


<div>  <div> GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL </div> </div>			
Chapter:	(10) Foster Care	Effective Date:	August 2014
Policy Title:	Financial and Non-Financial Supports for Children in Foster Care or Who Have Achieved Permanency		
Policy Number:	10.8	Previous Policy #:	1004.1.9- 1004.1.20; 1004.2-1004.3

CODES/REFERENCES

N/A

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children (DFCS) shall discuss all financial and non-financial supports with caregivers being considered for placement or transfer of permanent guardianship of a child in DFCS custody including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Supports available for children in foster care (if program eligibility requirements are met)
 - a. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
 - b. Foster Care per diem;
 - c. Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR);
 - d. Prevention of Unnecessary Placement (PUP), Parent Aide or Homestead services; (See [Support Services to Preserve or Reunify Families](#))
 - e. Wrap-Around Services;
 - f. Initial and/or Annual Clothing Allowance;
 - g. Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS);
 - h. Supplemental Supervision;
 - i. Mental and/or Behavioral Health services;
 - j. Medicaid;
 - k. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Retirement, Survivors, Disability Insurance (RSDI).
2. Supports available for children who have achieved permanency and are no longer in foster care (if program eligibility requirements are met)
 - a. TANF;
 - b. Subsidized Guardianship (SG) or Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship (NRSG);
NOTE: Because state law (effective 01-01-14) no longer recognizes “live with fit and willing relative” (LWFWR) as a permanent placement for children, DFCS is eliminating the Relative Care Subsidy program as an option for relatives going forward. If a relative wishes to be a permanent option for a child, permanent guardianship with the relative should be the permanency plan selected. Previous policy also allowed for caregivers to receive either a regular subsidy (averaged to \$10/day) or an enhanced subsidy (80% of the basic foster care per diem for the child’s age). Any new subsidy initiated after the effective date of this policy will be paid at 80% of the basic foster care per diem for the child’s age. Any subsidies (type and amount) initiated prior to the effective date of this policy will continue to

- be available upon renewal.
- c. Adoption Assistance (See [Introduction to Adoption Assistance](#));
- d. Prevention of Unnecessary Placement (PUP), Parent Aide or Homestead services;
- e. Wrap-Around Services;
- f. Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS);
- g. Mental and/or Behavioral Health Services;
- h. Medicaid;
- i. SSI or RSDI.

DFCS established the following eligibility criteria for relatives/caregivers to be eligible to receive the Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR), Subsidized Guardianship (SG) or Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship (NRSBG), when funding is available:

1. A relative must meet the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) degree of relationship to receive ERR or SG. If they do not meet this degree of relationship, they are eligible for NRSBG if they are granted guardianship. See [Practice Guidance](#) for TANF Specified Degrees of Relationship for Relative Subsidies;
2. There is an approved Relative/Non-Relative Care Assessment on file;
3. The income of the child, excluding the child's wages, is less than the amount of the SG/NRSBG payment;

NOTE: There is no income limit for the child in the ERR program because the child is in foster care and DFCS maintains legal/financial responsibility for the child.

4. There is a completed, signed and approved ERR or SG/NRSBG Application and Agreement in effect. The application and agreement must be signed by the relative/caregiver and County Director/Designee; and
5. Additional requirements for SG/NRSBG include:
 - a. The relative/caregiver and child are citizens of the United States or legal permanent residents;

NOTE: If an undocumented child is in the custody of DFCS and placed with a relative who is a citizen or legal permanent resident, the family is eligible for Enhanced Relative Rate- Undocumented Children in Care (UAS 548) while the child is in foster care. However, if permanent guardianship is given to the relative, they would not meet eligibility criteria for a subsidy unless both the child and relative caregiver are citizens and/or legal permanent residents;
 - b. The child has resided with the relative/caregiver under DFCS supervision for a minimum of six (6) months prior to the transfer of permanent guardianship;
 - c. Non-reunification must be granted and the application and agreement must be signed prior to the transfer of permanent guardianship to the relative/caregiver;
 - d. The relative/caregiver was granted permanent guardianship until age 18.

DFCS shall not initiate guardianship payments until permanent guardianship is transferred to the caregiver.

