



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
P.O. BOX 2675
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17105-2675

JUL 28 2003

WAYNE STEVENSON
Deputy Secretary for
Children, Youth and Families

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Dear Colleague:

Enclosed please find Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Bulletin Number 00-03-03 entitled Kinship Care Policy which obsoletes OCYF Bulletin Number 00-97-06 (Kinship Care Guidelines) and Bulletin Number 3140-03-08/3490-03-04 entitled Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers which obsoletes OCYF Bulletin Number 3130-87-07 (Child Placements with Emergency Caretakers). Together these two bulletins provide a framework and guidance for the placement of children with individuals with whom they already have an established relationship when out of home placement is necessary.

The Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers bulletin provides guidelines for the immediate approval of kinship caregivers when out of home placement of a child is required. This bulletin not only focuses on issues of safety and well being for children entering the child welfare system but also addresses issues related to funding requirements. In developing policy based upon best practice, OCYF has extended the length of time an emergency caregiver placement can exist, to 60 calendar days. This extended period will allow more time to assist a family in achieving reunification or for the county or private children and youth agency to approve persons who were initially approved as emergency caregivers as foster parents. The Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers bulletin expands the assessment of the caregiver's home and adds a requirement for criminal records clearances prior to placing a child in an emergency caregiver's home.

The Kinship Care Policy bulletin provides general guidelines for the placement of children with kinship caregivers. This bulletin recognizes the importance of kinship caregivers as temporary substitute care resources, as well as their role in providing permanent and stable homes for children who cannot be reunited with their parents. Stability and the preserving of connections are essential in promoting timely permanence and the overall well being of children in substitute care. A strengthened support system and services to kinship caregivers will also allow for the timely setting and achieving of appropriate permanency goals.

Both bulletins require written notification to caregivers that payments and other benefits may be available for the children in their care as well as all placement and permanency options available to these children. These notices

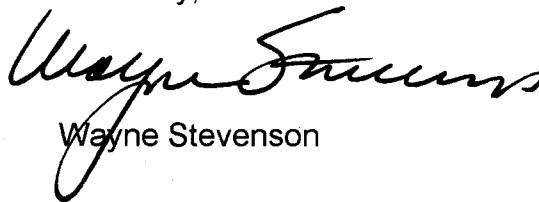
are an accompaniment to agency discussion with caregivers surrounding these issues and are intended to assist caregivers in making informed decisions regarding their ability to provide placement and permanency for children.

The policies and procedures set forth in the Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers and Kinship Care Policy bulletins support the achievement of permanency and stability for children in their living situations. Providing the required written notification documents to potential substitute care resources will lead to the timely establishment and achievement of permanency goals.

OCYF is in the process of having the notices required by these bulletins transferred into Spanish. Spanish translation notices will be forwarded upon completion. Please share this information with your staff and agency solicitor.

As always, thank you for your continued efforts in assisting Pennsylvania's youth in safely achieving timely permanence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Stevenson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wayne" being more prominent and the last name "Stevenson" following in a similar style.

Wayne Stevenson

Cc: Charles Songer
Barbara Robbins
Bernadette Bianchi



CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES BULLETIN

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA ● DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

ISSUE DATE:

July 28, 2003

EFFECTIVE DATE:

September 29, 2003

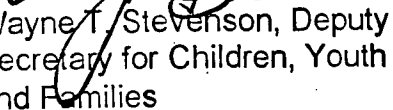
NUMBER:

00-03-03

SUBJECT:

Kinship Care Policy

BY:


Wayne T. Stevenson, Deputy
Secretary for Children, Youth
and Families

SCOPE:

COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES
COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEES
PRIVATE CHILDREN AND YOUTH SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES
COUNTY CHIEF JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICERS
COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH SOLICITORS

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to transmit to Pennsylvania public and private children and youth agencies and other affected and interested parties the requirements and policies for formal and informal kinship care as placement options for children.

BACKGROUND:

On September 1, 1984, the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) issued two Bulletins addressing kinship care issues. The first was numbered 3130-84-06 and 3700-84-01 and entitled Application of 3700 Regulations When Relatives Provide Substitute Family Care, which identified the specific ways to apply the Foster Care Regulations when foster parents were providing care in their homes for children related to them. The second bulletin was numbered 3130-84-07 and 3700-84-02 and entitled Reimbursement for Relative Foster Parents, which addressed foster care maintenance payments for foster parents who were related to the children in their homes. On October 1, 1997, a third OCYF Bulletin, numbered 00-97-06 and entitled Kinship Care Guidelines, was issued identifying kinship care guidelines to be utilized by Pennsylvania child welfare agencies. This bulletin supersedes and makes obsolete the above referenced bulletins.

