




Texas Department of Family and Protective Services  
Child Protective Services

## Kinship Caregiver Training




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Core


## Core

- Legal Timeline
- Case Participants
- Kinship Monthly Reimbursement and Daycare (HO)
- 3 in 30 (HO)
- Discipline Policy
- Safe Sleep
- Education
- Visitation Matters
- Frequent Visitors
- Emergency Planning (HO)
- Medical Consent Training (HO)
- Verification
- Filing a Complaint

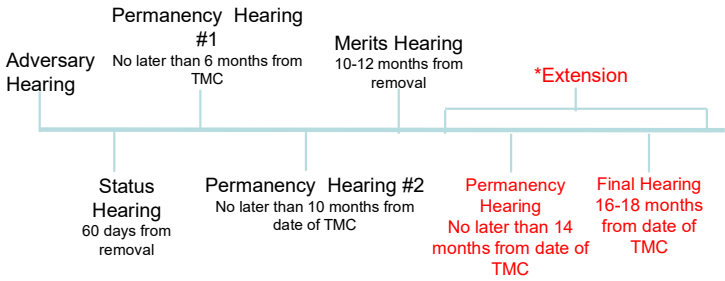


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Legal Time Line



Once Permanent Managing Conservatorship is granted, hearings are held every 6 months until the child achieves permanency.

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Legal Time Line

The table shows the time frames for the court hearings that may occur in a case of child abuse or neglect. This information applies if we remove a child from the home.

Type of Hearing	Time Frame
Emergency Hearing (if needed)	Within one workday after we remove the child from the home
Adversary Hearing	Within 14 days after we remove the child from the home
Status Hearing	Within 60 days after the date of the court order giving DFPS TMC
Initial Permanency Review Hearing	Within 180 days after the date of the court order giving DFPS TMC
Permanency Review Hearings	After the initial permanency review hearing, every 120 days until the final court order
Final Hearing (Trial), which results in final court order	Final court order is required before the Monday following the first anniversary of the court order giving DFPS TMC (but a six-month extension may occur).
More Permanency Review Hearings	After the final court order, every 180 days

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## Case Participants and Their Roles

- **Primary Conservatorship Caseworker** – the parents' and children's protective services caseworker assigned to work with the families whose children have been removed from their home due to abuse or neglect. This worker works directly with the parents to guide them in making the necessary changes in their lives to reduce the risk in the home. This worker is also responsible for ensuring that the children's needs are being met in their homes.
- **Kinship Development Caseworker** – works directly with the unverified relative/Kinship Caregiver to ensure the stability of the placement and to provide support and resources for Kinship Caregivers. KDWs provide training, individually or in Kinship Caregiver groups to help caregivers meet the needs of the children. KDWs assess kinship families continually, to determine their strengths and needs and help with permanency planning for the child, along with the child's Conservatorship Caseworker.
- **Attorney Ad Litem** – a special attorney appointed by the court to represent the child and their interests. The Attorney Ad Litem investigates the facts of the case, reviews records, interviews significant people involved in the case such as the child, and anyone who may be responsible for the child's care, such as the caregiver, parents and caseworker.
- **Guardian Ad Litem** – The court may also appoint a Guardian Ad Litem to represent the child's best interest in court; the Guardian Ad Litem may or may not be the child's Attorney Ad Litem.
- **CASA** – In many areas, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) are appointed to cases to help the court determine what is best for the child. In some areas, CASA is appointed as Guardian Ad Litem, which comes with specific responsibilities.

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## Kinship Monthly Reimbursement

### Kinship Reimbursement Payment

If a caregiver meets the below qualifications, then the caregiver qualifies for a monthly reimbursement that is up to half of the foster care daily rate per child. This payment is for 12 months and follows the child if they have to move from one caregiver to another. Generally, it is best for children to stay with the same caregiver if at all possible.

### Basic Eligibility Requirements

- The child is placed in the conservatorship of DFPS.
- The child is placed with a kinship caregiver who was formally approved by DFPS, but not verified as a foster parent
- The home is NOT receiving foster care maintenance payments.
- The caregiver signed and abides by the Kinship Caregiver Agreement (for each child).
- Caregiver has an approved home assessment.
- Caregiver begins the required Kinship Training
- The **total household income** does not exceed 300% of the federal poverty limit, in accordance with the current federal poverty guidelines.

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## Good Cause Extension

The monthly reimbursements are time-limited for the child and may be paid for up to twelve months. However, if DFPS determines there is good cause for an exception, payments may be made for up to an additional six months. Good cause exceptions include:

- identification, release, or location of the child's previously absent parent;
- waiting for the timeline to expire for an appeal of an order in a suit affecting the parent-child relationship;
- provision of additional time for the caregiver to complete the approval process for verification or adoption of the child;
- waiting for the approval of a child's placement from another state; and
- a delayed determination of the child's Indian Child status, or waiting for the approval of the Indian Child's Tribe.

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## Kinship Child Day Care

### Eligibility Criteria:

- The kinship caregiver must have an approved kinship home assessment on file;
- The caregivers must sign the Kinship Caregiver Agreement; and
- The caregivers must be employed outside the home and work at least 40 hours per week;
- The caregiver must be a resident of Texas.
- The child must be in DFPS conservatorship;
- The child must not be receiving adoption assistance; and
- As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, the child must be 6 years old or younger during the school year or 12 years old or younger during the summer.