NOTE: Payments will no longer be initiated six (6) months prior to the actual transfer of permanent guardianship. If the caregiver wishes to receive any funding prior to the transfer of guardianship, the caregiver must become an approved foster parent.

DFCS payments for ERR begin the first day of the following month after the approval of the ERR Application and Agreement as long as all other eligibility criteria are met. Payments for

SG/NRSG begin the first day of the month following the transfer of permanent guardianship as long as all other eligibility criteria are met.

The legal county of the child shall make subsidy payments if a family moves to another county or state as long as all eligibility criteria are met. Georgia will continue to be responsible for subsidy payments for eligible children as long as a Georgia court retains legal jurisdiction and the child remains eligible.

DFCS may make subsidy payments, as long as funds are available, up until the child reaches age 18 or until the child's 19th birthday if the child is still enrolled and participating in a public or private school system, registered home study program or accredited GED course.

RCS, SG and NRSG payments are not transferrable from one caregiver to another.

If a child receiving a subsidy is subsequently removed for abuse or neglect, a staffing must be completed with the Regional Field Program Specialist and State Office Permanency Unit prior to returning the child to this caregiver and reinstating the subsidy.

DFCS has opted out of the Title IV-E Kinship Guardianship Program and therefore, the requirements of Section (2) (E) (2) of the State Plan for IV-E for Title XIX and Title XX related to a child receiving a kinship guardianship payment being a dependent child and a recipient of AFDC (as in effect 7/16/96) is not applicable.

DFCS shall suspend ERR/SG/NRSG payments when:

1. The required six and/or 12 month subsidy review is not completed timely;
2. The caregiver dies and the agency is attempting to initiate subsidy payments to another caregiver;
3. The whereabouts of the child and/or relative/caregiver become unknown;
4. The child is on runaway status for 30 days or longer;
5. The child is not enrolled and participating in a public or private school system, registered home study program or accredited GED course;
6. The child's monthly income is equal to or exceeds the amount of the subsidy.

NOTE: Social Security considers the subsidy programs as income to the child; therefore, the child is rarely eligible to receive both. Any subsidy paid will need to be reported to Social Security and the child's benefits from Social Security will be reduced and/or eliminated.

DFCS shall terminate ERR/SG/NRSG payments when any of the following occurs:

1. The payment has been suspended for at least three (3) months;
2. The child dies;
3. The parent moves into the caregiver's home or is caring for the child;
4. The child is no longer living with the caregiver;
5. Maltreatment is substantiated against the caregiver and the child is removed from the home;
6. The whereabouts of the child and/or caregiver remain unknown for at least three (3) months;
7. The child is on runaway status for 90 days or longer (Reinstatement requires a justification and Regional Director approval);

8. The child is incarcerated for 90 days or longer or will not be released from incarceration until after his/her 18th birthday (Reinstatement requires a justification and Regional Director approval);
9. The child is returned to the parent or legal guardian;
10. The relative applies for and receives SSI/RSDI/Child Support for the child and the amount is equal to or greater than the subsidy;
11. The child marries;
12. The child reaches the age of eighteen (18) or nineteen (19) if still enrolled and participating in a public or private school system, registered home study program or accredited GED course. Payments must terminate upon the child's 19th birthday.

NOTE: These circumstances require prompt notification of the legal county's Regional Accounting Department so proper action may be taken to stop subsidy payments.

The County Director shall have the authority to approve the reinstatement of any terminated subsidy. **Exceptions:** The Regional Director shall have the authority to approve the reinstatement if the child was on runaway or incarcerated longer than ninety (90) days. The State Office Permanency Unit shall have the authority to approve the return of a child removed from a caregiver due to abuse or neglect and the reinstatement of the subsidy to that caregiver.

DFCS shall negotiate a recoupment or repayment agreement with any relative/guardian who receives an overpayment of Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR), Subsidized Guardianship (SG) or Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship (NRSG) within 5 business days of knowledge of the overpayment.

The County DFCS shall consult with the State Office Permanency Unit for consideration of a Referral to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of General Counsel for further action including possible legal proceedings:

1. When the relative/guardian refuses to enter into a Recoupment/Repayment Agreement;
2. When the relative/guardian misses a total of two monthly payments;
3. When the relative/guardian fails to comply with the terms of the recoupment/repayment agreement;
4. Anytime the County Department or State Office Permanency Unit suspects fraud or abuse.

