

# Becoming a Relative Caregiver



## What is a relative caregiver?

When a child can not remain safely with a parent and court intervention is necessary, placement with a relative is preferred. A relative can be a grandparent, family member (related by blood, marriage or adoption), or an unrelated person who has a close relationship to the child or the child's family. Relative caregivers can be licensed or unlicensed, but may not have access to the same benefits if they chose not to seek licensure. In order for a child to continue living with a relative who chooses to be unlicensed, the Family Support Team and court must approve of the unlicensed placement through a court order.

## How do I get licensed?

Relative caregivers have 90 days to complete a home assessment, training, and licensing to become a relative foster parent for the children placed in their care. To get licensed, you will need to complete the required documentation and:

- Get employer, personal, medical, and school references as applicable
- Complete relative caregiver trainings
- Participate in the home assessment process (home visits & interviews of all household members)
- Complete thorough background checks on all household members age 17 years or older
- Home meets safety and licensing requirements

## Comparing the Benefits

Benefit	Unlicensed Relative Home	Licensed Relative Home	Traditional Foster Home
Maintenance payment	90 days*	●	●
Clothing allowance	●	●	●
Medicaid coverage for children	●	●	●
Infant allowance	●	●	●
Transportation reimbursement	●	●	●
Child care assistance	●	●	●
Mentors and support groups	●	●	●
Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)	●	●	●
Free & reduced breakfast/lunch	●	●	●
Respite care		●	●
Guardianship subsidy**		●	●
Can foster non-related children			●

\*Unlicensed relative caregivers will receive maintenance payments only for 90 days while pursuing their licensure.

\*\*Guardianship Subsidy can provide financial, medical, childcare and respite services to help meet the needs of the child while they are under a guardianship



## Questions?

For questions or more information, contact your caseworker or email [fostercare@dss.mo.gov](mailto:fostercare@dss.mo.gov).



## What are the Responsibilities of a Relative Caregiver?

- Support the permanency plan established for the child
- Provide a safe home for the child while in foster care
- Support the child in maintaining contact with their parents, siblings, and extended family
- Ensure the child has normal living experiences
- Become a member of the Family Support Team
- Become a voice for the child
- Ensure the child's education, medical, dental, behavioral, mental health & developmental needs are met
- May attend and provide information to the juvenile court on the child's well-being

## Not the right time to become a relative caregiver? You can still help.

Maintaining family connections is vital for children who are in foster care. Relatives can maintain connections in the following ways.

- Participate in Family Support Team Meetings
- Stay connected with the child by phone or in person
- Attend their school, sports, or other activities
- Help with rides for sibling or parent visitations
- Arrange and supervise extended family visits with the child

The list above are examples of what may occur if approved and determined appropriate by the related child's Family Support Team.

### Additional Resources:

**Missouri Children's Division Child Welfare Manual:**

[dssmanuals.mo.gov/child-welfare-manual/child-welfare-manual-2019-update](https://dssmanuals.mo.gov/child-welfare-manual/child-welfare-manual-2019-update)

**Foster Parents' Bill of Rights:**

[revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=210.566](https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=210.566)

**MO KIN-4-KID Kinship Navigator Program:**

[education.missouri.edu/navigators](https://education.missouri.edu/navigators)



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