



PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT PACKET

A Guide For Kinship Caregivers





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OVERVIEW OF PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT

A PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT is an emergency or preliminary out-of-home placement, in an unlicensed home, for a child in state custody with a non-custodial parent or relative, or with a friend (as established in Utah Law), in order to avoid the use of other out of home placements with a caregiver unfamiliar to the child.

CHILD IN PROTECTIVE/TEMPORARY CUSTODY OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

A child who is removed from his or her parents or guardians by Child and Family Services because of abuse, neglect, or dependency, needs a safe, loving, and stable place to stay. Once Child and Family Services becomes involved, the juvenile court determines whether a child will return to his or her parents or guardians, be placed in custody with relatives or friends as described in Utah Code Ann. 78A6-307, or remain in state custody for placement with a licensed foster family.

FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS are looked to for the daily care of a child when they are removed from parents or guardians.

The order of placement preference, by Utah law is:

- A non-custodial parent
- A relative as defined in Utah Code Ann. 78A-6-307
- An adoptive parent of a sibling
- A friend designated by the parent or legal guardian who the child knows and is comfortable with and who is licensed as a foster parent or willing to become licensed within 6 months of the placement or sooner.
- For Indian children, relatives are defined by the tribe.

- A search for relatives will be completed for every child placed in Child and Family Services custody.
- Child and Family Services will inform the Juvenile Court Judge of possible placement options with relatives and friends.
- Child and Family Services will have temporary custody of the child while the child is placed in a Preliminary Placement.
- The kinship caregiver must be willing to follow all court orders and assist in reunification efforts.
- **Preliminary placement of a child does not guarantee that the child will remain with the kinship caregiver if another living arrangement is considered to be in the child's best interests.**

OVERVIEW OF PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT (continued)

PREFERENTIAL CONSIDERATION shall be given to a relative's or a friend's request for placement of the child, if it is in the best interest of the child. **Any preferential consideration** that a relative or friend is initially granted pursuant to statute **expires 120 days from the date of the shelter hearing.** After that time period has expired, a relative or friend who has not obtained custody or asserted an interest in a child, may not be granted preferential consideration by the division or the court (Utah Code Ann. 78A-6-307).

- Relatives are encouraged to be part of a Child and Family Team that meets together to help make decisions about the needs of the child or youth and family, including where the child should live while the family receives services.
- Reunification within 12 months is the primary goal for most Child and Family Services cases.
- Permanent living arrangements will be made for a child whose parents or guardians are unable or unwilling to make the changes that are needed to keep their child safe.
- The kinship caregiver may be asked to consider becoming a licensed foster parent for this kinship/specific child, and possibly, adoption or permanent guardianship.
- If DCFS is not able to find a kinship option and none have come forward, DCFS will move forward with alternative permanent options if the child cannot return home and needs an adoptive family .



HOW TO BECOME A PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT

TO BECOME APPROVED AS A PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT:

- ☐ Declare your interest in being a preliminary placement for a child related to you or to whom you have a relationship who is in state custody.
- ☐ Complete a Background Screening for everyone living in the home.
- ☐ Allow Child and Family Services to complete a limited home inspection and safety assessment, which may include references. The home must be free from health, safety and fire hazards. The child must have adequate sleeping arrangements. Firearms and medications must be secured by lock.
- ☐ Review information about expectations and options for kinship caregivers providing a preliminary placement (in this packet and from the Kinship Specialist).

