



10570 S. Federal Hwy., Suite 300* Port St. Lucie, FL 34952
www.cckids.net

Series: 300: Child and Family Services

Policy Name: Non-Relative Caregiver Program

Policy Number: 314

Origination Date: 09/01/2015

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Regulation: 39.5085 F.S
CFOP 175-11

Policy: It is the policy of Communities Connected for Kids to actively pursue safety and permanence for children, advocating for children who have non-relatives who are committed to caring for them on a temporary or permanent basis. The Non-Relative Caregiver program was implemented to assist non-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. Communities Connected for Kids approach to non-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 or with relative caregivers, the best alternative resource can often be found within the home of a non-relative.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. When Communities Connected for Kids receives a case, non-relative caregivers may not be immediately apparent. During the investigation 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 alternate caregivers are identified, the case manager will develop support and resources needed in caring for the child.
5. The case manager will remain involved both with the family providing placement and the birth family until the

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child's ongoing safety and permanency are assured.

6. Non-relative care in the form of long-term custody will be a priority consideration when family reunification and adoption are not viable options.
7. Careful attention will be made to assessing a non-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 alleged perpetrator(s). Assessments of non-relatives as possible placements will be similar to assessments of potential foster parents in terms of safety issues.
8. It is the policy of Communities Connected for Kids to offer non-relatives, and fictive kin caregivers the opportunity to pursue Level I licensure, and to provide ongoing supports.
9. Types of Non-Relative Placements to be used by CCKids:
 - a) Custody transferred to the non-relative without termination of parental rights.
 - b) Parental rights are terminated and the non-relatives become the adoptive parents.
 - c) Custody remains with DCF and the non-relatives become licensed foster parents.
 - d) Custody remains with DCF and the non-relatives provide care with or without financial payment but do not become licensed foster parents.
10. Whether licensed as a foster home or not, non-relative caregivers will be valued and treated as partners with the birth family and the agency. This includes notifying non-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 non-relatives

1. Services will be based on the case plan and the legal nature of the placement. Services to children and adults in non-relative placements will be based on the premise that non-relatives should be given as much self-determination and independence as possible, consistent with appropriate safety and nurturing of the child.
2. Non-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 non-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) legal assistance in obtaining permission to enroll the child in school, to obtain medical attention or to obtain legal custody or guardianship;
 - b) 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
 - c) information and referral services to connect with informal and formal service
 - d) providers in the local community.

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Criteria for Non-Relative Caregiver Placement: Communities Connected for Kids will give preference to an adult non-relative 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 required statutorial, and operating procedural standards.
3. The non-relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision for the child and to work towards achievement of the permanency goals.

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. Non-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.

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.

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Procedures for Accessing Financial Benefits for the Non-Relative Caregiver Program

1. Criteria for determining the eligibility to participate in the Non-Relative Caregiver Program for open cases:
 - a) Child(ren) who are placed in non-relative care
 - b) Child(ren) must be adjudicated dependent in the State of Florida.
 - c) Child(ren) must be placed in the temporary or long-term custody of a non-relative who resides 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.
 - f) Contingent upon availability of funding, non-relative caregiver financial assistance payments can continue until the child reaches age 18, is adopted, is no longer placed in the home of the non-relative caregiver, moves from the state of Florida, or the non-relative caregiver becomes licensed as a foster parent, whichever is sooner.
 - g) Child(ren) who receive Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Survivor Benefits on behalf of the child may be denied non-relative caregiver financial assistance payments for the child.
 - h) A signed statement by the non-relative caregiver expressing financial need to continue care for the child(ren) long term is required by DCF.
2. Application Process
 - a) If the child meets criteria, case management will assist the caregiver with the Non-Relative Caregiver Financial Assistance Application.
 - b) Once the paper application is completed in its entirety, the case manager will forward the application to the Eligibility Department at FLCBCEDS@cckids.net
 - c) The Eligibility staff will electronically submit the application to the Department of Children and Families Non-Relative Caregiver email address. (HQW.nonrelative.caregiver@myflfamilies.com)
 - d) The Office of Child Welfare will process the application within five days and confirm approval or denial of the application. Upon approval, the Non-Relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will add the Department Approved Service in the Provider Record in FSFN.
 - f) Communities Connected for Kids will submit the application and Notice of Case action into the FSFN system of record.
 - g) Annually, the Non-Relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will conduct a reassessment by contacting the Non-Relative Caregiver via U.S. Mail to determine whether the non-relative caregiver continues to meet eligibility requirements.

Clients Residing Outside of County

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1. The case manager will request a Non-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 Non-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 courtesy case worker complete the Non-Relative Caregiver Application and submit the request for Non-Relative Caregiver Financial Assistance back to the primary case manager at Communities Connected for Kids for processing.

Clients from Other Counties Residing in Circuit 19

1. The other county's case worker will request a Non-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 Non-Relative Caregiver Home Study.
3. The other county's case worker is responsible for doing the court preparation, and the presentation of the Non-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 courtesy case manager is responsible for completing the Non-Relative Caregiver Application and will submit the request for Non-Relative Caregiver Financial Assistance back to the primary case manager for processing.

Closed Cases

Criteria for determining the eligibility to participate in the Non-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 Non-Relative Care Program assistance.
3. A new Caregiver Home Study will be done for the current placement.
4. The court must approve the new home study.

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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 CCKids or CHS Agency Supervisor will complete the Non-Relative Caregiver Application, attaching the notice of filing and the copy of adjudication and placement order.
6. The CCKids or CHS Agency Supervisor will return the information packet to Communities Connected for Kids for processing and forwarding to the DCF Non-Relative Caregiver email box.

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

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