

**Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Office of Families and Children****Policy and Practice Guidance Document #004
Kinship Support Program Overview
January 28, 2021****Background**

This Policy and Practice Guidance Document expands upon the information included in the Families and Children Letter (FCL) #003 sent on December 30, 2020, located at: <https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/KinshipSupportProgram.stm>.

On December 29, 2020, Governor Mike DeWine signed Senate Bill 310 which created a Kinship Support Program (KSP) to provide financial payments to eligible kinship caregivers. As a result of this legislation, Executive Order 2020-43D was issued on December 30, 2020, stating that the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will pay eligible kinship caregivers who care for children placed in their home. The language states the payments will be provided for up to nine months for caregivers with a placement date on or before September 29, 2021 or up to six months for caregivers who have a placement date on or after September 30, 2021. This timeframe allows the caregiver time to become licensed as a foster parent if they choose. Once licensed, the caregiver will receive foster care payments for the child placed in their care. The Executive Order also states payments (including retroactive payments back to December 29, 2020) must be paid by June 2021.

Eligible kinship caregivers will receive \$10.20 per day per kinship child placed in their home. The first payments are scheduled to be released in April 2021 and will be retroactive back to December 29, 2020, or the date of placement, whichever is more recent.

Kinship Support Payment Eligibility

- The child must be in the temporary, permanent, or legal custody of a public children services agency (PCSA) or Title IV-E Agency.
- The child must be placed as a kinship placement with a kinship caregiver, which can include fictive kin.
- The kinship caregiver cannot be currently licensed as a foster caregiver.

KSP and Family Assistance

Kinship caregivers are ineligible to receive Ohio Works First (OWF)-child only benefits and KSP payments for the same child at the same time. The Office of Family Assistance is in the process of revising rules to reflect this requirement with an effective date of April 2021. Eligible caregivers may apply for OWF-child only benefits once the KSP payments have ended.

For the Ohio Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility determination, KSP payments will be treated in the same way foster care maintenance payments are treated for assistance groups. Therefore, if the SNAP assistance group chooses to include the child for whom KSP is received in the assistance group, the KSP payments will also be used in SNAP eligibility determination.

Kinship Support Payment Timelines

- Eligible kinship caregivers will receive the KSP payments according to the timeframes listed below unless they become a licensed foster caregiver or the child is no longer a kinship placement in the home, whichever is sooner.
 - If the child was placed in the kinship home on or before December 29, 2020, the kinship caregiver will receive the KSP payments for not longer than nine months.
 - If the child is placed in the kinship home between December 29, 2020 and September 29, 2021, the kinship caregiver will receive the KSP payments for not longer than nine months.
 - If the child is placed in the home on or after September 30, 2021, the kinship caregiver will receive the KSP payments for not longer than six months.

The timeframes are to allow the caregiver enough time to become a licensed foster parent if they choose to become licensed. To become licensed, kinship caregivers may receive waivers of non-safety related foster care requirements. This may include training classes or other requirements that may be a barrier to certification.

SACWIS

Caseworkers are reminded of the requirement to enter placement information each business day or as soon as the information becomes available in accordance with OAC 5101:2-33-70. Entering placement data timely will ensure accurate payments are made to caregivers.

SACWIS will issue payments directly to kinship caregivers starting in April 2021. The initial payment will be issued for the timeframe of December 29, 2020 thru March 31, 2021. Payments will be sent directly to kinship caregivers on the 10th of every month thereafter. Title IV-E Agencies are encouraged to generate the payment exceptions reports on the first of every month to ensure Kinship Support payments are issued

timely. Provider payment information will be created in SACWIS for agencies to review prior to April 2021.

Waiver of Non-Safety Requirements

Assessors are encouraged to utilize non-safety standard waivers to assist kinship caregivers to become licensed. If there is a foster care requirement the caregiver is unable to meet, assessors are encouraged to request a non-safety waiver. Assessors must request waiver approval via SACWIS in accordance with OAC 5101:2-5-18.

Once received, waiver requests will be reviewed and approved by ODJFS on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Information

PCSAs and their private agency partners may see an increase in the number of foster caregiver inquiries and applications due to the legislation. Agencies are encouraged to work together to complete homestudies as efficiently as possible. ODJFS is exploring additional resources to build capacity for home assessments, including working to solidify a contract to assist in the initiation and completion of foster care homestudies.

Contacts

If you have questions about the Kinship Support Program, please contact your Technical Assistance Specialist or the OFC Help Desk at 1-866-886-3537 option 4 or HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov.