

# **CWS4080W Kinship Care in Virginia**

## **LEARNER HANDOUTS**



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES

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## **Group instructions**

### **Breakout groups**

Ask the group to assess the following:

The truth or validity of the generalization behind the stereotype.

The reasons why, even if the stereotype accurately represents a group trend, the stereotype can be dangerous.

***Myth: “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”***

***Myth: “It’s their moral responsibility.”***

***Myth: “There aren’t that many family members to locate anyway”***

***Myth: “Kin caregivers only do it for the money.”***

***Myth: “Kin care is not as stable as adoption.”***

***Myth: “Kin placements are not as safe.”***

***Myth: Kin are too old/too poor to care for children.***

**One of the biggest dangers of stereotyping is that we may miss strengths and may tend to dismiss the resources that relatives can offer the child.**

***Myth: “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”***

Research shows that children living with relatives are no more likely – and are perhaps less likely – than children living with non-kin foster parents to experience abuse or neglect after being removed from their homes. A 1997 study found that non-kin foster parents were twice as likely as licensed kinship foster parents to have a confirmed report of maltreatment.

***Myth: “It’s their moral responsibility.”***

Clearly, kinship caregivers agree. They take the responsibility of raising their family when the children’s parents, for a variety of reasons, cannot. These caregivers lack neither morals nor a sense of responsibility; they do, however, lack resources.

They may be living on a fixed income or be retired; whatever the reason, it is highly unlikely that they planned financially for raising a relative’s child.

The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that it costs at least \$7,000 per year to raise a child.

The vast majority of children living with relative caregivers are eligible for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) child-only grant. However, 70 percent of relative caregivers do not access TANF or any other public financial assistance.

Even when caregivers access TANF child-only grants, this assistance amounts to, on average, just over \$4,000 per year—or about 57 percent of the anticipated cost of raising a child. (Cohen, Vanessa, 2008).

***Myth: “There aren’t that many family members to locate anyway”***

This couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, experts estimate that children have between 100 to 300 relatives at one time. (Casey Family Services, September 4, 2008).

***Myth: “Kin caregivers only do it for the money.”***

Many kinship caregivers survive on TANF payments and receive less financial support than non-related foster care providers (Hill, 2007).

***Myth: “Kin care is not as stable as adoption.”***

Children placed with non-relatives are three times more likely to be moved multiple times compared to children in kinship care (Green, 2003). Children in kinship homes are also less likely to reenter care after they’ve gone home or been adopted (Hurley, 2008).

Research exists that reveals that disruption of kinship placements have been seen to occur around the third year of placement. Those disruptions tend to occur due to a lack of systemic services and supports for the relative in the form of overall training about the system, finances, medical assistance, and necessary services and supports for the child – including lack of ongoing contacts with parents and caregivers. It will be crucial to remember that, in order to better ensure that kinship care works, locating and engaging family is not enough. We must also to connect family with much needed supports to empower them to care for the child.

***Myth: “Kin placements are not as safe.”***

Children in kinship care are three to four times less likely to be maltreated than children in traditional foster homes (Hurley, 2008). (North Carolina Family and Children's Resource Program, 2009).

***Myth: Kin are too old/too poor to care for children.***

Based on research, it is true that kinship caregivers do tend to be older and poorer than non-kin (Ehrle, Green, & Main, 2003). However, “a vast majority of children feel loved by their kin caregivers and happy with their living arrangement” (Shearin, 2007, pg. 35). In addition, older poorer kin, who might not be the best placement option, can still serve as

## Mobility Mapping

A Mobility Map is a child's memory of his or her life put to paper. The mobility mapping process allows the child to rediscover the important people and places from his or her past. The process can reveal a child's daily activities and significant relationships, as well as distinctive community or neighborhood features, structures, or geographic characteristics. It is likely the child will share personal stories of family and friends, places frequently visited, and favorite memories. The information revealed can provide children with knowledge about where they came from and important emotional connections from their past. This information contributes to their identity development. It can also provide caseworkers with opportunities to reach out to the people identified through this process and encourage connections with the child.

This activity can be done with children and adults. It is important to allow several hours to complete this activity, depending on the age of the child and how many moves the child experienced.

