



FAST FACTS: Kinship and Relative Care

Is Kinship care the right decision for my family?

Before making the decision to take on the responsibility of caring for a child whose parents can't care for them there are many things to be considered:

- Am I able to provide the child/children the safety & stability they need?
- Am I able to maintain family connections and cultural traditions that are important to the healthy development of this child?
- Do I have the time to devote to the special needs of this child?
- Will I get the support I need as a caregiver?
- How will I know how to meet the needs of a child that has experienced trauma?
- Will this child be able to love and respect me as my biological children do/did?
- Am I expected to financially provide for this child?
- Can I change my mind if it doesn't work out?
- Will I have permanent legal custody?
- Will I have to go to court?
- Will I be responsible for enrolling the child in school, obtaining health insurance, granting permission for medical care obtaining it, signing school permission forms, etc.?
- Am I eligible to become a licensed foster parent?
- How will this affect the rest of my family?

Resources that may assist in finding more detailed information to help those considering kinship/relative care.

National Resources:

Annie E. Casey Foundation: aecf.org

This foundation provides webinars and trainings for kinship caregivers.

Children's Defense Fund: childrensdefense.org

This website provides a great overview of "what is kinship care" as well as ideas on how to access resources in your community, important statistics, and answers to frequently asked questions that someone considering kinship care may have.



Minnesota Resources:

MN Department of Human Service: dhs.state.mn.us

This website provides information regarding NorthStar Care for Children and explains more specific information about kinship assistance eligibility requirements, custodial questions, and benefits for families under this program.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota: lssmn.org

This agency provides information about support and education groups, workshops, online learning opportunities and one-on-one support through their 'Warmline'.

Tips for caregivers of children in kinship care:

- Acknowledge the grief the child may be experiencing. Although there may not have been a death, children in out-of-home placements may experience the same grief as if their biological parent had passed away.
- Demonstrate patience. Change is difficult even for adults. Remember the child may have difficulty expressing their feelings of fear, guilt, anxiety, anger, confusion, or frustration. Although you already have a relationship with this child, your role has changed, and the child may be experiencing you in a different manner than before.
- Recognize trauma. Children that are removed from the care of their biological parents may have experienced neglect, abuse and/or may have been witness to some very frightening experiences. The effects of this may present in physical and emotional symptoms. Removal of a child from their home of origin is always a trauma to that child, regardless of the circumstances leading to the removal.
- Collaborate with others. Staying in close contact with other professionals such as the child's social worker, teacher, therapist, school nurse, and doctor can help in creating a comprehensive plan that will help the child be more successful at home, school and in the community.
- Seek a higher level of care if needed. There will be times when outside help may be necessary. Finding a therapist who specializes in working with kinship and foster care families is important. Therapeutic approach, expertise and experience should all be considered when choosing a therapist for your child.
- Reach out. There are many support groups for those providing kinship care. Having a place to connect with others that are going through similar experiences can be a great place to talk with supportive people and share resources and knowledge. The Adoptive Foster Kinship Connections program through the North American Council on Adoptable Children, NACAC, hosts many types of support groups in Minnesota, both live and online.
- <https://www.nacac.org/connect/support-for-minnesota-adoptive-families/>

Books

Books that may be helpful for both caregivers and children in kinship care {all available on Amazon.com}:

- *Mother Bunny and the Bad Plants: a story of kinship care for small children* - 1st Edition, Elise Bowditch and Laura Eyring
- *Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights* {Kids are Important series), Julie Nelson
- *Guardian Shift: Encouragement & Inspiration for Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles and Anyone Raising Other People's Children*, Scott Amaral

- *The Kinship Parenting Toolbox*, Kim Phagan-Hansel
- *Parenting Children of Trauma: The Foster-Adoption Guide to Understanding Attachment Disorder*, Marcy Pusey
- *The Grandfamily Guidebook: Wisdom and Support for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, Andrew Adesman and Christine Adamec

Information presented by:



LaShawn Goss-Love is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist that has been committed to working with families and children for over 30 years. LaShawn has worked with children in the school, community and justice system setting and has provided services in home and in the office setting. She has worked with clients experiencing anxiety, depression, substance abuse, attachment concerns, ADHD, Trauma, grief and loss, and identity and abandonment issues. She uses the lens of cultural awareness and a strength-based approach to address client concerns. LaShawn practices from an integrative approach drawing from techniques used in Play Therapy, Solution Focused Therapy, CBT, Experiential, Narrative and Structural theories.

LaShawn embraces the power of community and understands that each person's story holds power reverence. Additionally, LaShawn believes that relationships are the foundation of healing and growth and honors the experiences that impact the lives of individuals and families. She draws on her own experience with Kinship adoption in her work. LaShawn has provided many services over the years to adoption, foster and kinship families and has also facilitated trainings for foster care providers.

To learn more about Foster Adopt Minnesota and our efforts to ensure
each child will have a permanent family,
call 612-861-7115 or visit www.fosteradoptmn.org.