

What is formal kinship care?

Children who are removed from their biological parent homes and placed into the legal custody of the County Children and Youth agency enter the foster care system. Grandparents or other family members wishing to be a formal kinship caregiver for a child in care must go through the process to become a licensed foster home. This process takes at minimum 60 days to complete and involves criminal background checks, child-abuse clearances, FBI fingerprinting and clearance check, home studies, training, and frequent collaboration with a children and youth caseworker and other services providers as mandated by the county children and youth agency. Any decisions regarding the legal status of the child (i.e., custody) are made in the courts.

What is informal kinship care?

Informal kinship care is when a grandparent or other relative assumes the care of a relative child without the legal involvement of family court and without financial assistance from the child welfare system. In order to care for the children, the kinship caregiver may choose to request that the biological parents draft and sign a note stating that their children are in the care of the relative, which can be notarized or un-notarized. This document will assist the caregiver in applying for food stamps, health insurance, and child-only temporary assistance through the county assistance office. Importantly, this note is not a legal document. If the caregiver prefers a legally binding document, they may file for custody or guardianship through the family court system.



Formal Kinship Care

Informal Kinship Care