



10570 S. Federal Hwy., Suite 300\* Port St. Lucie, FL 34952  
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**Series:** 300: Child and Family Services

**Policy Name:** Relative Caregiver Program

**Policy Number:** 301

**Origination Date:** 4/21/03

**Revision Date:** 09/01/2019

**Regulation:** 39.5085 F.S

65C-28.008 F.A.C

65C-24 F.A.C.

CFOP 175-79

**Policy:** It is the policy of Communities Connected for Kids to actively pursue safety and permanency for children, advocating for children who have relatives who are committed to caring for them on a temporary or permanent basis. The Relative Caregiver program was implemented to assist relatives who assume court-approved placement and care responsibilities for a child. To ensure this policy is carried out, the following procedure is in effect.

**Procedure:**

General Information

1. In keeping with Federal law and state policies, when a child/adolescent must be removed from his/her home, a preference will be given to an adult relative when determining placement.
2. Communities Connected for Kids' approach to relative care acknowledges and supports the importance of the family in meeting the needs of its members. When children cannot be assured safety in their own homes, the best alternative resource can often be found within the extended family.
3. Parents and guardians facing the risk of child placement should be given a reasonable opportunity to identify and come together with their kinship network to plan for and provide safety, care, nurture, and supervision for the child.
4. Communities Connected for Kids and its case management agencies have the responsibility of assessing the suggested resource to assure that the child will receive appropriate care.
5. When Communities Connected for Kids receives a case, relative caregivers may not be immediately apparent and the family may be too embarrassed or angry to seek such support. During the investigation

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phase the family may or may not identify such potential caregivers. When the case is assigned to a Communities Connected for Kids case management agency, the case manager will continue to explore this option with the family. If relative caregivers are identified, the case managers will develop support and resources needed in caring for the child.

6. The case managers will remain involved both with the family providing placement and the birth family until the child's ongoing safety and permanency are assured.
7. Relative care in the form of long-term custody will be a priority consideration when family reunification and adoption are not viable options.
8. Careful attention will be made to assessing a relative's ability to provide a safe and nurturing setting for children including reasonable assurances that children will not have inappropriate, unsupervised contact with the adult(s) who abused or neglected the child. Assessments of relatives as possible placements will be similar to assessments of potential foster parents in terms of safety issues.
9. It is the policy of Communities Connected for Kids to offer relatives, non-relatives, and fictive kin caregivers the opportunity to pursue Level I licensure, and to provide ongoing supports.
10. Types of Relative Placements to be used by network:
  - a) Custody transferred to the relative without termination of parental rights.
  - b) Parental rights are terminated and the relatives become the adoptive parents.
  - c) Custody remains with DCF and the relatives become licensed foster parents.
  - d) Custody remains with DCF and the relatives provide care with or without financial payment but do not become licensed foster parents.
11. Whether licensed as a foster home or not, relative caregivers will be valued and treated as partners by the birth family and CCKids. This includes notifying relatives providing care for a child of any court review or hearing to be held about the child and of their opportunity to be heard in court.

#### Services to be provided to relatives

1. Services will be based on the case plan and the legal nature of the placement. Services to children and adults in relative placements will be based on the premise that relatives should be given as much self-determination and independence, consistent with appropriate safety and nurturing of the child.
2. Relative caregivers will be provided access to the same support and treatment services available in the network to foster parents. In those cases in which the relatives become licensed foster parents or adoptive parents, the families will receive services according to the requirements of those services. Some services that are frequently requested by caregivers are:
  - a) "relative" support groups open to all relative caregivers regardless of age;
  - b) legal assistance in obtaining permission to enroll the child in school, to obtain medical attention or to

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obtain legal custody or guardianship;

- c) assistance negotiating the social services system to get approved for food stamps, Medicaid or state supported insurance coverage for the child, child support, or day care services; and information and referral services to connect with informal and formal service providers in the local community.

Criteria for Relative Caregiver Placement: Communities Connected for Kids will give preference to an adult relative or other kin when determining placement, provided that the following criteria are met:

1. The placement is assessed by Communities Connected for Kids to be in the best interests of the child in terms of both safety and nurture;
2. The prospective caregiver and the living situation are assessed and determined to meet statutory and operating procedural standards
3. The relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision for the child and to work towards achievement of the permanency goal.

Continuing Stay Criteria

1. The child/adolescent is in a stable, nurturing environment and the caregiver is willing to continue the placement while permanency options are explored.
2. The basic physical and emotional needs of the child are being met and that the care provider is receiving adequate informal and formal support to meet those needs.
3. The child/adolescent is benefiting from the placement and cannot be maintained safely in another less restrictive placement (independent living, return home).
4. Relative care is being considered as the primary long-term plan and/or as an alternative permanent plan if the primary permanency plan is found to be inappropriate.
5. When necessary and appropriate to the needs of the child, efforts have been made to provide or procure reasonable assistance to help families meet assessment and/or licensing standards so that they can provide care for the child. (Caregivers have been informed of available resources, such as, subsidized guardianship assistance, medical coverage, day care, and food stamps. When needed, families have also been informed of any available community resources for free or low-cost clothing or furniture, minor home repairs, or other such incidental needs that may unnecessarily prohibit their being approved to provide care for children. )
6. If the caregiver wishes to be licensed as a foster parent, a determination has been made that the family meets state licensing requirements, thus enabling them to receive foster care board payments, Medicaid, and other benefits.
7. Since foster care placement, even with licensed relatives, is not a permanent plan, the case manager has assessed the interest and ability of the caregiver to adopt the child or to assume legal custody.

