court may decide to extend this time for up to an additional six months, which would be a total of 18 months.

**Placement Review Hearings:** If a court names DFPS as the permanent managing conservator, the court will review the child's placement and permanency plans every six months. The court's focus shifts to making sure that the child's needs are met and that DFPS is moving toward a permanent placement for the child.

**Please Note:** Parents can lose parental rights to their children if they do not carry out their parental responsibilities while the children are placed in DFPS care. This may happen if the parents do not stay in touch with their children and DFPS to plan for the children's future or if parents do not follow the service plan developed for the family. A judge or jury are the only people who can take away rights of a parent without the parents' agreement, and this can occur only during a court hearing. If the judge or jury decides to terminate or cut off a parent's rights to a child, the parent will no longer be the child's legal parent and the child can be placed for adoption.

### Do I need to attend court hearings?

You should always go to court when you get a notice or a phone call saying there will be a hearing about the children in your care. The judge will review the children's progress and the parents' progress at the court hearing. The judge will also decide where the children will live while the parent is participating in services.

### Important information about court hearings:

- ◆ Know the issues about the case so

## Kinship Care



*Parents can voluntarily give up their parental rights by signing a legal document called a relinquishment.*

you can provide appropriate care for the children in your home.

- ◆ If you can't attend a court hearing, notify the caseworker before and give them an update about the children in your home.
- ◆ Talk with the caseworker after the court hearing to find out what happened at court and if there are any new orders that affect your household.

**Note:** You may ask the judge for an interpreter if you are unable to speak or understand English or if you are hearing or speech impaired.

### How can I get an attorney?

You can find an attorney by calling local legal aid services or your local attorney referral service: 1-800-252-9690, or Legal Hotline for Texas 1-800-622-2520. The court will appoint a special attorney for the child, known as an attorney ad litem. The court may also appoint a guardian ad litem for the child to represent the child's best interests. Guardian ad litem may or may not be attorneys.

### What should I expect from caseworkers?

Caseworkers are the CPS staff you usually talk to about the children in your care. The children will have a caseworker, and in some areas you may have a Kinship Development Workers (KDW) to support you while you are caring for a relative's children. In areas

without Kinship Development Workers, the children's caseworker will provide you with information and assist you to get the services you need for the children. Caseworkers are responsible for making sure children are safe and their needs are being met. They also try to help parents develop the skills needed so children can eventually return home. You should discuss with the caseworker any services you may require due to disability or special needs. The parents and the children's caseworker together will plan for the changes that need to be made for the children to return home. If the children's parents do not make these changes and the children cannot return home, the caseworker will make a recommendation for the child's permanent plans. This recommendation will be discussed at DFPS' Conference (PC) meeting, a case staffing, or a Family Group Conference during the fifth month the child is in care.

### What is going to happen to the child?

Substitute care services are usually temporary. Therefore, it is very important that children have safe and permanent homes. DFPS first tries to return children to their own homes, but if that is not possible, the agency looks at other options, such as placing them in a relative's home or arranging for them to be adopted. Parents should get whatever help they need and make whatever changes are necessary to show that they can protect and provide for the safety of their child. If not, they should help DFPS make alternative arrangements.

## Kinship Care



*Children in DFPS' managing conservatorship must be treated with respect and dignity.*

### What are the permanent options for the child?

If children are removed from their homes, DFPS will pursue one of the following permanent solutions (also known as "permanency goals"):

1. Reunification of family
2. Alternative placement consisting of:
  - adoption and care by a relative;
  - permanent conservatorship and care by a relative
  - adoption and care by an unrelated family;
  - permanent conservatorship and care by an unrelated family;
  - care by a foster family with DFPS having permanent conservatorship;
  - care in some other family arrangement with DFPS having permanent conservatorship or
  - another planned living arrangement with the support of a family consisting of:
    - preparation for independent adult living, for youth who are at least 16 years old and have no developmental disability; or
    - preparation for adult living with community assistance in the most integrated setting, for youth who are at least 18 years old and who have a developmental disability.

