

# Colorado Kinship Care Resource Guide



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this guide is to provide information to you, Colorado kinship caregivers - grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbors, and friends - who have stepped forward to raise children whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them.

There are different ways in Colorado that you may take care of children. 1) An *informal agreement* between you and your kin regarding who will provide basic care for the child. No agencies are involved. 2) You, the kinship caregivers, have *legal custody* of the child. 3) You obtain *guardianship* of the child. 4) With or without guardianship, you receive services for a relative child through TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). 5) Your county *Department of Human Services has legal custody* of the child and you become a *Certified Kinship Care Foster Home*.

The difficulty in obtaining supportive services is often your biggest problem as a kinship caregiver. Obtaining public assistance to buy food and clothing, obtaining medical care or mental health services, and enrolling a child under your care in school, are typical examples.

You and the children you raise may also experience emotional stress in addition to economic problems. The children may have emotional or health problems resulting from exposure to drugs before birth and/or child abuse/neglect from parents. These situations can cause such difficulties as low birth weight, learning disabilities, or behavioral problems. Regardless of the circumstances that have made these arrangements necessary, all of you share the same need for resources, information, and community support.

This Resource Guide can help you by providing local and statewide information about organizations and programs that can serve your needs as a kinship caregiver. PART I of this Resource Guide provides answers to questions regarding the basics of public benefits, legal options, foster care, adoption, educational access, medical and mental health services, childcare, interacting with incarcerated parents, and support groups. PART II of this Resource Guide provides information about whom you can call or where you can go for help.

**Although information is power, there is nothing more powerful than your commitment to the children you are raising. We honor you for nurturing and embracing such a commitment.**

## PART ONE

### THE BASICS OF PUBLIC BENEFITS

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is responsible for administering federal benefits programs such as TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), Food Stamps, and Medicaid. Your county DHS office (also called social services) manages and determines eligibility for these programs plus childcare and energy (utilities) assistance. Other programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC), and the Colorado Children's Health Plan have different application processes, which will be described below.

- **What is TANF? Who can get it?** Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF, is the welfare reform program that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and provides monthly cash benefits to eligible low-income families with children. In order to be eligible for TANF, kinship caregivers must be related by blood or marriage (within the 5<sup>th</sup> degree of relationship) to the child(ren) in their "care and control." You may be asked to prove your relationship by providing birth certificates, and if necessary, marriage certificates. In complex family situations, you may need to use other legal proof to establish your relationship to the children.

There are two ways that kinship caregivers can receive TANF.

1. *Child only* benefits: You can receive money for the child(ren) in your care, but not for yourself. Your county DHS does not take into account any of your income or assets, and the work requirements or time limits of welfare reform will not impact you. The child remains eligible until he turns 18 years of age or leaves your home. If the child receives income (like Social Security benefits from a deceased parent) it would affect his/her eligibility or the amount of a *child only* TANF grant. Here is an **example**. Karen's mother died and she receives Social Security based on her mother's death benefits. If the monthly amount of her Social Security payment is small enough, Karen may still be eligible to receive a small TANF grant. But, if her monthly Social Security amount were higher than the TANF guidelines for eligibility, Karen would not be able to receive money from TANF. The county worker would advise you if Karen were still able to get Medicaid.
2. *Caregiver and child benefits*. The second way you could receive TANF is if *you become part of the grant*. Your county DHS worker will look at your income and assets to determine if you and the child(ren) are eligible for TANF. You will receive more money because the grant will be for both you and the child(ren). The welfare reform work requirements and time limits will apply to you, and training opportunities may be available. You will be required to work or look for work, and the time period you can receive benefits will be limited to 60 months (5 years) total. Since there may be exceptions to these rules, talk to your county DHS worker to learn more about them. Under certain circumstances, your family may also be eligible for supportive services and diversion grants, but because each of the 63 counties in Colorado developed their own TANF plan, you will need to talk with

your own county worker to find out what is available to you. If a child receives SSI (Supplemental Security Income) because of mental or physical disability, that child would not be included in the family's TANF grant. Here's another example. A child, named Bill, has cerebral palsy and meets the income guidelines so that he can receive SSI. He is automatically eligible for Medicaid because of his disability. If Bill is in kinship care with other brothers or sisters, he is not going to be included in the TANF grant for his siblings.

- **Besides the income and resources criteria, are there other conditions for receiving TANF?** Yes.
  1. Children must be immunized and verification must be provided. You can get this verification from the child's medical records, the child's doctor, or the health department where he/she was immunized.
  2. In order for children 16 to 18 years of age to receive TANF benefits, they must attend school full-time or be in an approved training program, which can be clarified by your county DHS worker.
  3. You must cooperate with your county's Child Support Enforcement Unit in locating both the father and mother of the children receiving TANF. The Child Support Enforcement Unit's attorney will petition the court to order those parents to pay child support back to the state. Advise the worker if there is good cause not to contact the parents, such as abuse and domestic violence issues that would put you or the child at risk.
  
- **Where do I apply for TANF?** You can apply at your county Department of Human Services (sometimes called social services). You do not need an appointment in order to pick up an application. When you pick up the application, ask about setting up an appointment with a worker who will be assigned to assist you with the application process. The amount of time you wait for an appointment will vary from one county to another. Be sure you obtain that person's name and the office phone number in case you later have questions or need to change your appointment. It is important that you apply as soon as possible, because if you are eligible for TANF, you will be entitled to benefits from the date you submit your application.
  
- **What should I bring with me when I apply for TANF?** Bring as much information as you can, because the more you can tell them, the faster your application can be processed. Your worker may assist you in getting necessary information you may have trouble finding, e.g., the child's birth certificate.

If you are applying for a *child only* grant, you may need the following information:

1. A photo I.D., such as a driver's license;
2. A rent receipt, house payment book, or lease with the landlord's name and phone number in order to verify your current address as a resident in the county;
3. A birth certificate for each child showing parent's name and the date and place of birth, which helps verify your relationship to the child;
4. Marriage certificates if applicable;

5. Social Security cards for the children if you have them. If you have only the numbers and not the cards, bring those with you;
6. A visa, green card, or immigration papers if you (or anyone requesting TANF) are not a US citizen;
7. A statement from your baby sitter showing his/her name and address, the amount paid, and how often it is paid. This may be helpful in obtaining childcare benefits.

*If you want to be included in the assistance grant, you must additionally bring the following information to verify your income and resources:*

8. Bank book and recent bank statements;
  9. Pay stubs covering a period of one month, if you have a job;
  10. Information on stocks and bonds, if you own any;
- **What happens after I apply?** Your county Department of Human Services (DHS) must decide if you are eligible for any kind of TANF within 45 days after you apply. You will receive a letter stating whether you are eligible or not for benefits. You should be informed of the amount of money and when you may expect to receive it. If the county DHS has not reached a decision within 45 days, you have a right to request a *fair hearing* before a *hearing examiner*. It is best to put your request in writing to your county DHS worker or his/her supervisor and keep a copy for yourself. There is a hearing process available to you if you disagree with the eligibility decision made by the county DHS. Your appeal rights are explained in Staff Manual 3.830-24 – 3.850.3, which you can see at your county DHS. If during this process, you are uncomfortable with the responsiveness of the county DHS staff, you may ask to speak to a supervisor.
  - **What are my rights and obligations if I receive TANF?**
    1. Your county DHS may require you to submit a Monthly Status Report (MSR) stating your income and resources and the number of people in your family. The MSR will also apply if you are receiving child only benefits. If you do not submit this report by the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the month, your benefits may be terminated.
    2. You will have to enter into an Individual Responsibility Contract (IRC) with your county DHS. Your worker will explain it to you.
    3. As stated earlier, DHS will ask you to cooperate in finding the child's parents and establishing a child support order, but you have the right to advise the caseworker if there are circumstances that would put you or the child in danger if DHS contacted the child's parent.
    4. Once you are receiving TANF, DHS must notify you 10 days in advance if your payment will be reduced or terminated, unless the decrease or discontinuance is because of information from your MSR. You have the right to know why your benefits are being reduced or terminated. If you are not notified 10 days in advance, or if you disagree with the change, you have the right to a fair hearing as described above. If at all possible, try to request a hearing through the county DHS worker or supervisor before the effective date of the change or within 10 days after you receive a notice of any change.



