



### What supports and services will the child in my care receive regardless of licensure or while I am applying for certification?

Each youth in care receives a medical card that pays for most necessary medical care and prescriptions. Other support services may include educational services, counseling, physical therapy and medical equipment. The child is also entitled to visits with his or her parents, siblings and other family members, if determined appropriate by the court and the child's service plan. DCFS also provides additional payments for daycare services, after-school care and extracurricular activities for youth in care.

### What supports and services will I receive regardless of licensure or while I am applying for certification?

Relative caregivers receive a monthly stipend to cover the child's food, housing, clothing and personal allowance, with the amount based on the child's age and any special needs, as well as certification status of the home.

### Are there other permanency options for the child in my care?

Every child needs the stability and security offered by a permanent home to thrive and develop. Reunification with the child's parent is the first option. When that is not possible, other options must be considered, including:

- **Private or subsidized guardianship:** Permanency through guardianship 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 effect on a child's life, including the right to consent to marriage or major medical treatment and the right to represent the child in legal actions. You may be eligible to receive a monthly subsidy payment that is the same amount as the Rate of Reimbursement (Board Rate) that you will receive when you became certified.
- **Adoption:** This means that you become the child's legal parent. If eligible and approved prior to adoption finalization, you may still receive a monthly subsidy payment that is the same amount as the Rate of Reimbursement (Board Rate) you will receive when you became certified.



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Printed by Authority of the State of Illinois  
DCFS #XXX • Month 2021 • 000 copies • CFS 1050-64 • rev 10.21.2025 at 8:40

## What you need to know about being a Relative Caregiver





Thank you for providing – or being willing to provide – a safe, nurturing and loving home for child(ren) in DCFS care who are related to you. By opening your heart and your home, you are giving them the stability and connections to community, friends and family members they need to thrive during the time when they need you the most.

### What is foster care?

A foster care placement occurs when a local court determines that a child cannot remain safely in his or her home. A caregiver takes on the responsibility of caring for the child until a permanent home – such as returning the child to his or her home, guardianship (private or subsidized) or adoption – can be arranged for the child.

### As a relative, can I care for a child who has come into foster care?

Yes. Lifetime family connections are important to children. When DCFS and the courts determine that it is necessary for children to be removed from their home and enter foster care, DCFS prefers to keep children with their relatives unless a relative placement is not in the child's best interests.

DCFS and its partner agencies may place a youth in care in the home of a willing and able relative who is not yet licensed as a foster home or certified as a

relative caregiver home. While relative caregivers help meet urgent needs and provide some continuity in a child's life, it is necessary for relative caregivers to apply for certification and to meet certification standards to continue caring for the related child or children.

*The Children and Family Services Act* defines "relative" as a person who is:

- (i) *related to a child by blood, marriage, tribal custom, adoption or to a child's sibling in any of the foregoing ways, even though the person is not related to the child, when the child and the child's sibling are placed together with that person or*
- (ii) *fictive kin.*

*For children who have been in the guardianship of the Department following the termination of their parents' parental rights, been adopted or placed in subsidized or unsubsidized guardianship, and are subsequently returned to the temporary custody or guardianship of the Department, "relative" includes any person who would have qualified as a relative under this Section prior to the termination of the parents' parental rights if the Department determines, and documents, or the court finds that it would be in the child's best interests to consider this person a relative, based upon the factors for determining best interests set forth in subsection (4.05) of Section 1-3 of the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.*

There are two different payment levels for a child living in the home of a relative:

- Unlicensed/uncertified relative caregivers receive a monthly amount equal to 90% of the rate of reimbursement for certified or licensed relative caregivers described below.
- Certified or licensed relative caregivers receive a higher Rate of Reimbursement (Board Rate). This rate is based on the age of each child. As of July 1, 2025 certified or licensed relative caregivers receive \$672 to \$827 per child per month depending on the age of the child. Please note these rates may change annually.

### What are the requirements for becoming a relative caregiver?

Relative and fictive kin caregivers come from all walks of life. You must be at least 21 years old and can be married, in a civil union, single, divorced or separated. You can work, go to school or be a stay at home individual. You don't have to own your own home; you just need to have enough space to accommodate children in your home.

As a relative caregiver, certain requirements must be met before you can care for the child in your home. For example, the home and caregiver assessment must be completed to ensure the home environment meets safety standards.

To ensure your success as a relative caregiver, regardless of licensure, you and other household members will be required to:

- Provide information for DCFS to conduct a name-based background check of all household members over 13 years of age.
- Ensure that everyone 18 years and older in the household submits their fingerprints and gives DCFS authorization to complete a more extensive background check.
- Cooperate with the assigned caseworker and other service providers, as needed, to ensure the child's needs are met and the child is available to participate in scheduled visitation with parents, siblings and other people important to the child.
- Once you become certified, you will receive a higher rate of monthly reimbursement based on the age of the children in your home. You will be given the opportunity to complete training that focuses on the needs of the children in your home.