ONCE APPROVED AS A PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT FOR THE CHILD:

- ☐ Review and sign the Kinship Caregiver Agreement for Preliminary Placement (Please see Agreement on page 9)
- ☐ With a Kinship Specialist, review and complete the application for the Specified Relative Grant and Medicaid through the Department of Workforce Services after the shelter hearing has occurred to ensure the child's health-care coverage (not applicable to non-custodial parent).
- ☐ Complete the Fingerprint process within 10 calendar days of the placement. For friends, if the placement is made after the shelter, fingerprints must be approved before placement can be made.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Kinship Caregivers will need to provide the following information for everyone living in the household:
 - ☐ Full names, including all aliases.
 - ☐ Social Security Numbers.
 - ☐ Driver's licenses or other government issued picture identification (if applicable)
 - ☐ Relationship to each child being placed in the home.
- Background checks will be run for everyone living in the home. This will include criminal and child abuse records.
- You may be denied if you have a criminal record or history of child abuse or neglect.
- **If you are denied, you may request your records:**

For criminal background information contact:
Utah Bureau of Criminal Identification (bci.utah.gov)
3888 W 5400 S, Box 148280
Salt Lake City, UT 84118
(801) 965-4445

For child abuse and neglect history contact:
Child and Family Services:
dcfs.utah.gov/about/grama-requests
for instructions on submitting a GRAMA
(Government Records Access &
Management Act) request.

KINSHIP CARE FLOWCHART

Child Taken Into Custody: Kinship Considerations

- Approved backgrounds for everyone in household.
- Friend – BCI and Federal Name-based check completed; follow-up fingerprints within 15 calendar days.
- Limited home inspection.
- Parent and Kinship Caregiver Agreements.
- Make placement.

Shelter Hearing

- Held within 72 business hours after the removal of the child.
- A juvenile court judge will determine if the removal was reasonable and if the child will remain in state custody.
- The child could possibly return home to the parent(s) if the judge so orders.

Preliminary Placement – State Custody

- Relatives have 10 days from the initial placement to complete fingerprint requirements.
- If a friend placement is chosen AFTER the Shelter hearing, the friend must have approved fingerprints before the placement can be made.
- DCFS caseworker will complete an initial visit within 2 days of the placement and 3 weekly visits in the first month. Monthly visits (or more, based on child and family needs) will occur thereafter.
- A Family Team Meeting will be held within 15 business days to discuss the child's needs and options for ongoing care.
- A family evaluation will be completed with the family that has been identified for ongoing care.

Court-Ordered Supervision – Temporary Custody to Relative

- DCFS worker assigned.
- Monthly visits (or more, based on child and family needs) will occur thereafter.
- Family Team working to reunify with parents.
- Kin caregiver part of the Family Team.
- DCFS will link family to community resources.
- An evaluation of the kin caregiver will be completed for permanency.

Return Home

- Ongoing services by DCFS could still be provided.
- Juvenile court could still be involved.

Pre-Trial – Generally 1-2 Weeks After Shelter Hearing

- DCFS has filed a petition regarding allegations of abuse or neglect of the child. This petition will be addressed at the Pre-Trial.
- If all parties can come to an agreement on the petition, a Disposition hearing date will be set. This date is generally 30 days away from the Pre-Trial date.
- The judge makes a finding regarding the petition.

Was an agreement reached at the Pre-Trial?

No

Yes

Trial

- A Trial date is set at the Pre-Trial (could be up to a month away).
- The allegations in the state's petition of abuse or neglect of the child are addressed.
- The judge makes a finding regarding the petition.

Reunification Services may be ordered by the court. If reunification is not ordered, a Permanency hearing must be held within 30 days.

Are the allegations of abuse or neglect in the petition found to be true?

Yes

No

Participate in Reunification Services

- Child and Family Team Meetings.
- Home visits by DCFS caseworker.
- Child and Family Plan that establishes the Permanency Goal and the steps to achieve the goal.
- Quarterly court reviews.
- Visits between child and his or her parent(s) and sibling(s).

Disposition Hearing

- Disposition hearing is generally 30 days after Pre-Trial/Trial.
- Child and Family Plan is submitted to the juvenile court and reviewed in court with the parents.
- Child and Family Plan is court ordered for all parties involved.
- An in-court review date is set to review progress. This hearing is required to occur within 6 months of removal.

Permanency Hearing

- A Permanency hearing will be held no later than 12 months after removal.
- A permanency decision will be made for the child (Return Home, Permanent Custody and Guardianship, or Adoption).