PROCEDURES

To initiate the caregiver's request to become a foster parent, the Social Services Case Manager (SSCM) will:

1. Notify the Resource Development (RD) Case Manager of the caregiver's interest to become a foster parent and provide him/her with the relative's demographic and contact information;
2. Document in the Narrative section of the Contact Detail page of Georgia SHINES, the date the referral was made to RD;
3. Schedule a joint visit with the RD case manager to discuss the process/requirements of becoming a foster parent. RD should have contact with the relative within five (5) business days of the referral to become a relative foster home;
4. Discuss with the caregiver other financial and non-financial supports available until the caregiver is approved as a foster parent;
5. Discuss permanency and the possibility of adoption with the caregiver;

6. Maintain ongoing contact with the RD case manager and the caregiver to follow-up and ensure the timely approval of the caregiver as a foster parent. (See [Resource Development-Safety and Quality Standards](#))

Prior to the placement of a child in DFCS custody with a relative/potential guardian, the SSCM will:

1. Ensure there is an approved [Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Assessment](#) on file;
2. Discuss all financial and non-financial supports available to caregivers wanting to be a placement resource for or accept permanent guardianship of a child in DFCS custody;
3. Discuss possible permanency options with the caregiver(s).

Prior to the transfer of guardianship to a relative/non-relative caregiver, the SSCM will:

1. Ensure there is an approved Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Assessment on file.
2. Discuss all financial and non-financial supports available to caregivers wanting to be a placement resource for or accept permanent guardianship of a child in DFCS custody.
3. Discuss adoption as the most permanent option for the child.
4. Supervise the child in the placement for a minimum of six (6) months including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Monthly purposeful visits with the child and caregiver(s) (See [Purposeful Contact Requirement](#));
 - b. Assessment of child's adjustment to the home;
 - c. Observation of the child's interactions with the caregiver(s) and other household members;
 - d. Assessment of the child and caregiver(s)' needs;
 - e. Referrals to services to address identified needs;
 - f. Regular follow-up with service providers by phone, email, face-to-face or mail correspondence regarding the child's or family's progress.
5. Conduct a Family Team Meeting (FTM) and document the FTM on the FTM tab in Georgia SHINES, including:
 - a. The benefits and impact of available funding once permanent guardianship is received;
 - b. Medical insurance options;
 - c. Well-being issues of the child including:
 - i. Current medical, mental or behavioral health and educational needs;
 - ii. The current services and whether or not they will continue once permanent guardianship is granted;
 - iii. Additional services that may be needed.
 - d. Who can serve as a back-up guardian if the caregiver becomes ill or dies;
 - e. Next steps regarding filing the petition and transfer of permanent guardianship.
6. Ensure any child under the age of fourteen (14) or who is free for adoption has a waiver for guardianship from the Permanency Unit.
7. Ensure any child with medical, developmental or behavioral special needs has a discharge medical prior to the planned discharged to the guardianship of the caregiver.

Initiation of ERR/SG/NRSG Payments

To initiate ERR payments for a child in DFCS custody, the SSCM will:

1. Ensure funding is available;
2. Ensure the relative meets the specified degree of relationship outlined in TANF policy

- and is either a citizen of the United States or a documented resident;
3. Ensure all other eligibility criteria for ERR have been met;
 4. Ensure an approved Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Assessment is uploaded in External Documents in the GA Statewide Automated Child Welfare System (SHINES) and that the Relative Care Assessment tab in SHINES is completed and approved;
 5. Ensure that a Payment of Care (POC) is entered into SHINES and the placement information is updated in order for a payment to be made;
 6. Discuss and assist the relative in completing/signing the [ERR Application and Agreement Form](#). If the relative resource is out-of-state, the case manager in the other state should be asked to assist with having the ERR Application and Agreement Form completed and signed following [Placement of Georgia Children into Other State](#) guidelines;
 7. Forward a copy of the approved [ERR Application and Agreement](#) to Regional Accounting and upload a copy in External Documents in SHINES;
 8. Notify the Office of Family Independence (OFI) to terminate any TANF payments being made on the child's behalf (TANF payments are made for the entire month, so the subsidy payments may not be paid until the first day of the month following the termination of TANF).