Generally, the options above are listed in the order of DFPS' preference. Except

in unusual circumstances, when the court finds it unnecessary to attempt reunifying a family, DFPS will select this goal first and assist the parents make the necessary changes. However, this goal may change over time as a situation develops and depends on if parents decide to participate in services. The parents may contest DFPS in court if they disagree with the permanency goal unless the court has already terminated their parental rights to the child.

**Please Note:** Parents can voluntarily give up their parental rights by signing a legal document called a relinquishment. Because signing a relinquishment is a very serious matter, parents should think about it carefully and discuss it with their attorney. If the parents choose to sign a relinquishment, the court may enter an order that terminates their parental rights, which means that the parents are no longer the child's legal parents. At that time, the parents will no longer be responsible for the child's future. When the child is free for adoption and the appropriate adoptive family (which may be the kinship caregiver) is selected, the child will be placed in a permanent home. Also note, there are some criminal acts that will make a kinship caregiver ineligible to adopt a child. In these circumstances, DFPS cannot recommend the placement. However, a judge can order a child be placed with such a kinship caregiver on a temporary or permanent basis without DFPS' recommendation.

## Kinship Care



### *Kinship Placement—Child living in the home of a relative or family friend*

### **What if the parents have problems caring for their child after the child is returned to them?**

Sometimes parents have some problems caring for their children after their children are returned to them. This is not unusual because the children have been in someone else's care for some time, and it takes time for the parents and the children to readjust to each other. Therapists, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) volunteers, and the children's caseworker can help with this adjustment. However, if parents are having problems that present the risk of abuse or neglect or actually result in abuse or neglect of their children, it is possible that the children could be removed from their care again. Once a child has been removed again, the child's permanency plan will need to be reconsidered. Returning the children to the parent's care may no longer be considered a safe option and other permanency plans will probably be considered.

### **How do I discipline the child in my care?**

Children in DFPS's managing conservatorship must be treated with respect and dignity. Children in DFPS's managing conservatorship (including foster and kinship homes) cannot be physically disciplined. Physical discipline includes open handed spanking, which is not allowed. The primary purpose of discipline must be to encourage appropriate behavior, not

to punish the child. Discipline must suit the particular needs and circumstances of each child, and must take into account the child's age, developmental level, specific misbehavior, how he or she has responded to discipline in the past, and history, including any history of physical or emotional abuse. Children in DFPS' managing conservatorship may not be deprived of basic necessities such as food or be subjected to cruel, harsh, unusual, humiliating, demeaning, or unnecessary punishment. Children cannot be threatened with the restriction of family visits, mail, or denial of court ordered contact with their siblings or parents. They also cannot be threatened with the loss of their placement. Telling a child that they cannot see their family or that they will be sent somewhere else to live is NOT appropriate discipline—these are considered threats.

Children in kinship care must not receive physical punishment. Because of the past abuse—neglect, physical and sexual abuse—physical discipline will further interfere with trust, feeling cared for, self-esteem, power and control feelings, and feelings of stability for the child. Appropriate discipline can include: establishing routines, setting reasonable limits, modeling appropriate behavior, offering choices, giving explanations, repeating instructions, use of "time outs," allowing logical or natural consequences, and reinforcing desired behavior. The Kinship Development Worker, child's caseworker, and therapist can suggest how a kinship family can effectively deal with problematic behaviors.

## Kinship Care



*Food stamps help low-income families buy nutritious food from local food stores, this assistance is available to qualifying families, elderly people, and single adults.*

### What written reports will I receive from DFPS?

You will receive a copy of the child's current service plan and any reviews, which are usually held at least once every six months. You will also receive a copy of DFPS' report to the court at least 10 days before the scheduled court reviews. These reviews are held after the child has been in care six months and then every four months thereafter while the legal case is in temporary status. If DFPS is granted permanent managing conservatorship (PMC) of the child, placement review hearings are held every six months.

