CF OPERATING PROCEDURE
NO. 175-79

Family Safety
Economic Self-Sufficiency Services

RELATIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM

This operating procedure establishes the policies and procedures for department and community-based care administration of the Relative Caregiver Program. Effective October 1, 1998, the 1998 Florida Legislature enacted the Relative Caregiver Program. (Chapter 98-403, Laws of Florida; section 39.5085, Florida Statutes (F.S.)). In so doing, the Legislature made a commitment to assist grandparents and other relatives who assume court-approved placements for a child as a result of departmental or community-based care involvement regarding a report of abuse, neglect or abandonment and thereby spare the child the trauma of placement in shelter or foster care. The Legislature recognized that most children living in grandparent or other relative placements do not need intensive supervision by the court or the department; and that family preservation and stability for the child could be significantly enhanced by a straightforward program consisting of financial support, medical benefits and other relevant services to the child and relative caregiver. The Relative Caregiver Program provides a placement option with incentives to achieve permanency and stability for many children who are at risk of foster care placement because of abuse, neglect, or abandonment but are instead placed by the dependency court with relatives.

This operating procedure supersedes CFOP 175-79 dated August 1, 2000. This operating procedure shall remain in effect until revised, superseded or repealed.

OPR: PDFS
DISTRIBUTION: X(electronic distribution): OSES; OSLS; ASGGS; Family Safety staff; and Professional Development Centers.
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Chapter One

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1-1. Purpose. (Chapter 39, F.S.) This operating procedure establishes the policies and procedures for the Relative Caregiver Program including completion of the home study, case planning, legal requirements, eligibility determination and re-determination and other casework activities. The Relative Caregiver Program offers financial assistance for a child placed with a relative who would be unable to serve as a caregiver without the relative caregiver payment because of financial burden, thus exposing the child to the trauma of placement in a shelter or foster care.

1-2. Scope. The policies and procedures within this operating procedure apply to all staff and designees of the department involved with children who are placed or who are likely to be placed with a relative pursuant to Chapter 39, F.S. This includes Family Services Counselors, Child Welfare Legal Services attorneys, Public Assistance Specialists, fiscal staff, program specialists, and community-based care staff. Contract providers shall be governed by the terms of the contract.

1-3. Legal Authority.

   a. Federal statutes, regulations, and policy statements:


      (2) 45 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 233.110, and Parts 1355 through 1356.

      (3) Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families: information memoranda; policy interpretations; policy announcements; letter responses.

   b. State statutes, administrative rules and plans:

      (1) Section 39.5085, F.S.

      (2) Chapter 414, F.S.

      (3) Chapter 435, F.S.

      (4) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) State Plan.

      (5) Title IV-E State Plan.

      (6) 65C-24, Florida Administrative Code

1-4. Definition of Terms. All major terms used in this operating procedure are defined in attachment 1 to this chapter.

1-5. Federal Funding Requirements. The state receives funding for the Relative Caregiver Program monthly payments and benefits from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. The relative caregiver payment is not related to Title IV-E; however, the child must meet the criteria for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) child-only eligibility. (See chapter 65A, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), and chapter 2 below.) Children who receive a relative caregiver payment are not eligible to simultaneously receive TCA benefits.
1-6. **Home Study Requirements.**

   a. Relative caregivers must be capable, as determined by a home study, of providing a physically safe environment and a stable, supportive home for the children under their care, and must assure that the children’s well-being is met, including, but not limited to, the provision of immunizations, education, and mental health services as needed. Ss. 39.5085(2)(b), F.S. Attachment 2 to Chapter 1, Caregiver Home Study, is to be completed and used as documentation of a completed home study. Attachment 3 to Chapter 1 provides the instructions for completing the home study.

   b. The home study requirements established in ss. 39.508(3), F.S., shall be followed in conducting a Relative Caregiver Program home study. The department shall not place the child or continue the placement of the child in a home with proposed relative caregivers if the results of the home study are unfavorable absent court approval of the continued placement overriding the department’s concerns. The written home study must be completed and filed with the court prior to or at the time the relative placement is being considered as a possible placement for the child(ren). A copy of the home study shall be placed and maintained in the case file of the department. The home study must include, at a minimum:

      (1) Interviews and an assessment with the proposed adult caregivers to determine their ongoing commitment and ability to care for the child, and their willingness to provide a permanent home for the child. The assessment must also include the proposed caregivers’ attitude toward the child’s parent or caregiver of the removal home and reunification efforts, as well as the attitude of other household members regarding placement of the child in their home.

      (2) Record checks must be completed through the department’s automated abuse information system (FAHIS), and local and statewide criminal and juvenile records checks through the Department of Law Enforcement and the Department of Juvenile Justice, on all household members 12 years of age or older, and any other persons made known to the department who are frequent visitors in the home and who may be in a potential caregiving capacity. The counselor must consider all criminal activities documented in the record check results to determine if substantial concern is warranted regarding the safety and stability of the caregiver’s home. All criminal activities documented in the record check results must be discussed with the relative as part of the home study process. In addition, the counselor must carefully consider the record check results due to the desirability of adoption as one of the permanency options for children in a relative placement. See s. 435.045, F.S.

      (3) An assessment of the physical environment of the home (e.g., electrical; plumbing in working order; no visible hazardous structural deficiencies; sufficient living space and furnishings for all members of the household, including any children in the home and those who may be placed within the home contingent on the outcome of the home study).

Note: Subsection 39.5085(2)(c), F.S., exempts Relative Caregiver Program beneficiaries from foster care licensing requirements under s. 409.175, F.S. Subsection 39.5085(2)(f) allows use of flexible funding, subject to availability of such funds, to assist the relative caregiver in providing for the child’s safety, growth, and healthy development. See CFOP 175-16, Avoiding Unnecessary Placements Through the Use of Substitute Care Funds.

      (4) A determination of the financial security of the proposed caregivers.

Note 1: The intent of the financial assistance and benefits for children in relative placements is to provide relative caregivers who could not otherwise afford to take the child into their home, a means to avoid exposing the child to the trauma of shelter or foster care. Therefore, the relative caregiver’s and child’s needs for financial assistance and benefits must be frankly and openly discussed. Is the relative willing and able to care for the child without such assistance, or with a TANF child-only grant? Is the caregiver primarily in need of Medicaid for the child? The counselor must carefully explain the various
assistance options so that the relative caregiver can make the best choice for the child in light of the family’s individual circumstances.

Note 2: Section 39.5085, F.S., does not provide financial assistance in cases involving emergency (pre-adjudicatory) relative placements. However, a TANF child-only grant may be available during the interim period until the child is adjudicated dependent and placed in the legal custody of the relative pursuant to subsections 39.508(9)(a)3. or 4., F.S. At that time, the assistance eligibility can be transferred to the Relative Caregiver Program. See, paragraph 2-3b of this operating procedure. The relative must be informed of this option.

(5) A determination of suitable child care arrangements.

(6) Documentation of counseling and information provided to the proposed caregivers regarding the dependency process and possible outcomes.