REFER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN TO:

Regional Directors

ORIGIN: Kerin J. Kohler 717-346-0445

In January 2000, OCYF issued The Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice (Practice Standards). The Practice Standards are based on research findings and were developed with consultation from the Child Welfare League of America. These Practice Standards represent a consensus among families, county agency staff, private agency staff, social work educators, and staff from OCYF. This process was an effort to determine the actions necessary to improve overall child welfare practice. The Practice Standards define the standards, which we should strive to meet in order to increase positive outcomes for the children and families we serve. Special focus was paid to the areas of Safety, Permanency, and Well Being. This bulletin incorporates the principles set forth in the Practice Standards in an effort to promote the implementation of best practice across the Commonwealth.

OCYF has issued the Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers Bulletin numbered 3130-01-03, which defines the requirements for county agencies when children are placed with relatives and other caregivers on an emergency basis. This bulletin does not replace the Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers bulletin. The two are meant to be used in conjunction with one another. Both the Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers bulletin and the Kinship Care Policy bulletin promote the safe placement of children with persons with whom they have an established positive relationship and define the circumstances in which each may be utilized.

STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY:

FEDERAL STATUTE

1. **The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272).**
Provides that states seek the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate for each child in care. 42 U.S.C. § 675 (5) (A).
2. **The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193).**
Provides that a " . . . State shall consider giving preference to an adult relative over a non-related caregiver when determining a placement for a child provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant State child protection standards." 42 U.S.C. § 671 (a) (19).
3. **The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) (P.L. 105-89).**
Builds upon the role of relatives when children are placed in the child welfare system. The tenets of ASFA allow for relatives to provide permanence. 42 U.S.C. § 675 (1) (E).

STATE STATUTE

1. **42 Pa. C.S., Chapter 63. The Juvenile Act.**

A. Section 6334. Petition.

A petition shall include the facts which bring the child within the jurisdiction of the court; as well as, the name and address of any known adult relative residing in the county or nearest to the location of the court when the child's parents, guardian or custodian cannot be found within the Commonwealth.

B. Section 6351. Disposition of dependent child, Subsections a and e.

(a) General rule.

When a child is found to be dependent, the court must proceed to a proper disposition best suited to the protection and physical, mental and moral welfare of the child, including: to allow the child to remain with the parent, guardian or other custodian; transfer temporary legal custody to an individual, including any relative who after study is found to be qualified to receive and care for the child; transfer temporary legal custody to a public agency, an agency or private organization licensed or authorized by law to receive and provide care for the child; transfer permanent legal custody to an individual, including any relative who after study is found to be qualified to receive and care for the child; or transfer custody to the juvenile court of another state if authorized by and in accordance with section 6363 (relating to ordering foreign supervision).

(e) Permanency hearings and (f) Matters to be determined at permanency hearing.

The court must determine and review the permanency plan best suited for the child, and consistent with the purposes of the Juvenile Act as set forth in 42 Pa. C.S. § 6301 (b) (1), to preserve the family whenever possible and achieve another alternative permanent family when the unity of the family cannot be maintained. Permanency is to be achieved in a timely manner.

2. **62 P.S., Chapter 1. Public Welfare Code, Article VII. Children and Youth.**

A. Section 701. Availability of services.

Requires the Department to assure the availability and equitable provision of adequate public child welfare services to all children regardless of religion, race, settlement, residence, or economic or social status.

B. Section 702. Consultation.

The Department is required to consult with and assist each county institution or its successor in carrying out child welfare duties and functions as authorized by law.

C. Section 703. Rules and Regulations.

The Department is required to make and enforce the rules and regulations necessary and appropriate to accomplish the child welfare duties and functions vested by law in the county institution districts or their successors.

3. 62 P.S., Chapter 5. Institution Districts, Section 2305. Powers and Duties of Local Authorities as to Children.