### What visitation rules must be followed?

The court will address visitation issues, including whether visits must be monitored or supervised, at the hearings. If appropriate, parents should visit their children regularly and show their love even though the children are not living with them. If the court orders the visits to be supervised, this means the person who is responsible for the supervision needs to understand the importance of closely monitoring the visit. The person who supervises the visitation must be able to see the children at all times and hear what is being said to the children. The person must also be willing to stop any behavior or conversation between the parent and children that may be harmful to the children. The caseworker will help you arrange visitations. Contact the caseworker if a family visitation must be cancelled for some reason.

### What assistance and financial resources are available to help?

As a relative providing care for a child, you may be eligible to receive assistance and financial resources to help in raising the child. More information is provided at the end of this manual in the "Finding Help in Texas" section. For most government assistance, you will need to have the following information available:

- ◆ Texas driver's license or other picture ID,
- ◆ a social security number for each adult and child (or proof that an application has been made for a number),
- ◆ a document that provides proof of relationship to child,
- ◆ proof of income,
- ◆ proof of assets, and
- ◆ proof of rent and utilities costs.

If you are related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption, you may receive a "child-only" grant and Medicaid through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program. If you qualify for the TANF program and are a grandparent, great-grandparent, or great-great-grandparent, you may be eligible for an additional one time payment of \$1,000 (called an "Integration Payment") to assist in buying initial items for the child.

A kinship caregiver may qualify for an integration payment of \$1,000 from DFPS if they are not eligible through TANF. TANF or DFPS integration funds can be used to purchase items

## Kinship Care



*Relatives may supervise visits to help the child and parent spend positive time together*

that you need when the children first come into your home, such as beds, clothing, or bedroom items. You cannot qualify for both the TANF and the DPFS integration funds. A caregiver may also qualify for an annual reimbursement from DFPS as much as \$500 per child for child-related expenses. This reimbursement may be available as long as three years after the relative is appointed the child's permanent managing conservator. Day care assistance may be available while DFPS has legal conservatorship of the child and the child is placed with a relative if the kinship caregivers meet the eligibility criteria. This assistance is available through DFPS if you qualify and if funding is available. For more information, consult with your KDW or child's caseworker.

**Food stamps** help low-income families buy nutritious food from grocery stores. It is available to qualifying families, elderly people, and single adults. (refer to "Finding Help in Texas" at the end of this manual).

**Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)** can help grandparents and other relatives buy nutritious food for the children in their care. WIC offers food assistance and nutritional screening to low-income pregnant women, women with infants 11 months or younger, and children younger than age 5. In Texas apply for WIC at 1-800-942-3678 or at a local WIC office.

**SSI** is an important source of assistance for grandparents and other relatives raising children who are blind or disabled. Administered by the U.S. Social Security Administration, SSI

provides a cash benefit to the child. To qualify for benefits, the child must be younger than age 18 and meet the SSI disability, income, and asset criteria. Children younger than age 18 are eligible for Social Security benefits under Old-Age Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) if the child's parent is collecting retirement or disability insurance benefits or if the parent is deceased. Grandparents and other relatives can apply for benefits on behalf of the child based on the work record of the child's parent. For more information, contact a SSI service representative at 1-800-772-1213 or go to <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10085.html>. For additional information, refer to "Finding Help in Texas" at the end of this manual.

**The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** is a supplement to the income of working people with children. It is available to grandparents and other relatives only if they work and have at least one "qualifying child" living with them. To qualify, the relative and child must live in the same home for more than six months of the year and their home must be in the United States. This tax credit can be particularly useful because, unlike other tax credits, the relative can still get a refund even if no income tax is owed.