(7) Documentation that information has been provided to the caregivers regarding support services available in the community.

c. In addition to the above requirements, a determination shall be made and documented of the child’s attitude and feelings, if age appropriate, concerning placement with these relatives.

d. Absent a detrimental change to the relative caregiver’s home or family, such as, for example, the house demolished by a tornado or a known child abuser moves into the home, the home study, pursuant to ss. 39.508.(3), F.S., needs to only be completed once.

e. If a home study is unfavorable, the relative caregiver(s) must be advised within 5 working days of the final agency decision to not recommend placement of the child(ren) in their home. The written notice must include the reason for the unfavorable home study and must advise the relative caregiver of his/her right to appeal. The relative caregiver may request, within 21 calendar days of the home study completion and/or notification of the final agency decision, to appear before the Caregiver Home Study Committee to address the appeal.

f. Court ordered relative placements prior to 10/1/98 where the department’s supervision case is still active or is closed and the relative caregiver wants to be considered for the Relative Caregiver Program benefits will require completion of the comprehensive caregiver home study included herein. In addition, the following guidelines will be necessary:

(1) The department will file with the court a notice of filing that includes the completed caregiver home study and, where such home study fails to raise any concerns regarding continuation of the placement, a recommendation for continued placement with the relative caregiver.

(2) The department will simultaneously send copies of the notice of filing, the caregiver home study and the recommendation to the judge. The transmittal to the judge will state that no hearing is required where there are no concerns regarding the continued placement.

(3) A court hearing is only required if the home study results in a question about the appropriateness of continuing the child in the relative placement. If continued placement is a question, a court hearing shall be scheduled and the caregiver home study filed with the court. At the court hearing, the judge will be informed of the concerns about the continued placement of the child(ren) with the relative caregiver. If child safety issues are identified as a result of this home study, the hearing may occur after the child has been removed.

1-7. Case Planning. Relative caregivers will be actively involved in development of the case plan regardless of the case plan goal. Case planning requires careful family assessment that includes
effective communication and input from the relative caregiver, the parent(s) when reunification is the goal, the child(ren), if age appropriate, and other involved parties.

a. When reunification is the case plan goal, relative caregivers will be excellent resources for identifying the underlying conditions or behavior that need to be corrected in order for the child to be safely returned home. Their historical relationship with the child(ren) will be a benefit in identifying educational, medical and other service needs that will individualize the case plan for the child(ren).

   (1) Unless it is clear the relative placement will result in permanency for the child, concurrent planning shall be developed. It is critical that the case plan be legally sufficient from the beginning of the case.

   (2) In order to ensure the relative caregivers are actively involved in reunification efforts, the caregiver must be assigned tasks in the case plan to facilitate visitation and communication between the parent(s) and child(ren). When siblings are separated, the caregiver must be assigned case plan tasks to facilitate visitation and communication between the child(ren) and the siblings.

b. When the case plan goal is temporary legal custody with protective supervision or placement with the relative under protective supervision, the relative caregiver, child, if age appropriate, and other involved parties will assist with identification of the measurable objectives, tasks and services needed to maintain the placement. The case planning discussions must address the need for a permanency goal and a realistic timetable for achieving one of these permanency options.

1-8. Relative Caregiver Program Payments and Benefits.

   a. Relative Caregiver Program payments shall be made to the relative caregiver, on behalf of the child, to cover the cost of (and the cost of providing) the child’s basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, and a child’s personal incidentals (e.g., toiletries or other personal items; entertainment; etc.).

   b. Any child for whom relative caregiver payments are made is deemed, for purposes of Title XIX (Medicaid), to be a dependent child and to be a recipient under TANF. This results in the child being eligible for Title XIX Medicaid and Title XX social services benefits. See 42 U.S.C. 1931-1932; subsection 39.5085(2)(f), F.S.

   c. Relative Caregiver Program payments shall be made to the relative caregiver on behalf of the child in the amount determined by the department based on the child’s age and other eligibility criteria discussed in Chapter 2 of this operating procedure.

   d. Eligibility for the Relative Caregiver Program payments shall be reviewed every six months and adjusted periodically, if appropriate, to reflect changed circumstances. If the review demonstrates that the payment should be lowered, the relative caregiver shall be notified of his or her right to a fair hearing. For purposes of this paragraph, examples of “changed circumstances” shall include the following:

      (1) The child begins receiving supplemental security income.

      (2) The child begins receiving unearned income. Examples are social security benefits, child support, etc.

      (3) The child is no longer living in the home with the relative caregiver.

   e. Contingent upon availability of funding and continuing eligibility, Relative Caregiver Program benefits shall continue until the child reaches age 18, is no longer living in the home of the relative
caregiver, or the child is adopted, whichever is sooner. In the case of adoption by the relative, an adoption subsidy equal to eighty percent of foster care board rate may be paid. Refer to CFOP 175-71, Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Subsidy. Long-term custody to the relative with or without guardianship or a guardianship appointment subsequent to an adjudication of dependency and placement with the relative shall not affect continuing eligibility for the Relative Caregiver Program benefits.

1-9. Legal Requirements/Permanency Planning.

   a. The goal of any out-of-home placement, including the Relative Caregiver Program, is to achieve permanency, consistent with the child’s best interests, as soon as possible. Permanency in a Relative Caregiver Program situation may be achieved through reunification with the parent(s) or the caregiver of the removal home, long term custody or guardianship to the relative, or termination of parental rights and subsequent adoption of the child by the relative. Refer to CFOP 175-15, Child Welfare Legal Services. When considering the permanency plan for a child in relative placement, the concurrent planning guidelines must be followed with the understanding that the relative caregiver is defined as a Resource Family.

   b. When considering placing a child adjudicated dependent with a relative caregiver, the procedures in CFOP 175-34, Removal and Placement of Children, must be followed. The home study will provide the basis for the placement recommendation and future work with the relative and the removal family, and must be included as part of the predisposition study filed with the court. A copy of the predisposition report and home study must be maintained in the child’s case record.

   c. As the potential relative placement is being discussed, the relative must be informed of the available financial assistance and benefit options. See “notes” following paragraph 1-6b(4) above.

   d. Ss. 39.5085(2)(a), F.S., requires that an eligible Relative Caregiver Program placement must either be a court-ordered placement in the home of a relative under protective supervision of the department pursuant to ss. 39.508(9)(a)3., or court-ordered temporary legal custody to a relative pursuant to ss. 39.508(9)(a)4., F.S. In both types of placements, the relative caregiver shall be requested to participate in the development and implementation of the case plan, and shall, if determined by the court, be considered a participant entitled to notice and opportunity to contribute at 6-month judicial reviews unless the court excuses participation or permanency is established for the child.

   e. An important element of the Relative Caregiver Program is the Legislature’s recognition that most relative placements “do not need intensive supervision of the placement by the courts or by the department.” Ss. 39.5085(1)(b), F.S. Rather, the “limited casework and supervisory resources of the courts and the department” should be reserved “for those cases in which children do not have the option for safe, stable care within the family.” Subsection 39.5085(1)(d), F.S. Given this clear statement of legislative intent, while also according a full measure of consideration to the child’s need for permanency, it is suggested that the following guidelines be used in determining s. 39.508, F.S., dispositional recommendations to the court:

      (1) In cases where reunification with the parents is the goal, a recommendation for placement in the home of the relative under protective supervision of the department, pursuant to ss. 39.508(9)(a)3., should be recommended. This dispositional recommendation will allow the department the ability to assist the parent(s), child and relative caregiver with reunification efforts and to monitor, evaluate and assess the need for ongoing or additional services and tasks in the case plan.

