

Florida's New Levels of Licensure and the Guardianship Assistance Program



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CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM
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Objectives

- ▶ Describe the new levels of foster care licensure.
- ▶ Explain Level I child-specific licensure for relative and non-relative caregivers.
- ▶ Review the benefits of caregivers becoming licensed.
- ▶ Describe the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) and the Extended Guardianship Assistance Program (EGAP).
- ▶ Explain the role of Dependency Case Managers as it relates to Licensing and GAP.
- ▶ Outline implementation timeline for licensure and GAP.

Restructuring Foster Care Licensing

- ▶ To allow for the implementation of the Guardianship Assistance Program (which will be explained further), the Department has restructured the current types of foster care licenses and implemented “levels” of licensure.
- ▶ This impacts all licensed foster parents.
- ▶ The largest impact is the addition of a category of licensure for the relative and non-relative caregiver population.
 - ▶ This means relative/non-relative caregivers will go through a licensing process to become licensed foster parents.

Levels of Licensed Care

▶ **Level One: Child-specific foster home**

- ▶ The majority relative/non-relatives will become Level I homes (unless they choose to complete a higher level of licensure).
- ▶ Licensure requirements.—The caregiver must meet all Level II licensing requirements. However, requirements not directly related to safety may be waived.

▶ **Level Two: Non-child-specific foster home**

- ▶ Level II homes are the equivalent of what were previously known as traditional foster homes.
- ▶ Licensure requirements.—The caregiver must meet all licensing requirements pursuant to S. [409.175](#) and corresponding rule by the Department.

▶ **Level Three: Safe foster home for victims of human trafficking**

- ▶ Licensure requirements.—The caregiver must meet all Level II licensing requirements and all certification requirements pursuant to s. [409.1678](#).

▶ **Level Four: Therapeutic foster home**

- ▶ Licensure requirements.—The caregiver must meet all Level II licensing requirements and all certification requirements established in rule by the Agency for Health Care Administration.

▶ **Level Five: Medical foster home**

- ▶ Licensure requirements.—The caregiver must meet all Level II licensing requirements and all certification requirements established in rule by the Agency for Health Care Administration.

How Does This Impact Caregivers?

- Becoming licensed will enhance benefits for the relative/non-relative caregiver population, including access to educational resources and receiving support from licensing staff.
- Rather than receiving Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Funds, licensed caregivers will receive a monthly board payment for each child (\$333 per month). The board rate begins once the caregiver is licensed and is not contingent on the child's adjudication status.
- If a case closes permanent guardianship, licensed caregivers will be eligible to enter the Guardianship Assistance Program, which offers an ongoing monthly GAP payment with annual redetermination.

Phases of the Guardianship Assistance Program

Placement

For emergency or planned placements, relatives may receive TANF Cash Only benefits (no change to current process).

Licensure

Relatives/Non-Relatives will proceed with the process of becoming a licensed Level I foster parent. They will then receive a foster care board payment.

Case Closure

If a case closes permanent guardianship, the family will proceed to GAP. This requires a minimum of 6 months of foster care board payments prior to closure.

GAP Payments

Receive GAP payments and complete the re-determination process annually to continue receiving benefits.

Level I-Child Specific Foster Home

- ▶ Level I-child specific foster home is the licensure type that has been designated for relative/non-relative/fictive kin caregivers that are seeking to be licensed when a relationship with the child has previously been established.
- ▶ Caregivers seeking Level I licensure must meet all safety related licensing requirements pursuant to F.A.C. 65C-13 and 409.175 F.S. (same for all levels of licensure).
 - ▶ Under a Level I licensure, some of the non-safety related licensing requirements may be waived on a case-by-case basis.
- ▶ Level I-child specific foster home licenses are only applicable for placement of the child(ren) identified on the license.
- ▶ Monthly board rate payments for Level I licensure- \$333.00 monthly (per child)

Guardianship Assistance Program

- ▶ The Guardianship Assistance Program is a Title IV-E benefits program that is available to guardians who commit to caring for a child long term (permanent guardianship).
- ▶ GAP is not a permanency option; it is a benefit program available when a case closes permanent guardianship. Permanency options of reunification and adoption must have been determined to not be in the child's best interest before considering a goal of permanent guardianship (this has not changed).
- ▶ The benefits associated with the Guardianship Assistance Program are paid to the court-approved guardian, on behalf of the child, following case closure in permanent guardianship.

Guardianship Assistance Program (continued)

- ▶ Similar to the current Relative & Non-Relative Caregiver Program.
- ▶ Payments continue until the child turns 18 years old as long as the guardian has custody of the child.
- ▶ Ongoing annual redetermination is required to ensure guardian is still caring for the child.

Guardianship Assistance Program Eligibility Criteria

- ▶ The child has been placed with the guardian by the court;
- ▶ The court has granted legal custody to the guardian pursuant to s. 39.521 or s. 39.522, F.S. (permanent guardianship);
- ▶ The guardian has been licensed to care for the child as provided in s. 409.175, F.S.;
- ▶ The child was eligible for foster care room and board payments for at least 6 consecutive months with the current guardian;
- ▶ The guardian enters a Guardianship Assistance Agreement for the child prior to the closing of the case in permanent guardianship.

Guardianship Assistance Program Benefits

- ▶ Monthly payments amount to \$333 per month (same as Level I board rate);
- ▶ Medicaid benefits until the child is 18 years of age (or 21 if the child is eligible for Extension of Guardianship Assistance Program);
- ▶ Tuition and Fee Exemption for Students in Foster Care (inclusive of all children that are receiving G.A.P. benefits);
- ▶ A family is still eligible for benefits if the child and caregiver live or move out of state;
- ▶ A one-time payment to assist with the costs of establishing permanent guardianship (up to \$2,000; non-recurring expenses).

Takeaways for Case Management

- ▶ DCMs will be responsible for providing timely notification any time a child is placed into the home of a relative or non-relative.
 - ▶ Currently a uRefer is submitted to provide notification of all placement changes. **It is imperative that the uRefer is submitted no later than 2 business days from placement.** This is what will trigger the start of the licensing process.
- ▶ DCMs will be responsible for informing the assigned Kinship Coordinator if a case goal is changed to Permanent Guardianship in order for the Kinship Coordinator to begin preparation for the family's entry into the GAP program at the time of case closure.
- ▶ DCMs will not be responsible for completing the actual licensure tasks.
 - ▶ CCKids' Caregiver Support Program is expanding to add new staff (Kinship Coordinators) who will complete licensing tasks and provide ongoing support to Level I caregivers.

Important Timeframes

- ▶ Florida Statute has already been amended to reflect the new Levels of Licensure (409.175 F.S.)
- ▶ FSFN enhancements to incorporate levels of licensure go live on April 12, 2019.
- ▶ Communities Connected for Kids will begin the process of licensing relatives/non-relatives as Level 1 foster homes starting July 1, 2019.

Questions?

Additional information is available on the Center for Child Welfare's website: <http://www.centerforchildwelfare.org/licensure.shtml>

If you have questions in the meantime, contact the Caregiver Support Program by email at: FLCBCcaregivers@cckids.net