Establishes that the duty of the county in protecting and promoting the welfare of children and youth is: to provide child welfare services designated to keep children in their own homes, prevent neglect, abuse and exploitation, to help overcome problems that result in dependency, neglect or delinquency, to provide foster family homes and child caring institutions as adequate substitute care for any child in need of such care, and upon the request of the court to provide such services and care for children and youth adjudicated dependent, neglected or delinquent.

4. 23 Pa. C.S., Chapter 63. The Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), Section 6344. Information relating to prospective child-care personnel.

Establishes a requirement that all prospective employees of child care services, including prospective foster and adoptive parents, obtain a certification from the Department of Public Welfare as to whether the applicant is named in the statewide central register as the perpetrator of a report of child abuse or as the perpetrator of a report of student abuse and a criminal history record by the Pennsylvania State Police. In addition, out of state applicants must obtain a clearance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

STATE REGULATION

1. Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 3130 (relating to Administration of County Children and Youth Social Service Programs).

Provides the regulatory base for the administration and provision of child welfare duties by the public children and youth social services.

2. Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 3490, Sections 3490.121-127 (relating to Verification of the existence of child abuse and student abuse records for child care services).

Provides the regulatory base for the submission of request for verification of the existence of child abuse and student abuse records for an applicant for child care service, which includes foster homes as a "child care service."

3. Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 3680 (relating to Administration and Operation of a Children and Youth Social Service Agency).

Provides the regulatory base to ensure that an agency, which provides social services for a child, does so in a manner that protects the health, safety and rights of the clients receiving services.

4. Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 3700 (relating to foster family care agency).

Provides the regulatory base for approval of foster parents.

DEFINITIONS:

The following definitions are offered to assure a common understanding of the policies and requirements set forth in this bulletin:

Agency: The county agency or the private foster family care agency.

County Agency: The county children and youth social services agency established pursuant to section 405 of the act of June 24, 1937 (P.L.2017, No. 396), known as the County Institution District Law, or its successor, and supervised by the Department of Public Welfare under Article IX of the act of June 13, 1967 (P.L. 31, No. 21), known as the Public Welfare Code.

Formal Kinship Care: Situations in which the county agency has legal custody of the child and out of home placement is made with a kinship caregiver who is an approved foster parent by a licensed foster family care agency.

Informal Kinship Care: Situations in which arrangements are made by the parents for the placement of their child with a kinship caregiver.

Kinship Care: The full-time nurturing and protection of a child who is separated from his/her parents and placed in the home of a caregiver who has an existing relationship with the child and/or the child's family. The existing relationship involves one of the following characteristics:

- Relative of the child through blood or marriage;
- God parent of the child as recognized by an organized church;
- Member of the child's tribe or clan; or
- Significant positive relationship with the child or the child's family.

Placement: Twenty-four hour out-of-home care and supervision of a child.

Private Foster Family Care Agency (FFCA): A private agency, which recruits, approves, supervises and places children with foster families.

DISCUSSION:

Formal kinship care, as other types of substitute care, is intended to be **temporary care** while parents work toward reunification. ASFA encourages the use of concurrent planning for each child who comes in contact with the child welfare system. When the child is in the legal custody of the county agency and placed with a kinship caregiver, the caregiver shall be informed of all permanency options from the onset of placement to determine their level of involvement in permanency planning for the child when reunification is not an option. Permanency options for a child could be any one of the following: adoption, permanent legal custodianship, permanent placement with a fit and willing relative or another planned placement that is intended to be permanent. A "temporary" kinship care placement may lead to a permanent living situation for a child. Long-term foster care is not recognized as a permanency option.

Kinship care is designed to promote the following objectives:

- Preserving family connections through placement with "fit and willing" relatives and other individuals with whom the parents or the child have an existing relationship who are providing care for a child who cannot remain with his/her parents.
- Assuring that kinship caregivers are able to make informed decisions regarding their commitment to the child by providing them with information about concurrent planning and the foster parent approval process resulting in the ability to receive foster care maintenance payments when they have been approved to provide foster care for a child who is in the legal custody of the county agency.
- Supporting formal kinship caregivers with placement services, foster parent orientation and training in a manner that recognizes the caregiver's knowledge of the child and family situation and the ability to receive foster care maintenance payments.
- Supporting permanency for children in formal kinship care through services identified in OCYF bulletin numbered 3350-03-01 entitled Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) Policies and Procedures, which include family profiles, child preparation for permanency and post permanency services.