      (2) In cases where the parents are unavailable, unable or unwilling to pursue a case plan for reunification, or demonstrate a poor prognosis for reunification as determined using the Reunification Prognosis standard tool, a recommendation for temporary legal custody to the relative
caregiver pursuant to subsection 39.508(9)(a)4., F.S., should be recommended. Such a dispositional recommendation would in most cases represent minimal intrusion into the relative caregiver family, while leaving the door open for adoption or other permanency arrangements such as long-term custody to the relative or guardianship.

f. An initial judicial review must be conducted no later than 90 days after the date of the disposition hearing or after the date of the hearing at which the court approves the case plan, but in no event shall the judicial review be held later than 6 months after the date the child was removed. The subsequent judicial reviews must be held at least every 6 months. (Section 39.701, F. S.)

g. Subsequent to adjudication and disposition pursuant to subsection 39.508(9)(a)3. or 4., F.S., a recommendation for long-term custody to the relative could be a recommendation, provided the conditions under subsection 39.508(9)(a)5.a., F.S., are met. Guardianship to the relative custodian might also be considered. So long as the child has previously been adjudicated dependent and placed in the custody of the relative pursuant to subsection 39.508(9)(a)3 or 4, eligibility for Relative Caregiver Program payments and benefits will not be affected.

h. A court-ordered relative placement may exceed 12 months and does not require a finding of extraordinary circumstances in order for the placement to continue. Unless modified by the court, the placement shall continue until the child reaches age 18, leaves the home, or is adopted, whichever occurs sooner. See paragraph 1-8e for continuing benefit options in cases of adoption, long-term custody and guardianship.

i. When recommending long-term custody to a relative, a case plan update must be submitted to the court describing the responsibilities of the relative, department and any other involved person or entity. In addition, the goal must be changed to long-term custody to a relative with a recommendation made as to the need for continued protective supervision or preventive services after consultation and agreement is reached between the counselor, the relative caregiver and the child, if age appropriate.

j. The department shall recommend termination of supervision of a court ordered relative placement when the placement is considered stable and the relative caregiver, the child, if age appropriate, and the department agree supervision is no longer necessary. The order terminating supervision by the department shall set forth the powers of the custodian of the child and shall include the powers ordinarily granted to a guardian of the person of the minor unless otherwise specified. The right of the relative caregiver to continue to receive Relative Caregiver Program payments and benefits will not be affected by the termination of the court ordered supervision.

1-10. Placement Supervision. Relative Caregiver Program placement offers an alternative to foster care placement and will not, in most cases, require intensive supervision by the court or the department. The court-approved case plan, supported by the case assessment, shall dictate the kind of supervision needed to achieve the permanency plan.

1-11. Child Care. Child care is available through the TANF At-Risk category for children placed with relatives who receive Relative Caregiver Program payments. TANF At-Risk child care is still available after a relative caregiver is granted long term custody or legal guardianship of the child.

1-12. Record Keeping.

a. The procedures in CFOP 175-42, Case Chronological Documentation, must be followed. Contacts shall focus on visitation activities, court activities, case plan goals, service needs and corresponding services for the child, parent (when reunification is the goal), and relative caregiver. The documentation of contacts should address safety concerns about the child and ensuring that health, specifically immunizations, education and mental health (as indicated) needs are being met by the relative caregiver.
b. The record shall contain sections specific to narrative, health, school, correspondence, Title XIX/TANF/Title IV-E, and legal.

c. The most recent Child Health Check-Up (formerly, EPSDT, Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment) screen for physical and mental health for each child shall be requested from the Medicaid agency and utilized in case planning and reporting to the court.

1-13. **Child Support Collections (42 U.S.C. 654 and 671 (a)(17))**. States are to take all appropriate steps to secure an assignment of support rights on behalf of a child receiving maintenance payments assistance under TANF, Title IV-E, or medical assistance. Also, sections 454 and 458 of the Social Security Act require states to collect and distribute child support for foster care cases. See 45 CFR 302.52. Subsection 414.095(15)(d), F.S., requires that caretaker relatives cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Program in establishing, modifying, or enforcing support orders with respect to child(ren) in their care who are receiving TANF, Title IV-E, or medical assistance benefits. See Chapter 2, paragraph 2-3.c., Relative Caregiver Program Eligibility Policy.

1-14. **File Retention**. All out-of-home care records shall be retained for at least seven years beyond case closure. See chapter 2, paragraph 2-1c of this operating procedure for situations which require retention beyond the seven year period (e.g., any case that is being audited must be retained until all reports of findings are received and any outstanding issues and questions are resolved). Districts shall establish and maintain procedures for maintaining closed files. See CFOP 175-53, Records Retention for Family Safety Case Records for other applicable retention periods.
## Terms and Definitions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</strong></td>
<td>Temporary cash assistance is the state’s program which provides cash assistance to needy families with dependent children. The TANF Act passed in 1996 enacting the time-limited cash assistance program. Certain groups of temporary cash assistance participants are exempt from the time limit, including child-only cases.</td>
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| **Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)** | For eligibility to begin, a home study must be completed, a child must be adjudicated dependent and a court order must be in effect that orders temporary custody of the child to the relative or relative placement under protective supervision of the department. Once these activities are completed and the relative caregiver payment requested, the TCA technical and financial policy must be met by the child. For children unknown to TCA at the time of the request for the relative caregiver payment, the relative caregiver payment will begin the earlier of 30 days from the date of application or the date of approval.  

**NOTE:** In most situations, the relative caregiver case will be initially approved as a TCA child-only case. When the relative caregiver payment is approved, benefits will begin the first month that the child may be removed from the TCA case. These situations are treated as changes. Payment cannot be received from TCA and Relative Caregiver in the same month. |
| **Date of Eligibility** | Refers to a community-based care contractual provider or other agency or entity named by the department to perform duties and responsibilities assigned to the department. |
| **Designee** | Determination of the continuing eligibility of a child for Relative Caregiver Program payment must be done according to the regular review cycle established in the TCA program. Generally this requires the relative to participate in 6-month re-determinations of eligibility. |
| **Ongoing Determination of Eligibility** | Refers to the financial need of the child. Neither income nor assets of the child can exceed the Relative Caregiver Program payment standards or the asset limit prescribed by the TANF State Plan. |
| **Need** | Payments to cover the cost of caring for the child, (and cost of providing) food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, and personal incidentals, i.e., for example, transportation, non-prescription medication. |
| **Relative Caregiver Program Payments** | The family setting from which the child was first legally removed, including a relative’s or non-relative’s home if such person had assumed and continued to exercise day to day responsibility for care and control of the child, prior to court involvement. |
Resource Family  
Refers to a relative family or a foster/adoptive family who is willing and able to assist the department in working toward reunification and who consider themselves a permanent resource for the child if reunification efforts are unsuccessful.

Medicaid  
Medical assistance funded under Title XIX of the Social Security Act, which provides basic health care to various coverage groups. Children who are eligible for relative caregiver payment are eligible for Medicaid coverage.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)  
A legal proceeding which terminates the parents’ rights to their child and frees the child for adoption.

Also formerly referred to as permanent commitment.