- What are food stamps?** Food stamps have traditionally been coupons, which you can use instead of cash to buy food at the grocery store. Instead of receiving coupons in the mail, almost all clients now access their benefits through a card called an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card, which works like a bankcard. The county DHS will train you on how to use the card and give you a list of sites and stores where you can use your card. In general, all members of an eligible household (all the people who live together) who are U.S. citizens may get food stamps. You do not need to have custody of the children in your home for them to be included in your application. DHS determines eligibility by looking at the gross income and available assets for all people in the household. If every member of the household gets TANF or SSI payments, the household automatically meets the eligibility criteria for food stamps. Welfare reform has made it extremely difficult for non-citizens to receive food stamps because of very complicated rules about which types of legal immigrants can receive them. Applications for food stamps are generally available at your county DHS office. In the Denver metro area, you may call the Denver County DHS office to learn of a food stamp office nearer to you. You will need the same information as listed above in the section on TANF. The fair hearing process applies in the same way as described above.
- What is LEAP?** LEAP (Low-income Energy Assistance Program) is a federally funded program, which provides cash assistance to help needy individuals meet the costs of winter home heating. The Crisis Intervention Program, a component of LEAP, provides assistance with furnace repair/replacement or the replacement of broken windows. Applications are taken at your county DHS office each year between November 1<sup>st</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup>. A summer Crisis Intervention Program (May – October) for furnace repair/replacement is also available for households who were approved for LEAP benefits in the prior LEAP season. Contact your county DHS for information regarding applications and eligibility, or for additional information contact Colorado’s state LEAP office (See Part II).
- What is WIC?** The Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) provides food assistance to low income pregnant women who do not have children, low income women with infants and children under the age of five who are nutritionally at risk, and children in out of home care whose birth family is eligible. Participants receive vouchers, which can be used at local supermarkets to purchase nutritious foods such as milk, milk products, eggs, juice, infant formula, beans, peanut butter, and cereal. Generally, both income and health determine eligibility. To apply for WIC as a kinship caregiver, you must make an appointment at the nearest participating WIC medical center or health clinic. You may ask your county DHS worker for the nearest location or call the public health department listed in the telephone book. The application process includes an intake interview with you and brief medical examination of the child(ren). This information will determine if your child is nutritionally at risk. Applications are usually approved the same day while you wait.
- What should I bring to apply for WIC?** As a kinship caregiver applying for only the child, you will need proof of address, the child’s birth certificate, and the child. It would

also be advisable to take legal authorization to seek medical treatment for the child in your care (e.g., a letter from your county DHS office or a medical Power of Attorney).

- **What is Medicaid?** Medicaid is a medical services program run by DHS. If you (or the child in your care) are eligible and receive medical services, your doctor or hospital sends the medical bill directly to Medicaid instead of to you. Medicaid then pays this bill for the care you or the child received. Any member of the household who is eligible for Medicaid will receive a Medicaid card with a Medicaid number, which must be presented to your doctor, hospital, or pharmacist each time you receive services from them.

As a general rule, you and/or the children are eligible for Medicaid if:

1. You and/or the children receive TANF;
2. You and/or the children would have been eligible for AFDC under the rules before welfare reform was passed;
3. You and/or the child receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income for disabilities)  
See the section later on SSI.

You or the children may be eligible for Medicaid if any of the following situations apply:

1. One of you has a mental or physical disability;
2. One of you is pregnant and eligible under income guidelines;
3. You have been receiving a TANF grant, but your grant was just terminated because your income level increased enough to make you ineligible. You can continue to receive Medicaid for a transition period, but will need to check with your county DHS worker for the length of time.
4. Your kinship children were covered by Medicaid while in out-of-home care and may continue to be eligible when reunited with their families, placed in kinship care, or adopted. Check with the county DHS caseworker to see if your kinship child is eligible for ongoing services or the Children's Health Insurance Program (In Colorado CCHP, see below).

- **What is EPSDT?** Children who receive Medicaid are encouraged to take part in a program called Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment or EPSDT. This program provides special comprehensive services for children including medical exams, vision and hearing tests, dental care, immunizations, lead poisoning screening, mental health services, and transportation to and from medical appointments. For an EPSDT case manager, call your local Public Health Department or Nursing Service listed in the county section of the phone book. If something your child needs is denied, it is often because a strong enough case for its medical necessity was not made. If this happens, contact the Managed Care Ombudsperson for EPSDT (See Part II) or the Medicaid customer service department (See Part II).
- **What are CCHP and CCHP+?** An earlier version for the Colorado Child Health Plan, CCHP, covered only outpatient services, like doctor visits, and out patient hospital services. After March 15, 1998, children who applied for the Colorado Child Health Plan became qualified for CHP+. CHP+ is a full-coverage health plan that includes all

the benefits covered by CCHP, plus inpatient hospital care, mental health care, prescriptions, glasses and hearing aids, and outpatient substance abuse treatment. CCHP members can take action by contacting their CCHP worker to upgrade to CHP+ and receive the full benefits of CHP+. This plan requires premium payments (like insurance), but they are adjusted based on annual income and family size. Those children who are eligible include individuals 18 years and under, who are **not** eligible for Medicaid and are living with a financially qualified family. You will need to call the information number listed in Part II to learn about eligibility. Applicants must be permanent U.S. citizens, who entered the U.S. before 8/22/96, and reside in Colorado. Applications are available at your local health department, social services office, doctor's office, or school. For telephone information, see Part II.

- **What is SSI?** Supplemental Security Income is a program that provides monthly cash assistance to children and adults who have mental and/or physical disabilities. An application can be made with the Social Security Administration, listed in the telephone book under U. S. Government. In order to receive SSI, you or the child for whom you care must prove that you are disabled and financially needy. The following items should be taken to the appointment:
  1. Social Security number for anyone who is applying for SSI;
  2. Any information about the child's disability, including medical records from the doctor, the court ordered treatment plan from your county DHS (if there is one) any psychological assessments or mental health records from the professional who saw the child, and any special education plan from the child's school;
  3. A birth certificate or proof of citizenship (naturalization papers), visa, green card, or immigration papers;
  4. Information about income and resources if you are applying for yourself. Any individual who receives SSI will be eligible to receive Medicaid coverage. If you want more information, are dissatisfied with the process, or disagree with the outcome, there is a toll free hotline. See Part II.
  
- **What if my child has other special needs?** Children with the following symptoms and behaviors may need to have an expert evaluate them for special services:
  1. Falling behind in school or frequently in trouble in school;
  2. Destructive to him/herself, others, animals or the environment;
  3. Has few or no friends;
  4. Lies frequently and for no apparent reason;
  5. Does not seem to see or hear well and does not process information well;
  6. Is not meeting developmental milestones;
  7. Rarely makes eye contact and does not like to be touched (may or may not be a cultural issue for a child);
  8. Is abusing/using alcohol or drugs;
  9. Seems to feel no remorse;
  10. Has inappropriate sexual behavior.

Some sources for help are:

1. Child Find (preschool), which is affiliated with the public schools and free of charge;

2. EPSDT (see earlier section);
3. Early Childhood Connections (See Part II);
4. Handicapped Children's Programs, which you can find locally by asking your county DHS worker;
5. CORE Services, such as day treatment, family therapy, wrap around services and others, may be available through your county DHS;
6. Mental Health Services, both public and private.

## **FINDING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE LEGAL MAZE**

For kinship caregivers, the legal process can be emotional, stressful, time-consuming, and expensive. On the other hand, having a legal basis for your authority to care for the child can provide many benefits. Unless you, kinship caregivers, establish a legal relationship with the children under your care, you may find that the Department of Human Services, district or juvenile courts, and even your own families do not recognize your decision-making authority. Legal arrangements discussed here include legal custody, guardianship, power of attorney, foster care, visitation, and adoption. This section also explains how you may obtain child support payments for the children you are raising, and it briefly discusses your legal options when a child's parent has threatened to become dangerous.

- **What is legal custody?** According to the Colorado Children's Code, "legal custody" means the right to the care, custody, and control of a child; the duty to provide food, clothing, shelter, ordinary medical care, education, and discipline for a child; and in an emergency, to authorize surgery or other extraordinary care. Legal custody may be taken from a parent only by court action in district court. Do not confuse *legal custody* with *physical custody*, which refers to a more informal situation in which a caregiver is raising a child in her home without an official award of legal authority by the court. Although you can petition on your own, it is advisable to seek the aid of an attorney if you wish to petition for legal custody, because the legal process has become quite complicated. Unfortunately, such legal assistance is not typically available through the county DHS, but you may contact Legal Assistance, which has low-income eligibility requirements. (see Part II)
- **What is guardianship?** According to the Colorado Children's Code, "guardianship of the person" means the duty and authority vested by court action to make major decisions affecting a child, including, but not limited to:
  1. The authority to consent to marriage, to enlistment in the armed forces, and to medical or surgical treatment;
  2. The authority to represent a child in legal actions and to make other decisions of substantial legal significance concerning the child;
  3. The authority to consent to the adoption of a child (only if the court order explicitly provides this authority) when the parent-child legal relationship has been terminated by judicial decree;
  4. The rights and responsibilities of legal custody when legal custody has not been vested in another person, agency, or institution.

Guardianship may be awarded to you, a kinship caregiver, by a judge within the course of a Dependency and Neglect case involving your county DHS child protective services. (Dependency and Neglect refers to a judicial process that determines whether or not a child has been abused/neglected.) It is important for kinship caregivers to know that if they have permanent legal guardianship, they cannot receive foster care payments. However, the child in their care may still qualify for *child only* TANF benefits. Another way guardianship may be awarded to you is in probate court if the child's parents have died or become incapacitated.