Permanency planning and the ASFA requirements are as important for children in formal kinship care as they are for children in other substitute care settings. Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act, in complying with ASFA, identifies the permanency goals that apply to children in the custody of the county agency, including those in kinship care. These include return to parent, adoption, permanent legal custodianship, permanent placement with a fit and willing relative or another planned living arrangements intended to be permanent.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES:

The county agency may conduct an investigation or assessment of a child residing with an informal kinship caregiver prior to the agency's involvement and based upon risk and safety assessments determine that the child and caregiver are in need of in-home services. Informal kinship caregivers and the children for whom they provide care are entitled to the same in-home services available to children who reside with their parents.

As part of its intake investigation/assessment, referral process and on going service provision, the county agency is responsible for identifying adults who are potential kinship caregivers for children who have been or may be removed from the home of a parent, guardian or other custodian. When the county agency determines through the use of safety and risk assessments that a child cannot safely remain in his/her own home, and grounds for dependency exist making placement essential to protect the child's health and safety, the county agency must file a dependency petition requesting that legal custody of the child be transferred to the county agency unless the child's parent, guardian or custodian enters into a written voluntary placement agreement with the county agency. If an appropriate kinship caregiver is identified, an assessment of the selected caregiver must be completed in compliance with Chapter 3700 Regulations. The decision to place a child with a kinship caregiver must be based on the ability of the kinship caregiver to meet the health and safety needs of the child and the caregiver's ability to meet the foster care approval requirements.

If a child is placed with a kinship caregiver who is not an approved foster parent, prior to receiving the child the county agency must complete an assessment of the kinship caregiver, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter §3700.70 (a) (relating to temporary and provisional approvals of foster families) or the Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers bulletin, bulletin number 3130-01-03. Both allow for the temporary approval of a caregiver after the initial assessment indicates that placement with that caregiver would not jeopardize the child's health or safety. A placement made pursuant to the Emergency Caregiver bulletin is one in which a resource is needed for the child requiring immediate placement. A placement made pursuant to Chapter §3700.70 (a) may occur when a kinship caregiver becomes known after a child has been placed in substitute care. Kinship caregivers approved to provide care to a child pursuant to the Emergency Caregiver bulletin must be offered emergency caregiver maintenance payments. Kinship caregivers approved to provide care to a child pursuant to Chapter §3700.70 (a), must be offered foster care maintenance payments. Placement with a caregiver approved under these provisions may not last more than 60 calendar days. The kinship caregiver must be approved as a foster parent during this 60-day period. As soon as the county agency places a child with a kinship caregiver, steps should be taken to begin the process to approve the kinship caregiver as a foster parent. The county

agency may approve the caregiver as a foster parent or refer the kinship caregiver to a private foster family care agency (FFCA) for approval as a foster parent. The requirements of the Chapter 3700 Regulations and the agency's foster home approval requirements must be applied uniformly to all prospective foster parents, regardless of the relationship between the child and the foster parents. The court has the authority to order placement of the child with a specific caregiver. If the child remains in the home of an unapproved caregiver and in the legal custody of the county agency beyond 60 days, the state will not participate in the reimbursement of the home even if the court has ordered that foster care maintenance payments be made to the caregiver. If the agency is unable to approve the kinship caregiver as a foster parent by the 60th calendar day of the child's placement with the caregiver, the child should not remain in the kinship caregiver's home unless ordered by the court.

Kinship resources may be known to the county agency immediately upon the need for substitute care, or may come forward at any time during the course of placement. County agencies should first seek "fit and willing" kinship caregivers when a child is in need of substitute care. At no point in the placement and permanency process should kinship caregivers be denied the opportunity for consideration as a resource for the child. Consideration should be given to the following when determining the most appropriate placement resource for the child:

- Nature and quality of the relationship between the child and caregiver;
- Ability and desire of caregiver to protect the child from abuse, neglect and other maltreatment;
- Safety of the caregiver's home;
- Caretaker's ability to provide a nurturing environment for the child;
- Health status of the caregiver;
- The caregiver's supports;
- The caregiver's commitment and willingness to work with the parent and the agency;
- The caregiver's willingness and ability to provide permanency for the child; and
- Applicable regulatory and agency approval requirements.