Specified degree of relationship  
Refers to the non-parent relative with whom the child resides. A child must be living in a home maintained by a specified relative as a condition of eligibility. The relative must be a non-parental relative within the fifth degree of specified relationship shown below:

- Brothers, sisters (including those of half blood)
- Aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews
- Grandparents, great-grandparents
- First cousins (and 1st cousins once removed)
- Relatives of a father whose relationship must be determined by a non-judicial determination of paternal relationship
- Stepbrother or stepsister.
- (Note: The parent of a stepparent is not a specified relative.)
- The natural and other legally adopted children and other relatives of the adopted parents, as long as they are within the specified degree.
- Legal spouses of any persons named in the above groups even though the marriage terminated by death or divorce.
- Individuals of preceding generations as denoted by prefixes such as grand, great-grand, great-great-grand.
**CAREGIVER HOME STUDY RECOMMENDATION TO COURT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1 Name:</th>
<th>#2 Name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The caregiver…</td>
<td>For each item indicate “Yes” or “No” and provide a summary.</td>
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</table>

1. understands and is able to meet the child’s need for protection  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
2. understands the child’s need for care and permanency  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
3. has been counseled on dependency proceedings  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
4. will provide adequate and nurturing care  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
5. has an adequate and safe home  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
6. has a history free of child abuse and/or criminal record  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
7. is financially able to care for the child  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
8. can provide long-term permanency if needed  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |
9. has been counseled on available support in the community  
   - Yes | No | Yes | No |

**Placement Decision**  
This placement is Recommended ________ Not Recommended _________  
Explanation:  

---

Counselor Completing Home Study: Name __________________________ Signature __________________________

Supervisor Reviewing/Approving Placement: Name __________________________ Signature __________________________
## HOUSEHOLD MEMBER DEMOGRAPHICS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Full Legal Name</th>
<th>Relationship to Child</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
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<th>Juvenile/Criminal Record</th>
<th>FAHIS Record</th>
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Explanation of any juvenile, criminal, or FAHIS record (Attach copies of the CI1140 or CI1160. Do not attach copies of the criminal history checks):

Description of caregiver's relationship to child(ren):

Description of caregiver's relationship with spouse/partner:

Explanation of reference check:

### Other Adult Household Members (including anyone frequently in the home in a potential caretaking capacity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Juvenile/Criminal Record</th>
<th>FAHIS Record</th>
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<tr>
<td>S M D</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S M D</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Caregiver</td>
<td>Date of Birth</td>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Explanation of any juvenile, criminal, or FAHIS record (also attach copies):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship to Caregiver</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone No.</th>
<th>Juvenile/Criminal Record</th>
<th>FAHIS Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other comments
# ASSESSMENT OF COMMITMENT AND ABILITY TO CARE FOR CHILDREN

The primary caregiver… | #1 Name: | #2 Name: 
--- | --- | ---
1. expresses strong desire to care for children | Yes No | Yes No 
2. has demonstrated an understanding of reason(s) for out-of-home placement | Yes No | Yes No 
3. has demonstrated an understanding of child-specific care needs | Yes No | Yes No 
4. has family and/or other sources of support | Yes No | Yes No 
5. indicates a willingness to follow through with referrals and services if needed | Yes No | Yes No 
6. appears to be in good health and reports no serious medical conditions | Yes No | Yes No 
7. states that they are free of substance or chemical dependency | Yes No | Yes No 
8. has a history of mental illness | Yes No | Yes No 
9. has a history of domestic violence | Yes No | Yes No
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. has childhood free of abuse/neglect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. understands child’s need for return home or other permanent resolution</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. appears willing to assist with reunification efforts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. expresses willingness to raise child(ren) if reunification cannot be accomplished</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. shows willingness to participate in case plan and attend court hearings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. is committed to following through with any court restrictions on parental visitation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. is committed to support sibling visitation, if applicable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. has ensured that any pets are well-cared for and do not present safety concerns</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. lives in a location that will not require the child to change schools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ASSESSMENT OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Current Address:

2. How Long at Current Address?  
3. Phone Number:  
4. Rent or Own?  

5. Does the caregiver have a valid driver's license?  
   Caretaker #1: Yes    No  
   Caretaker #2: Yes    No

6. Previous Addresses (last 3 years):

7. General Description of Home (including number of rooms and number of bedrooms):

8. General Description of Neighborhood:

9. Schools the Children Will Attend:

### The home...

For each item indicate “Yes” or “No” and provide an explanation.

10. is adequately furnished  
   Yes    No

11. will provide each child with adequate and appropriate sleeping arrangement  
   Yes    No

12. has no visible conditions, including level of cleanliness, which would be hazardous to child health and safety  
   Yes    No

13. has reasonable security measures  
   Yes    No

14. has medicines, alcohol, cleaning agents out of reach of children  
   Yes    No

15. has gun(s) and ammunition in locked cabinet  
   Yes    No   NA

16. has smoke/fire alarms  
   Yes    No
### DETERMINATION OF FINANCIAL SECURITY, RESOURCES, AND CHILD-CARE ARRANGEMENTS SELF REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Current Employer</th>
<th>Caregiver #1 Name:</th>
<th>Caregiver #2 Name:</th>
<th>2. Employer’s Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Medicaid Eligible?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Additional Support or Income</th>
<th>Social Security Benefits</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retirement Benefits</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAGES (Temporary Case Assistance)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Benefits</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Combined Monthly Income</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. Expenses</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food/Supplies</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Bills (please list)</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. Does the family have sufficient funds to support their current expenses?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. Will child care be needed?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>If yes, how will it be provided?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12. What new expenses are anticipated for the child(ren) to be placed in the home?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13. Will the family be able to provide sufficient care for children to be placed in the home without causing financial hardship for the family?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Explain:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14. Does the family want to be referred to Economic Self-Sufficiency Services for consideration of the relative caregiver payment?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**To the best of my knowledge, I have given the department truthful information on all questions asked of me.**

Caregiver’s Printed Name: [Caregiver’s Printed Name]          Caregiver’s Signature: [Caregiver’s Signature]
INSTRUCTIONS FOR CAREGIVER HOME STUDY

The Caregiver Home Study will be completed and submitted as part of the Predisposition Study when an out-of-home placement with a relative or non-licensed caregiver is being recommended by the department pursuant to Ss. 39.508(3)(a), Florida Statutes. This will also include children being placed from a licensed foster home to a relative placement. Careful attention to each section will ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the potential placement, maximizing the child’s safety, well-being and short-term and long-term stability. Particularly important is the section with information on the willingness and capacity of the caregiver to be a potential caregiver on a permanent basis.

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Counselor Name  Enter the name of the counselor who is conducting the home study.

Date Home Study Completed  Enter the date that the home study was approved by the supervisor.

Child(ren) to be Placed and Current Ages  Record each child’s name and respective age for whom a placement is being considered.

Florida Abuse Hotline Information System Number  Enter the current FAHIS number if the placement is being made as a result of a report of child maltreatment.

Court Case Number  Enter the case number assigned by the court.

Caregiver Home study Recommendation to Court

NOTE: At a minimum, a copy of the household member demographics must be attached to the recommendation when presented to the court.

1. Child’s need for Protection  Assess and summarize the caregiver(s) understanding of the dependency factors and their willingness and capacity to care for and protect the child(ren) from harm, especially if parental access to the child is a safety concern.

2. Permanency  Assess and summarize the caregiver(s)’ understanding about the temporary nature of the placement, the time-limited goal of reunification and court-ordered supervision.

3. Dependency Proceedings  Record and summarize the counseling on dependency proceedings the caregiver(s) have been given including case plans, case reviews, agency supervision and other orders of the court. This also includes the caregiver(s) understanding that the biological parent(s) have limited and court sanctioned access to the child(ren).

4. Adequate and Nurturing  Assess and summarize the caregiver(s) ability to provide adequate and nurturing care for the child(ren). This includes the attitude of the caregiver(s) toward the child’s parent as well as the caregiver(s) capacity for parenting children who have been abused or neglected.

5. Adequate and Safe Home  Assess and summarize the adequacy of the caregiver(s)’ home setting. This includes a critical analysis of the immediate physical environment and the local neighborhood and community.
**Abuse/Criminal History**

Assess and summarize the results of record checks for the potential caregiver(s) and other household members. This includes a complete review of all reports of child and adult abuse or neglect involving the caregiver(s) as well as a detailed analysis of any criminal history obtained on the caregiver(s) and other persons in the home.