What Permanency decision was made?

Return Home

Permanent Custody and Guardianship

Adoption

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)
A Petition is filed to terminate parental rights based on lack of progress on the Child and Family Plan. TPR trial date is set.

Have Parental Rights been terminated?

Yes

Adoption

- Subsidy Paperwork must be filled out.
- An Adoption Hearing will be set.

Return Home

- Ongoing services by DCFS could still be provided.
- Juvenile court could still be involved.

The Permanency decision is based on the parent's progress on the Child and Family Plan.

Child is returned home due to the parent's success.

LICENSED FOSTER CARE AND TEMPORARY CUSTODY & GUARDIANSHIP

TEMPORARY CUSTODY & GUARDIANSHIP TO A RELATIVE DURING COURT JURISDICTION (OPEN DCFS CASE):

- In most cases, the primary goal is reunification with the parent. Unfortunately, approximately half of children who are in Child and Family Services custody cannot return home to their parents due to the parent's inability to overcome the issues that brought the family to the attention of DCFS.
- While reunification services are being provided to the family, caregivers need to consider the needs of the child and their ability to meet those needs.

LICENSED FOSTER CARE VS. TEMPORARY CUSTODY & GUARDIANSHIP

	Licensed Foster Care	Temporary Custody & Guardianship
CUSTODY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child remains in the temporary custody of the state and is placed with the relative or friend who obtains a provisional license to receive additional support from Child and Family Services. • Friends must become licensed within 6 months of the child being in state custody. • With the help of the Kinship Specialist, the Kinship Caregiver applies for a provisional license with the Office of Licensing, allowing the child to be placed in the home while completing the requirements for licensure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The court has ordered that the kin caregiver have temporary custody and guardianship of the child while Child and Family Services has an open case and is providing supportive services to reunify the parent and child.
FINANCIAL AND MEDICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed foster parents receive a monthly reimbursement (See table below.) • Child and Family Services will help in obtaining Foster Care Medicaid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial and Medicaid assistance are available for relative kinship caregivers by applying through the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) for the Specified Relative Grant (SRG). • Relative Kinship caregivers will be required to complete "Duty of Support" paperwork with the Office of Recovery Services (ORS), authorizing the state to collect child support from the child's parent or guardian. • Extended Relatives and Friends may be eligible for Medicaid Assistance.

LICENSED FOSTER CARE AND TEMPORARY CUSTODY & GUARDIANSHIP (continued)

LICENSED FOSTER CARE VS. TEMPORARY CUSTODY & GUARDIANSHIP (CONTINUED)

	Licensed Foster Care	Temporary Custody & Guardianship
RESPONSIBILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child and Family Services will help in obtaining specialized services and support. A Health Care professional will be assigned to work with the kinship caregiver to ensure that the child's medical, dental, and mental health needs are met. Children in state custody may qualify for additional educational and therapeutic supports. The Kinship Caregiver (and spouse, where applicable) completes an In-Class and On-line training to help them understand the needs of children who are removed from their families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kinship Caregivers are responsible to complete necessary paperwork, get the child to appointments and visits, and to obtain other resources as needed. Child and Family Services can make referrals for services deemed necessary for the child.
HOMESTUDY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Kinship Caregiver completes a home study (with the assistance of a Child and Family Services kinship specialist) and applies for a license to be a kinship/specific foster parent in the state of Utah. This will include home visits, references, and interviews with family members and the child. Once approved by the Office of Licensing, the kinship caregiver will have up to 5 months to complete the requirements for licensure, which includes foster parent training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the plan is for the Kin Caregiver to adopt, Child and Family Services may be required to complete a home study evaluation.
ADOPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The licensed kinship caregiver is eligible to be considered for an adoption subsidy, if adoption becomes the plan for the child. If the kinship caregiver adopts as a licensed caregiver, the Medicaid can be accessed in any state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Kinship Caregiver may be eligible to be considered for a state adoption subsidy, if adoption becomes the plan for the child. In some cases, when adoption has been ruled out, permanent guardianship may be the best legal option to create a long-term family for the child. If the kinship caregiver moves to another state, they may lose the Medicaid benefit.