- **If I have a notarized letter from the child's parents giving me authority to raise the child, is that considered legal custody?** No. The only way to establish a legal relationship with a child under your care is to go to court and get the approval of a judge. However, in Colorado, a parent may delegate to you his/her powers related to the care and decision making responsibility for the child. You, the child's parent, or an attorney can write up a document called a **Power of Attorney**, which specifically outlines what powers you may have regarding medical or legal decisions for a child. This document is only temporary and may be changed or ended at any time. The Power of Attorney is not filed with the court nor approved by a judge, but it must be signed/notarized by the parent. This kind of permission would be used, for example, if a parent left a child with you for a short period of time to go out of town and intended to return soon.
- **Do I need the consent of the child's parents to get legal custody?** Not necessarily. Before a relationship can be legally established, the child's parents have to be given a reasonable opportunity to respond to or oppose the new legal relationship that you, the kinship caregiver, are proposing to the court. In cases where the birth parents of the child are unavailable for long periods of time, the court may have the power to "transfer" a child's legal custody without the parents' consent. Such a case is generally called a *default custody* case, since legal action is taken through the inaction of the parents. A *contested custody* case results when a parent challenges a caregiver's request for legal custody. When a parent agrees to give the kinship caregiver legal custody, it is called a *consent custody* case. It would be wise to consult an attorney if you become involved in seeking legal custody of the child in your care.
- **What does permanent custody refer to?** When a court maintains jurisdiction in a Dependency and Neglect case involving a child, and there is no other pending child custody action (divorce) or action for the allocation of parental responsibilities (custody and visitation), the court may enter an order of permanent custody to a parent, or person other than a parent, with whom the child lives the majority of the time.
- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of legal custody?** Legal custody gives you legal authority to obtain certain benefits and services for the child under your care. It allows you to make basic decisions about how the child will be raised, and enables you to protect the child from potentially abusive parents or dangerous situations. Legal custody also offers a flexible arrangement because it can be changed if the kinship caregiver is no longer able to raise the child because of health or financial problems or if the child's parent stabilizes and can resume safe parenting. Legal custody is more

difficult to dissolve than guardianship. Legal custody may be too flexible if the parents of the child are irresponsible and the caregiver wants a permanent commitment for raising the child. There is always the risk that a parent may convince the court to change the custody arrangement at a later time. Getting legal custody can be expensive and take a long time, especially if one of the child's parents is adversarial or missing. If everyone is in agreement, however, the costs and time involved may be reduced.

- **Do I have to make children in my custody visit their parents?** Yes, if the court has ordered a regular visitation schedule. When the legal custody of a child is awarded to someone other than his parents, the law still allows the child his right to visitation, unless there is a specific court order prohibiting visitation. If there is conflict over visitation, the court may require that you and the child's parents go through a mediation process to work out a visitation schedule. If the court orders a regular visitation schedule, and you do not comply, then your authority may be jeopardized by being held in violation of court orders. If you, the legal custodian, suspect his parents are mistreating the child during visits, you should call your county DHS office and talk with a child protective services caseworker. You will need to involve this agency because it can investigate the situation and, if necessary, protect the child with a modified court order. It is up to the judge to decide whether visitation is in the best interest of a child. If the children's custody resides with the county DHS, the kinship caregivers will need to comply with the visitation agreement in the court ordered family treatment plan. Kinship caregivers need to understand the effects of visitation on the child's emotions and behaviors. It is considered normal for grief and loss issues to recur before and/or after each visit, and children may act angry or sad. Caregivers may want help from caseworkers or therapists if a parent misses an anticipated visit, because the child's loss and abandonment issues will increase. When a family's plan moves toward reunification, the frequency and duration of visits will increase to facilitate a child's move back home.
- **Are kinship caregivers able to receive child support?** Child support is available to any relative or non-relative who has physical custody and is caring full-time for a child. The amount of child support, which the child's parents will be ordered to pay to the caregiver, depends on both the parents' ability to pay and the needs of the child. You may apply for child support with the Child Support Enforcement Unit at your county DHS office. An attorney for the agency will file a petition on your behalf to establish child support obligations. If you, the caregiver, are already receiving public assistance for the child, child support will be paid directly to the State of Colorado.
- **What happens if the child's parents do not pay the ordered amount?** A proceeding called a *contempt hearing* will be held in which the parents must explain why they have not paid the required amount of child support.
- **If the parent of the child I am raising has threatened to hurt me, what can I do?** If you feel you or the child are in immediate danger, call the police. If the child is in the custody of your county DHS, call your caseworker immediately. If DHS is not

involved, you can and should apply for legal protection, such as a restraining order, as soon as possible.

## **THE LEGAL SYSTEM WHEN THE CHILD IS IN FOSTER CARE**

**What is Foster Care?** Foster Care is a program in the state of Colorado which:

- 1) May in very limited circumstances provide a *temporary* voluntary placement by a child's parents/guardian through the county DHS;
- 2) May be accessed as a voluntary process or as part of a dependency and neglect action (see below) through Program Area 4 (when a child's behavior is beyond the control of parents and/or at risk of harming him/herself or the community);
- 3) May provide a *temporary* placement for children who have been found by a court to be "dependent and/or neglected" and consequently, cannot live safely with their birth parents or legal guardians. Generally, abuse and neglect can include physical harm, sexual abuse, emotional or verbal abuse, abandonment of a child, educational or medical neglect, and inadequate food, clothing, shelter, or supervision.

Foster care is part of the child welfare system whose purpose is to help preserve the family, assure the safety of children, and facilitate permanency for children. Foster parents receive monthly stipends as reimbursement for the care of the foster children, who are generally covered by Medicaid for medical services. Usually, a child's involvement in the foster care system begins with a call to Child Protective Services, within the county DHS, to report that the child has been abused, neglected, or abandoned by her/his parents or guardian. There must be an investigation by the county DHS to assess and evaluate whether the claims of abuse/neglect are substantiated, and whether the child should be removed from the home. Only a court can declare that a child is "dependent and/or neglected," and this decision can be made only after a judge has had the opportunity to evaluate all the relevant evidence of the investigation. If the judge finds that the child cannot remain safely at home, he will give legal custody of the child to the county DHS. When DHS has legal custody of the child, the preference for placement is first with grandparents, then other relatives, and finally other forms of out of home care. If you want to be a foster parent for your kinship child, you must be certified by the county DHS. Sometimes the court awards custody directly to kinship caregivers.

- **What is the court process:** Children who are in foster care (in the custody of the county DHS due to abuse/neglect or imminent danger) will be involved in a dependency civil court proceeding in district court, or in Denver County, juvenile court. Children under the age of six are provided expedited procedures through the court process to insure their developmental needs for permanency are met.

A **temporary custody hearing** must be held within 48 to 72 hours of the child's placement for the court to decide if the child will remain in placement on a temporary basis. The investigating caseworker presents the facts of the case and the basis for placement of the child. The judge determines whether or not the child should remain in

out-of-home care, checking to see if the county DHS provided “reasonable efforts” to maintain the child in the parental home. If the judge decides that the child should not remain in placement, the child will be returned to the parents’ home that same day. If the child remains in placement and the case is to continue, the judge will advise the birth parents that they may retain an attorney, or if they cannot afford one, the court can appoint an attorney. The court will also order the parent to identify relatives who would be suitable to care for the child. The child is appointed a *guardian-ad-litem* (G.A.L.), who is an attorney representing the best interests of the child. It is part of the G.A.L.’s job to meet with the child, who is his client. You have a right to know who the G.A.L. is and to develop a relationship with him/her. The attorney representing your county DHS is ordered to then file a Dependency and Neglect (D&N) petition on behalf of the child. This is the legal action that will initiate the following process.

At the **adjudication**, the court makes a determination whether or not the child is truly “dependent and neglected.” The **adjudicatory hearing** must be held within 60 days from when the D&N petition is filed, if the child is under 6 years of age. If the child is 6 years and older, the court has up to 90 days to adjudicate. If the court finds the child to be “dependent and neglected,” the child remains in the legal custody of the county DHS and stays in placement. If not, the child is returned home the same day.

It is at the **dispositional hearing** that a formal family service plan (treatment plan) is submitted to the court by the county DHS caseworker. The dispositional hearing must be held within 45 days of adjudication. If a child is under age 6, the hearing must be held within 30 days of adjudication. If it is possible, the adjudication and dispositional hearings are to be held at the same time. You, the kinship caregiver, as a part of the treatment team, should have some input and knowledge regarding the treatment plan, particularly the logistics of visitation between the parent and child and the requirements for any special needs the child may have. An example would be transportation to and from medical or mental health appointments. Any protective orders, such as restraining orders, which were filed earlier, may be changed at this time if appropriate. The treatment plan for the family must be reasonable and developed so the parent can learn to provide adequate parenting to the child within a reasonable time, and it must relate to the needs of the child. If you have had the child in care for more than three months, you may intervene (which means you can be heard by the court) as a matter of right at this time with or without an attorney. You may write a letter to the judge, but it may be advisable that you hire an attorney who can advise and intervene for you. You would intervene if you believe you have pertinent information to share that is not being reported to the court regarding the best interest of the child. If the court finds that no appropriate treatment plan can be devised for a particular parent based on abandonment of the child, significant abuse, or long-term, severe neglect, immediate permanency (including termination of parental rights) can then take place.