**Financial Ability**

Assess and summarize the potential caregiver(s) financial ability to provide for the additional children who may be placed in the home, including a possible need for financial assistance or benefits such as Medicaid and services or goods.

**Permanency-Long Term**

Assess and summarize the potential caregiver(s) understanding and ability to provide for the child(ren) on a long-term basis. The caregiver must understand that a relative placement has a twofold purpose: assist and support reunification efforts; and provide a permanent home for the child if reunification is determined to not be a viable option.

**Support Services**

Record and summarize counseling the caregiver(s) have been given about available support services in the community. Support services may include support groups for kinship care and grandparents, educational services, housing, transportation and legal services.

**Placement Decision:**

Indicate whether the placement decision is approved or not approved. If approved, record an explanation that includes the supportive services needed for the caregiver or the child in order to maintain the placement, any potential concerns about the placement and a discussion of the overall results of the home study and justification of the placement. It is important to discuss specific recommendations about visitation if reunification is the current goal. If not approved, record an explanation that clearly and completely states the reasons for the decision.

**Counselor Completing Home study**

Record counselor’s name that completed the home study. Counselor must sign on signature line.

**Supervisor’s Approval**

Record name and signature of supervisor reviewing and approving the placement decision.

**Household Member Demographics**

**Primary Caregiver(s)**

Record the name of each potential caregiver(s) in the placement home.

**Relationship to Child(ren)**

Record each potential caregiver(s) biological relationship (e.g., maternal grandmother, paternal uncle) to the child(ren) to be placed.

**Social Security Number**

Must be redacted when submitted to the court.

**Marital Status**

Record the marital status of the potential caregiver(s) - Single, Married or Divorced.

**Reference Check**

Indicate if a reference check was conducted. Provide findings from the contact. Record the name, address, and telephone number of the person contacted and the date of any contact.
Juvenile/Criminal Record

Record the findings from the state and local background checks. Mark “Y” for yes if juvenile or criminal history was found, or mark “N” for no if no history was found.

FAHIS Record

Record the findings from the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System check. If the potential caregiver(s) was a subject in a report, mark “Y” for yes, or if no FAHIS history, mark “N” meaning no FAHIS history.

Explanation of Checks

Explain the outcomes of the juvenile/criminal record and FAHIS checks and the dates conducted. Attach a copy of the Subject Abuse History (CI1140 or CI1160). **Do not attach copies of criminal history checks.**

Description of Relationships

Describe the caregiver’s past and present interpersonal relationship with each child to be placed, the child’s parent(s) and siblings, and other extended family members. Explore each child’s present relationships with friends, involvement in community activities (church, school, etc.) and their behavior and feelings toward the relative.

Describe Marital Relationship

Describe the history of the caregivers’ marital relationship (e.g., married for 15 years, five years of live-in arrangement) and the characteristics of the relationship, e.g. tolerant, argumentative, etc.). Include strengths and weaknesses, shared goals of the couple or individual goals as well as interests and abilities. Base this upon observations and responses to interview questions. Corroborate stability of relationship with references.

Adult Household Members

Enter the same type of information as described above. Also include information on any adult household member who may be in a potential caregiving capacity (e.g. characteristics of the relationship between the adult and the child to be placed, the feelings of both the adult and child regarding the placement, discipline methods, etc.).

Children in the Home

Describe the ages, relationships to adults in the home, school placements, health status, special needs, etc. of all children in the home. Information is needed to determine the capacity of the caregiver to care for additional child(ren) as well as the compatibility of the children already in the home with the children to be placed. Findings must be explained as indicated on the Juvenile, Criminal or FAHIS Record.

Others Who Frequent Home

Enter the same type of information as in Children In the Home, above. Juvenile/Criminal History and FAHIS checks are required for persons and children 12 years of age or older. The findings must be explained as indicated in Explanation of Juvenile, Criminal or FAHIS Record.

Other Comments

Enter additional information obtained while conducting the interview. This includes the caregiver’s feelings about their job(s), their social network, support systems (family or friends), whether they will be supportive of the child’s involvement in outside activities like Scouts, Little League, school clubs, etc. Are the potential caregivers “child-oriented?” Openness? Sharing of ideas? Quality of listening? Indicate family and social activities the caregiver(s) enjoy or participate? What are their primary interests?

Assessment of Commitment and Ability to Care for Children
Consider each factor listed and record your assessment of each potential caretaker(s) commitment and ability for each of the 18 factors.

**Assessment of Physical Environment:** This section will help determine whether or not the environment is safe for the child, if it allows for continuity in the child’s life, if there is enough space for the child and the stability of the family’s life.

1. **Current Address**
Enter for each potential caregiver:
Document the current street address of the potential caregiver.

2. **How long at the current address**
Document the length of time they have resided at the current address,

3. **Phone #**
Document a telephone number(s) or contact telephone number(s) if they do not have a telephone in their home.

4. **Rent or Own?**
Document if they rent or own the home.

5. **Fla. Driver’s License #**
Does the caregiver have a valid driver’s license? Circle yes or no.

6. **Previous Addresses**
Document the previous addresses of the past three years.

7. **Description of Home**
Record a description of the home (e.g., 3 bedroom/2 bath home, 4 bedroom/1 bath apartment, 3 bedroom/2 bath double wide mobile home.)

8. **Description of Neighborhood**
Record a description of the neighborhood (e.g., suburban area of large metropolitan city, rural county area, inner city area)

9. **Schools**
Record each school that the child(ren) will attend and record whether the placement will require a change of schools. Also, any information about school such as whether the school will be able to meet any special needs of the child(ren) may have, e.g., hearing impaired.

10. **Adequately Furnished**
Record a description of the interior furnishings of the home and assess if adequate space will be available for the child(ren) who are being placed to store their individual possessions such as clothing, books, and toys.

11. **Sleeping Arrangements**
Record your observations of sleeping arrangements for the child(ren) who are being placed. Will the child(ren) be afforded privacy?

12. **Hazardous Conditions**
Record your assessment of visible conditions (e.g., locked/gated fence around swimming pool, cleanliness of the home as well as the outside yard area, sanitary conditions of kitchen and bathrooms).

13. **Security Measures**
Record your observations of locked doors, windows or other accesses to the home.

14. **Dangerous Items/Substances**
Record your observation of locked cabinets, laundry or cleaning area, garages, storage areas, etc. to determine whether any dangerous items or substances are accessible to the child(ren) who are being placed.
15. Guns/Ammunition  Record your discussion with the potential caregiver and observations of locked cabinets for guns and ammunition in the home. If there are no guns or ammunition in the home, record NA.

16. Smoke/Fire Alarms  Record your discussion with the potential caregiver and observation of smoke/fire alarms and emergency evacuation plans.

Financial Security, Resources, and Child Care Arrangements. This is a self-report. No additional verification is required.

1. Current Employer  Record the name of the potential caregiver(s)' business and employer.

2. Address  Enter the employment address.

3. Salary  Record the gross salary of each potential caregiver.

4. Length of Employment  Record the caregiver(s)' length of time with the current employer.

5. Hours/Shifts  Enter the normal working hours or shift for each caregiver.

6. Medicaid  Indicate whether the caregiver(s) are receiving Medicaid benefits.

7. Other Sources of Income  Record other sources and the amount of income of all the household members (do not include the income of the children to be placed) if the source is not listed. Total the household income.

8. Combined Monthly Income  Enter the combined monthly income of all the household members.

9. Expenses  Record the household’s monthly expenses as listed in this section. This does not include those of the child(ren) to be placed. Total the household monthly expenses.

10. Income & Expenses  Compare income and expenses. If income exceeds expenses, the household appears to have sufficient income to support themselves.