LICENSED FOSTER CARE AND TEMPORARY CUSTODY & GUARDIANSHIP (continued)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR LICENSED FOSTER CARE VS. TEMPORARY GUARDIANSHIP

When weighing your options, consider the eligible monthly financial assistance for the **reimbursement payment per child as a Licensed Foster Parent** with Child and Family Services and the **Specified Relative Grant** with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS).

LICENSED FOSTER PARENT		TEMPORARY GUARDIANSHIP	
Basic Licensed Foster Parent reimbursement-based upon the age of the individual child	*Basic Licensed Foster Parent monthly reimbursement (per child)	Specified Relative Grant based upon the number of children in the home	Specified Relative Grant amount per month
0-5 yr. old	\$513.00	1	\$288.00
6-11 yr. old	\$546.00	2	\$399.00
12+ yr. old	\$579.00	3	\$498.00
		4	\$583.00
		5	\$663.00
		6	\$731.00
		7	\$765.00
		8	\$801.00
		9	\$839.00
		10	\$874.00

*Amounts are based on a 30-day calendar month. Actual amounts are reimbursed/paid according to the number of days the child is placed in the home.

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PARENT/GUARDIAN PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENT

This agreement explains the role of a kinship caregiver in caring for your child(ren) and the terms for visiting your child(ren) prior to a shelter hearing. It also documents your agreement or disagreement with the placement decision.

Name of Child(ren):	
Name of Kinship Caregiver:	
Phone Number(s)	
Address:	

Role of Kinship Caregiver

The identified kinship caregiver listed above must pass an initial background screening and agree to care for the child(ren) under certain conditions. These conditions include:

1. Keep the child safe and provide daily care and nurturance.
2. Not allow the custodial parent or guardian to have any contact with the child unless authorized by the court or Child and Family Services in writing.
3. Take the child to medical, mental health, dental, and educational appointments at the request of Child and Family Services in writing.
4. Allow Child and Family Services and the child's Guardian ad Litem to have access to the child.
5. Support the child's permanency plan, including assisting the custodial parent or guardian in reunification efforts at the request of Child and Family Services
6. Follow all court orders.
7. Inform Child and Family Services of any changes or circumstances that might affect the child's well-being such as a change in health, address, or caregiving arrangements.

Visitation

The Child and Family Services caseworker will work with you and the kinship caregiver to arrange for you to have visits and/or telephone contact with your child(ren), unless safety issues or a court order prevents that. The contact arrangements outlined below are for you to visit with your child(ren) and apply until a judge reviews them at a court hearing. It is very important for you to follow these arrangements. According to Utah statute, the kinship caregiver is required to contact the Child and Family Services caseworker and law enforcement if unauthorized contact occurs. Consequences of unauthorized contact may result in removal from the Kinship Caregiver's home. You will receive a document from the court that provides the date and time of a shelter hearing, when a judge will review the placement and visitation arrangements. The caseworker will work with you to develop an ongoing plan for contact with your child(ren) after the shelter hearing.

These are the Contact Arrangements outlined for you to visit with your children.

Agreement/Disagreement

☐

I agree with the plan for my child(ren) to stay with the identified kinship caregiver. I agree that I will not remove my child(ren) from the kinship caregiver. I understand that I may have contact with my child(ren) only as written above, until a judge reviews the visitation arrangement.

☐

I disagree with the plan for my child(ren) to stay with the identified kinship caregiver; however, I understand that the law allows Child and Family Services to make this decision. I agree that I will not remove my child(ren) from the kinship caregiver. I understand that I may have contact with my child(ren) only as written above, until a judge reviews the visitation.