The court may also decide that it is appropriate for the county DHS to place a child with a foster family, kinship family or a legal guardian, who could care for the child on a permanent basis, if needed. At the same time, the county DHS must continue to make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify the family through a treatment plan. This



process is called concurrent case planning. Such procedures generally happen if the child is under 6 years of age, but it also occurs for older children if the prognosis for successful reunification with birth parents is poor.

At the **court review hearing**, the judge determines if the parents are in compliance with the treatment plan, if “reasonable efforts” are being made by the county DHS to reunite the family, and whether there are any other matters that relate to the best interest of the child. A court review hearing must be held within 90 days of the dispositional hearing for any children who are placed out of the home, and every six months thereafter.

At the **permanency hearing**, the court must determine whether the original placement goal (reunification) for the child continues to be appropriate and determine whether “reasonable efforts” to find a safe and permanent home for the child have been made. If the child remains in out-of-home placement, the court must hold a permanency hearing no later than 12 months after the child is considered to have entered foster care. If the child is under the age of 6 years, the permanency hearing must be held no later than 3 months after the decree of disposition, which should be 6 months from the date the child was placed in foster care. If the court has previously made a determination that no appropriate treatment plan should be developed, the permanency hearing must take place within 30 days of disposition. If, based on the parents’ noncompliance with the treatment plan, the court decides that the child cannot be returned to the parents within 6 months, the court must enter an order determining the future status of the child. This order must include information regarding the placement goal for the child that relates to whether the child will be:

1. Returned to the parents;
2. Referred for legal custody or guardianship proceedings with relative, kin, or other person;
3. Placed for adoption with relative, kin, or other person;
4. Other planned permanent living arrangement.

If the child cannot be returned home, the court may order the county DHS to show cause why it should not file a motion to terminate the parent-child legal relationship. Possible causes include:

1. The parents have maintained regular consistent contact with the child, and it is not in the best interest of the child to discontinue the relationship.
2. The child is 12 years of age or older, objects to termination, and will not consent to adoption.
3. The child’s foster parents are unable to adopt due to exceptional circumstances but are willing to provide a permanent home for the child, and removal of the child from that home would be detrimental to the child.
4. The criteria of the termination statute have not yet been met.
5. A compelling reason is identified why it is not in the child’s best interest to terminate the parent-child legal relationship.

If the county DHS has none of these reasons for not filing a motion to terminate the parent-child legal relationship, they will then file such a motion, and the judge will set the date for a trial to hear the case.

Once the court terminates the parent-child legal relationship, the birth parents have 45 days to appeal. If the parents' attorney files an appeal, the adoptive parents must wait until the appeal process is concluded before they can file a motion to adopt. Refer to the section on adoption.

- **What is the Indian Child Welfare Act?** This Act was created by Congress to enable the sovereign Indian Nations of the United States to have jurisdiction over Native American children who have membership or eligibility for membership in their Nation. Tribes with jurisdiction or potential jurisdiction are to be contacted to determine whether or not the tribal court wishes to take jurisdiction over the life of the Native American child who is the subject of a Dependency and Neglect action in Colorado. It requires different rules of evidence in Dependency and Neglect proceedings. Colorado caseworkers, county attorneys, *guardian-ad-litem*s, and district courts have a legal obligation to follow the Indian Child Welfare Act procedures. No one, including parents and kin, has the authority to decide to ignore the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) requirements.
- **Can relatives be certified as foster parents?** Yes, if the child is in the legal custody of the county DHS. It is generally believed that placement with relatives helps children feel more secure and less separated from their families and communities. County DHS caseworkers are required to make efforts to locate available kin with whom a child could be placed, but family assessments must be conducted to determine if the placement would be appropriate and safe. In order to become certified as foster parents, relative caregivers must comply with the same requirements as other foster parents. They are required to participate in foster parent training as a part of this certification process.
- **What are my rights as a foster parent?** Once a child is court ordered into foster care placement at the temporary custody hearing, the county DHS maintains legal custody. Colorado statute now requires the court to advise birth parents that relatives may be considered as placement resources and requires the parents to identify suitable relatives. Colorado law also stipulates whom to consider in this order: grandparents, other relatives, certified foster families, and residential childcare facilities. The county social worker and the *guardian-ad-litem* will have regular involvement with the child without the relatives being present. The court will order a treatment plan that includes visitation with which the relative caregiver must comply. The court must approve taking the child on trips out of state, as well as major medical treatment procedures. Kinship foster parents are intended to be part of a treatment team for the child, involving the DHS caseworker, the child's therapist, teacher, and other professions. Kinship foster parents may act as advocates for the child's best interest both with the treatment team and the court. As a certified foster parent, the relative caregiver will receive a monthly stipend to support the care of the child. There is a base rate, but if the child has special needs or other special considerations, it may be increased. The child in foster care is usually

provided with Medicaid to cover medical, dental, and mental health needs. Recreation activities and mentoring programs may also be available for the child through the county DHS.

- **Confidentiality.** Kinship foster parents need to know that the same laws of confidentiality that govern caseworkers, attorneys, and foster parents apply to them. You are limited in what information you can share, even with other family members, neighbors and friends, about the child or that child’s family unless you receive permission from DHS, who has custody of the child. You may share information about the child’s needs and/or problematic behavior with the school if the county DHS agrees. Ask the child’s caseworker to provide this permission for you in writing.
  
- **What if I run into barriers in working with the child welfare system?** Difficulties such as working with the flow of information, understanding and coordinating with caseworkers around the treatment plan, and gaining support under stressful circumstances may arise. Generally, it is recommended that kinship caregivers work with caseworkers to resolve these difficulties. But if you meet barriers in working with the child’s caseworker, you have a right to “move up the ladder,” which means talking with the caseworker’s supervisor, moving to the administrator, and if need be, asking to speak with the director. Sometimes kinship caregivers have gained assistance by talking with the child’s *guardian-ad-litem* (G.A.L.). The G.A.L. is responsible for the child’s best interest and may have other avenues you can pursue in obtaining needed services for the child.
  
- **What is the process called Family Group Decision Making?** Whether you or the county DHS has custody, there is a process by which both the parents and relatives can help in making future plans for the best interest of the child. The procedures and name of the process may vary from one county to another, but generally it involves a large meeting of family members, friends (sometimes), and other supportive people. First, the professionals involved with the child talk with the family about safety concerns, and they provide information about available resources. Next, the family usually meets without the professionals and develops a plan to provide support that helps the parents and child(ren) to successfully complete a treatment plan. They may develop a plan for where the child lives temporarily or permanently. Procedures to insure the safety of all involved are followed. The plan is then presented to the court for approval.
  
- **What happens if a child needs to be placed in another state?**  
Out-of-state placement of children must comply with the **Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC)**. The purpose is to insure that the placement be made in a timely and safe manner. The sending and receiving state authorities must have enough background information to make a decision for the proposed placement, to arrange needed services for the child, and to designate where planning, financial, and jurisdictional responsibilities lie. The Interstate Compact shall be followed when:
  1. A child is in the custody of a county department or under the jurisdiction of a court in one state and is under consideration for placement with a parent, relatives, non-

- relatives, foster parents, adoptive parents, or into residential or group care in another state;
2. An adjudicated delinquent is ordered by court into a non-public institution out-of-state;
  3. A child is being considered for placement out-of-state by parents or legal guardians into facilities that are not designated as medical or educational organizations.
- Your county DHS can provide you with information about the Interstate Compact.

## **ADOPTION**

- **What is adoption?** Unlike legal custody and guardianship, adoption is a legal process in the court by which all parental rights are permanently transferred to adoptive parents. In order for kinship caregivers to adopt a child in their care, the parent must either have relinquished parental rights and consented to the adoption, or the parent-child legal relationship must have been terminated by the court. A child who is twelve years of age or older must consent to an adoption before a judge approves it.
- **What do I do if I want to adopt the child I am raising?** Before any adoption can be granted, the birth parents' rights must have been relinquished or terminated. Upon finalization of an adoption, the adoptive parents assume all legal rights and responsibilities with regard to the child. The way you approach adoption depends on your kinship care child's legal situation.
  1. If you have custody of a relative child and have never been involved in a Dependency & Neglect proceeding with a DHS agency, the Colorado Children's Code enables you to adopt your kin in an easier and quicker way. You must have evidence that your relative child has been in your physical custody for the past full year, and the child's parents must have abandoned or failed to support him/her for at least one year. You may or may not be required to have a home assessment completed. You may want to consult an attorney, but you have the option of completing the paperwork yourself, and the court provides packets for this purpose. Once you have "filed a petition to adopt" (turned in your paperwork to the court), the court will follow the steps for the required procedure, which will include the judge's action to terminate the birth parents and child's legal relationship. You must also contact the county DHS to ask if the child qualifies for an adoption subsidy.
  2. If you have been given guardianship or legal custody of your relative child by a judge following a Dependency & Neglect proceeding when the parent-child legal relationship was terminated, you follow a different procedure. In this case, the county DHS has been granted permission from the court to consent to an adoption for your child. You must go through that county DHS to get their consent to adopt, and the agency will guide the procedure. You may negotiate with them for an adoption subsidy (see below). The county DHS may also determine if you or the child is eligible for any other forms of financial assistance.
  3. If your relative child is in the custody of a county DHS and the parent-child legal relationship was terminated, a family assessment must be completed by a qualified individual who works for the county DHS or a licensed child placement agency

approved to do adoptions. This person submits a report to the court scheduled for the judge to consider the Petition for Adoption. If the judge is satisfied that the adoption is in the best interest of the child, he/she will grant the adoption. You may want the help of an attorney who practices family law to help you through the process.

When the county DHS is involved, there are **county requirements for adoption** that kinship caregivers need to know. If the child is already legally available and placed in an adoptive home, the county DHS needs to provide the following documents or reports to the caregivers: 1) A consent form for out-of-state travel and medical care; 2) The Adoption Placement Agreement; 3) An information sharing report about the child's background, medical history, and any special needs so that your family can anticipate and plan for any potential problems; 4) Information regarding subsidized adoption. For details about these requirements, contact your county DHS or the State Department of Human Services Adoption Unit. (See Part II.)

- **Is there financial help available to support the child once I adopt him/her?** Families adopting children with special needs who meet eligibility requirements may be entitled to adoption assistance. Colorado defines special needs for the adoption subsidy as:
  1. The child has a physical disability.
  2. The child is developmentally disabled.
  3. The child has an emotional disturbance.
  4. There are hereditary factors that put the child at risk which are documented by a physician or psychologist.
  5. The child is considered a high-risk infant. (e.g. HIV positive or fetal alcohol syndrome.)
  6. The child has other barriers that may inhibit adoption.

These barriers may include, but are not limited to, a healthy child over the age of 7 and a child who is a member of a sibling group that must be placed together in an adoptive home. The county DHS will need to assess and document any special needs of the adoptive child. An adoption subsidy must be negotiated, and an agreement signed with the county DHS that has legal custody of the child before the adoption is finalized. When the child is not in the legal custody of a county DHS, additional steps must be used to determine if the child is eligible for adoption assistance. Families should contact their county DHS adoption unit for more information. Private agencies, or the DHS agency in the adoptive family's county of residency, may provide ongoing services (e.g. day treatment, family therapy) to help preserve the placement. Community services may also be helpful.

Adoption assistance may include Medicaid, medical assistance, a dormant subsidy (becomes activated later when needed), or a payment for a long or short-term period of time to partially help cover the cost of providing for the special needs. Families adopting children with special needs may also be reimbursed for legal fees, court costs, expenses related to transportation during the placement process, physical exams, and the

adoptive home study. A county DHS adoption staff person can provide information to you about the process of reimbursement for these costs.

The county DHS will base the adoption subsidy on the child's documented special needs, the adoptive family's circumstances, and the need to purchase services that are not available free of charge in the community. Other parameters involved in an adoption subsidy include the following:

1. The adoption caseworker must tell an adoptive family about the availability of an adoption subsidy.
2. The adoptive family's income shall not be used in determining an adoptive child's eligibility for subsidy.
3. Private insurance benefits for which the adoptive child is eligible must be used before Medicaid from the adoption subsidy is used.
4. The adoption assistance payment may be used at the adoptive parents' discretion to meet a variety of needs for the child.
5. After the adoption is finalized, the county DHS will maintain yearly contact to review the need for the adoption subsidy and renew it. This process is typically done by mail.
6. When this subsidy is reviewed and renewed annually, the family has the opportunity to update the county DHS about the changes, challenges or successes of the child and family.
7. Subsidy can continue until the child reaches the age of 18, but if he/she has a physical or mental disability, it can continue until he/she reaches age 21.
8. If the child is over age 18 and attending college, the subsidy will not continue.

## **EDUCATIONAL ACCESS FOR KINSHIP CARE FAMILIES**

- **What can I do to enroll the child I am raising in school if I don't have legal custody?** If the county DHS has custody, ask the child's caseworker for assistance in contacting the school to arrange for the child to be enrolled. If the child's parent maintains custody, you will need the parent to assist you in enrolling the child in school. This perhaps would be necessary when a voluntary placement agreement is used. If you, the kinship caregiver, have custody, you can enroll the child in school.
- **Who is eligible for special education? What should I do if I think a child under my care requires special education?** If you have legal custody of the child in your care, you may contact your child's teacher or principal and request special educational testing for that child. If your child is in the legal custody of the county DHS, you will need to collaborate with the caseworker to request educational testing. The general process toward achieving special education is as follows:
  1. The child's legal custodian must give written consent before a child is evaluated and given special tests to be placed in a special education program;
  2. An educational staffing is required prior to an additional intervention;
  3. An intervention period may follow during which the child will be given supportive services (e.g. remedial instruction, counseling, psychological support, social work

- services and/or community services) to help improve his/her performance or determine if a disability exists;
4. A decision will be made by the child's school about whether to provide additional support services or to refer the child for special education;
  5. If the child is found eligible for special education, an *Individual Education Plan* (IEP) will be developed for the child with your active participation. The legal custodian will need to sign this plan;
  6. The child's IEP will be reviewed annually, and the child will be reevaluated every three years;
  7. If you do not agree with the child's evaluation or plan, you can request a hearing or mediation (if you have legal custody). If a county DHS agency has custody, collaborate with the caseworker to request a review of the evaluation/plan with the school.
- **What other educational support is available?** Some schools maintain lists of individual tutors if you are interested in this service. Both charter schools and home schooling may **not** be an option if your county DHS has legal custody of the child in your care. Many school districts now have charter schools and permit home schooling, which you may explore as alternative resources to public school if you do have custody of your kinship child. To gain more information about home schooling guidelines and curriculum, you may call the state office of the Colorado Department of Education. (See Part II.)
  - **What is Head Start and how can I help enroll the child in my care?** Head Start is a federally funded, "all day program" for preschoolers. It provides education, enrichment, and many other services to small children and their parents or caregivers. In order to be eligible, a child in your care must be no older than five years, and three years old no later than December 31<sup>st</sup> of the year of enrollment. For example, if your child is two years old in September when school starts, he may be enrolled in the fall semester if he turns three years old before December 31<sup>st</sup>. Generally, the program does not cost anything for the families using it, but their income must be within a certain level to be eligible. If you have legal custody, guardianship, or have adopted your kinship child, your income may be a factor for eligibility. If you have guardianship and the child receives TANF *child only* benefits, he/she will be eligible. If a county DHS agency is the legal custodian and your kinship child is a foster child, he/she is automatically eligible, but you will need to work with the caseworker to enroll the child in Head Start. If the child's parents have legal custody, one of them will need to sign with you to enroll the child.
  - **What is the "Even Start" program?** In Colorado, Even Start is a resource to assist schools in the implementation of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act, and to assist parents in helping their children. It is based on the idea that reading problems run in families. There are four components in the Even Start program:
    1. Early childhood education;
    2. Adult literacy or basic education (including learning English as a second language and studying for your GED);

3. Parenting education and support;
4. Parent and child time together.

For additional information contact the Even Start Coordinator at the Colorado Department of Education. (See Part II.)

- **What is Early Childhood Connections?** Under the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (I.D.E.A.), children who are at risk of or have disabilities, birth to age 3 years, are entitled to the following services at no charge:
  1. Free screening or multi-disciplinary evaluation;
  2. An Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP);
  3. Service coordination;
  4. Procedural safeguards to ensure basic legal rights.

In Colorado, these services are provided under the name of Early Childhood Connections for Infants, Toddlers, and Families (ECC). (See Part II.) Before using ECC funds, other funding sources such as Medicaid, State Early Intervention funds, or third party insurance must be explored.

A primary responsibility of ECC is to build community capacity through interagency collaboration using Community Centered Boards (CCBs). (For information, see the list in Part II.)

## **MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

- **How do I get medical services for the child under my care if I do not have custody or guardianship?** If the child is in the legal custody of the county DHS, the agency will provide you with a Medicaid card for the child and a letter giving you authorization to obtain medical care. If you are caring for someone else’s child, even if you have the parent’s permission, you cannot get medical care for the child by yourself. You will need to get a *medical power of attorney* (see legal section) which is legal permission from a parent to obtain medical care for the child.
- **What immunizations do children need and when?** The following is a list to use as a general guideline. Be sure to consult with your child’s doctor or local health clinic to decide what is right for the health of the child in your care.

| <b><u>Immunizations</u></b>          | <b><u>Schedule</u></b>                                  |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DPT) | 5 doses at 2, 4, 6 and 12 to 15 months and 4 to 6 years |
| Polio (OPV)                          | 4 doses at 2, 4, 6 months & 4 to 6 years                |
| Measles, Mumps Rubella (MMR)         | 2 doses at 12 to 15 months & 4 to 6 years               |
| Hemophilus Influenza b (Hib)         | 4 doses at 2, 4, 6 and 12 to 15 months                  |

Please refer to the earlier section on public assistance related to Medicaid and EPSDT for information regarding medical and/or mental health services under these programs.



- **What kinds of medical problems should kinship caregivers be aware?** If substance abuse has been a problem for the child’s parents, be aware of conditions like fetal alcohol effect or syndrome, failure to thrive, and HIV/AIDS infection. Talk to your child’s doctor or other medical professionals for more detailed information.
- **Where can I take a child under my care to be tested for any of these problems?** If you are concerned that a child under your care has any of these conditions, you will have to talk to the person or agency that has custody. Only the legal custodian can initiate the assessment process or receive the results. There are laws regarding who may be advised if a person is HIV positive. Work with your county DHS caseworker regarding this confidentiality and how to care for children with any of these medical conditions.
- **Why are mental health services so important? Aren’t children too young to benefit?** Mental health services are not just for people with severe mental illness. These services can also be a helpful way for caregivers and the children under their care to talk about their problems and to get some solid advice and guidance from a qualified provider. The stresses of caring for a child, coupled with the emotional and financial pressures of everyday living, can be overwhelming. The children may have a variety of problems stemming from the loss of their parents. In some situations, the children may have been traumatized from abuse or neglect. There are mental health services designed specifically for young children who are having problems communicating, adjusting, or recovering from traumatic experiences.
- **What if I can’t afford to pay for mental health services?** If the child under your care is receiving Medicaid, your local Community Mental Health Center’s (MHC) services will be covered under the child’s plan. Regional areas of the state are divided into managed care groups called Mental Health Assessment and Service Agencies (MHASA’s) which are listed in Part II. It is important to request from the mental health intake worker a therapist who has experience with children with special needs (e.g., children who have been abused and neglected, children with disabilities, and children or youth who are abusing drugs and alcohol.). If the child is enrolled on your private insurance, you may check to see if he/she is covered for a particular mental health service. The child may also qualify for the Colorado Child Health Plan. See Part II . If the child is in the custody of the county DHS, your child or family may receive CORE services such as in-home skill-base/therapy services, intensive family therapy, play therapy, day treatment, sexual abuse treatment, or substance abuse treatment. These services are free of charge and intended to preserve the placement of the child in your home.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

- **What are the basic types of drugs?**  
There are 5 basic types of drugs:
  1. Stimulants (amphetamines, cocaine, and tobacco) which speed up the nervous system;

2. Depressants (barbiturates, tranquilizers, and alcohol) which slow down the central nervous system;
3. Hallucinogens (LSD, PCP) which can cause changes in perception and consciousness;
4. Narcotics (heroin) which lower the perception of pain; and
5. Cannabis (marijuana) which affects thinking and behavior.

The three most frequently used drugs by children and adolescents are alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco.

- **How can I tell if the child I am raising has a substance abuse problem?** Some common signs to look for include: sudden unexplained changes in mood or behavior; loss of interest in usual activities, hobbies or friends; significant drop in grades at school; withdrawal from the family; sudden neglect of appearance; over-reaction to criticism; becoming angry or depressed; unusual secretiveness (refusal to share where he is going or with whom); decreased energy or drive; health problems such as sleepiness; blood shot eyes, sudden weight gain or weight loss; blackouts, memory lapses, poor short-term memory, slurred speech, hallucinations, or delusions. Some of these behaviors can also look like normal adolescent behaviors, and some of them could be symptoms of sexual abuse trauma. When these behaviors are more frequent or intense than usual, you should seek professional help from a doctor or counselor. Contact your child's county DHS caseworker and ask for referral information for prevention and intervention in substance abuse.
- **How can I help?** It is important to educate all children about drug abuse, but it is especially important if the child's parent has been an alcohol or drug abuser, or if there has been a history of alcohol/drug abuse in the family. You, or a therapist trained in this particular area, may talk with the child about the damage alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs can cause or have caused in the family and try to dispel myths. Learn to really listen to the children you are raising and take their problems and concerns seriously. Model positive behavior and help your child develop strong values. Finally, if you suspect the child has a problem with drugs or alcohol, get help immediately. Tell them they are too special to waste their lives by using drugs.

## **CHILDCARE OPTIONS FOR CAREGIVERS**

- **What are the different types of childcare?**
  1. Childcare in your home (i.e. babysitting) is often difficult to arrange and tends to be more expensive. There are no regulations for this type of childcare. If the child is in the custody of DHS, ask the caseworker about the necessary requirements for childcare providers. They may not always have to be licensed.
  2. Family childcare means your child receives care in a home setting, typically in a licensed childcare provider's home. This setting is beneficial because of the small number of children. Family caregivers generally work alone, so you will need to make other plans if they become ill or take a vacation.

3. Childcare centers, nursery schools, or preschools may be part of a chain, be privately owned, or supported by churches and social service groups.

Assess the childcare home or center for safety and notice:

1. Is it clean and safe?
2. How does the caregiver handle meals and discipline?
3. What is the ratio of children to the adult caregiver?
4. How does the staff relate to children?

The childcare home or center should be licensed by the State of Colorado, which means that the home or center has met standards for cleanliness, safety, health conditions, staffing, and program content. The childcare staff should also have basic training and experience in child development. Notice the availability of age-appropriate activities and toys and the quality of interaction between staff and children.

- **Where can I find a list of qualified childcare providers?** Contact your county's Department of Human Services, who should be able to provide you with a list of local licensed providers. For those of you in the Denver Metro area, the Mile High United Way has a Help Line (see number in Part II) that will give you an automated system which asks for the zip code of the area in which you are looking for childcare. Then, they give you a list of licensed childcare facilities.

maintain a healthy relationship with their imprisoned parents. Many kinship caregivers with children or relatives in prison report that this can be particularly difficult in the face of their anger and resentment at their loved ones for the behavior that led to their imprisonment. However, without the cooperation of all the parties, the children will be the losers. The most successful kinship relationships involve a partnership between caregiver, parent, and child, who all make an effort to keep each other informed about the health, welfare, education, and emotional well-being of the children. If the child in your care is in the custody of the county DHS, the caseworker can assist you in setting up visitation plans as well as provide guidance about how children and families are affected by having a relative in prison.

## **SURVIVING KINSHIP CARE – YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

Dealing with the emotional consequences of kinship care requires a process of changing roles. For many kinship caregivers, the first step in the continuum is the feeling of “Why me? Why my family?” Although this is a very common, initial reaction, it is not a healthy or productive place to stay. Kinship caregivers have to deal with *anger* at the children’s parents for not properly fulfilling their roles and *frustration* with the changes in their lives that are seemingly out of their control. For those caregivers who watch the deterioration of a loved one due to drugs, alcohol or AIDS, there is often a sense of *hopelessness, shame, and despair*. They may ask themselves if the pain will ever go away. Additionally, when the caregiver’s son or daughter made choices that did not meet the parents’ dreams for them, there is a sense of *guilt or loss* which makes them ask if there wasn’t something they could have done differently. Parenting can be both difficult and rewarding. Support groups may be available for people who are experiencing similar problems. Such groups may be run by a social worker or therapist trained to deal with this particular problem. The groups help provide effective solutions for common problems, plus there is comfort from others. The DHS caseworker, therapist, local Family Center, or in Denver, Catholic Charities. (See Part II) can help with referral information. One day, kinship parents may find themselves able to breathe a sigh of relief. They know what needs to be done, and they’ve made plans. Life is more on schedule with a routine. Caregivers at this point can accept their new role and have incorporated the children into their futures. The time it takes to get to this step varies with individuals, based on coping skills and resources, plus family and community support. Hopefully, the challenges will be balanced by the rewards.

## **PART II**

### **Referral Information and Resources:**

**AARP Colorado:** 303-830-2277, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

AARP Grandparent Information Center: 601 ‘E’ Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049.  
202-434-2296.

**Adoption Exchange**

1-800-451-5246

**Adoption Program, Colorado Department of Human Services**

303-866-3228

**Catholic Charities and Services: Kinship Care Support Groups and Resources**

Administrative Center and Information: 303-742-0828 ex. 647

**Colorado Child Health Plan (CCHP/CHP+)**

1-800-359-1991 toll free, 303-692-2960

**Colorado Domestic Violence Coalition**

1-888-778-7091 toll free, 303-831-9632.

P.O. Box 18902

Denver, CO. 80218

e-mail: [ccadv@ix.netcom.com](mailto:ccadv@ix.netcom.com)

**Colorado State Foster Parent Association**

303-463-7989, 1-800-426-3281, [www.csfpa.org](http://www.csfpa.org)

**CORRA (Colorado Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies: Options for Inclusive Child Care)**

7853 E. Arapahoe Court, Suite 3300 Englewood, CO 80112

303.290.9088, fax: 303.290.8005, [www.corra.org](http://www.corra.org)

**Eastern Plains**

Cheyenne, Kiowa

Childcare Connections (800) 379-6765

Baca, Chaffee, Custer, Herfano, Las Animas, Prowers, Pueblo

Children First Resource and Referral

(719) 549-3411 (800) 894-7707

Fremont

Children First Resource and Referral

(719) 269-1958

Bent, Crowley, Otero

Children First Resource and Referral

(719) 254-7776

Kit Carson, Lincoln

NE Colorado CCR&R (719) 743-2526

**Front Range**

Adams, Arapahoe, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin, Jefferson, Park

Metropolitan Denver Resource and Referral Agency

(303) 969-9666 (800) 436-3665

El Paso, Elbert, Teller  
 Childcare Connections (719) 638-2070 (800) 379-6765

Larimer  
 Women's Center (970) 407-7044  
 Women's Center (970) 663-2288

Boulder  
 Childrens Service's (303) 441-3180

**Mountain**

Grand  
 Mountain Family Center (970) 725-3257

Eagle, Garfield  
 Resource & Referral of Eagle and Garfield Counties  
 (970) 963-6779 (877) 963-6779

Gunnison  
 Family Ties West (970) 323-0124 (800) 530-2033

Lake, Summit  
 Early Childhood Resource & Referral of the High County  
 (970) 513-1017

Pitkin  
 Kids First (970) 920-5363

**Northeast**

Sedgwick  
 NE Colorado CCR&R (970) 474-3504

Phillips  
 NE Colorado CCR&R (719) 854-2921

Weld  
 United Way of Weld County  
 (970) 353-4300 (800) 411-8929

Washington  
 NE Colorado CCR&R (970) 345-2225

Logan  
 NE Colorado CCR&R (970) 522-9411

Yuma  
 NE Colorado CCR&R (970) 848-3867 (800) 794-3867

Morgan  
 Morgan County Family Center  
 (970) 867-9606

**Northwest**

Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt

Childcare Network (970) 879-7330 (888) 879-7330

**San Luis Valley**

Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache

San Luis Valley Resource & Referral

(719) 589-1513 (800) 411-8382

**Southwest**

Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, San Juan

Southwest Early Childhood Network

(970) 385-4747

**Western Slope**

Mesa

Mesa County Resource & Referral

(970) 241-1764

Delta, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, San Miguel

Family Ties West (970) 323-0124 (800) 530-2033

**County Department of Human Services Offices:**

|             |                   |              |              |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Adams       | 303-412-8121      | La Plata     | 970-382-6150 |
| Alamosa     | 719-589-2581      | Lake         | 719-486-2088 |
| Arapahoe    | 303-795-4850      | Larimer      | 970-498-6300 |
| Archuleta   | 970-264-2182      | Las Animas   | 719-846-2276 |
| Baca        | 719-523-4131      | Lincoln      | 719-743-2404 |
| Bent        | 719-456-2620      | Logan        | 970-522-2194 |
| Broomfield  | 303-469-3301      | Mesa         | 970-241-8480 |
| Boulder     | 303-441-1000      | Mineral      | 719-657-3381 |
| Chaffee     | 719-539-6627      | Moffat       | 970-824-8282 |
| Cheyenne    | 719-767-5629      | Montezuma    | 907-565-3769 |
| Clear Creek | 303-569-3251 x371 | Montrose     | 970-249-3401 |
| Conejos     | 719-376-5455      | Morgan       | 970-542-3530 |
| Costilla    | 719-762-4131      | Otero        | 719-383-3100 |
| Crowley     | 719-267-3546      | Ouray        | 970-325-4437 |
| Custer      | 719-783-2371      | Park         | 303-838-0082 |
| Delta       | 7970-874-2030     | Phillips     | 970-854-2280 |
| Denver      | 720-944-3666      | Pitkin       | 970-920-5350 |
| Dolores     | 970-677-2250      | Prowers      | 719-336-7486 |
| Douglas     | 303-688-4825      | Pueblo       | 719-583-6160 |
| Douglas     | 303-688-4825      | Rio Blanco   | 970-878-5011 |
| Eagle       | 970-328-8840      | Rio Grande   | 719-657-3381 |
| El Paso     | 719-444-5532      | Routt County | 970-879-1540 |
| Elbert      | 719-541-2369      | Saguache     | 719-655-2537 |
| Fremont     | 719-275-2318      | San Juan     | 970-387-5631 |

|            |              |            |                        |
|------------|--------------|------------|------------------------|
| Garfield   | 970-945-9191 | San Miguel | 970-728-4411           |
| Gilpin     | 303-582-5444 | Sedgwick   | 970-474-3397           |
| Grand      | 970-725-3331 | Summit     | 970-668-4100           |
| Gunnison   | 970-641-3244 | Teller     | 719-687-3335 ext. 3034 |
| Hinsdale   | 970-641-3244 | Washington | 970-345-2238           |
| Huerfano   | 719-738-2810 | Weld       | 970-352-1551           |
| Jackson    | 970-723-4750 | Weld       | 970-352-1551           |
| Jefferson  | 303-277-1388 | Yuma       | 970-332-4877           |
| Kiowa      | 719-438-5541 |            |                        |
| Kit Carson | 719-346-8732 |            |                        |

### **Denver Indian Health & Family Services**

303-936-4050 - 3749 S. King, Sheridan, CO 80110

303-936-2688 – 4407 Morrison Road, Denver, CO 80219

### **Department of Corrections**

719-579-9580 General Information. Office of Offender Services: 719-226-4900

“Inmate Locate” Telephone Number: 719-226-4880

- Contact the facility where your family member is incarcerated regarding visitations:

Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility: 719-267-3520

Buena Vista Correctional Facility: 719-395-2404

Buena Vista Minimum Center: 719-395-7363

Colorado Correctional Alternative Program (Buena Vista, CO): 719-395-7303

Canon Minimum Centers:

Arrowhead Correctional Center: 719-269-5601

Four Mile Correctional Center: 719-269-5388

Pre-Release Unit: 719-269-5311

Skyline Correctional Center: 719-269-5420

Colorado Correctional Center (Golden, CO): 303-273-1620

Centennial Correctional Facility (Canon City): 719-269-5510

Colorado State Penitentiary (Canon City): 719-269-5120

Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (Canon City): 719-269-4002

Colorado Women’s Correctional Facility (Canon City): 719-269-4704

Delta Correctional Center: 970-874-7614

Denver Reception & Diagnostic Center: 303-371-4804

Denver Women’s Correctional Facility: 303-307-2502

Fremont Correctional Facility (Canon City): 719-269-5002

Limon Correctional Facility: 719-775-9221

Rifle Correctional Center: 970-625-1700

San Carlos Correctional Facility (Pueblo): 719-544-4800

Pueblo Minimum Center – Women’s Unit: 719-583-5711

Sterling Correctional Facility: 970-521-5010

Yos-Pueblo: 719-583-5902

Private Facilities:

Bent County Correctional Facility (Las Animas, CO): 719-456-2610



Huerfano County Correctional Center (Walsenburg, CO): 719-738-3246  
Kit Carson Correctional Facility (Burlington, CO): 719-346-9450  
Crowley County Correctional Facility (Olney Springs, CO): 719-267-3548

Division of Adult Parole (Lakewood, CO): 303-238-5967

**Department of Education**

303-866-6600 Home schooling

**Early Childhood Connections**

1-888-777-4041. State telephone number for information about programs in your community, or call your Community Center Board directly:

Arkansas Valley, LaJunta, CO: 719-384-8741

Blue Peaks, Alamosa, CO: 719-589-5135

Centennial Developmental Services, Evans, CO: 970-339-5360

Colorado Bluesky Enterprises, Pueblo, CO: 719-546-0572

Community Connections, Durango, CO: 970-259-2464

Community Options, Montrose, CO: 970-249-1412

Denver Options, Denver, CO: 303-753-6688

Developmental Disabilities Center, Lafayette, CO: 303-665-7789

Developmental Opportunities, Canon City, CO: 719-275-1616

Developmental Pathways, Aurora, CO: 303-360-6600

Eastern Colorado Services, Sterling, CO: 970-522-7121

Foothills Gateway, Fort Collins, CO: 970-226-2345

Horizons Specialized Services, Steamboat Springs, CO: 970-879-4466

Mesa Developmental Services, Grand Junction, CO: 970-243-3702

Mountain Valley Developmental Services, Glenwood Springs, CO: 970-945-2306

North Metro Community Services, Westminster, CO: 303-252-7199 or 303-457-1001

The Resource Exchange, Colorado Springs, CO: 719-380-1100

Southeastern Developmental Services, Lamar, CO: 719-336-3244

Southern Colorado Developmental Services, Trinidad, CO: 719-846-4409

**Even Start in Colorado**

303-866-6674

**EPSDT Ombudsperson**

303-744-7667

1-877-HELP-123

**Family Center Contacts: By county location.**

Adams: Crawford Family Resource Center: 303-340-0880

Araphoe: Glendale/Holly Hills Family Center: 303-512-0142

Araphoe: South Aurora Family Resource Center: 303-671-9088

Araphoe & Denver: Lowry Family Center: 303-340-7030

Costilla: Costilla County Family Center: 719-672-4130

Denver: Center for the People of Capitol Hill: 303-355-3052

Denver: Cross Community Coalition: 303-292-3203  
Denver: Focus Points: 303-292-0770  
Denver: Southwest Denver Avondale Lutheran Church: 303-623-5878  
Fremont: Fremont County Family Center: 719-269-1523  
Jefferson: Mountain Family Project: 303-838-7552  
LaPlata: LaPlata Family Centers Coalition: 970-385-4747  
Montezuma: Pinon Project Family Centers: 970-564-1195  
Montrose: West End Family Link: 970-864-2245  
Montrose: Olathe Family Ties: 970-323-0125  
Pueblo: Pueblo Family Center, Risley Middle School: 719-544-0488  
Summit: Summit County Family Center: 970-262-2472  
Washington: Rural Communities Resource Center: 970-345-2311

**Grandparents Resource Center** 303-980-5707

### **Head Start in Colorado**

303-844-3100 Regional Office for General Information or contact CORRA for locations in your county, 303-290-9088. County DHS offices often have a list of locations.