## The Fostering Connections Act

In October 2008, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act became law. Things kinship caregivers should know about this law include:

## Kinship Care



*Any prospective or current kinship caregiver can pursue foster home verification, if they are interested in supporting a child in DFPS conservatorship who is placed in their care*

- ◆ DFPS must tell relatives when related children are removed from their homes and placed in state care.
- ◆ DFPS must tell relatives they may apply to become a foster parent if related children have been removed. DFPS must tell them about other options regarding placement and ways to support the child while in placement.
- ◆ In September 2010, Texas began a financial assistance program to help kinship foster parents who sign an agreement with DFPS and subsequently take permanent, legal custody of the child. This is called the Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) program.

### Foster Home Verification for Kinship Caregivers

Any prospective or current kinship caregiver can pursue foster home verification, if they are interested in supporting a child in DFPS conservatorship who is placed in their care, regardless of the child's permanency plan. However, foster care placements are meant to be a temporary arrangement until the permanency plan can be achieved for the child.

### Kinship Foster Home Verification Requirements

To become a kinship foster home, kinship caregivers must successfully complete the verification process, which requires extensive criminal and child protective services background checks,

as well as the requirement that kinship caregivers pass minimum standards required for foster home verification.

### Below are some things you should ask yourself in order to decide if foster home verification is the right path:

- ◆ Are you at least 21 years old and a responsible mature adult?
- ◆ Do you have steady income?
- ◆ Will you complete an application with the help of CPS staff?
- ◆ Will you share information about your background and lifestyle through a home screening?
- ◆ Will you provide references from relatives and friends?
- ◆ If you're married or divorced, can you show proof?
- ◆ If you're married, are both spouses willing to become foster parents?
- ◆ Do you have a high school diploma or a GED, or can you pass a test that includes basic reading, writing and math?
- ◆ Can you agree to a home screening which includes interviews with everyone who lives in your home?
- ◆ Will you and all people in your house, age 14 and older, submit to a criminal history and a child abuse and neglect history check?
- ◆ Will you submit fingerprints for FBI criminal history check for all adults, 18 years and older, in your house?
- ◆ Will you attend 25 to 35 hours of training to learn about abuse and neglect and how it affects children?

## Kinship Care



***Need an attorney?  
Call 1-800-252-  
9690 or the  
Legal Hotline  
for Texans at  
1-800-622-2520***

### **Other things to consider:**

- ◆ Do you have enough sleeping space?
- ◆ Will you agree not to use physical discipline?
- ◆ Will your home likely pass fire, health, and safety inspections?
- ◆ Are your pets vaccinated or are you willing to get them vaccinated?
- ◆ Will you learn CPR and first aid and become certified?
- ◆ Will you be screened for tuberculosis (TB)? Will the people in your house be screened for TB?

If you said yes to these questions, you may be eligible to become verified to be a foster parent. Questions or concerns about the foster home verification process can be directed to your relative child's primary caseworker, your kinship worker, or DFPS FAD staff or to a private child-placing agency.

### **A list of Child Placing Agencies can be found online, here:**

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/PCS/Residential\\_Contracts/active\\_contracts.asp#CPA](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/PCS/Residential_Contracts/active_contracts.asp#CPA)

### **What about SSI and Child Support?**

Foster care payments as well as any other subsidy payments, such as adoption assistance or permanency care assistance payments may impact the amount you can receive in SSI on behalf of the child. The kinship

caregiver should communicate with their local SSI office regarding any SSI questions or concerns.

Child support is considered income and would be considered in determining any subsidy monthly payment amount, such as adoption assistance or permanency care assistance payments. Child support payments might also be redirected to DFPS while you are being paid as a foster parent to help pay for the costs of your relative's child care. If you are paid as a foster parent, you may not be able to receive child support payments from the parent on behalf of your relative child. You should discuss any child support questions or concerns with your caseworker.