The county agency shall provide written notice of kinship care options to the kinship caregiver at or before the time the child is placed with the kinship caregiver; the form attached as Attachment A must be used. This form will be available in Spanish. The notice includes the following:

- An explanation of informal and formal kinship care;
- The foster care approval requirements;
- An explanation of the foster parents' responsibilities and the level of agency involvement a foster parent can expect;

- An explanation of the availability of foster care maintenance payments or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits;
- An explanation of the availability of Medical Assistance;
- The telephone number of the local County Assistance Office;
- An explanation of concurrent planning; and
- An explanation of the ASFA identified permanency goal options.

The county agency should assist the kinship caregiver in understanding the options and provide the caregiver with an opportunity to ask questions regarding the options and the information contained in the notice. The kinship caregiver must also be provided with a Confirmation of Intent form, which is used to document the caregiver's decision regarding the child; the form attached as Attachment B must be used. This form will be available in Spanish. If the kinship caregiver has not made a decision regarding the care of the child, the county agency must document this and provide another copy of the form to the kinship caregiver when the caregiver has made a decision.

When a child is placed with a kinship caregiver, the agency must provide notice to the caregiver including a detailed explanation of foster family care and the agency's requirements for approval. The notice must include the amount of the foster care maintenance payment available. Formal kinship caregivers must be offered foster care maintenance payments at the same per diem rates as other similarly situated approved foster parents providing the same level of care within that agency. The county agency or the private FFCA must provide this notice to the kinship caregiver within ten days from the onset of the foster family home assessment. If notice is being provided to the kinship caregiver by a private FFCA, the private FFCA must provide a copy of such notice to the county agency. See Attachment C. This form will be available in Spanish.

Kinship caregivers must be provided relevant support services. The level of service must be individually determined and based on the needs of the child, the parents and the resources of the kinship caregiver. Kinship caregivers must be provided training and support to assist them in successfully parenting the children in their care. Foster parent orientation and training requirements, required by the Chapter 3700 Regulations should be included in a training program for formal kinship caregivers. Training opportunities should be provided in a manner that recognizes the caregivers' knowledge of the family situation and their ability to help remedy family problems. The agency should accommodate the caregiver's need for individualized training which would address the specific needs and issues of the children in their care.

If after initial approval, a formal kinship caregiver is not in compliance with Chapter 3700 Regulations in areas that do not result in an immediate threat to the health and safety of the child, a provisional approval may be granted for the care of the child pursuant to Chapter 3700 section 3700.70 (b). This provisional status may not last longer than 12 months and the placement is not Title IV-E

reimbursable while the caregiver is on provisional status. The agency should make every effort to assist the caregiver in meeting the foster care approval requirements. If the caregiver does not make adjustments to meet Chapter 3700 Regulation and the agency's approval requirements, the child cannot continue to remain in the care of the kinship caregiver after the 12-month provisional period, as long as the county agency has legal custody.

Each county agency must develop and maintain intake, in-home and placement policies and procedures that implement the kinship care policies and procedures contained in this bulletin, which are consistent with the concepts included in the Pennsylvania Standards for Child Welfare Practice.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children:

Since placements across state lines require compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), no child may be placed in another state based on the Child Placements with Emergency Caregivers bulletin. If the county agency wishes to consider a kinship caregiver outside of Pennsylvania, it must comply with the terms of the ICPC. The request for the home study of a kinship caregiver should be identified as a foster family care request. The child may not be placed with a caregiver who lives in another state (the receiving state) unless approved according to the foster care regulations of the receiving state. The county agency must offer foster care maintenance payments to a kinship caregiver in another state upon being approved in that state as a foster parent. If the child is Title IV-E eligible, the receiving state must also provide Medical Assistance to the child. The sending county agency will remain financially responsible for the child's care and may not release jurisdiction without the concurrence of the receiving state.