Parent/Guardian

Date

Phone Number

Parent/Guardian

Date

Phone Number

DCFS Worker

Date

Phone Number

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KINSHIP CAREGIVER PRELIMINARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENT

Child and Family Services has placed the child(ren) name below in protective custody. You have been identified to provide temporary care for the child(ren) as a kinship caregiver. Child and Family Services will continue to explore other options for placement, including other family members. This form explains the responsibilities of Child and Family Services and of you, the kinship caregiver, for the safety, protection, and daily care of the child(ren) while they are in your care.

Name of Child(ren):	
Name of Kinship Caregiver:	
Relationship to Child(dren):	

Responsibilities of the Kinship Caregiver

1. Keep the child(ren) safe from harm.
2. Review all information known to the caseworker about the child(ren) that is relevant to the child(ren) care.
3. Not allow the parent/guardian to have any contact with the child(ren), except as authorized in writing by Child and Family Services or ordered by a court.
4. Contact Child and Family Services and law enforcement if the parent/guardian attempts to make any unauthorized contact with the child(ren).
5. Allow Child and Family Services and the Guardian ad Litem (if an attorney is appointed for the child) to have access to the child(ren).
6. Assist the parent/guardian in reunification efforts (returning the child(ren) to their parents under court- approved conditions that support the safety and well-being of the child(ren)) at the request of Child and Family Services.
7. Provide daily care and nurturance for the child(ren).
8. Meet the medical, dental, mental health, and educational needs of the child(ren) and provide transportation to meet those needs.
9. Apply for medical benefits through the Department of Workforce Services within 10 business days after the child(ren)'s placement.
10. Work with the parent/guardian and others to meet the child(ren)'s need and plan for the future.
11. Inform Child and Family Services of any changes or situations that might affect the child(ren)'s well-being, such as change in health, residence, and caregiving arrangements.
12. Follow all court orders.
13. Within 10 business days after placement, complete the FBI Fingerprint process on all adults 18 years of age and older residing in the home.
14. If you are unable or willing to meet these responsibilities, the child(ren) may be removed from your care.

The following are the written terms of the Parent-Child(ren) visitation:

Responsibilities of Child and Family Services

1. Retain temporary custody and legal responsibility for the child(ren).
2. Prepare a written agreement for visitation between child(ren), parents, and other family members that includes a schedule and descriptions of contact.
3. Routinely share information with you and include you in the Child and Family Team.
4. Provide information to you on how you can obtain financial and medical assistance to help meet the needs of the child(ren) while in your care.

We have read this agreement and agree to carry out the above responsibilities:

Kinship Caregiver	Date	Phone Number
Kinship Caregiver	Date	Phone Number
DCFS Worker	Date	Phone Number

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State of Utah

GARY R. HERBERT
Governor

SPENCER COX
Lieutenant Governor

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Ann Silberberg Williamson
Executive Director

DIANE MOORE
Director

Verification of Placement

To Whom It May Concern:

The following children are in the protective custody of the Division of Child & Family Services.

On _____ the child(ren) listed below:
(Date)

Name	Date of Birth

They were placed in the care of:

Kinship name

Address

Please contact the caseworker or supervisor listed below if there are any questions.

Caseworker

Date

Phone

Supervisor

Date

Phone

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CONTACT LIST

Name, phone number	When contact can be made
DCFS Caseworker	
Kinship Specialist	
Guardian ad Litem (Child's Attorney)	
DCFS Supervisor	When Caseworker cannot be reached
Fostering Healthy Children Nurse	
Emergency/After Hours	When Caseworker and Supervisor cannot be reached
Other	

NOTES

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KINSHIP CAREGIVER SUPPORTS



DCFS Caseworkers will join with family members to create a Child and Family Team that will work with you to understand the needs of the child placed in your home and assist in making referrals to other agencies in the community to meet those specific needs. Do not hesitate to ask for help; your team will help address the challenges you will be facing by taking on this responsibility.



Government Agencies may be able to help connect you with basic services such as: financial assistance, childcare, housing, food, transportation, and more.

Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS): The DCFS Kinship Specialist will assist the kin caregiver in applying for benefits from the Department of Workforce Services.
dcfs.utah.gov/services/kinship



Education and Support can be obtained through the Utah Foster Care Foundation (utahfostercare.org | 1-877-505-KIDS) and provides:

- Training on specific issues, such as: child development, grief and loss issues, and strategies for meeting children's special needs.
- Continued training and support as part of a community cluster group of resource families.



Other Supports and Information:

- **Grandfamilies** provides classes to kinship families, support groups for adults and children, advocacy, and crisis intervention. grandfamiliesutah.org | 800-839-7444
- **Help Me Grow Utah** provides parents and caregivers a personal care coordinator who connects families to resources for children ages 0-8. helpmegrowutah.org | 801-691-5322
- **Care About Childcare** provides information about daycare providers in your area and their qualifications. (careaboutchildrencare.utah.gov)
- **Grandfamilies.org** is a national organization that provides information on kinship resources, laws, and research.
- **The Utah Coalition for Caregivers Support** provides support, resources, and issues. utahcares.org
- **WIC** – Women, Infants and Children Program for children placed in states' custody under the age of five wic.utah.gov
- **2-1-1** is a statewide information and referral line that connects individuals and families to services and resources such as housing, food, childcare, transportation, financial assistance, and more. Dial 2-1-1 or visit 211utah.org
- **Allies with Families** provides information and support for mental wellness allieswithfamilies.org
- **Utah Caregiver Support Program:** Offers in-home services that support family caregivers. <https://daas.utah.gov/seniors/#caregiving>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adjudicated Custody: A finding by the court that the facts alleged in the petition have been proven.

Adjudication Hearing: An adjudication hearing is to be held to adjudicate the petition filed by the Attorney General on behalf of Child and Family Services.

Assistant Attorney General (AAG): The AAG is an attorney that represents Child and Family Services.

Child and Family Plan: A written document developed by the team and based on assessed needs and child and family preferences. The plan specifies the goals, roles, strategies, resources, and schedules for coordinated provision of assistance, supports, supervision, and services for the child, caregiver, and teacher. For the child to be successful at home and school, special supports may be necessary for the primary caregiver at home and for the teacher at school.

Child and Family Services: The Division of Child and Family Services or DCFS.

Child and Family Team: The child, his or her family, the Child and Family Services social worker, and the out-of-home provider are primary members of a child and family team. Other entities that may be included to provide additional support include representatives from education, health care, , the GAL, parent's attorney, the Attorney General, and other supportive individuals as designated by the family.

Duty of Support: If there is a court order removing the child from the parent's home, Office of Recovery Services (ORS) must be informed that there is a court order involved and special handling that may be required. The natural or adoptive father and mother are equally responsible for the support of their minor children, even though the children may not live in the parental home. Parental responsibility and the requirement for Duty of Support procedures remain until such time as the children attain age eighteen, are emancipated by marriage, or as otherwise ordered by the courts.

Family Evaluation (Home Study): The evaluation of the home shall include the relationships and connections to the child, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the family. The following factors are critical in a successful placement: commitment to the child; ability to sustain long term relationships; proper motivation and realistic expectations; emotional openness and flexibility; empathy; strong social support system; knowledge of resources; and stability. Recommendations will be made based on the evaluation of the child's needs.

Friend: Friend means an adult the child knows and is comfortable with. A friend does not meet the definition of a relative of the child as defined in Utah Code Ann. §78A-6-307, and may be an extended relative of the child that is not included in the definition of relative. An emergency placement may be made with a friend, if one is designated by the custodial parent or guardian of the child and the friend is [a licensed foster parent or is willing to become a licensed foster parent within six months or sooner of the child being placed with them.

Guardian ad Litem or GAL: GAL is an acronym for Guardian ad Litem. The court may appoint a GAL to represent the best interests of a child involved in a case before the court. Out-of-home providers are encouraged to contact the child's GAL about any concerns that the child's needs are not being met

Kinship Background Screening: First steps in assessing for safety of a potential kinship placement. This includes screening for criminal history and history of child abuse and neglect.

