



**INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE POLICY**

Chapter 16: Financial Services/Assistance

Section 02: Assistance for Unlicensed Relative and Kinship Placements

Effective Date: July 1, 2023

Version: 8

- [Procedure](#)
- [Definitions](#)

- [Forms and Tools](#)
- [Related Policies](#)

- [Legal References](#)
- [Practice Guidance](#)

POLICY OVERVIEW

Funding Assistance may be provided to unlicensed relative and kinship placements by the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) to help meet the needs of children in their care.

[Back to Top](#)

PROCEDURE

DCS is committed to meeting the needs of children in unlicensed relative/kinship placements by providing the following funding assistance (see Practice Guidance for more information regarding the various funding assistance):

1. Bedding Allowance;
2. Child Care Allowance;
3. Educational Needs Funds;
4. Initial Clothing and Personal Allotment;
5. Personal Allowance;
6. Respite Care Funds;
7. Special Occasion Allowance;
8. Travel Reimbursement; and
9. Unlicensed Kinship Stipend (UKS)

The FCM will:

1. Ensure all appropriate clothing and/or personal items go with the child at the time of removal or placement change, whenever possible;

Exception: If a child is removed from a property used for the illegal manufacture of a controlled substance, personal items and clothing will not be removed.

2. Ensure emergent needs of the child (e.g., formula, diapers, food) are met before leaving the child with the unlicensed relative/kinship placement;
3. Direct the unlicensed relative/kin to the Indiana Foster Care website to access resources at initial placement;
4. Make efforts to deliver the child's clothing and/or personal items within 48 hours if they were not taken at the time of removal, unless the child was removed from a property used for illegal manufacturing of a controlled substance;

5. Complete a thorough inventory of the child's clothing and/or personal items and document on the Inventory of Personal Items form within 10 business days of placement. The inventory of the child's clothing and/or personal items should be:
 - a. Taken anytime a child's placement changes, and
 - b. Reviewed with and signed by the unlicensed relative/kin acknowledging which items belong to the child and which items were brought with and/or bought for the child.

Note: The Inventory of Personal Items form should be updated with changes throughout the life of the case.

6. Engage the Child and Family Team (CFT) to identify community supports and resources which may be able to assist the relative/kin in meeting the child's financial needs;
7. Ensure the unlicensed relative/kinship placement is aware of the various funding assistance which may be available;
8. Meet with the FCM Supervisor to discuss the child's needs for clothing and/or personal items;
9. Verify any requests for assistance do not exceed the allotted amount and/or the allowance has not previously been expended for the child during the life of the case when a financial need has been identified;

Note: Questions regarding the allotted amount and/or the child's usage of annual allowances should be directed to the Regional Manager (RM) or the local Regional Finance Manager (RFM);

10. Complete a referral in KidTraks, when requested by the unlicensed relative/kin, for the following (if applicable):
 - a. Personal Allowance,
 - b. Initial Clothing and Personal Items Allotment,
 - c. Bedding Allowance, and
 - d. Child Care Allowance.
11. Complete a referral for respite care if a need is identified;
12. Contact the DCS Educational Liaison (EL) for assistance with obtaining a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma, tutoring, or enrolling in summer school. These expenses should not come out of the child's personal allowance;

Note: A Global Services referral should be completed for fees that cannot be waived or funded through other means (e.g., insurance and school resources).

13. Collaborate with the FCM Supervisor and Kinship Navigator (KN) (formerly known as the Relative Support Specialist [RSS]) to inform all unlicensed relative/kinship placements of the invoicing instructions needed to utilize the Special Occasion Allowance and the enrollment process to receive the UKS;
14. Ensure the unlicensed relative/kin has applied for a Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Voucher, if applicable; and
15. Ensure the unlicensed relative/kin is informed of the Relative Parent Travel Invoice Instructions.

The FCM Supervisor will complete a Relative Placement Entry form within 24 hours of the child's placement and communicate with the KN that a relative/kinship placement has been made.

Upon receipt of the Relative Placement Entry form, the KN will:

1. Contact the placement via phone within 48 hours of receiving the Relative Placement Entry form;
2. Schedule a home visit within five (5) business days;
3. Complete the Kinship of Indiana Support Services (KISS) Safety and Risk Measuring Tool within five (5) business days of the completed home visit;
4. Develop a list of needs to be addressed within the first 30 days of placement and staff with the KN Supervisor (formerly known as the RSS Supervisor) to develop a plan to address the concrete needs (if applicable); and
5. Ensure vendor paperwork is processed for the family.