Any request from another state for placement of a child with a kinship resource, other than a parent, in Pennsylvania, must be treated as a foster family care request and comply with the terms of the ICPC. In these situations, the resource must become a formal kinship caregiver and the caregiver must meet the foster care requirements whether or not the sending state makes foster care maintenance payments. The agency must supervise an ICPC approved formal kinship care placement and provide reports as requested by the sending state until the sending state agrees to discharge the child with concurrence from both ICPC Offices.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS:

The decisions of the county agency involving the placement of a child with a kinship caregiver must be documented in the case record. The county agency must comply with all of the documentation requirements of Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapters 3130, 3490 and 3700. A private FFCA must comply with all of the

documentation requirements of Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapters 3680 and 3700. In addition, the following critical points in the decision making process must be documented:

- Date the written notice of placement options required by this bulletin was provided to the kinship caregiver (Attachment A);
- Provision of the Confirmation of Intent notice to the kinship caregiver documenting the caregiver's decision regarding the care of the child (Attachment B). If the kinship caregiver did not decide his/her intent regarding the care of the child at or before the completion of the intake assessment, the county agency shall document this and provide another copy of the form to the kinship caregiver to complete when a decision has been made;
- If the kinship caregiver applies to become a foster parent, the applicant must be notified in writing, of the decision of the agency to approve or disapprove the kinship caregiver as a foster parent pursuant to the Chapter 3700 Regulations and the agency's approval requirements, and the basis for that decision;
- If approval is denied, this notice must also advise the applicant of his/her right to appeal the decision to deny approval in accordance with the provisions of Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 3700, section 3700.72. A copy of this notice to the applicant must be maintained in the case record;
- Receipt of any appeal by a kinship caregiver and the actions taken by the agency to forward the appeal to the Department's Bureau of Hearings and Appeals, including the dates received and forwarded and the parties involved;
- The decision to place or not to place the child with the kinship caregiver and the basis for that decision;
- Documentation of compliance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, where applicable.

COUNTY AGENCY LETTERHEAD

Summary for Kinship Caregivers

You have expressed an interest in providing care for _____, who cannot remain in the care of his/her parent(s). Kinship care is the full-time nurturing and protection of a child who is separated from his/her parents and placed in the home of a caregiver who has an existing relationship with the child and/or the child's family.

Formal kinship care is when the county agency has legal custody of a child and out of home placement is made with a kinship caregiver who is approved as a foster parent for the child.

When a child is in the custody of the county agency and placed with a kinship caregiver, the caregiver must meet all of the foster care approval requirements of the foster family care agency as well as those set forth in Title 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 3700 (relating to Family Foster Care Agency). Unless you are already an approved foster parent, the county agency or a private foster family care agency will complete an assessment of you and your home. In order for the child who is in the custody of the county agency to remain in your care, foster parent approval must occur within 60 days. The county agency or private foster family care agency will assist and guide you through this process. If you are approved as a foster parent, you can receive foster care maintenance payments for the care of the child.

You must meet the following **minimum** foster care requirements set forth in Chapter 3700 in order to become an approved foster parent.

- Be at least 21 years of age;
- Have a medical appraisal performed by a licensed physician to establish that you are physically able to care for the child and are free from communicable disease;
- Complete a criminal background record and child abuse clearance to determine the existence of certain criminal offenses and/or history of child abuse;
- Undergo at least two interviews with a caseworker. The purpose of these interviews is to enable the agency to assess the following:
 - your ability to provide care, nurturing and supervision to the child and to protect the child from abuse or neglect;
 - your mental and emotional stability;
 - your supportive ties within the community;
 - your own relationships;

- your ability to work in partnership with the agency, the child and his/her family; and
- your ability to discipline the child without using physical or corporal means;
- Consent to agency inspection of your house to make sure it meets all of the requirements for foster family residences, including:
 - safety caps on electrical outlets;
 - poisonous materials marked and not accessible to children;
 - an operable portable fire extinguisher;
 - heating devices which have been properly installed and maintained;
 - emergency telephone numbers posted adjacent to the telephones;
 - operable smoke detectors;
 - separate and adequate bedroom space for the child;
 - drinkable well water (if you have a well);
 - an operable heating system; and
 - an operable telephone;
- Supply several references. These may include your family physician, family members, neighbors and other unrelated persons;
- Complete an orientation program for new foster parents;
- Participate in six hours of agency approved training annually; and
- Cooperate with an annual re-evaluation.

To be an approved foster parent you must meet all of the regulatory requirements. In certain circumstances when there are conditions that could preclude approval, such as a health problem, our office may request a waiver of any regulatory requirement that would not affect the health, safety or rights of the child. These waivers must be submitted to the Department of Public Welfare for approval.