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### Discharge Criteria

1. Permanency goals of reunification or adoption (by relative or non-relative) have been met and the child is in a permanent home.
2. The child/adolescent is unable to function in a family setting;
3. The child/adolescent exhibits severe suicidal or homicidal threats/attempts, acute mood symptoms, thought disorder, behavioral or cognitive loss of control, which requires a more intensive level of care.

### Procedures for Accessing Financial Benefits for the Relative Caregiver Program

1. Criteria for determining the eligibility to participate in the Relative Caregiver Program for open cases:
  - a) Children who are placed in relative care are eligible for the Relative Caregiver Program.
  - b) Child/children must be adjudicated dependent in the State of Florida.
  - c) Child(ren) must be placed in the temporary or long-term custody of specified relatives who reside in the State of Florida.
  - d) Caregiver Home Study must favorably address the nine (9) safety and permanency factors listed on the "Recommendation to Court" page.
  - e) Caregiver Home Study must have been filed, accepted, and approved by the court.
2. If the child meets criteria, case management will notify the caregiver to contact the Communities Connected for Kids Caregiver Support Program to schedule an appointment to apply for the Relative Caregiver Program. The application is submitted to the office of Economic Self Sufficiency (ESS) electronically by the CCKids Caregiver Support Program designee assisting the caregiver.
  1. The dependency case manager completes the Relative Caregiver Communication and attaches a copy of the Dependency Adjudication Order and Custody Order on each child; and delivers the communication form and the orders to their agency (CCKids/CHS) supervisor.
3. Once the child is adjudicated, the dependency case manager completes the relative caregiver form and submits it to the Eligibility Department.
4. The Office of Economic Self Sufficiency will contact the family to assist with the appropriate financial benefits.
5. Communities Connected for Kids will copy the Relative Caregiver Communication Form and court order placing the children in the legal custody of the relative.

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#### Clients Residing Outside of County

1. The case manager will request a Relative Caregiver Home Study be done by the county in which the client lives.
2. The case manager is responsible for doing the necessary court preparation, and the presentation of the Relative Caregiver Home Study to court.
3. When the court approves the home study and placement, the case manager will send the other county worker the court documentation.
4. The case manager will request that the other county case worker complete the Relative Caregiver Communication Form and submit the Request for Relative Care Program Benefits to their district contact person for this program.

#### Clients from Other Counties Residing in Circuit 19

1. The other county's case worker will request a Relative Caregiver Home Study be done by a Communities Connected for Kids case management agency.
2. The assigned Case Manager is responsible for doing the Relative Caregiver Home Study.
3. The other county's case worker is responsible for doing the court preparation, and the presentation of the Relative Caregiver Home Study to court.
4. When the court approves the home study and placement, the other county worker is to send Communities Connected for Kids the court documentation.
5. The case manager is responsible for completing the Relative Caregiver Communication Form and submitting it to their district contact person.

#### Closed Cases

Criteria for determining the eligibility to participate in the Relative Caregiver Program for closed cases:

1. The case will be assigned to the case management agency who previously worked the case, or if the case was a DCF case, a referral will be made to a case management agency.
2. Communities Connected for Kids will request the closed file (or closed DCF file) and verify the Adjudication Order / placement of temporary or long term custody with said relative who is requesting the Relative Care Program assistance.

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3. A new Caregiver Home Study will be done for the current placement.
4. The court must approve the new home study.

#### Procedure for submitting

1. The assigned case manager will complete a new Caregiver Home Study for the current placement.
2. The case manager Supervisor will approve or disapprove the home study and return it to the Case Manager.
3. If approved, the Case Manager will forward it to the CLS to file it in court.
4. Once the Case Manager has received the notice of filing the case, they will copy the notice and submit it to their Agency Supervisor.
5. The Agency Supervisor will complete the Relative Caregiver Communication Form, attaching the notice of filing and the copy of adjudication and placement order.
6. The Agency Supervisor will return the information packet to Communities Connected for Kids for processing and forwarding to the DCF County office.
7. The District Office contact will log the receipt of case and forward to the local Office of Economic Self Sufficiency.
8. The Office of Economic Self Sufficiency will contact the family to assist with the appropriate financial benefits.

#### Child Care

Subsidized child care is available to Relative Caregiver Program recipients through T.A.N.F. At-Risk Category.

#### Child Support Collection

The Relative Caregiver will cooperate with Child Support Enforcement Program in establishing, modifying, or enforcing support orders with respect to children in their care who are receiving T.A.N.F., Title IV-E, or medical assistance benefits.

Approved: Carol Deloach  
Carol Deloach, CEO  
September 1, 2019

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