To initiate SG/NRSG payments for a child transferred from the custody of DFCS to the permanent guardianship of a relative/caregiver, the SSCM will ensure:

1. Funding is available;
2. The relative meets the specified degree of relationship outlined in TANF policy for SG payments and the relative/non-relative caregiver and the child are either citizens of the United States or a documented residents;
3. All other eligibility criteria for the subsidy requested have been met;
4. An approved Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Assessment is uploaded in External Documents in SHINES and that the Relative Care Assessment tab in SHINES is completed. If the relative is out-of-state, [Placement of Georgia Children into Other State](#) guidelines must be followed regarding placement approval and the transfer of guardianship to the relative/caregiver;
5. Non-reunification has been granted by the court;
6. A completed and signed [SG/NRSG Application and Agreement](#) is in effect prior to permanent guardianship being transferred to the relative/caregiver and it is uploaded into External Documents in SHINES;
NOTE: For relative/caregiver resources out-of-state, the SSCM in the other state should be asked to assist with having the SG/NRSG Application and Agreement form completed and signed following ICPC guidelines;
7. The relative/caregiver is an approved resource and has a contract in SHINES as well as an approved POC to link the approved POC and approved placement;
8. A copy of the approved SG/NRSG Application and Agreement and applicable court orders are submitted to Regional Accounting.

Changes in Household Circumstances

When a caregiver reports changes in household circumstances, the SSCM will:

1. Immediately assess the impact the reported change has on the safety and well-being of the child(ren) and the eligibility for ERR/SG/NRSG;
2. Staff reported changes with the supervisor within 72 hours unless there is a safety concern. Safety concerns should be staffed immediately;

3. Suspend or terminate the subsidy payments, if required;
4. Document the reported change, the impact on the safety and well-being of the child, the continued eligibility/ineligibility of the subsidy payments and staffing outcomes in the Narrative section of the Contact Detail page of Georgia SHINES within 72 hours;
5. Notify Regional Accounting and the Resource Maintainer of any changes.

Suspension or Termination of Subsidy Payments

To suspend or terminate ERR/SG/NRSG payments, the SSCM will:

1. Provide written notification to the caregiver and child at the last known address regarding the effective date of the suspension/termination, reason for the suspension/termination and whether or not any action can be taken to reinstate the subsidy;
2. Provide notification to Regional Accounting regarding the suspension/termination of the subsidy including the reason for the action and the effective date to stop the subsidy. The SSCM should note on the Relative Care Per Diem Report provided by Regional Accounting that the subsidy should not be paid;
3. End date the placement on the Placement Detail page and update the Relative Care Assessment tabs in SHINES as needed;
4. Suspend/terminate the POC in SHINES;
5. If the payment is terminating, close the Post Foster Care (PFC) stage in SHINES.

Reinstatement of Terminated Subsidy Payments

In order to reinstate a subsidy that has been terminated, the SSCM shall:

1. Stage progress an intake to the PFC stage to initiate the case.
2. Conduct a home visit with the child and caregiver to complete a renewal evaluation:
 - a. Have the relative complete the [Six \(6\), Twelve \(12\) or Thirty-Six \(36\) Month Review for Subsidy or Court Review form](#).
 - b. Interview the caregiver and child separately.
 - c. Assess the following:
 - i. Current household situation;
 - ii. Reason the subsidy was terminated;
 - iii. Reason the subsidy needs to be reinstated;
 - iv. The relative's/caregiver's capacity to continue to provide for the child(ren)'s safety, permanency and well-being;
 - v. All information included on the [Six \(6\), Twelve \(12\) or Thirty-Six \(36\) Month Review for Subsidy or Court Review form](#);
 - vi. Home environment via a walkthrough of the home;
 - d. Obtain any needed verification regarding the child's income or information on any new household members.
 - e. Contact collaterals including the school, health care providers, other service providers and other relevant parties to obtain/verify information.
Note: A [release of information](#) form must be signed by the relative/guardian before any contact is made with collaterals.
 - f. Discuss the terms of the application and agreement with the caregiver and obtain appropriate signatures on the form.
 - g. Notify the relative/caregiver that SSCM must staff the reinstatement with the SSS, County Director and Regional Director (when required) to obtain approval for the reinstatement.