In some situations, we may conduct an initial home visit and assessment and recommend that the child be placed with you while a full home assessment is being completed. Payment for the care of the child is available to you during this period. Should the child be placed with you after this initial home assessment is completed, you must make sure that you obtain criminal and child abuse clearances from the appropriate offices immediately upon placement of the child. Our agency will provide you with the necessary forms. If these clearances are not returned to you within 60 days of the initial placement of the child, your home cannot be approved. If these clearances are received, the rest of the assessment must be completed by the 60th day of placement, or, again, your home cannot be approved. **These timetables are important to remember.**

Not all applicants are approved. If you or your home does not meet regulatory requirements at the time of the home assessment, we will notify you that we cannot approve you as a foster parent. If you are not approved as a foster

parent, you have the right to appeal the decision to the Department of Public Welfare. Should this situation arise, we would provide you with notice of your right to appeal. If you are not approved as a foster parent, the child may not be able to remain in your care while in the legal custody of the county agency unless ordered by the court. If you are not approved and still want to provide care to the child, an option would be to transfer custody of the child to you giving you legal guardianship. Should this occur, financial support and medical coverage may be available either directly from the parents or through the County Assistance Office (CAO). This would include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. The phone number for the local CAO is _____. The CAO worker will assist you in determining what benefits are available. Our agency will remain available to assist you in this process.

If you are approved as a foster parent, you can expect the following to occur:

- You are eligible to receive the same foster care maintenance payment as a non-relative foster parent for the care of the child. In addition, a Pennsylvania Medical Assistance Card or HMO Membership Card may be available to the child to cover medical costs.
- You may work with more than one caseworker. One may be a coordinator who will meet with you periodically after your home assessment is completed to assist you in understanding your role as a foster parent with our agency and providing you with support services. Another caseworker may work with you, the child and the child's parents towards the short and long-term goals of placement and permanency for the child. You will see one of these workers at least monthly.
- You will be expected to be the primary caregiver to the child and to work with the agency and the child's family around visitation and planning for the child. This includes participation in service plans, ongoing team meetings, and court hearings if requested. You will need to keep the agency aware of all contact between the child and his/her parents. You will care for the child as a parent would, working at all times to nurture and meet his or her developmental needs.

Formal kinship care, as all types of substitute care, is temporary. Out of home placement allows the family a reasonable period of time to correct the circumstances that resulted in the placement of the child. The agency has a duty to work toward the most permanent home for the child and as a result conducts concurrent planning. Concurrent planning is a practice that plans for family reunification while at the same time planning for an alternate permanency option. A permanency plan is developed as soon as a child is placed in foster care.

Permanency plan options include the following:

- return home;
- adoption;
- placement with a permanent legal custodian;
- placement with a fit and willing relative; and
- another planned placement that is intended to be permanent.

The information provided to you is intended to assist you in making decisions regarding your willingness and ability to provide kinship care or permanency to the child(ren). Should you have further questions, you may contact the caseworker or supervisor listed below.

Caseworker: _____

Casework Supervisor: _____

Agency Phone #: _____

Date: _____

COUNTY AGENCY LETTER HEAD

Kinship Caregiver Confirmation of Intent

Children:

1. I/we state that I/we have received the "Summary for Kinship Caregivers," and have had an opportunity to ask questions of the caseworkers assigned.
2. I/we understand the different options of care. If the child(ren) is/are declared dependent and placed in the custody of the county agency: I/we

_____ Do wish to become formal kinship foster parents, but do not wish to receive foster care maintenance payments if approved. In choosing this option I/we understand that TANF benefits may be available.

_____ Do wish to become formal kinship foster parents and receive foster care maintenance payments if approved.

Caregiver(s):

Date: _____

Date: _____

Caseworker/Witness:

Date: _____

AGENCY LETTERHEAD

Notification of Foster Care Application Approval and
Foster Care Maintenance Payment

Foster family care is the 24 hour out-of-home care for children who are in the legal custody of the county agency and placed in a family home setting in which the caregivers are approved by a foster family care agency to provide such care.

Your application to be a foster parent for _____ (child/ren's name/s) has been received and is being processed by our agency. This agency will be conducting an assessment of you and your home. The child will require the level of care listed below. The foster care maintenance payment listed below is available to you if you are approved as a foster parent for the child(ren):

Level of Care: _____

Foster Care Maintenance Payment:

The following are our agency's requirements for approval as a foster parent. (Insert Agency's Requirements.)

If you have further questions, please contact our agency at _____.

CC: County agency caseworker
County agency supervisor
(If conducted by a private foster family care agency)