

Policy and Practice Guidance Document #006

Becoming a Foster Caregiver after the Kinship Support Program

February 16, 2021

If you are a kinship caregiver receiving Kinship Support Program (KSP) payments, you will have at least six months to work toward becoming a certified foster caregiver so that you can begin receiving foster care per diem payments when KSP payments end. If you choose to become a certified foster caregiver for children in your care, the following steps should be taken during the time you receive KSP payments so there is a seamless transition from KSP payments to foster care per diem payments upon completion of foster caregiver certification.

Steps to Become a Certified Foster Caregiver

1. Educate yourself about foster parenting.

Foster caregivers have several more requirements to undergo than kinship caregivers. Not only will the child's caseworker have regular contact with you, but you will also have your own worker, an assessor, assigned to help you through the process. For more information about the differences between kinship care and foster care, please read the articles found in the links below.

Helpful Articles:

- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/kinship-care/resources-for-kinship-caregivers/kinship-vs-foster-care>
- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/becoming-a-foster-parent/how-to-become-a-foster-parent-in-ohio>

2. Choose an agency.

In Ohio, foster parents can choose which agency is best for their family to pursue foster care certification, so it's important to do your research. You can find the full list of agencies for your county here: <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/ohio-childcare-needs/service-provider-directory/service-provider-directory>. Once you have chosen an agency to assist with the foster caregiver certification process, you will need to contact the agency. Once the agency receives your inquiry, it will reach out to you to start the process to become a foster parent.

Helpful Articles:

- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/becoming-a-foster-parent/choosing-a-foster-care-agency>
- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/becoming-a-foster-parent/roles-in-the-foster-care-process>

3. Attend the required preplacement training, if required.

Typically, pre-placement training is required for anyone who wishes to become a foster parent. The training includes 24 - 36 hours of coursework, which covers basic knowledge about foster care, as well as agency policies. However, for kinship caregivers, all training requirements may be waived. This should be discussed with the chosen agency as an option.

4. Complete an application.

Each agency manages the application process differently. Some will want you to apply prior to training, during training, or after training. The application starts the official process to become a foster parent and requests basic demographic information, as well as historical data. The official application to complete is the JFS 01691 “Application for Child Placement”. This form is located at www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/num/JFS01691/pdf/.

Helpful Articles:

- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/bcoming-a-foster-parent/how-foster-parenting-will-change-your-life>
- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/becoming-a-foster-parent/emotional-preparation-for-foster-parenting>

5. Complete the homestudy process.

A homestudy is required as part of the certification process. The basic elements include:

- At least one home visit
- Medical statements for everyone in the home, only the statements for the applicant(s) need to be signed by a medical professional
- Financial information
- Background checks
- Personal references
- Safety audits and walkthrough of the home
- Fire inspections
- Well inspection (if applicable)
- Interview with each member of the home

This process could take several months as you gather all of the required information and documents. Please be patient and ask questions throughout the process. Kinship caregivers may have some non-safety requirements waived during the homestudy process. These waivers are considered on a case by case basis by ODJFS.

Helpful Articles:

- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/becoming-a-foster-parent/foster-parent-costs>
- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/becoming-a-foster-parent/foster-parent-requirements>
- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/currently-a-foster-parent/what-to-expect-from-your-foster-care-agency>

Next Steps After the Homestudy

After your homestudy is completed and you receive your foster care certificate, the agency will have an assessor meet with you while you have a child placed in your home. This assessor will be a support as you navigate working with the child and the agency as a certified foster parent. While ongoing training is not required for you, it is certainly available as a support to you. To continue being a certified foster parent, the agency will conduct a recertification with you every two years.

Helpful Articles:

- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/currently-a-foster-parent/support-for-foster-parents>
- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/currently-a-foster-parent/foster-parent-rights-and-responsibilities>
- <https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care/currently-a-foster-parent/normalcy-in-foster-care>

Additional Resources and Information

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services maintains a website with all information related to foster care, kinship care and adoption; including additional guidance and resources on the subjects outlined above:

<https://fosterandadopt.jfs.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ofc/foster-care>.