3. Staff the information obtained with the SSS and County Director (include Regional Director when required) and document discussion of the following:
 - a. Safety of the home environment;
 - b. The relative's/caregiver's protective capacities to continue to provide for the child's safety, permanency and well-being;
 - c. Any changes in household composition, income, well-being needs and/or visitation with the parents;
 - d. Collateral information obtained;
 - e. Reason the subsidy was terminated and reason reinstatement is needed;
 - f. Approval decision to reinstate the subsidy.
4. Obtain appropriate DFCS approval signatures on the application and agreement;
5. Complete a new payment of care in SHINES and update the Placement tab in SHINES;
6. Provide Regional Accounting with a copy of the approved application and agreement;
7. Send a copy of the approved application and agreement to the caregiver.

Recoupment or Repayment of Overpayments:

When a change in household circumstances results in an over payment of ERR, SG or NRSG, the SSCM will:

1. Notify the relative/guardian via written correspondence of the overpayment and the need for a meeting to discuss recoupment/repayment;
2. Conduct a face-to-face meeting with the caregiver/guardian to discuss the reason for the overpayment and the need to recoup the funds;
3. Negotiate a recoupment/repayment agreement;
4. Obtain appropriate signatures on the recoupment/repayment agreement.

Family Receiving Subsidy Relocates

When the family receiving a subsidy moves out of county, the SSCM will:

1. Notify the DFCS office in the new county of residence in writing of the family's subsidy status and relocation to their county, and request a follow-up visit to the family's new residence. The purpose of the visit is to update the Application and Agreement with the new address and assure the child's safety and well-being;
2. Upon receipt of approval of the current residence, document the approval in the Narrative of the Contact Detail and update the address of the caregiver in the Person Detail page in SHINES within 72 hours;
3. Upload the updated Application and Agreement in SHINES External Documents;
4. Notify Regional Accounting and the Resource Maintainer of the family's relocation;
5. Ensure the legal county completes any renewal assessments.

NOTE: It is the court's discretion to maintain or negotiate a transfer of jurisdiction to another venue.

When the family moves to another state, the legal county SSCM will:

1. Notify the other state of the child's status and relocation to their state. Notifications of the child's custody and subsidy status are sent through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) to the other state following any current ICPC guidelines governing the two case types:
 - a. Children in the legal custody of DFCS; or
 - b. Children no longer in DFCS custody but for whom permanent guardianship

- (until age 18) has been transferred to a relative/caregiver.
2. For cases where the child is in DFCS custody:
 - a. Follow all ICPC guidelines regarding the child relocating to another state; (See [Court Jurisdiction and Other ICPC Components](#))
 - b. Notify Regional Accounting and the Resource Maintainer of the family's relocation;
 3. For cases where guardianship has been transferred to a relative/caregiver:
 - a. Submit with the ICPC request the following information:
 - i. Guardianship court order;
 - ii. CCFA;
 - iii. RCA;
 - iv. SG/NRSG Application and Agreement;
 - v. Parents' names;
 - vi. Name(s) of relative caregiver(s)/permanent guardian(s);
 - vii. Child's name and date of birth;
 - viii. New address;
 - ix. Date of move;
 - x. Identifying information from the court of jurisdiction and DFCS agency responsible for continuation of the subsidy payments, including mandatory court personal status report requirements for guardianship and agency (annual) renewal report.
 - b. Request the receiving state send a written report, based on a home visit and face-to-face interview with the family and child (if appropriate).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Federal and State funds support our financial programs available to relatives and guardians. Because these funding streams are being reduced, it is imperative that SSCMs are good stewards of these financial programs. A relative/non-relative caregiver assuming care of a child should be thoroughly assessed to determine their appropriateness as well as the supports they will need to properly care for the child. The families should be monitored to ensure continued eligibility for the programs. If it is determined that a relative/guardian is no longer eligible to receive the financial support provided, the SSCM must act diligently in ensuring the financial assistance ceases and that any overpayments are repaid.

