



New York State

Office of Children & Family Services

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News

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NEW KINGAP PROGRAM ASSISTS GRANDPARENTS, OTHER RELATIVES CARING FOR CHILDREN

Grandparents and other relatives caring for children in New York State have a new option, under the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) that went into effect on April 1.

The program enables foster children to achieve permanent placements with related foster parents by providing financial support and, in most cases, medical coverage upon their discharge from foster care to the relative guardian.

To be eligible, relatives must be fully certified or approved as foster parents, and be caring for a related child who has been placed with them as a foster child for at least six months.

NYS Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) Commissioner Gladys Carrión, Esq., said: “Relatives are often best suited to give children, whose birth parents are unable to care for them, the love, stability and support they need to grow and thrive. I am pleased that New York State can offer relative caregivers this new option, which will help provide permanency for the children and needed support for the caregivers, often with the least disruption to family structures.”

KinGAP will likely encourage relatives who are currently serving as foster parents for a related foster child to agree to be a permanent resource for the child. Often, relatives are reluctant to see the foster care relationship end and to assume legal guardianship because of the loss of needed financial support and medical coverage for the child.

Also, KinGAP will help address those cases where a return to the birth parent is not safe or suitable and adoption is not a viable or appropriate option. Often, especially with older foster children, the child will not consent to adoption. In some cases, the severing of parental rights required for an adoption with the child remaining with a relative caretaker can cause conflict and confusion for the child and create issues and pressures within the family.

The program is overseen by OCFS, which went through a lengthy federal approval process. The federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 gave states the option to operate a KinGAP program. Ten states, including New York, now have federally approved KinGAP programs. New York’s KinGAP program also required the approval of the New York State Legislature, granted last year.

Relatives interested in learning more about KinGAP and whether kinship guardianship is a viable permanency option for their family should check with their caseworker. Caseworkers are with the local department of social services (in New York City, the Administration for Children’s Services) or, in some instances, with a voluntary agency assisting the local district. A wealth of information on KinGAP is available at www.ocfs.state.ny.us (click on the “Kinship Care – KinGAP” button in the left column).

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