### **What is Permanency Care Assistance?**

The Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) program was created to help children and youth who could not be reunited with their parents or adopted. It will give an extra permanent option for children and youth who might otherwise grow up in foster care. This program requires that relatives and close family friends become the child's verified foster parents for at least 6 months, along with other requirements (see below) before they negotiate and sign a PCA agreement and the court grants them Permanent Managing Conservatorship. The benefits include monthly financial assistance and health care assistance to help raise the child to adulthood.

## Kinship Care



*Keep track of important information and documents, regarding the child in your care.*

### Older Youth and Permanency Care Assistance

For youth who are 16 and older when Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) agreements are signed, the relative or fictive kin can continue to receive PCA support until the youth turns 21 years of age, so long as certain educational and/or employment eligibility requirements are met by the youth. Youth can also still apply for educational training vouchers and tuition fee waivers for vocational or college pursuits, if their relative or fictive kin caregiver has permanent managing conservatorship and is receiving PCA assistance on behalf of the youth.

### What are the eligibility requirements for Permanency Care Assistance?

To be eligible to sign a Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) agreement with DFPS and receive PCA benefits, you must first become verified as a foster family and serve as such for the subject child for at least six consecutive months prior to the transfer of Permanent Managing Conservatorship from DFPS to you.

#### In addition:

- ◆ DFPS must determine that reunification and adoption are not appropriate permanency options for the child.

- ◆ The child must demonstrate a strong attachment to the kinship caregiver.
- ◆ The kinship caregiver must have a strong commitment to caring permanently for the child.
- ◆ Older youth must be consulted about the PCA plan.
- ◆ The caregiver must negotiate, sign, and abide by a PCA agreement, which takes effect on the date that PMC is transferred.
- ◆ The child must be in the temporary or permanent managing conservatorship of DFPS on the day before PMC is transferred.
- ◆ Subsequent to signing the PCA agreement, the kinship caregiver must be named in court as the permanent managing conservator for the child.

Assuming all the requirements above are met, PCA payments can begin the first of the month following the month in which PMC is transferred to the kinship caregiver. If the agreement is not signed prior to the transfer of PMC, eligibility is lost permanently.

### What is the amount of the Permanency Care Assistance monthly payment?

For Permanency Care Assistance payments, the maximum monthly payment amount depends upon the child's authorized service level (ASL) at the time the permanency care agreement is signed. The PCA payment ceiling for a child whose service level is Basic Care is \$400 per month; the

## Kinship Care



*Need information  
about your case  
or have a  
case-specific  
complaint?  
Contact the  
DFPS Office  
of Consumer  
Affairs at  
1-800-720-7777*

payment ceiling for a child whose service level is Moderate, Specialized or Intense is \$545 per month. These payments are similar to adoption assistance payments.

### Additional Information:

Fostering Connections Internet Site: [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/About\\_Child\\_Protective\\_Services/fostering\\_connections.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/About_Child_Protective_Services/fostering_connections.asp)

Questions can be directed to [Fosteringconnections@dfps.state.tx.us](mailto:Fosteringconnections@dfps.state.tx.us)

### Important Terms

**Adversary hearing**— a court hearing held no later than 14 days after a child is removed by DFPS, which is held to determine whether or not a child removed from the home by DFPS should be returned. Parents are given notice of this hearing and if the child is not returned home, will be asked to provide names of relatives or other persons who might be willing to serve as temporary caregivers of a child.

**Attorney Ad Litem/Guardian Ad Litem**— The court will appoint a special attorney for the child, known as an attorney ad litem. The court may also appoint a guardian ad litem for the child to represent the child's best interests. Guardian ad litem may or may not be attorneys.

**Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Worker**— A person who has received the court's approved training and has been certified by the court to appear at court hearings as a volunteer advocate on behalf of the child.

**Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)**— A child's family, extended family, and trusted friends attend a conference to agree on a plan to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for the child while maintaining family placement and support.

**Final Order**— A court order that ends the court involvement in the parent-child relationship. This may include returning of a child to a parent, granting managing conservatorship to a relative, granting permanent managing conservatorship to DFPS or terminating the parental rights to the child.