Prior to completing the Mobility Map, explain to the child the purpose of the activity:

- To stimulate the child's memory,
- To generate discussion between the child and caseworker,
- To explore diverse topics, and
- To draw out information useful for locating connections that have been lost.

Strategies for engaging the child:

- Be patient and encourage the child to draw pictures.
- Be mindful of the individual's developmental stage.
- Allow the child to take the lead.
- Work with child at their convenience.
- Encourage caregiver's involvement only if the child feels comfortable with their participation.
- Keep a sense of humor.
- Be flexible.
- Respect individuality.
- Remember the unique cultural aspects of the child.
- Understand that a genuine rapport with a child takes place over time.

**Materials Needed:** An assortment of writing tools: markers, pens, colored pencils, or crayons; at least one pad of poster size paper, tape, and a private space with plenty of wall space. The child needs to feel safe in order to share information without concern of others overhearing. It is preferred that the Mobility Map be done in the child's home.

**Instructions:**

1. Tape paper along several walls in the room at a height the child can easily reach.
2. Prepare the child by telling them things such as:
  - "We are going to have fun today and draw a big picture of the story of your life."
  - "We are only going to focus on positive memories and you can skip over any negative memories or negative times in your life."
3. Explain to the child that you want to be able to remember all of the things he or she tells you so you may go back and ask questions or write notes.
4. Use the questions below as a guide to help you get started or stay on track during the mobility mapping. These questions are not all inclusive as each child will require individualized attention and guidance to successfully complete a mobility map. The child should write the names of the individuals they draw as well as the locations, including addresses if known, or other geographical information.

Questions:

- Think back as far as you can in your life. Where was the first place you remember living?
- What did it look like?
- Can you draw it for me?
- How old were you when you lived there?
- Who lived there with you?
- Can you draw them for me?
- What were their names?
- How old were they?
- Do you remember your neighbors?
- Can you draw their houses?
- What were their names?
- Did you know them well?
- What school did you go to?
- Did you ride the bus?
- Did you have a favorite teacher?
- What was their name?
- Can you draw the school and your teacher in it?
- How about a favorite coach or other school people?
- Did you go to church or other religious services?
- Can you draw the place you went to?
- What did you do for fun when you lived there?
- Did anyone come to visit often?

- Did you go visit anyone?
- Where did you live next?
- How old were you when you moved?
- Who lived with you in this place?
- Can you draw them and the house and how old they were?
- Repeat this until you get to the place they live now

Other Clarifying Questions:

- Who in the family would know relatives' last names?
  - Who planned family reunions or events?
  - What foods did you eat and did anyone have an accent?
  - Do you remember any landmarks or street names?
  - How big is your family?
  - What are some fun memories or stories?
  - What social media sites do you use?
5. Ask the child to go back with a different color marker and put a mark next to the people with whom they feel safe.
  6. Ask the child to repeat this with a different color marker and mark the people with whom they do NOT feel safe.
  7. Ask the child to identify the people from the safe list with whom they would want to reconnect.
  8. Ask the child what five things are missing in their life right now. This can include people, places, things or unanswered questions.
  9. Ask the child to identify their top five needs.
  10. Ask the child to place a number next to the need in order of importance with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important.

**Remember to encourage the child often and to redirect away from negative memories. Tell them that you can focus on the positive things during this activity.**

Prior to giving the Map to the child, take a picture and scan the image into eWiSACWIS. Once the map is complete, give the child the final Map.

*Adapted from Kids Central, funded in part by the Children's Bureau/Administration for Children & Families/Health & Human Services for the following projects: Grant # 90-CF-0026 Family Finding, 2011*



## Out-of-State Relative Interest in Foster Parent Approval Process

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

We appreciate your interest in becoming a kinship foster parent for your young relative in Virginia. Kinship foster parents are needed when children are in foster care. The local department of social services (LDSS) has legal custody of the child or youth and decides where a child in foster care lives. In Virginia, children in foster care must be in approved placements. In order to be considered, you must complete the process of becoming an approved kinship foster parent. When children remain connected with loving and supportive relatives and fictive kin, the trauma of separation from family is significantly reduced. The role of a kinship foster parent involves supporting family reunification and preserving family relationships. Being a kinship foster parent is a big undertaking and it is important for you to know what is involved in the process of becoming approved as a kinship foster parent.

