



KINSHIP SERVICES **CAREGIVER'S HANDBOOK**

If you are reading this handbook, you may be considering caring for a child that is a relative or member of your extended family or community.

Options

There are a number of options the Children's Aid Society (CAS) may present to you when considering providing care to your kin:

- 1. A Voluntary Service Agreement between the child's parents, yourself and the CAS.**
- 2. A Court Order called a "Supervision Order" placing the child in your care.**
- 3. Apply for Legal Custody**
- 4. Adoption**

A CAS Worker will need to meet with you and your family to complete an assessment(s) to make sure that the child will be safe and that the placement is in the child's best interest.

This handbook will help you to understand the process and hopefully answer any questions that you may have about being a kinship service caregiver.

WHO DOES WHAT?

Intake Worker:

An Intake Worker is the worker who you will likely have the first contact with. The Intake Worker's job is to follow up on referrals and complete an initial assessment of you and your family. The primary job of the Intake Worker is to make sure that the child is safe.

Family Service Worker:

A Family Service Worker (FSW) works with a family on an ongoing basis after it has been determined that a child is in need of protection. The FSW will develop and implement a plan of service with the child's family designed to improve the child's safety. Sometimes, this means that the FSW will take the matter to court.

Kinship Assessment Worker:

A Kinship Assessment Worker (KAW) is responsible for conducting additional interviews and assessment of the potential kinship caregivers. Their job is to complete the comprehensive assessment of the kinship service caregiver and to provide recommendations to the CAS. They have to determine if the placement is safe, viable and realistic for the child and if the plan is an appropriate permanency plan. Their work is to be done within 3 months of the child being placed in your home.

Kinship Support Worker:

A Kinship Support Worker is assigned to a kinship service family to provide support and assistance to enable you to care for the child living in your home. The Kinship Support Worker can provide behavioural advice, financial information, and advocacy and referral to community services. If you need someone to "just listen", your Kinship Support Worker is there for you. The Kinship Support Worker will assist with access.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Who do I speak to if I want to care for a child or children that are part of my family, extended family or community?

A. You may speak to an Intake Worker or the Family Service Worker.

Q. How does the process work?

A. Initially, an Intake Worker or Family Service Worker will attend your home and conduct an initial screening and assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to determine if you and your family would be suitable kinship service caregivers. Your family (those over 18) will be asked to complete a criminal record and child welfare record checks. The worker will conduct a safety inspection ensuring that smoke detectors are operational and there are no other safety hazards. The worker will also interview you and your family and if the child is placed with you, visit you and the child within 7 days and within 30 days.

Q. What will the interviews include?

A. The interviews will include a variety of different questions about you and your family to determine the safety and permanency of the plan for the child. The interviews will also identify the strengths and needs of your family and what supports you may require.

Q. Typically, when will the child come to live with me?

A. The child may come to live with you at one of many different stages. In some cases, if it is an emergency, you may be asked to take the child immediately. In other cases, the child may not be with you until the comprehensive assessment is complete (this could take 3 months). In many cases, the child is placed with kin within 30 days.

Q. What is a kinship comprehensive assessment?

A. The Kinship Assessment Worker completes this assessment. This is the final but more detailed and in-depth assessment to determine the suitability of the placement over the long-term.

Q. What does this kinship comprehensive assessment include?

A. This assessment includes some of the topics covered on the initial assessment but will be more detailed. Topics include: previous child welfare involvement, criminal history, family and mental health history, relationship with the child and their parents and your thoughts on access, financial stability, and the physical environment. The assessment will also focus on your ability to meet the academic, social, medical, cultural and developmental needs of the child. The Kinship Assessment Worker will require personal and medical references.

Q. How long will this assessment take?

A. This assessment will take around 3 hours to complete and is usually done in one visit. There may be occasions where additional interviews are required or a follow-up phone call. The Kinship Assessment Worker will come to your home.

Q. What if I don't have the time to meet with workers or don't want to?

A. The CAS Worker is mandated to ensure that the child's placement is safe and the assessment process is part of this safety check. The CAS Worker will be flexible and try to work around your schedule.

Q. Is there any financial assistance available?

A. You may be eligible for Ontario Works Temporary Care Allowance. This may be about \$200 per child depending on circumstances. Ontario Works may also provide you with a drug and dental card for the child. You may also apply for the Child Tax Credit. If the child is less than 6 years old, you will be entitled to a federal benefit for

child care. The CAS may be able to offer some short-term financial support for start up or other emergencies. You will need to consider whether or not your financial situation is sufficient to care for a child.

Q. Will I have to sign anything?

A. Yes, you will need to sign consents for your family physician. You will also need to sign consents for Children's Aid Societies in other areas where you have previously lived.

Q. Who will provide support to us?

A. Once you have been assessed and approved to provide kinship services to a child, you will be assigned a Kinship Support Worker that will visit you on a regular basis. This worker will be your primary contact with the CAS. Their job is to ensure the child's placement is stable and that you have what you need to care for the child.

Q. What about day care?

A. Your Kinship Support Worker can provide you with information about applying for a day care subsidy. In some cases, the CAS may be able to provide you with some funding to start day care.

Q. Is adoption a possibility? Can I adopt my kin?

A. If you are considering adoption, then you will need to discuss this option with your CAS worker. The adoption process is much more detailed and typically takes longer to complete than taking care of your kin on a temporary basis. Additionally, you will have to undergo a detailed homestudy and take special training to ensure that you can meet the permanency needs of the child. Finally, the adoption process will involve a decision by the Courts.

OPTIONS

There are different options for kin caregivers that are involved with the CAS.

Voluntary Service Agreement:

When appropriate, the CAS and the parent may sign a Voluntary Service Agreement where both parties decide to work voluntarily and the child is placed with the kin.

- You and the parent(s) may want to agree that you will care for the child for a period of time.
- There will be a written agreement, a Kinship Plan of Service that is signed by you, the CAS, and the parent that outlines the role and responsibilities of all parties.
- The CAS may provide recommendations about access depending on the situation or the circumstances.
- The child's parent retains their legal rights over the child so that decisions about schooling and medical care must be made with the parent.

Supervision Order:

If a Voluntary Service Agreement is not appropriate, the CAS will seek a Supervision Order through the Courts. Under a Supervision Order:

- A child can be placed with you for a period of three to 12 months at a time.
- Certain conditions would be in place and all parties would be expected to follow them.
- You would be entitled to make decisions about the child's day to day care.
- You would have to follow the access arrangements as outlined by the court.

Should the children not be able to return to their parent(s) care and a more permanent option is needed, then you may want to consider Legal Custody or Adoption, depending on the age of the child and the overall situation.

Contact Information

Peterborough Office:

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Lindsay Office:

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Haliburton Office:

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**Winter Hours (Sept– June) 9-5pm
Summer Hours (July 1st -Labour Day) (8:30am-4:30pm)**

Website: www.khcas.on.ca

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