Kinship Care: An alternative to having a child placed in a foster home.

Kinship Caregiver: A non-custodial parent, relative, or friend, as defined in statute, who is selected for placement and care of a child involved with Child and Family Services.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Kinship Specialist: DCFS worker who helps the family team to explore kinship options for placements and connections, explains the process, and connects families to services in the community. The specialist may also become the resource family consultant if the family chooses to become licensed as a foster parent specifically for the child.

Legal Custody: A relationship embodying the following rights and duties:

- A. The right to physical custody of the child.
- B. The right and duty to protect, train, and discipline the child.
- C. The duty to provide the child with food, clothing, shelter, education, and ordinary medical care.
- D. The right to determine where and with whom the child shall live.
- E. The right, in an emergency, to authorize surgery or extraordinary care.

Mediation: Involves the use of a skilled and unbiased third party to assist families, agencies, and attorneys in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution regarding child welfare and placement issues. The mediator has no decision-making power and does not make recommendations as to the outcome of the case. In mediation, participants attempt to resolve the issues cooperatively before the case goes to trial. Mediation puts the decision-making power in the hands of the parties involved.

Permanency Goal: The establishment and maintenance of a permanent living situation for a child to give the child an internal sense of family stability and belonging and a sense of self that connects the child to his or her past, present, and future. Permanency can be achieved in a number of ways based on the child's circumstances, e.g.: (1) keeping or returning the child to his or her home; (2) placing the child with a relative or non-relative and supporting permanent custody or guardianship; (3) supporting independent living; or (4) adoption.

Preliminary Placement: An out-of-home placement with a non-custodial parent or relative, or with a friend who is a licensed foster parent, or willing to become licensed, which is referred to in statute as an emergency placement.

Protective Custody: Taking a child into custody for protection by a Child and Family Services CPS worker, law enforcement officer, or physician. Protective custody begins from the time the decision is made, typically from when the child is removed from the home, and continues until the shelter hearing or until the child returns home, whichever occurs earlier.

Relative: A relative who is the child's grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, great aunt, uncle, great uncle, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepparent, first cousin, stepsibling, sibling, or the first cousin of the parent or an adult who is an adoptive parent of the child's sibling. For an Indian child, relative also includes an "extended family member" or "Indian custodian" as defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which is by the law or custom of the child's tribe or, in the absence of such law or custom, shall be a person who has reached the age of eighteen and who is the Indian child's grandparent, aunt, or uncle, brother or sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, niece or nephew, first or second cousin, or stepparent.

Reunification Services: These are reasonable services that Child and Family Services is ordered to provide to the child and family to assist with the reunification process. Reunification services may not extend beyond 12 months. The court may extend reunification services for no more than 90 days if it finds that there has been substantial compliance with the Child and Family Plan, and that reunification is probable within that 90-day period and that the extension is in the best interest of the child.

Shelter Hearing: A shelter hearing shall be held within 72 hours of the child's removal from the home, excluding weekends and holidays.

THINGS TO CONSIDER IF YOU ARE COMMITTED TO BECOMING A KINSHIP CAREGIVER

- What is my relationship with the child's parents or guardians? How will this affect my relationship with the child's parents or guardians and the extended families?
- How well do I know this child?
- How will this impact my own children and spouse? How will this impact my job and other responsibilities?
- Will I have family support?
- How do I feel about the circumstances surrounding the child's removal?
- Will I be able to set and enforce limits with the parents/guardians?
- Will I be able to let this child go back home when the time comes?
- Will I be able to offer this child a permanent home if necessary? Can I commit the time, energy, and resources needed for this child to have a permanent home?
- Will I need financial assistance?
- Will I need assistance to meet the educational, medical, dental, or emotional health needs of this child?
- Am I prepared to meet the special needs of the child, including behaviors and emotions resulting from abuse and neglect?
- Am I willing to work with Child and Family Services?