Each state has their own process for relative caregivers. Given that you do NOT live in Virginia, you will need to follow the requirements for your state. The LDSS that has custody of your young relative starts the process with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) steps outlined in the flowchart below. The time frame for each step will vary. Since you are receiving this letter from us, we would be the ones to make the ICPC referral after we have had a chance to talk and see if you are interested in proceeding. Once your state's ICPC program receives and accepts our referral, they will send it to your local department who will reach out to you. Your local department will make the recommendation for the home study and approval.

All states require background checks, a home study, and some training that varies. The other details of your state's process and required documents may be found on the ICPC website.

<http://icpcstatepages.org/>.

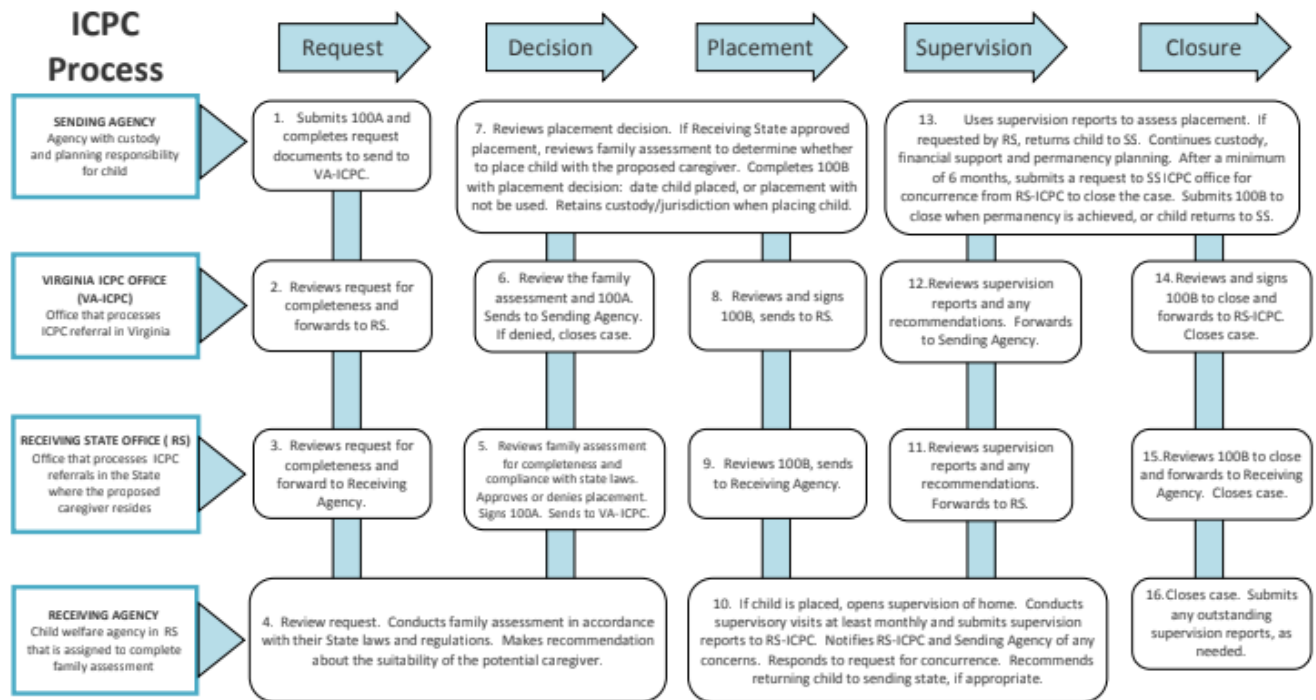
If you wish to proceed in seeking approval as a kinship foster parent, contact:

Respectfully,

PS. If you decide to proceed with being an approved relative caregiver and your local department denies your approval, you may be able to appeal the decision (check the above website to see if your state has an appeal process). Please stay in communication with us.



## Out-of-State Relative Interest in Foster Parent Approval Process



\*All documents are sent through the Niece system.