Financial Supports

1. **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF):** TANF is a federally funded grant program that allows states to create and administer their own assistance programs. TANF provides monthly financial assistance to needy families so children may be cared for in their own homes. To receive TANF benefits the relative must follow the application procedures established by the agency's Office of Family Independence (OFI) and meet all eligibility requirements including being a specified relative.
NOTE: If a relative is approved for another subsidy, OFI must be immediately notified to stop TANF payments. A relative may only receive one financial subsidy at a time.
2. **Enhanced Relative Rate (ERR)-UAS Code 542:** Provides financial support to assist relative caregivers (who meet the TANF degree of relationship) with the basic care of a related child in DFCS custody placed in their home. The ERR payment is a monthly payment equal to eighty percent (80 %) of the current **basic** foster care per diem for the

child's age. The calculation is based upon the **basic** foster care per diem rate for a DFCS Family Foster Home. ERR may be received by relatives while they are completing the process to become an approved Relative Foster Home. However, the ERR payments must be terminated prior to receipt of the Foster Care Per Diem. Parents (biological or adoptive) are not eligible to receive ERR payments.

NOTE: ERR may be funded through TANF, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Retirement, Survivors, Disability Insurance (RSDI), or Child Support. Regional Accounting will determine the funding source utilized for ERR payments.

3. **Foster Care Per Diem:** The foster care per diem is a monthly financial payment received by approved DFCS foster parents. The amount of the per diem is based upon the age of a child and changes accordingly. A relative may receive the foster care per diem after completing all the requirements for becoming an approved DFCS foster home (See Chapter 10: Resource Home Development). Pending approval to become a foster parent, relatives that meet the TANF degree of relationship may receive ERR for a child in DFCS custody.
4. **Adoption Assistance:** See [Adoption Assistance Introduction](#)
5. **Relative Care Subsidy (RCS)-UAS Code 553:** The RCS was a monthly financial payment calculated at 80% of the current **basic** foster care per diem based on the child's age at the time legal custody was transferred to the relative. The payment was calculated based upon the **basic** foster care per diem for a DFCS Family Foster Home and followed the foster care rate/age schedule.
NOTE: Effective 01/01/14, RCS may no longer be selected as a financial option for relatives providing a permanent placement to a child. Those relatives receiving the subsidy prior to 01/01/14 shall continue to be eligible to receive it as long as all other eligibility criteria are met.
6. **Subsidized Guardianship (SG)-UAS Code 552:** SG is a monthly financial payment calculated at 80% of the current **basic** foster care per diem based on the child's age at the time guardianship is awarded. The payment is calculated based upon the **basic** foster care per diem for a DFCS Family Foster Home and follows the foster care rate/age schedule. Relatives (who meet the TANF degree of relationship) become eligible to receive SG payments after non-reunification is granted, the child has been placed with the relative for at least 6 months under DFCS supervision and permanent guardianship is transferred to the relative. Payments begin the month after the child is transferred from the legal custody of DFCS to the permanent guardianship of the relative. Other eligibility criteria and restrictions apply.
7. **Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship (NRSG)-UAS Code 550:** NRSG is a monthly financial payment calculated at 80% of the current **basic** foster care per diem based on the child's age at the time guardianship is awarded. The payment is calculated based upon the **basic** foster care per diem for a DFCS Family Foster Home and follows the foster care rate/age schedule. Relatives (who do not meet the TANF degree of relationship) and non-relatives become eligible to receive NRSG payments after non-reunification is granted and the child has been placed with the caregiver for at least 6 months under DFCS supervision. Payments begin the month after the child is transferred from the legal custody of DFCS to the permanent guardianship of the caregiver. Other eligibility criteria and restrictions apply.
8. **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Retirement, Survivors, Disability Insurance (RSDI)/Child Support**

If the child in DFCS custody receives SSI, Child Support, or other payments, the agency must submit an application to the Social Security Administration and/or the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) to become the payee for the child's payments. The SSCM must ensure relative placement resources understand the benefit payments will be received by the agency and will be used to support the child while the child is in DFCS custody. Because subsidy payments and SSI are both federally funded, a child is ineligible to receive funding from both programs. The DFCS subsidy payment will be reduced dollar for dollar against the SSI. SSI payments may not be sent directly to the relative. (See [COSTAR Manual](#) regarding the distribution of SSI funds received on behalf of a child)

If guardianship of the child is transferred from DFCS to another individual, the SSCM must notify the Social Security Administration and request that payee responsibility be transferred to the new legal guardian. A copy of the notification should be given to the relative caregiver and a copy placed in the subsidy file.