11. Child Care  Indicate whether child care arrangements for the child(ren) to be placed will be required, how transportation to child care will be provided, and any other comments regarding child care.

12. Child Related Expenses  Record any additional and anticipated expenses related to the child(ren) who will be placed such as clothing, medical, or transportation.

13. Sufficient Care  Record your assessment of the caregiver(s)' ability to care for the children to be placed without causing a financial hardship.

14. Economic Services  Indicate whether the relative(s) can/could accept the child(ren)’s placement without receiving financial assistance and, if the relative(s) indicate they could not, whether the caregiver(s) requests a referral to Economic Self Sufficiency Services for the Relative Caregiver Program benefits. If the potential caregiver(s) is a non-relative or does not fall within the specified degree of relationship, enter NA.
The Caregiver(s) must sign this section of the home study affirming that the information they have provided is accurate and correct.
Chapter 2
ELIGIBILITY


a. Relative caregivers who opt to receive a monthly payment to assist them monetarily in caring for a child, who has been placed with them by a dependency court, may apply for temporary cash assistance through the Economic Self-Sufficiency program. The eligibility requirements are closely linked with "child-only" temporary cash assistance cases in the current TCA program. "Child-only" and Relative Caregiver Program cases are subject to the eligibility criteria in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) State Plan. There are certain important differences in these two programs, including differences in payment amounts, benefits, eligibility criteria, and procedures, which will be discussed in this chapter.

b. In order for the child who is placed with a relative caregiver to receive a monthly Relative Caregiver Program payment, the child must:

   (1) Live in an approved home of a specified relative. The relative caregiver, as determined by a home study, must be capable of providing a physically safe environment and a stable, supportive home for the child(ren) under their care, and must assure that the child’s well-being is met.

   (2) Be adjudicated dependent pursuant to 39.508(9)(a)3. or 4., F.S., and be in:

      (a) Court-ordered temporary legal custody of the relative; OR,

      (b) Court-ordered placement in the home of a relative under protective supervision of the department.

   (3) Meet certain technical and financial requirements.

   (4) Not be included in any other temporary cash assistance (TCA) case.

   (5) Reside in the state of Florida.

NOTE: A child placed with a relative in Florida by another state is not eligible for the Relative Caregiver Program payment or benefits.

c. Retention of Eligibility Case Records.

   (1) All information in the eligibility paper case file must be retained for at least seven years from the most recent complete re-determination/application.

   (2) Circumstances, which require retention beyond the seven-year period, include:

      (a) Claim(s), negotiation(s), audit(s), or other action(s) initiated but not concluded; or,

      (b) Information/documentation pertaining to lost benefits; or,

      (c) Information/documentation older than three years that continues to be required to establish eligibility within the prior three years.
(3) For assistance, contact the district records manager. See also, CFOP 175-53, Records Retention for Family Safety Case Records.


   a. Program Administration. This program is jointly administered by the Family Safety Program Office and Economic Self-Sufficiency Services Program Office. At the district level, the referral and eligibility determination process for the Relative Caregiver Program is shared by Family Safety staff and Economic Self-Sufficiency staff. It is important that communications are maintained at all levels. The staff of both programs utilize the Relative Caregiver Communication form, Attachment 1 of this chapter, to notify one another of a relative caregiver’s desire to apply for a Relative Caregiver Program payment and to communicate changes in circumstances that may affect the amount of the payment or eligibility for the payment.

   b. District Family Safety Staff. In addition to monitoring, evaluating and assessing services and the progress of case plans and informing the court by completing judicial reviews, district family safety staff are responsible for:

      (1) Completing a home study of the relative’s home, including all appropriate record checks, to determine if the relative is capable of providing a physically safe environment and a stable, supportive home for the children in their care so the child’s well being will be protected. Home studies may be completed by a person or other agency contracted with the department for this purpose. All home studies, including contracted home studies, must be approved by the department before a relative caregiver placement can be recommended to the court.

      (2) Completing court activities for an adjudication of dependency and court-ordered placement with the relative under protective supervision or outright temporary legal custody to the relative. An adjudication of dependency and a court-ordered relative placement are required before a referral is made for the Relative Caregiver Program benefits.

      (3) Notifying the public assistance specialist within 5 days when a child in the home of a relative caregiver becomes potentially eligible for the Relative Caregiver Program benefits and the relative has indicated a desire to be considered for these benefits. Notification must be documented using the Relative Caregiver Communication form.

      (4) Notifying the Public Assistance Specialist within 10 days when there are changes in the case of a child in the home of a relative caregiver that may impact the Relative Caregiver Program benefits, such as the child has been adopted, turned age 18 or left the home. The Relative Caregiver Communication form is used for this purpose. Refer to paragraph 1-8e of this operating procedure.

   c. District Public Assistance Staff. District public assistance staff are responsible for:

      (1) At the face to face interview, the Public Assistance Specialist must inform all persons caring for children who are relatives about the Relative Caregiver Program. A notation in running record comments will serve as verification that the client was informed of this program.

      (2) The Public Assistance Specialist must explain the options associated with the Relative Caregiver Program to the applicant.

      (3) The client must complete the Relative Caregiver Program Request for Eligibility Consideration, Attachment 2 of this chapter, by marking the appropriate box and signing the form.
(4) The Public Assistance Specialist must provide the client with a copy of the Relative Caregiver Program Request for Eligibility Consideration form and maintain a copy in the case record.

(5) Determining the child’s initial and ongoing eligibility for the Relative Caregiver Program payment and Medicaid as well as providing notification of such action to the client and Family Safety counselor. Districts are encouraged to specialize the processing of eligibility determinations for children in the care of relatives in order to facilitate communication and streamline the flow of information between the two programs.

(6) Determining continuing eligibility for the child’s monthly Relative Caregiver Program benefits, including Medicaid, through complete reviews, and scheduled and unscheduled partial reviews.

(7) Maintaining an electronic and paper case file for the relative payee which contains an assistance group for each relative caregiver payment.

(8) Documenting, clearly, on the running records comments (CLRC) screen, the benefit calculation(s) for each child.

(9) Communicating with the Family Services Counselor as necessary and providing updates on the status of the eligibility case.

(10) When the request for Relative Caregiver payments is originated at the Economic Self-Sufficiency office, the Public Assistance Specialist should provide written notification to Family Safety, via the Relative Caregiver Communication form, within 10 working days. At that time, a copy of the Relative Caregiver Program Request for Eligibility Consideration form signed by the applicant will also be provided to Family Safety.


a. Initial Application.

(1) The child’s relative caregiver is referred (or self-refers) to the Economic Self-Sufficiency Services Office to complete the Request for Assistance (RFA) for temporary cash assistance.

(2) An appointment is scheduled with a Public Assistance Specialist for an interactive interview.

(3) The Public Assistance Specialist reviews the family composition and determines if the family will be subject to the work requirements and time limits under the TCA program, or, alternatively, if the child is eligible for a “child-only” payment. Assistance under the TCA “child-only” category is not time-limited, nor is the relative subject to work requirements.

(4) If all eligibility factors are met, the case is approved by the Public Assistance Specialist for payment.

b. Conversion to Relative Caregiver Program Payment.

(1) Upon notification (Relative Caregiver Communication form, Attachment 1 to this chapter) from the Family Safety Counselor that the home study has been completed, the home has been approved, the child has been adjudicated dependent, and the court has ordered the placement with the relative, the Public Assistance Specialist takes action to convert the TCA payment to the
Relative Caregiver Program payment for each eligible child. In doing so the Public Assistance Specialist:

(a) Creates an assistance group for the child(ren) who are potentially eligible under the Relative Caregiver Program. The Public Assistance Specialist must remove the child’s needs from any active temporary cash assistance (TCA) group to ensure duplication of benefits does not occur.