**Foster Home Screening/Home Assessment**— A report on the safety and appropriateness of the home of any person requesting possession of a child for whom DFPS is the managing conservator.

**Kinship/Relative Placement**— The placement of a child in the home of a relative or family friend. This placement occurs when parents are unable to provide for the child's safety.

**Kinship Development Workers (KDW)**— The caseworker identified to work with the relative/kin provider in education, support, advocacy, and training.

**Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC)**— Permanent legal responsibility for the child given through a court order. Permanent managing conservatorship continues until the child turns 18 or is emancipated (has his/her minority status removed), unless modified by a court order.

**Permanency Conference (PC)**— When children are in foster care, permanency

## Kinship Care



***Service Plan (also called a Family Service Plan) is an agreement between DFPS and the parents of children in foster or kinship care.***

planning is a process that involves a meeting with all concerned parties (foster parents, relatives, social workers, etc.) They meet to determine a permanent living arrangement for the child--known as a “permanency plan.”

**Service Plan (also Family Service Plan)**— An agreement between DFPS and the parents of children in foster or kinship care. It outlines expectations for changes needed in order for the child to be returned home safely, and the services DFPS will provide to help the parent make those changes.

**Status hearing**— a court proceeding in which a judge hears progress made since the last court proceeding. In CPS, this might include a situation where at the first hearing a judge orders a birth parent to take parenting classes or complete a chemical dependency program. Then, at the status hearing, the judge would ask if the birth parent completed the court ordered classes/treatment.

**Substitute Care** —A temporary setting for children who are unable to remain safely in their own homes. Substitute care includes foster care, kinship care, and placement in residential care facilities.

**Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC)**—A legal order that gives the right to physical possession of the child, the duty of care, control and protection, and the responsibility to provide for the child’s physical and emotional needs.

**Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)**— A legal action that causes a parent(s) to lose all rights to the child.

## Finding Help In Texas

### Helpful Telephone Numbers:

- ◆ Call 211 for access to information about health and human services in your community. Callers from outside of Texas and those on cellular phones will have to call their 211 Area Information Center directly.
- ◆ Call the HHSC Ombudsman office at 877-787-8999 if you have problems or complaints about a state agency health and human service or program.

### Helpful Online Databases:

- ◆ The 211 Texas Database provides information about services in your community offered by nonprofit organizations and government agencies. [www.hhs.state.tx.us/tirn/refguide.shtml](http://www.hhs.state.tx.us/tirn/refguide.shtml)
- ◆ The Reference Guide contains basic information on more than 200 programs provided by Texas state agencies. [www.hhs.state.tx.us/tirn/refguide.shtml](http://www.hhs.state.tx.us/tirn/refguide.shtml)
- ◆ [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com) allows you to screen yourself for potential eligibility for programs provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and other state agencies
- ◆ Finding Help in Texas allows you to search for information on health and human services in your community or throughout Texas. [www.helpintexas.com](http://www.helpintexas.com)

## Kinship Care



***The Child Care Management Services (CCMS) program of the Texas Workforce Commission helps eligible parents with the cost of child care.***

### Helpful web sites:

#### ***Alcohol and Drug Information***

The American Council for Drug Education is a substance abuse prevention and education agency.  
<http://www.acde.org>

#### ***Child Care***

Find a child care provider in your area.  
<http://www.txchildcaresearch.org>

The Child Care Management Services (CCMS) program of the Texas Workforce Commission helps eligible parents with the cost of child care. The requirements to be eligible for this assistance vary in different regions of the state. To learn more, visit the Texas Workforce Commission web site at [www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/ccinfo.html](http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/ccinfo.html)

#### ***Child Abuse or Neglect***

This web site allows the public to report instances of abuse or neglect that do not require an emergency response. An emergency is a situation where a child or person who is elderly or has a disability appears to face an immediate risk of abuse or neglect that could result in death or serious harm. Make reports online at: <https://www.txabusehotline.org>

- ◆ Call 911 or Statewide Intake at 1-800-252-5400 if:
- ◆ the situation you are reporting is an emergency;
- ◆ you prefer to remain anonymous;
- ◆ you have insufficient data to complete the required information on the website report; or

- ◆ you do not want e-mail confirmation of your report.