Financial Policy Exception

The FCM will complete the following steps for a Financial Policy Exception when an item requested is greater than the policy limit but **under** \$1500:

1. Complete a Global Services referral for the requested dollar amount and state the justification of need for:
 - a. Funding greater than the policy limit, and/or
 - b. Funding for expenses not referenced in policy.
2. Submit the referral to one (1) of the following workflow approvers:
 - a. FCM Supervisor, or
 - b. Local Office Director (LOD)/Division Manager (DM).

The workflow approver will:

1. Review the Financial Policy Exception justification;
2. Approve or deny the Financial Policy Exception, as appropriate; and

Note: The referral will proceed to the KidTraks Invoicing Unit for payment, upon Financial Policy Exception approval.

3. Notify the FCM via written correspondence (e.g., email) if the Financial Policy Exception is denied.

Request for Additional Funds (RAF) Form

An RAF form is completed when an item requested is greater than the policy limits and **above** \$1500.

The FCM will:

1. Complete the RAF form; and
2. Submit to the FCM Supervisor for approval or denial.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Review and respond to any RAF requests by either approving or denying the request; and
2. Submit the RAF decision to the LOD/DM.

The LOD or DM will:

1. Review and approve or deny the RAF; and
2. Send the RAF to the RM for final approval or denial.

The RM will:

1. Review the RAF and make a determination whether to approve the request;
2. Submit a copy of the RAF to the Regional Finance Manager (RFM) if approved; and
3. Notify the LOD/DM of the final determination via written correspondence.

The RFM will process the RAF form upon receipt from the RM.

[Back to Top](#)

RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Concrete Needs

Concrete needs are goods and services that enable the kinship caregiver to provide for the family's care, well-being, safety, and stability, which may include, but is not limited to food, housing, clothing, healthcare, childcare, and mental health as well as services identified for stabilization within the first 30 days of the child's placement.

Emergent Needs

Emergent needs are goods and services needed to ensure the child's basic needs and safety are met to place the child in the unlicensed relative/kinship placement.

Forms and Tools

- [Application for Assistance, Food Stamps, Cash Assistance, Health Coverage](#)
- [Automated Direct Deposit Authorization Agreement \(SF 47551\)](#)
- Case Plan/Prevention Plan (SF 2956) - available in the case management system
- [Claim for Support of Children Payable from Family & Children Funds \(SF 28808\)](#)
- DCS Kinship Care email - DCS.Kinshipcare@dcs.in.gov
- DCS Education Services email - dcs.education@dcs.in.gov
- [Direct Deposit Authorization \(SF 51519\)](#)
- [Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure](#)
- [Indiana Foster Care Website](#)
- [Inventory of Personal Items \(SF 54315\)](#)
- [Unlicensed Kinship Caregiver Stipend Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)
- [Kinship Indiana Support Services \(KISS\) Safety and Risk Measuring Tool](#)
- [Kinship Navigator Tip Sheet – available in DCS SharePoint](#)
- [Relative Home Environment Checklist \(SF 55106\)](#)
- [Relative Parent Travel Instructions](#)
- [Relative Parent Travel Invoice \(SF 54891\)](#)
- [Relative Placement Entry \(SF 57025\)](#)
- [Relative Resource Guide](#)
- [Request for Additional Funding \(SF 54870\)](#)
- [W-9 and Direct Deposit Form Instructions](#)
- [W-9 and Direct Deposit Form Q & A](#)
- [W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification](#)

Related Policies

- [13.05 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements](#)

[Back to Top](#)

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-107: "Relative"](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-131.7 "Unlicensed caregiver"](#)

[Back to Top](#)

PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 16.02

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

Child Care Concerns

It may be appropriate to facilitate a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting to discuss any concerns regarding child care, which may include, but are not limited to:

1. Safety and/or well-being of the child;
2. Child care needs;
3. Location of child care;
4. Child care cost;
5. Alternate child care facilities;
6. Site visits completed by the Family Case Manager (FCM) to make an informed decision as to the appropriateness of the child care facility; and/or
7. Determining if a Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) inspection report should be completed for the child care facility.

Funding Assistance

Bedding Allowance

Bedding allowance funds are available up to \$400 per child if there is a need for a bed and/or bedding, and DCS approval has been obtained. This is a one (1) time payment per child, per the life of the case, and the bed and bedding must go with the child should the child return home or be moved to a different placement.

Bed and bedding purchases include, but are not limited to:

1. Mattress and/or box spring;
2. Bed frame and/or rails;
3. Pillows; and
4. Bedding (e.g., blankets, sheets, comforter).