(b) Includes in each relative caregiver assistance group all child(ren) eligible for a Relative Caregiver Program payment. NOTE: Standard filing unit under the TCA program does not apply to children eligible under the Relative Caregiver Program. Filing unit policy for the Relative Caregiver Program is addressed in paragraph 2-3c of this operating procedure.

(c) Removes the child from the assistance group if the child is receiving TANF temporary cash assistance.

(d) Converts the TCA payment to the Relative Caregiver Program payment for the next recurring month.

NOTE: Payment cannot be received from TCA and Relative Caregiver Program in the same month.

(e) Notifies the relative caregiver and the Family Services Counselor of the payment conversion to the Relative Caregiver Program.

(2) In addition, the Public Assistance Specialist conducts periodic determinations of eligibility, including scheduled periodic complete reviews. Complete reviews are generally scheduled on a six-month cycle. The relative caregiver will participate in an interactive interview at each complete review and all factors of eligibility will be reviewed.

(3) The Public Assistance Specialist also evaluates eligibility for other public assistance programs if the child’s circumstances change and he or she is no longer eligible for the Relative Caregiver Program payment.

c. Relative Caregiver Program Eligibility Policy. The temporary cash assistance policy as specified in the TANF State Plan and HRSM 165-22, Integrated Public Assistance Policy, and this operating procedure serve as the basis for this eligibility determination. However, there are some differences due to specific Relative Caregiver Program requirements. These differences are highlighted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative Factor</th>
<th>Relative Caregiver Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Request for Assistance (RFA)</td>
<td>CF-ES 2066, RFA-Completed and signed by the relative caregiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RFA processed on the FLORIDA system by a PAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face Contact</td>
<td>Face to face contact required with caretaker relative (payee) or authorized representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Time Standard</td>
<td>45 days from the date of application (same as temporary cash assistance).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Additional Information Needed** | The relative caregiver must provide additional information within 10 days of request or the case will be terminated, as continued eligibility cannot be determined. 
If the request for additional information is part of an application process, the relative must return information according to normal TCA processing standards. Failure to do so will result in denial of benefits. |
| **Date of Eligibility** | For eligibility to begin, a home study must be completed, a child must be adjudicated dependent and a court order must be in effect that orders temporary custody of the child to the relative or orders the relative placement under protective supervision of the department. Once these activities are completed and the relative caregiver payment requested, the TCA technical and financial policy must be met by the child. For children unknown to TCA at the time of the request for the relative caregiver payment, the Relative Caregiver Program payment will begin the earlier of 30 days from the date of application or the date of approval, whichever is earlier. 
NOTE: In most situations, the relative caregiver case will be initially approved as a TCA child-only case. When the relative caregiver payment is approved, benefits will begin the first month that the child may be removed from the TCA case. These situations are treated as changes. A face-to-face interview is optional as these situations are treated as changes. Payment cannot be received from TCA and Relative Caregiver Program in the same month. |
| **Ten Day Notice Requirement** | A person receiving assistance must be given or mailed written notification 10 calendar days in advance of action to cancel or reduce the cash assistance grant. The notification provides fair hearing rights. |

### ELIGIBILITY FACTORS

| **Complete Eligibility Review** | Eligibility reviews are completed according to regular TCA policy and procedure and typically require the relative to participate in eligibility reviews every six months. |
| **Partial Eligibility Review** | • Partial reviews are scheduled when a child’s situation is anticipated to change. 
• Partial eligibility reviews are required when the child turns age 6 and 13 due to the Relative Caregiver Program payment amount changes at these ages. 
• Any changes in the income, assets or placement status (living arrangement) must be reported within 10 days. 
• Other changes invoking a partial include a child’s removal from the relative’s home, changes of address, etc. |
| **Adjudicated Dependent** | The child must be adjudicated dependent pursuant to 39.508 (9), F.S. The Family Services Counselor provides information on the date the child is determined by the court to be dependent. |
| **Approved Home** | The Family Services Counselor must ensure that a home study is conducted and the relative’s home is approved by the department. When the department does not approve the caregiver home for placement of a child(ren), the court may concur with this recommendation or choose to not concur and order continued placement notwithstanding the department’s home study concerns. For purposes of eligibility, the home study will be considered approved if the court approves the home study over the department’s concerns. |
| **Age** | Children must be under 18 years of age. |
| **Residence** | The child must reside in Florida and intend to remain. (If a child moves out of the state of Florida, the child is not eligible for the Relative Caregiver payment.) |
| **Citizenship** | Each child must be a U.S. citizen, or a qualified alien. |
### Filing Unit
- The child is a filing unit of one.
- TCA standard filing unit policy does not apply for a child who is determined to be a relative caregiver child.
- A relative caregiver may have several children in the home who qualify for separate relative caregiver payments and may receive a payment for each child.
- The relative caregiver may receive a TCA payment for herself and other relative children or her natural children and still be entitled to the relative caregiver payment for the child(ren) in this category of assistance.
- The relative caregiver may receive a TCA payment for relative children in a child only case and the relative caregiver payments for one or more children in this category.
- Under no circumstances may the child receive payments from the TCA program in the same month they receive a relative caregiver payment.
- The child continues to be eligible for the relative caregiver payment when their parent(s) temporarily visits in the home. If the parent is in the home 30 consecutive days or longer, the child’s eligibility for the relative caregiver payment ends. The parent could then apply for temporary cash assistance for themselves and their child.

### Living in the Approved Home of a Specified Relative
A child must reside in the “approved” home of a relative within the fifth degree of relationship during the month of application and thereafter. (The relative with whom the child is placed must be approved by family safety) Refer to chapter 1.

### Welfare Enumeration
Each child must provide a Social Security Number or proof they have applied for one.

### Child Support Enforcement
The payee must provide information to the PAS and must cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Program to identify and locate the non-custodial parent(s), establish paternity and/or support, and enforce and/or modify child support unless good cause exists (see HRSM 165-22, chapter 1400).

*Among other reasons, good cause exists when legal proceedings for the adoption of a child are pending before a court. Good cause also exists when the parent or caretaker relative is being assisted by a public or licensed private social agency to determine whether or not to relinquish the child for adoption and the discussions have not gone on for more than three months. (45 CFR 232.42(2)(ii) and (iii))*

### Immunization and Education
- The child’s immunizations must be current when they are under age 5.
- School attendance is required for children under age 16 in keeping with the law on mandatory education.
- The immunization and education information may be documented in the TCA case file. If this is the situation, this documentation should be used.
- Immunization and education information is also contained in the child’s family safety case file.
- If the relative caregiver is unable to provide documentation on immunizations, the Family Services Counselor should be contacted and the information provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELIGIBILITY FACTORS</th>
<th>Relative Caregiver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asset Limit</strong></td>
<td>$2000 for a relative caregiver child. Only the assets of the child are used in the eligibility determination for the relative caregiver payment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>All earned and non-earned income is counted unless specifically excluded or disregarded in HRSM 165-22, chapter 1800. Only the income of the relative caregiver child is included in the eligibility determination for the relative caregiver payment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Budgeting**

- The child’s countable income must be less than the relative caregiver payment standard for the child’s age.
- Difference between relative caregiver payment standard for the age of the child and the child’s countable income is the amount of the payment.