# Kinship Background Screenings Guide

Handout F-2

## **RELATIVE or Fictive Kin Screening for Alternate Living Arrangements (ALA)**

### Child IS at risk of removal

When is a background screening required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the Safety Assessment has been determined conditionally safe and child cannot remain safety in the home.</li> <li>• Before the ALA occurs.</li> </ul>
Who in the household is required to be screened?	→ All adults aged 18 and over.
What is required to complete a background screening for adults?	→ Viewing or copy of current valid identification.
What systems are part of the background screening for adults in the home BEFORE ALA can occur?	→ Accurant or other state funded person locator tool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <a href="https://fusion.dss.virginia.gov/dfs/DFS-Home/Foster-Care/Accurant-Search">https://fusion.dss.virginia.gov/dfs/DFS-Home/Foster-Care/Accurant-Search</a></li> </ul> → National Sex Offender Registry
What guidelines are used to make a determination of approval or denial?	→ The results of each criminal history inquiry need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the circumstances of each offense. The case-by-case assessment should focus on the safety of the child. → Safety considerations should include crimes involving child abuse/neglect; assault or battery; crimes against children including child pornography and trafficking; crimes involving violence including rape, sexual assault, or homicide
Other requirements for adults in the home after ALA has occurred?	→ Notify the local department prior to changing their place of residence and provide the local department with the address of their new residence. → Notify the local department when there are changes or additions to the household composition.

→ Depending on where a case begins or how a case progresses, we may end up completing different types of background screenings at different times or we may only run certain system checks and not others.

## Child Welfare Inquiries for Kinship & Fictive Kin

The LDSS must complete an inquiry into the child welfare history of all adult household members when a child has been determined to be conditionally safe and cannot remain safely in their home and the parent/caregiver desires to voluntarily place their child in an alternate living arrangement (ALA). This inquiry process must be used for all ALA, including the 5-Day Exception and Parental Child Safety Placement Program pathways. This inquiry process must be completed prior the child's placement with the ALA. Here are the instructions for how to complete a child welfare history inquiry:

- When possible, please have a designated child welfare worker/supervisor complete the check. If they are not available, other leaders can complete the check.
- Search all name information on anyone 18 and older living in the home:
  - You will need first, middle, last & maiden names and other surnames (if applicable)
  - You will need DOB
  - You will need SSN
- When you search, please make sure you are looking for other potential spellings (if the last name is Greene, please check Green as well).

When you search OASIS, please only type in the last name so that you are not limiting your possible matches, and make sure you have saved your search to be sorted by name.

- If you find a name match, please research this to understand why the name is in OASIS:
  - If the person is founded as an abuser/neglector or actively being investigated, please note the dates/circumstances, and further assessment and supervisory consultation is needed. These issues might not prevent placement, but it is our due diligence to ensure we are meeting the needs of the child(ren) and ensuring child safety. **We will address these issues as part of the permanency assessment tool (PAT) process.**
  - If the person is involved in a family assessment, unfounded investigation or some other type of case, please read enough to understand the case dynamics, their role and any potential concerns for matching the child with this person (i.e. if it was unfounded because we could not establish a caretaker relationship, but there was evidence that sexual abuse occurred....we would want to communicate that to the team....or, if the adult had other children in foster care through a delinquency matter but there were issues related to their ability to parent a teen, we would want to communicate that). These issues might not prevent placement, but it is our due diligence to ensure we are meeting the needs of the child(ren) and ensuring child safety. **We will address these issues as part of the PAT process.**
  - If you come across information that there could be other persons in the home based on recent information in OASIS, please communicate this **immediately** to the involved child welfare workers/supervisors to allow them to address this with the family and caregivers.
- When you communicate back to the requestor, please make sure you are acknowledging affirmatively all the names you searched and whether there is or is not information that would indicate possible child welfare history for each name searched. Communicate any information found in OASIS in a separate paragraph.

Here are some examples:

**Example 1:**



The Family Services Specialist requested child welfare inquiries on Jane and John Smith.

OASIS name searches were conducted on:

- Jane Jones Smith
- Jane Susan Smyth
- Jane Susan Jones
- John Doe Smith
- John Doe Smyth

No OASIS matches were found for: Jane Jones Smith, Jane Susan Smyth, Jane Susan Jones, John Doe Smith, and John Doe Smyth. Search completed by Family Services Supervisor Adams on April 18, 2024.

**Example 2:**



The Family Services Specialist requested child welfare inquiries on Jane and John Smith.

