



Date:

To:

RE:

Recognizing the importance of family and its meaning in the lives of children, federal and state law now require expanded opportunities for adult family members to participate in the care and placement of related children who are in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). This focus recognizes that, where possible, a child's best interests are served by remaining in the context of family, culture, and community. The Department of Children and Families is required to exercise due diligence to identify adult relatives of children who come into our care, and to provide the adult relatives with resource information about the programs and services available to relatives.

You have been identified as an adult relative of the child(ren) named above and this letter is being sent to you to advise you that your relative is currently in the care of DCF. I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible in order to discuss your ability and willingness to participate in your relative's case.

I may be reached at _____. I look forward to hearing from you.

After talking with me, if you wish to be considered as a placement resource for your relative, your next step will be to complete the Application for Foster Care. I can provide you with the application when we meet or I can mail or e-mail the application to you.

Your relative may be placed with you on an emergency basis while you complete the licensing process, provided that the Department conducts an emergency home assessment and initial background screen which do not identify any potential licensing barriers. To start this process it is important that you contact me as soon as you receive this letter.

The Application for Foster Care requires you to provide information about yourself and other adults and children in your home, including information about criminal court involvement and prior involvement with the Department of Children and Families. The application also asks for information about your medical history and mental health history, as well as any substance abuse issues. You will also need to include information about the physical layout of your home and any firearms, weapons and pets in your home. You will need to provide three references and a financial statement as part of the application process. Finally, you will need to participate in nine hours of training to become licensed by DCF. While this process may seem complex, it is necessary to comply with state and federal law, and we will be happy to assist you with completing the application.

If you become licensed through the Department, you will receive foster care payments, which currently range between approximately \$25-\$28 per day, depending on the child's needs, and you may also be eligible for some additional services. The attached list provides a summary of these services.

In addition, after the child has been placed with you as a foster parent for six months, you may be eligible for the subsidized guardianship program. Once you indicate an interest in the guardianship program, the DCF worker will assess the placement in terms of whether or not this is a viable permanent plan for the child. Under this program, DCF files a motion in court to end DCF's involvement as legal guardian of the child and to transfer guardianship to you, the licensed relative. If you are approved as permanent guardian, the amount of the monthly subsidy will be negotiated with you. The child will be enrolled in health insurance at state expense. You may also be eligible for additional one-time subsidies to cover unusual expenses.

Additionally, the Department of Social Services has recently modified its Care 4 Kids rules so that DCF subsidized guardian families are treated the same way as foster care families. The income of DCF subsidized guardians is no longer counted toward eligibility or payment levels. Therefore, you may be eligible for day care assistance as well.

State law also addresses what will happen if you are unable to continue to serve as the child's guardian. In the event of your death, severe disability or serious illness, DCF may transfer the guardianship subsidy to a new relative caregiver who meets the foster care licensing requirements and is appointed guardian by a court.

Please be aware that if you request to be a placement resource and the Department determines that you do not qualify to hold a license as a foster parent, you may still ask to intervene in the child's legal proceeding before the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters for the purpose of obtaining temporary custody of your relative. If you file your request within ninety days of the first hearing in the case, the court **will** grant the motion to intervene, except for good cause shown. If you wait longer than ninety days, the court has greater discretion to decide whether or not to allow you to intervene, except that your request **will** be granted (absent good cause) whenever the child's placement has disrupted or is about to disrupt. If the court allows you to intervene, the court may request that you release your medical records, including any psychiatric or psychological records, and may require you to submit to a medical or physical examination. The Department is responsible for paying for any court-ordered examinations.

You may contact the Juvenile Court with jurisdiction over your case at _____ for information on how to intervene in the case.

In addition, you may also ask the court for permission to intervene in the case for the purpose of seeking permanent guardianship of your relative child, regardless of whether DCF agrees. The court has discretion to grant or deny your motion to intervene, except that the motion will be granted (absent good cause) whenever the child's most recent placement has disrupted or is about to disrupt.

In addition, if you become a licensed foster parent for your relative child or if the court grants temporary custody to you, and the Department objects to your request to become the child's permanent legal guardian or adoptive parent, the Department must prove to the court that transfer of guardianship to you or adoption by you is not in the best interests of the child and that you are not a suitable and worthy person. If the court determines that DCF has not proven this, you will be awarded legal guardianship or be allowed to adopt the child.

This letter provides you with information about the options that are available under current law for you to participate in the care and placement of your relative. **Time is of the essence in responding to this request**, as we must make placement decisions that serve the best interests of your relative child. Placement with family members promotes the best interests of the child and maintains important family connections. As outlined above, there are numerous services that are available to assist you. Please call me immediately if you have any questions or if you would like more information about the various options available to you.

There are also several time sensitive deadlines set forth above. Failure to adhere to any of these deadlines could result in your relative's placement in a non-family foster home. In addition, failure to abide by the court's deadlines for intervention could preclude you from participating in the court process.

I encourage you to contact me so I can assist you with reviewing all these options and providing you with any forms that you may need. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Social Worker Name:

Phone:

E-mail:

cc: Assistant Attorney General