**Disregards**

The earned income of a child is generally excluded. However, if the earnings are countable, the first $200 and 1/2 of the remainder are disregarded in the budgeting process.

**Case recording**

Record all actions taken on the case in the FLORIDA running record comment screen (CLRC) fully explaining the circumstances regarding the relative caregiver eligibility, any changes in relative caregiver eligibility and circumstances surrounding a case approval or denial.

**Home study**

The Family Services Counselor ensures that a home study is completed to determine if the relative is capable of providing a physically safe environment and a stable, supportive home for the child(ren) in their care so the child’s well being will be protected. The home study is one requirement before a relative caregiver payment can be authorized for a child.

**Adjudicated Dependent**

A child may be considered potentially eligible for relative caregiver payment once the home study is completed and the child is determined dependent and court-ordered temporary custody is awarded to a relative or a court ordered placement is made in the relative’s home under protective supervision of the department.

**Notification about Relative Caregiver children**

The Family Service Counselor shall notify the Public Assistance Specialist anytime a child potentially qualifies for a relative caregiver payment. If the relative is an applicant or recipient, then the child’s eligibility for a relative caregiver payment shall be reviewed and adjustments made to the family’s payment if all other factors of eligibility are met. The Public Assistance Specialist shall not determine eligibility for the Relative Caregiver Program unless such information is received from a Family Services Counselor or the department’s designee.

d. **FLORIDA System.** The FLORIDA system will process the child’s eligibility for the Relative Caregiver Program payment, but the payment must be created by the Public Assistance Specialist using a FLORIDA workaround # 94 and a FIAT (a manual process that allows an override of the automated system and requires a supervisor’s approval) of eligibility.

2-4. **Medicaid Eligibility.** (39.5085 (2) (f), F.S.)

a. Children eligible for the monthly relative caregiver payment are eligible for Medicaid.

b. The initial eligibility determination for relative caregiver and Medicaid benefits is made by the Economic Self-Sufficiency Services Public Assistance Specialist.

c. Refer to HRSM 165-22, chapter 2000, for policies and procedures regarding retroactive Medicaid eligibility.

Previous editions of this form are obsolete, and may no longer be used.
RELATIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM
REQUEST FOR ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATION

Please read the program requirements and program options listed herein. Your signature below indicates that you are requesting consideration for Relative Caregiver program eligibility and understand the requirements and options of the Relative Caregiver Program.

Relative Caregiver Program Requirements

- I must be taking care of children who are related to me.
- There must be a Florida court order by a judge finding that the children were abandoned, abused or neglected. The Child(ren) who I am applying for has been placed in my custody by a Florida juvenile court judge.
- I understand that the Department’s office of Family Safety will do a home study to be sure that the children in my custody are safe from abuse or neglect. If there are problems in my home, the Department may be court ordered by a judge to supervise them or even remove them from my home.
- I must file a Request for Assistance with the Department of Children and Families Economic Self-Sufficiency office, have an interview and provide all the requested documentation that the Department needs to decide if I meet the requirements for Temporary Cash Assistance. If it is hard for me to get the requested documentation, I understand that I can ask my caseworker to help me.
- If I receive Temporary Cash Assistance, I cannot also receive Relative Caregiver benefits in the same month. If I meet technical and financial requirements, I can ask to receive Temporary Cash Assistance while the request for Relative Caregiver eligibility is being processed. If I am eligible for Temporary Cash Assistance, I will not receive the increased Relative Caregiver benefit until the first month after the Department stops my Temporary Cash Assistance.
- I understand that the Relative Caregiver payment is to cover the cost of the child’s basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, school supplies, and personal items like toiletries, entertainment, etc.

Relative Caregiver Program Options. I would like to be considered for the following:

☐ Temporary Cash Assistance payment while my Relative Caregiver application is being processed. I understand that if approved for the Relative Caregiver payment I will not receive the child’s increased Relative Caregiver benefit until the first month that the Temporary Cash Assistance payment can be stopped, or;
☐ Relative Caregiver payment for the eligible child(ren), or;
☐ Temporary Cash Assistance child-only payment, or;
☐ Temporary Cash Assistance payment and include my own needs, or;
☐ Relative Caregiver payment for the eligible child(ren) and Temporary Cash Assistance for other qualified individuals in my home.

ASK A WORKER FOR HELP IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS
☐ I have been given a copy of the relative caregiver program brochure.

Print Name ___________________________________________ Signature ___________________________ Date _____________

CF-ES 2305, Apr 2001

Attachment 2 to Chapter 2
Chapter Three

DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF THE MONTHLY BENEFIT PAYMENT

3-1. Statutory Requirements. Subsection 39.5085(2)(d), F.S., provides that the amount of the Relative Caregiver Program benefit payment shall be based on the child’s age within a payment schedule established by rule of the department, and subject to availability of funding. The subsection further provides that the statewide monthly rate under the program for children judicially placed with relatives who are not licensed as foster homes may not exceed 82 percent of the statewide foster care board rate, nor may the cost of providing Relative Caregiver Program assistance to a relative caregiver exceed the cost of providing out-of-home care in emergency shelter or foster care. See Attachment 1 to this chapter, Relative Caregiver Payment Standards.

3-2. Payment Schedule by Age Categories.

a. The basic monthly benefit payment schedule (not including Medicaid, family support and preservation services, flexible funds utilized in accordance with s. 409.165, F.S., subsidized child care, and other services which may be available through the department or other local, state or federal programs) is uniform and is based on the age of the child. If a child turns age 6 or 13 during a month other than the initial month of eligibility or a review month, the Public Assistance Specialist must set a partial review for the month prior to the birth month.

b. The following chart shows the payment standards by age of the child.

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<th>AGE OF CHILD</th>
<th>MONTHLY PAYMENT STANDARD</th>
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<td>0 to 5</td>
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NOTE: Pursuant to 39.5085(2)(d), in no case may the monthly payment exceed 82 percent of the statewide average foster care [monthly board] rate.

(Signed original copy on file)

KATHLEEN A. KEARNEY
Secretary
This publication has been revised to expand and update the responsibilities of district Public Assistance staff in the Relative Caregiver Program eligibility process. When a relative caregiver is identified by Economic Self-Sufficiency staff, the responsibilities of the Public Assistance Specialist are expanded. They include the provision of a face-to-face information exchange regarding the Relative Caregiver Program and the public assistance options available. An additional requirement is that relative caregiver applicants are to complete the Relative Caregiver Program Request for Eligibility Consideration form, which has been made an attachment to this operating procedure. This documents that they have been informed of the payment options available and allows them to indicate their desired option. Clarification is provided that when the applicant indicates an interest in applying for the Relative Caregiver Program payment, the Public Assistance Specialist will notify Family Safety staff by completing and sending the Relative Caregiver Communication form and a copy of the Relative Caregiver Program Request for Eligibility Consideration form signed by the applicant within 10 working days. Additional language has been inserted to specify that both Public Assistance and Family Safety staff use the Relative Caregiver Communication form to communicate between each other a relative caregivers desire to apply for the Relative Caregiver Program payment and to communicate changes in circumstances that may affect the amount of the payment or eligibility for the payment. References to Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency (WAGES) have been replaced by Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), as these newer terms have replaced WAGES. Also, an erroneous reference in section 2-2b(4) was corrected.
RELATIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM
MONTHLY PAYMENT STANDARDS

The monthly payment standards for the Relative Caregiver Program payment are uniform and are based on the age of the child. If a child turns age 6 or 13 during a month other than the initial month of eligibility or a review month, the Public Assistance Specialist must set a partial review for the month prior to the birth month. The following chart shows the payment standards by age of the child.

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