OASIS searches were conducted on the following names:

- Jane Jones Smith
- Jane Susan Smyth
- Jane Susan Jones
- John Doe Smith
- John Doe Smyth

There was a match found in OASIS on Jane Susan Jones, name was confirmed by DOB and SSN. Jane was involved with a family assessment two years ago (include month/year) and here is the (cut and paste) from the family assessment summary – highlight any specific concerns and include the referral number. Examples might include use of corporal punishment, neglect concerns, etc. Be sure to include the nature of the allegations, track of the referral (FA/INV), the outcome of the risk assessment, if services were needed, possible legal action, and if a case was opened. **While these issues might not technically prevent placement, they should be documented, considered and addressed.**

No OASIS matches were found for: Jane Jones Smith, Jane Susan Smyth, John Doe Smith, and John Doe Smyth. Search completed by Family Services Supervisor Adams on April 18, 2024.

Please document the search results in OASIS, either as an I&I or Contact, so it can be maintained in the official case record. Use I&I and/or Contact Purpose of: ALA Child Welfare Inquiry



# Relative Maintenance Communication Form

This form is used to communicate any relevant status/change updates known by Family Services staff to Benefit Programs staff.

**TO: (Benefit Programs staff – Name & Email address)**

**FROM: (Family Services staff – Name & Email address)**

**LDSS Name:**

**DATE:** Click or tap to enter a date.

## I. Relative/Caretaker Information

Relative/Caretaker #1 - Name		Relative/Caretaker #2 - Name	
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## II. Child's Information

<b>Child #1</b> – First/Last Name		
Date of signed Parental Child Safety Placement Agreement?	Click or tap to enter a date.	
<b>Child #2</b> – First/Last Name		
Date of signed Parental Child Safety Placement Agreement?	Click or tap to enter a date.	
<b>Child #3</b> – First/Last Name		
Date of signed Parental Child Safety Placement Agreement?	Click or tap to enter a date.	
<b>Child #4</b> – First/Last Name		
Date of signed Parental Child Safety Placement Agreement?	Click or tap to enter a date.	

## III. Status/change updates – (Please provide any relevant information below - e.g., address changes; moves out of state; child has returned to the home of the parent(s) or caretaker(s)/guardian(s); an alternate living arrangement has been facilitated with a new relative/fictive kin caregiver(s); child has entered foster care; etc.)

Comments	
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## Kinship Foster Parent Approval Process

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear

We appreciate your interest in becoming a kinship foster parent. Kinship foster parents are needed when children are in foster care. The local department of social services has legal custody of the child or youth and decides where a child in foster care lives. In Virginia, children in foster care must be in approved placements. In order to be considered, you must complete the process of becoming an approved kinship foster parent. When children remain connected with loving and supportive relatives and fictive kin, the trauma of separation from family is significantly reduced. The role of a kinship foster parent involves supporting family reunification and preserving family relationships. Being a kinship foster parent is a big undertaking and it is important for you to know what is involved in the process of becoming approved as a kinship foster parent.

In order to be an approved kinship foster parent, you must be willing to allow a representative of the local department of social services to meet with you in your home to begin the process, which includes:

1. Completing the Permanency Assessment Tool conducted by the local department of social services. The tool will provide an opportunity for discussion about the process of becoming an approved kinship foster parent and will assist the local department in determining how best to proceed.
2. Agreeing to all adult household members submitting to all background checks, to include criminal history and central registry of abuse and neglect. Also, Department of Motor Vehicle record checks if driving the child/youth. However, a driver's license is not required to be approved as a kinship foster parent.
3. Completing kinship foster parent training, which is focused on the needs of the child, the role of a kinship foster parent in the life of the child, and supporting reunification of the child and parent.
4. Engaging in a mutual family assessment conducted by the local department. You will be asked to provide certain documentation such as income verification, marriage certificates, divorce decrees, personal references. The assessment is to ensure that you can demonstrate the ability to:
  - a. protect and nurture children,
  - b. meet the developmental needs and address developmental delays,
  - c. support children's relationships with their families,
  - d. connect children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime
  - e. work as a member of a professional team
5. Obtain a physical examination for kinship foster parents and tuberculosis screenings for all household members.

When children enter foster care, it is critical that they remain connected to their families and communities in order to preserve the relationships that allow them to heal from the trauma that they have experienced. If you wish to proceed in seeking approval as a kinship foster parent, contact:

Respectfully,