Adams County Head Start: 303-286-4141  
Akron United Methodist Church Head Start: 970-345-2695  
Alamosa Head Start, Inc.: 719-589-9171  
Boulder County Board of Commissioners: 303-441-3980  
Brush United Methodist Church Head Start: 970-842-3376  
Chaffee County Head Start Program, Salida: 719-539-1184  
Colorado Springs, Community Partnership for Child Development: 719-635-1536 ext. 275  
Del Norte Town Council Head Start: 719-657-3101  
Denver Catholic Charities & Community Services Head Start: 303-743-0828 ext.151  
Denver, Clayton Family Futures, Head Start: 303-355-4411  
Denver Great Kids Head Start: 720-913-0343  
Denver, Rocky Mountain SERV, Jobs for Progress, Head Start: 303-937-1060  
Eagle County School District Head Start: 970-926-6858  
Englewood Head Start, Sheridan School District #2: 303-761-0525  
Englewood Interfaith Task Force Head Start: 303-347-6985  
Fort Morgan Head Start: 970-867-5767 ext. 216  
Fremont County Head Start: 719:275-8636  
Grand Junction, Western Slope Head Start Program: 970-243-9318  
Greeley Head Start, Weld County: 970-353-3800 ext. 3342  
Ilf Community Center Head Start: 970-521-0538  
Jefferson County Head Start, Golden: 303-271-4003  
LaJunta Head Start: 719-384-1081  
Lakewood Head Start: 303-275-3407  
Leadville, Lake County, The Center: 719-486-6928  
Limon Head Start: 719-775-0222

Longmont Children's Council Head Start: 303-776-8523  
Loveland Head Start: 970-613-5031  
Monte Vista Head Start: 719-852-3215  
Montrose County Head Start: 970-249-5858  
Ft. Collins Head Start ,Poudre School Dist.#1,: 970-490-3195  
Pueblo Head Start: 719-546-3010  
Saguache County/Center Head Start: 719-754-3191  
Tri-County Head Start (Durango): 970-247-5960  
Yuma County Head Start: 970-332-0932

### **Internet Resources**

Books: [www.ewol.com/brookdale/rpsource.html](http://www.ewol.com/brookdale/rpsource.html)  
NS&A: [www.nsatraininginstitute.org](http://www.nsatraininginstitute.org)

### **Job Placement Services**

303-573-0333

### **LEAP (Energy Crises Intervention Program)**

Contact your county DHS office or State LEAP Office: 1-800-782-0721 or 303-866-5970

### **Legal Assistance for Low Income People**

Colorado Legal Services  
1905 Sherman Street, Suite 400  
Denver, CO. 80203  
General Information: 303-837-1313. New Clients: 303-837-1321.

### **Medicaid Customer Service Department**

303-866-3513  
1-800-221-3943

### **Mental Health Assessment and Service Agencies (MHASA)**

303-866-7400 State Office for General Information  
Website of statewide organizations providing support services:  
<http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/ohr/mhs/cosups.html>  
Access Behavioral Health, Denver, 303-333-2494  
Adams Community Mental Health, Thornton, 303-853-3500  
Arapahoe Mental Health Center, Englewood, 303-779-9676  
Aurora Community Mental Health, 303-617-2300  
Behavioral Health Care, Inc., Englewood, 303-889-4805  
Centennial Mental Health Center, Sterling, 970-522-4549  
Colorado Health Networks, Colorado Springs, 719-538-1430  
Colorado West Regional Mental Health Center, Glenwood Springs, 970-945-2241  
Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Arvada, 303-425-0300  
Larimer County Mental Health Center, Fort Collins, 970-577-2125  
Mental Health Center of Boulder, 303-443-8500  
Mental Health Corporation of Denver, 303-504-6500

Midwestern Mental Health Center, Montrose, 970-249-9694  
 Northeast Behavioral Health, Sterling, 970-353-3686  
 North Range Behavioral Health, Greeley, 970-353-3686  
 Pikes Peak – Options Colorado Health Network, Colorado Springs, 719-572-6100  
 San Luis Valley Colorado Mental Health Center, Alamosa, 719-589-3673  
 Southeast Colorado Family Guidance & Mental Health Center, LaJunta, 719-384-5446  
 Southwest Colorado Mental Health Center, Durango, 970-259-2162  
 Spanish Peaks Mental Health Center, Pueblo, 719-545-2746  
 SyCare-Options Colorado Health Networks, Alamosa, 719-587-0899  
 West Central Mental Health Center, Canon City, 719-275-2351  
 West Slope – Options Colorado Health Network, Glenwood Springs, 970-945-2241

**Nicholson, Spencer & Associates Training Institute:**

303-433-6449, fax: 303-433-1605, [www.nsatraininginstitute.org](http://www.nsatraininginstitute.org)  
 Adolescent Assessment, Case Planning & Intervention; Adolescent Development;  
 Adolescent Substance Use & Associated Disorders.  
 Case Aide Services Training; Building Partnerships Training; ADHD Training.  
 Domestic Violence & Child Protection Services Cross-Training  
 Ethics and Liability; Jurisprudence Workshop; Legal Preparation  
 Foster Parents CORE Training  
 Parenting Education Classes: Parents of Infants; Parents of Toddlers; Parenting Children  
 1 to 4; Positive Parenting of Children 6 to 12; Parenting your Teen; Strengthening Latino  
 Families.

**Parent's Lifeline:** 303-433-KIDS (5437)

**Promoting Safe & Stable Families:**

Southwest Family Center, 810 King St., Denver:303-623-5878;  
 Catholic Charities: 303-308-1420; FPFS Resource, Peoria St., Denver:303-373-9011;  
[www.cdhs.state.co.us/agency/CW9822I.html](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/agency/CW9822I.html).

|                              |                                   |              |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Adams                        | Intergenerational Learning Center | 303-853-5531 |
| Arapahoe                     | Aurora Family Preservation        | 303-745-1515 |
| Baca                         | Baca County DSS                   | 719-523-6355 |
| Bent                         | Bent County DSS                   | 719-456-2620 |
| Boulder                      | Boulder County DSS                | 303-441-1080 |
| Child Welfare Services       | Colorado DHS Child Welfare        | 303-866-4980 |
| Child Welfare Services       | Colorado DHS Child Welfare        | 303-866-4129 |
| Denver                       | Southwest Family Center           | 303-623-5878 |
| El Paso                      | El Paso DHS                       | 719-444-5537 |
| Fremont/Custer/Chaffee       | Fremont County DSS                | 719-275-2351 |
| Huerfano/Las Animas          | Las Animas Family Center          | 719-546-6666 |
| Jefferson                    | JCMH                              | 303-432-5671 |
| Kit Carson                   | Prairie Family Center             | 719-346-5398 |
| La Plata/Archuleta/Montezuma | Operation Healthy Communities     | 970-382-0585 |
| Larimar                      | The Family Center                 | 970-221-1615 |

|                        |                                   |                   |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mesa County            | Wrap Project                      | 970-241-0067      |
| Montrose/Delta         | Family Ties West                  | 970-323-0124      |
| Morgan                 | Morgan County Family Center       | 970-867-9606      |
| Otero                  | Otero County DHS                  | 719-254-7776      |
| Prowers                | Prowers County DSS                | 719-336-7486 x118 |
| Pueblo                 | Hope for Children                 | 719-545-5845      |
| San Luis Valley        | La Gente SLV BOCS                 | 719-589-5851      |
| Summit                 | Summit County Family Center       | 970-468-9540      |
| Ute Mountain Ute Tribe | Ute Mountain Ute Tribe            | 970-565-4576      |
| Washington             | Rural Communities Resource Center | 970-848-3867      |
|                        | Washington County Connection      | 970-345-2225      |
| Weld                   | Catholic Charities Northern       | 970-484-5010      |

**Rocky Mountain Children’s Law Center, providing legal representation for abused and neglected children:**

7150 E. Montview Blvd. #1 Foot Hall, Denver, CO 80220  
303-871-6410

**SSI (Social Security: Supplemental Security Income) Free Hotline**

1-800-772-1213

**United Way (Mile High)**

**Help Line for Licensed Childcare in the Denver Metro Area**

303-433-8900.

**WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children)**

WIC Program

Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment

4300 Cherry Creek Dr. South

Denver, CO. 80246

(303) 692-2400

1-800-688-7777

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This guide has been developed for the  
Colorado Department of Human Services by  
Nicholson, Spencer, and Associates.

Additional copies may be downloaded through the  
Colorado Department of Human Services website  
[www.cdhs.state.co.us/cyf/cwelfare/cwwweb.html](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/cyf/cwelfare/cwwweb.html)

You may also download this resource guide through the  
Nicholson, Spencer, and Associates website  
[www.nsatraininginstitute.org](http://www.nsatraininginstitute.org)