Child Care Allowance

Child Care Allowance funds are available up to \$18 per day or \$90 per week (total \$2340) per child (only if needed for work, school, or due to a medical requirement). Child care costs are paid for a child care center or home that is licensed, registered, or the appropriate background checks have been conducted (see policy 13.05 Conducting Background Checks for Unlicensed Placements). This funding is available for six (6) months. If the relative/kin becomes licensed or begins receiving Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) prior to six (6) months, the funding will end.

Note: DCS will only permit an Unlicensed Registered Child Care Ministry to be paid using Child Care allowance if the ministry accepts CCDF.

Educational Needs Funding

Educational Needs Funding is available to cover the cost of securing a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma, tutoring, and summer school. This referral is made in KidTraks through Global Services. Contact the local DCS Educational Liaison (EL) for assistance with school related fees as many may be waived.

Note: When other funding is available for securing an HSE diploma, the other funding should be utilized prior to completing a Global Services referral.

Initial Clothing and Personal Item Allotment

An allotment of up to \$200 per child is available within 60 days of initial placement of the child with FCM approval. At times it may be necessary for the clothing to be purchased prior to DCS approval.

Note: Clothing may be purchased beyond the 60 days of initial placement in unique circumstances (e.g., sudden weight gain or loss, maternity clothing, or attempts to obtain clothing from previous placement without success).

If the unlicensed relative/kin receives a voucher from DCS, the unlicensed relative/kin has 30 days to utilize the voucher. Unlicensed relative/kin must present the receipts for all purchases. Clothing and personal items may include, but are not limited to:

1. Clothing (e.g., socks, coats, undergarments);
2. Shoes;
3. Toiletries and personal hygiene items;
4. Hair products;
5. Diapers and wipes; and
6. Infant formula and bottles.

Personal Allowance

Each child in an unlicensed relative/kinship placement is eligible to receive an annual Personal Allowance of up to \$300 starting on the 8th consecutive day of placement. These funds may be expended and are reset at the beginning of each calendar year. These funds may be used for items such as, but not limited to:

1. Computer hardware and/or software;
2. School functions and activities (e.g., field trips, formal attire for special occasions, class pictures);
3. Driver's education (unless eligible for Emancipation Goods & Services Funds);
4. Application fees;
5. Extracurricular and co-curricular activities and associated fees (e.g., musical instruments and sporting equipment);
6. Electronic devices (e.g., e-readers, laptops, iPod, or gaming systems);
7. Activities for young children (e.g., preschool activities).

Note: Note: The following items are not permitted or reimbursable: piercings, tattoos, tobacco products, alcoholic products or beverages, firearms/weapons, fireworks, lottery tickets, gift cards, cash, checks, or money orders. An **exception** may be made to purchase a gaming system gift card or on-line gaming apps when the child has a gaming console or computer and the only option to purchase a game is through a gaming system or app gift card. An additional exception may be made to purchase cell phone minutes for a child that has a cell phone.

Respite Care

Respite care funds, if needed and approved by the Family Case Manager (FCM), are available for up to five (5) days each calendar year. The respite care must be provided by a licensed resource parent.

Special Occasion Allowance

DCS will pay an annual Special Occasion Allowance to unlicensed relative/kin for all children in out-of-home care. This allowance is up to \$50 for birthdays and up to \$50 for the winter holiday season. For the unlicensed relative/kin to receive reimbursement for these funds, the child must be in the unlicensed relative/kin's care on the child's birthday and on the date of the winter holiday. Allowable items that may be bought using the Special Occasion Allowance include, but are not limited to:

1. Toys;
2. Electronics (e.g., video games);
3. Salon services;
4. Clothing;
5. Jewelry;
6. Sporting equipment;
7. Birthday party; and
8. Event tickets for birthday or holidays.

Note: Items not allowable include piercings, tattoos, tobacco products, alcoholic products or beverages, firearms/weapons, fireworks, lottery tickets, gift cards (e.g., gas, gift card, store gift card), cash, checks, or money orders. An **exception** may be made to purchase a gaming system gift card when the child has a gaming console and the only option to purchase a game is through a gaming system gift card.

DCS will reimburse the special occasion allowance upon receipt of a properly claimed invoice with a receipt attached. No referral is required. Questions regarding a child's usage of the annual allowance should be directed to the RM and to the local DCS RFM.

Travel Reimbursement

Travel will be reimbursed monthly beginning at mile one (1) for travel such as:

1. Travel between the unlicensed relative/kin home and the school if the child continues to attend the school they attended prior to removal;

Note: Mileage will be eligible for reimbursement only when transportation services are not provided by the school corporation. Consult with the EL for information on what school corporations are required to provide transportation for the child.

2. Travel to and from Headstart, summer school, pre-school, summer camps, and school related extracurricular activities;

Note: Mileage will be eligible for reimbursement to and from these programs only when it is not provided by the school corporation.

3. Travel to and from parent and/or sibling visits (including visits to other relatives that are authorized by DCS and are a part the child's Case Plan/Prevention Plan) and visits to facilitate the transition to another placement;
4. Travel for pre-placement visits between the relative/kin and the child, regardless of whether they are overnight visits, if the relative/kin is being considered as a placement resource;
5. Travel to and from the following types of health-related appointments:
 - a. Doctor (primary care physician and any specialists),
 - b. Dentist (including orthodontist),

- c. Health clinic,
 - d. Hospital/emergency room (including visits during a child's inpatient episodes),
 - e. Occupational and physical therapy, and
 - f. Behavioral health counselor and therapist.
6. Travel to and from employment or for purposes of a job search for youth 14 years of age or older;
 7. Travel to and from the following types of case activities:
 - a. Administrative case reviews,
 - b. Judicial reviews (court appearances),
 - c. Case conferences,
 - d. CFT Meetings,
 - e. Foster parent training sessions, and/or
 - f. Behavioral health counselor and therapist.
 8. Other travel that is extraordinary and has been approved in writing (as consistent with the child's Case Plan/Prevention Plan) by the DCS LOD/DM prior to the travel taking place.

Unlicensed Kinship Stipend

A stipend of \$300 per month will be provided for each child placed in an unlicensed kinship home by DCS. \$150 will be provided by DCS if an unlicensed kinship home provides care for a child for less than 15 days. See the Unlicensed Kinship Caregiver Stipend Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for additional information.

Kinship and Other Relative Placement Options

A child may be placed with an individual who is not related by blood, marriage, or adoption if this is an individual with whom the child has an established and significant relationship. The relationship with the child will be documented as other relative and must:

1. Have the characteristics of a family relationship. The relationship should have the same characteristics or be similar to the relationship that the child has with an individual related to them by blood, marriage, or adoption;
2. Have existed prior to the agency's current involvement with the child or family; and
3. Be verified through interviews or attested to by the written or oral designation of the child or of another person, including other relatives related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Relative Placement Options

Adult relatives (18 years of age and older) to be considered for placement include, but are not limited to:

1. Adult siblings including step and half-siblings;
2. Maternal or paternal grandparents;
3. Adult aunts or uncles;
4. Adult cousins;

Note: The individuals must be first or second cousins.

5. Parents and extended family of half-siblings (e.g., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins);
6. Former step-parents and extended family of former step-parents (e.g., adult siblings, grandparents, adult aunts or uncles, and adult cousins); or

7. Other adult relatives suggested by either parent of a child including, but not limited to extended cousins, great or great-great aunts or uncles.

Supporting Relative/Kin Caregivers

It is important for FCMs to support all relative/kin caregivers. FCMs should be mindful that relative/kin caregivers may not have planned to take placement of the child. This is especially true in emergency and/or after-hours placements. The FCM, KN, and Regional Foster Care Specialist (RFCS) should be patient and exercise empathy for the relative/kin caregivers and serve as a support to them by answering any questions and addressing any concerns they may have. It is the goal of DCS to have a child transition as smoothly as possible from their home into the relative/kin caregiver's home. The transition will be easier to achieve if the relative/kin feels supported and may focus primarily on the child.

The FCM, KN, and the RFCS are responsible for communicating all the support and clinical services that DCS may offer the relative/kin caregiver. Information regarding the foster care portal should be provided to the relative/kin caregiver to enable them to access community and financial resources. If the unlicensed relative/kin does not have access to internet, provide the Financial Assistance Options for Relative Caregivers Brochure, Relative Resource Guide, Prevent Child Abuse Helpline (1-800-244-53743), and 2-1-1.

Tax Reimbursement

Tax on any purchases made for a ward including clothing, personal items, and special occasion allowances is reimbursable. For example, the resource parent purchases clothing in the amount of \$180 and paid \$12.60 in tax for a total of \$192.60. The resource parent may claim reimbursement for \$192.60. However, if the resource parent purchased clothing in the amount of \$200 and paid \$14 in tax for a total of \$214, the resource parent may only claim \$200 outlined in policy. Reimbursement may be claimed for the items plus tax up to the stated limit for each allowance.