

Relative Caregiver Program

Grandmother, Grandfather, Sister, Brother, Aunt, Uncle, Cousin

The Relative Caregiver Program offers monthly cash assistance and Medicaid for a child under age 18 who, under certain circumstances, is placed by the court with a relative. The monthly payment provides financial help for a relative who would not be able to afford to care for the child without assistance. The monthly payment varies depending on the child's age or other circumstances. Medicaid pays for the child's health care. The child may also be eligible for subsidized child care.



When the court has determined that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect and is removed for safety reasons, a counselor will work with the child and the family to determine what is the safest and best long-term place for the child. The child cannot return to the home unless the parents are able to take care of the problems that led to the child's abuse or neglect. The court will supervise the parent's progress. You will be asked to help the child and parents, and you will be an important part of the case plan. By law, if children cannot be returned home in 12 months, they must be provided with another permanent home in which to grow up. If the child is unable to return home in 12 months, it is likely that you will be asked to adopt the child or become a permanent legal guardian, or that you will be given long-term custody.

eligibility

- The child must be **adjudicated dependent in Florida** and placed in the custody of a relative by the court. This means that the judge determined the child was at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment at home.
- The child must be placed in the **approved** home of a **relative**.
 - In order for the home to be approved, a home study and background check must be completed. A home study will involve a counselor asking you questions about your finances, feelings about the child for which you might be caring, the safety of the home and other related issues. Background checks must be done on all household members age 12 or older, and others who visit the home frequently. These background checks include a check through the department's automated abuse information system, and a check for criminal and juvenile records.
 - The caregiver's degree of relationship can be no less than the first cousin, once removed to the parent or stepparent of the child. Second cousins or less may not receive the Relative Caregiver Payment. Additionally, a child who is not related to the caregiver is eligible if he or she is in a court ordered placement with a half-brother or half-sister who is related to the caregiver. The child who is related to the caregiver must remain in the court ordered placement for the unrelated half-sibling to retain eligibility.
- The child must be a **US citizen** (or qualified non-citizen) and a **resident** of the **State of Florida**. A person is considered a resident if he/she intends to remain in the state.
- The child must be **younger than the age of 18**.
- The child must have a **social security number** or submit an application for one.
- **assets & income**
 - Only the assets and income of the child are considered in determining eligibility for the Relative Caregiver Program.
 - Assets are resources or items of value that are owned (solely or jointly) by someone who has access to the cash value. These may be a savings account, trust fund or cash on hand, for example. The asset limit is \$2,000 per child.
 - The child's income is compared to the Relative Caregiver Payment Standard. The income limit is the Relative Caregiver Program payment standard.

● child support

- The relative caregiver must cooperate with the **Department of Revenue Child Support Enforcement Program in identifying the child's mother and father in collecting any support owed.** Failure to cooperate will result in the cancellation of all cash assistance paid to your family and Medicaid benefits for adult members of your household. If you have any concerns regarding this requirement, contact your local Child support Enforcement Office.

choosing Temporary Cash Assistance or the relative caregiver payment

If you are currently receiving a Temporary Cash Assistance payment on behalf of the child, you may have questions about whether it would be helpful for you to receive the Relative Caregiver cash assistance or whether it would be better to continue with Temporary Cash Assistance. Please talk with your family services counselor or Economic Self-Sufficiency Specialist for more information.

periodic eligibility reviews

The relative caregiver is responsible for participating in periodic eligibility reviews with Economic Self-Sufficiency for continued financial and Medicaid assistance. This means providing requested information and attending office appointments when scheduled. You will get a notice in the mail telling you it is time to come in for a review and instructions on where you are to go for the appointment.

exemption from educational fees

A child who is or was in the Relative Caregiver Program when he or she reached age 18 is eligible for an exemption from certain educational fees at state community colleges and in certain vocational education programs. Your family services counselor can provide additional information.

relative caregiver's rights & responsibilities

Relative Caregivers have the right to:

- Be provided with a description of services to be provided under the child's case plan including type, how often the service will be provided and location of service provider(s).
- Be provided with a description of the measurable goals and timeframes for achieving the overall goal(s) of the case plan.
- Have at least one monthly face-to-face meeting with the counselor to review case plan progress and resolve any problems that arise. The counselor may be from the Department of Children & Families or from a contracted service provider.
- Have a copy of the case plan in your principle language, if possible.
- An appeal if the home study is unfavorable.
- Receive monthly cash payment for the child as long as the child remains eligible and compliance with the program is maintained.

Relative Caregivers have the responsibility of:

- Being capable, as determined by a home study, of providing a physically safe place and a stable, supporting home for the children under your care. You must assure the children's well-being. This includes, but is not limited to, immunizations, education and mental health services, as needed.
- Notifying the department by calling the toll-free number, 1-800-FLA-3463, if the child's counselor does not make a visit each calendar month to see the child in the caregiver's home. Another counselor may make these required visits when the child's counselor is not available.
- Spending the monthly cash assistance for the child's needs.
- Keeping the court and the child's counselor informed of the child's and your address and phone number at all times throughout these proceedings.
- Keeping the department (through your counselor) or provider agency informed if there is a change in your marital status, or if someone moves in or out of your home.

- Working toward achieving the goal of a long-term home for the child as quickly as possible.
- Cooperating with the Department of Revenue Child Support Enforcement to assist in determining paternity, and in supporting establishment and enforcement of child support. Failure to cooperate will result in the cancellation of all cash assistance paid to your family and Medicaid benefits for adult members of your household. If you have any concerns regarding this requirement, contact your local Child Support Enforcement Office.
- Following up with services and scheduling appointments for treatment.
- Contacting the child's counselor in the event that you are canceling a scheduled visitation and any other scheduled appointments. You must contact the counselor 24 hours prior to the scheduled appointment, unless your reason for canceling was an emergency.
- Participating in the development of the case plan and to be supportive of the goals of the case plan.
- Participating in an assessment including, but not limited to, an abuse/neglect and criminal background check. The Department of Children & Families, or the contract provider, is required to conduct background checks on each caretaker, every adult in the household, frequent visitors, and every child age 12 and older.
- Cooperating with the completion of the home study, which must be approved by the department and presented to the Court.

department counselor or contract provider's rights & responsibilities

The Department of Children & Families (or a contract provider) also has certain responsibilities. One such responsibility is to conduct a thorough home study and background check in order to assess the home. Additionally, there is a responsibility to notify you when, for example, the counselor working with your family changes. As long as the court requires supervision, your counselor should be in regular contact with you and should expect the same from you.

guardian ad litem

The court may appoint a guardian ad litem for the child(ren). This is a person who volunteers and is trained to pay special attention to the child's needs. The guardian ad litem will also meet with you, the child and everyone else involved (parents, school, etc.), and prepare reports and recommendations for the court.

confidentiality

The department (including contract providers, your counselor and the Economic Self-Sufficiency Specialist determining eligibility) will keep details concerning the family situation confidential, as provided by law. Certain eligibility and status information will be available only to those authorized to access it.

thank you

You are a very important person in the life of this child that you are raising. We thank you for your willingness to open your home to this child and help him/her grow up in a safe and living environment.

If you have any questions, please call me, or call my supervisor if you can't reach me.

My name is: _____

My telephone number is: _____

My office hours are: _____

My supervisor's name is: _____

My supervisor's telephone number is: _____