Subsidy Payments

Subsidies are financial supports paid to the approved relative/caregiver of a child in foster care or transferred to the permanent guardianship of an approved caregiver to assist in meeting the needs of the child. A caregiver may not receive a subsidy and foster care per diem in the same month. Caregivers are to be informed of and assisted with determining which financial support program (i.e., TANF, Foster home per diem, Enhanced Relative Rate, Adoption Assistance, Subsidized Guardianship/Non-Relative Subsidized Guardianship, etc.) will be most beneficial in maintaining stability and permanence for the child. Parents of the child are never eligible to receive relative care subsidies.

Initiation of a subsidy should not result in a break in:

1. Financial payments for meeting the needs of the child;
2. Medicaid coverage;
3. Childcare services.

The purpose of the subsidies is to financially assist caregivers providing a temporary or permanent home for a child in foster care. The payments are available to help defray basic expenses that otherwise may jeopardize the child's opportunity to experience stability and permanence. Subsidy payments must be used for the child's needs or expenses, such as the following abbreviated list:

1. Clothing, including any special clothing needs related to change in size, allergies, etc.;
2. Special dietary needs such as special foods or supplements;
3. Medical and dental care;
4. Special educational needs not covered by P.L. 94-142;
5. Childcare expenses;
6. Extracurricular activities;
7. Mental health services or counseling, if recommended.

Non-Financial Supports

The availability and eligibility criteria of any service necessary to develop, approve, support and/or maintain a child in a caregiver's placement/guardianship must be immediately discussed with the caregiver and documented in SHINES. Services may include, but are not limited to:

1. Supplemental supervision (childcare) or other alternative supervision options;
2. Mental or behavioral health services to the child, caregiver or household member;
3. Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) services;
4. Referrals for clothing, food, furniture, utility assistance or other basic items;
5. Medicaid or other medical coverage;
6. Training or educational supports needed to support the child, relative or household member.

TANF Specified Degree of Relationship

In order to receive ERR or SG, the relative caregivers must meet the TANF degree of relationship criteria. The following relationships meet the requirement:

1. Grandparent (up to great-great-great);
2. Sibling (half, whole, step);
3. Aunt/uncle (up to great-great);
4. Niece/nephew (including child and grandchild of niece/nephew);
5. First cousin;
6. First cousin once removed (the child of a first cousin).

NOTE: Includes the spouse of any person named in the above group even after the marriage is terminated by death or divorce, unless the child is born after termination of the marriage.

EXCEPTION: The spouse of a stepparent or the spouse of a stepsibling is not within the specified degree of relationship.

To establish a child's relationship to a paternal relative, paternity must first be legally established. Verification of the degree of relationship must be documented in SHINES.

Staffing of Removal Related to Abuse or Neglect

The staffing must determine the appropriate permanency plan for the child and that all child safety and well-being issues have been addressed to solidify the placement prior to returning the child to the caregiver and reinstating the subsidy payment. Document the staffing in SHINES. If the staffing determines that continued subsidy would be appropriate, complete a new agreement to reinstate the subsidy payment. If the subsidy renewal is due or past due, immediately complete the renewal process.

Maintaining SG/NRSG Case Records

Someone must be designated to manage the SG/NRSG case record, monitor payments, and complete the required annual reviews. The case record/SHINES must contain the following:

1. The signed Application/Agreement and all renewal forms;
2. The non-reunification and permanent guardianship order;
3. Notification to discontinue TANF and/or transfer child's income (SSI, child support to the new custodian/guardian);
4. Documentation of six and 12 month renewals including required home visits with separate interviews with the caregiver and children;
5. Copies of any subsidy suspension/termination notifications.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Suggested Format for Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Assessment
ERR Application and Agreement Form](#)

