

## ***What You Need to Know About Being A Relative Caregiver***



**Other requirements** ~ A licensing worker will conduct a licensing study to ensure that your home is clean, well-heated, lighted and ventilated, and free from observable hazards. In other words, that your home has enough room and is a safe environment for foster children.

### ***Are there other permanency options?***

After you become licensed, you may also be interested in discussing other permanency alternatives with the caseworker if, after some time, the plan for the child does not involve a return to his or her home. Every child needs the stability and security offered by a permanent home in order to thrive and develop into a caring, competent adult. The permanency alternatives that might be appropriate for you and the child(ren) in your care include the following options:

**Private Guardianship** ~ This means that the court appoints you as the child's private guardian (instead of DCFS). As a private guardian, you assume the right and responsibility to make important decisions that will have a permanent affect on the development and life of the child, including the right to consent to marriage or major medical treatment and the right to represent the child in legal actions. You could be eligible to receive a monthly subsidy payment that is the same amount as the full foster care board rate that you will receive when you became licensed.

**Adoption** ~ This means that you provide a permanent home for the child. Again, you may still be eligible to receive a monthly subsidy payment that is the same amount as the full foster care board rate you will receive when you became licensed.

*A related child is being placed in your home because the child has been abused, neglected, or is dependent and needs to be removed from his or her home and placed in a safe environment.*

*Relatives are one of the most common and desired groups of people the Department of Children and Family Services can turn to when looking for a safe and nurturing environment for a child.*

This brochure contains information about the services, payments and procedures that you need to know when caring for a related child. It also explains the benefits of becoming licensed as a foster home, and alternatives to DCFS being the guardian of the child – such as private guardianship and adoption.

The worker who places the child in your home will discuss this information with you. Please review it carefully and keep it in a safe place for future reference.

### ***What is Foster Care?***

Foster care means that a child cannot be left safely in his or her home and that the court has determined that DCFS should have custody of the child. Other caregivers, such as yourself, in partnership with the Department, take on the responsibility of caring for the child until a permanent home – such as returning the child to his or her home, private guardianship or adoption – can be arranged for the child.

### ***What is a child in foster care entitled to?***

A child in foster care is entitled to the following:

- Monthly payments for costs associated with being in foster care, such as housing, food and clothing
- Casework and other services such as counseling
- Medical benefits
- Educational services

The child is also entitled to periodic visits with his or her parents and other family members as determined by the court and the child's service plan. Services are also available to the child's parents in order to stabilize and rehabilitate family relationships so that a child

may return home. If that is not possible, an alternative permanency plan for the child will be developed.

A caseworker will be assigned to work with you, the child and the child's parents to identify services that are needed and to provide and arrange for those services. This is the person with whom you will work most closely while the child is in your care.

### **What are my responsibilities as a Relative Caregiver?**

The worker who places the child in your home is required to make an initial safety check before making the placement. This safety check includes child abuse and criminal background checks for you and certain other members of your household.

The placing worker will also ask you to read and sign a Relative Caregiver Placement Agreement. This agreement states that you understand your role as a Relative Caregiver and that you agree to keep the child safe from harm, participate in the child's service plan, and when asked, facilitate an ongoing relationship between the child and his or her parents and siblings. It is also encouraged to pursue licensure as a foster family home.



### **What payments may I be entitled to?**

There are two different payment levels for children placed in the homes of relatives:

- Payments to unlicensed relative caregivers
- Payments to licensed foster homes

As an unlicensed relative caregiver, you will be paid a monthly amount equal to the state's "standard of need" rate, which varies depending on the number of children you care for and the county where you live.

When you become licensed as a foster home, you will be paid a **substantially higher monthly amount** (the full foster care board rate) for each child in your care, depending on the age of the child(ren).

There is a chart in your "Relative Placement Packet" that shows both the "Standard of Need" payments and the "Full Foster Care Board Rate" payments for your county (and the number and ages of children in your care).

### **How do I apply for a foster home license?**

To become a licensed foster home, you must complete and submit an application for licensure. A foster home license certifies that you have met standards set forth in state law and DCFS rules, including an assessment of your family and home and references. If you fail to apply for a license, the child may be removed from your home.

A licensing worker will contact you with additional information about the benefits of becoming a licensed foster home and how to begin the licensing process.

If you have not heard from a licensing worker within 60 days of the children being placed in your home, please contact the DCFS Advocacy Office at **1-800-232-3798** and tell the staff that a licensing worker has not yet contacted you.

### **What are the requirements for becoming a licensed foster home?**

**Background checks** ~ Everyone in your home age 13 and older, except the related children who have been placed with you, must authorize and undergo a background check as part of



the licensing process. Adults (persons age 18 and older) must be fingerprinted as part of the background check process. The background check process includes a review of the state's child abuse and neglect records, criminal history records, and the Sex Offender Registry for Illinois and any other state you have lived in for the past five years.



**References** ~ You must provide the names and addresses of three persons who are not related to you who can attest to your character and suitability for becoming a licensed foster home.

**Health of Family** ~ You and all the members of your household, except the related children who have been placed with you, must provide medical reports as part of the licensing process. School medical reports are accepted for your children.

**Training** ~ You and your spouse (if you are married) must complete six hours of training to get a license. To meet this requirement, you may take special training classes or watch a set of four training videotapes in your home.

**Discipline** ~ You and the rest of your family must understand that corporal punishment may never be used with foster children, including foster children who are related to you.