#### ***Child Support Payments***

Even though you may be taking care of a related child in your home, the birth parents may be held financially responsible. Certain programs, such as TANF, require cooperation in attempting to collect child support from birth.

#### ***Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI)***

ECI is for families with children, ages birth through three years old, who have developmental delays. If you are concerned about the child's walking, talking, crawling, understanding, seeing, or hearing, you will want to find out more about early intervention assessment and services. <http://www.dars.state.tx.us>

#### ***Families Raising Children of Color***

Pact, an Adoption Alliance provides articles, book lists, links and more for families raising children of color.  
<http://www.pactadopt.org>

#### ***Food Stamps***

Food Stamps are issued monthly, via a Lone Star card, to qualifying families based on household size and income. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission uses current poverty guidelines to assess eligibility. You will need to provide proof of your household income when you apply for food stamps. [www.hhsc.state.tx.us/help/food/foodstamps/index.html](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/help/food/foodstamps/index.html)

## Kinship Care



***Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) provides monthly financial assistance to qualifying families so they can better care for children.***

### ***Grandparents Support***

There are many organizations that are providing information and referral information to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. AARP (1-800-424-3410 or <http://www.aarp.org/grandparents>), Generations United (<http://www.gu.org>), GrandsPlace (<http://www.grandsplace.com>), and Grandparent Again (<http://www.grandparentagain.com>).

### ***Head Start Program***

Head Start is a child development program designed to promote the growth and development of children from low-income families. Children ages three to five years attend. Early Head Start provides learning and development services for families with children up to age three. <http://www.ehsnrc.org>

### ***Social Security Card / Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Survivors Benefits***

Social Security Cards may be obtained by applying for either a new or a replacement card. You do not have to be the child's legal guardian to obtain a Social Security card for him. U.S. citizens need a copy of their birth certificate or baptismal record.

- ◆ SSI provides low-income elderly, blind or disabled individuals, including children, with financial assistance in the form of monthly payments. If the child has a disability, he may qualify for assistance.
- ◆ Social Security dependent's or survivors benefits are payable to children under the age of 18 on the

record of a parent who is collecting retirement or disability benefits from Social Security. Survivor's benefits are payable to children under the age of 18 on the record of a parent who has died. Relatives providing care for children receiving these benefits will need to apply in order to become the payee of these benefits. <http://www.ssa.gov>

### ***Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)***

TANF provides monthly financial assistance to qualifying families so they can better care for children. This program also provides help to children who have been deprived of parental support or care. Children who are eligible for TANF are also eligible for Medicaid health care assistance. [www.hhsc.state.tx.us/help/financial/temporary\\_assistance.html](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/help/financial/temporary_assistance.html)

### ***Texas Education Agency (TEA)***

Texas Education Agency provides oversight and resources for the public school districts in the states of Texas. TEA provides resources and information regarding special education services and other federal programs to assist students with the special needs. <http://www.tea.state.tx.us>

### ***Health and Human Service Agencies:***

**DADS** - Department of Aging and Disability Services

**DFPS** - Department of Family and Protective Services

**DSHS** - Department of State Health Services



## Kinship Care



### Important Information About Children in Your Care

*Child's Birth Name* \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Social Security #</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>
<b>Allergies</b>	<b>Medication</b>
<b>Biological Mother Address/Phone #</b>	<b>Biological Father Address/Phone #</b>
<b>Caseworker Address/Phone #</b>	<b>Supervisor Phone #</b>
<b>School/Daycare Phone #</b>	<b>Doctor's Name Phone #</b>

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## Kinship Care

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## Kinship Care

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