### Day Care is limited to providing daily care only:

- during the kinship caregivers' work hours; or
- while the kinship caregivers are attending:
  - case conferences,
  - court, or
  - kinship caregiver training.



\*As funding permits, DFPS provides full-time Kinship Child Day Care services during spring break and summer vacation for children who attend school full time.

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## Kinship Child Day Care

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**To Request Daycare:**  
Kinship caregivers must verify that they have attempted to access appropriate community services to care for the child, such as Head Start, pre-kindergarten classes, public (government-funded) pre-kindergarten classes, and early education programs offered through the local schools. If a child is eligible for community day care type services, but no services are available, the caregiver must place the child on the waiting list.

The requesting caregivers must complete and sign the Foster/Relative & Other Designated Caregiver Daycare Verification.

The caregiver must also verify that the caregiver works 40 hours or more outside the home. Acceptable verification includes:

- copies of the caregiver's last three pay stubs;
- a statement from the employer attesting to being employed full-time for 40 hours a week; or
- in the case of self-employment, a completed Form 1806Word Document Caregiver Statement of Self-Employment Income. Being a volunteer, student, or providing foster care or kinship care services is not considered employment.

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## 3 in 30

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3 IN 30

A COMPLETE APPROACH TO BETTER CARE FOR CHILDREN

All children who come into DFPS care need a good review of their physical and behavioral health needs right away. As a caregiver of a child in DFPS care, we know you are committed to the health, safety, and well-being of the children in your home.

With your help, CPS is launching a new practice in 2018 called 3 in 30. It combines three critical tools for learning the medical, behavioral, and developmental strengths and needs of children and youth. These tools will help us understand the children in your care so we can tailor services to their needs.

Children and youth who come to live with you must have the 3-Day Medical Exam within three business days of entering DFPS legal custody. The Texas Health Steps Medical Checkup and the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment must be complete within 30 days.

**Call STAR Health Member Services at 866-912-6283**  
Ask for a nurse outside of normal business hours.

**For help with:**

- Finding a doctor for the exam, assessment, or check-up
- Learning if your current doctor can do the 3-Day exam and Health Steps checkup
- Questions about Medicaid ID cards
- Problems with pharmacy refills
- Medical, dental, behavioral health or vision services

**For more information:**

- Search "3 in 30" on the DFPS website at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)
- Send questions to [DFPSStarHealth3in30@dfps.state.tx.us](mailto:DFPSStarHealth3in30@dfps.state.tx.us)

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## 3 in 30

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**3-Day Initial Medical Exam**

In 3 business days, children entering DFPS care must see a doctor to be checked for injuries or illnesses and get any treatments they need.

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**CANS Assessment**

In 30 days, children (ages 3-17) must get a CANS assessment. This review helps us understand how trauma is affecting a child, and how the child is doing. CANS tells us which services may help the child, such as counseling. It also shows strengths we can build on, like good relationships.

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**Texas Health Steps Medical Check-Up**

In 30 days, each child must see a doctor for a complete check-up with lab work. This makes sure:

- We address medical issues early.
- Kids grow and develop as expected.
- Caregivers know how to help the child grow and develop.

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## Discipline

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### What is appropriate and what is not?



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 Discipline

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- TDFPS Discipline Policy (Form K-902)

**No physical discipline of any sort is allowed**

- If used by the Kinship Caregiver, the children may be removed from the home

- **Explore alternative discipline:**
  - Time out, remove privileges, cease or decrease allowance, talk to child, grounding.


**Better Options:** Token/reward system, consistent structure and routines, recognize positive behavior *rather than* negative behavior, be aligned with spouse/other caregivers regarding discipline and recognition for the child.

**Education-opt out:** DFPS policy prohibits corporal punishment from being used on a child in DFPS conservatorship. The caseworker directs the child's caregiver or education decision-maker to submit the written, signed statement prohibiting the use of corporal punishment as a method of student discipline to the school district in the manner prescribed by the district's policies. The written statement must be submitted at the beginning of each school year and at the time of any change in school placement.

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 Safety

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Making your home safe is one of the most important things to do. Home is a place to relax, explore, play, and enjoy spending time with family. Of course, accidents happen and there will be minor scrapes and bruises along the way, especially as children grow and discover new things. But serious injuries are often preventable.

- Never leave a child alone in the bathtub or around water, including lakes, rivers, and pools.
- Store trigger locked guns and ammunition, in a locked container, out of a child's reach.
- Store all medications in a locked box out of a child's reach.
- Do not nap or sleep with a child, especially babies and toddlers.




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 Safe Sleep

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**Do's**


- Do put babies to sleep alone on their backs in a crib or on another firm surface with a tight-fitting bottom sheet. If the baby leaves a dent in the bed, it's too soft.
- Do keep babies away from second-hand smoke.
- Do dress babies lightly and control the room temperature.




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 Safe Sleep

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**Don'ts**

- Don't put babies to sleep with blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, or bumper pads.
- Don't cover a baby's face or let a baby cover his or her face with anything.
- Don't let babies sleep with older kids.
- Don't sleep with a baby, especially if you have been using alcohol or medicines that make you sleepy or when you are very tired.
- Don't put babies to sleep on chairs, sofas, futons, beanbags, or cushions.
- Don't put babies to sleep on soft beds such as pillow-tops, waterbeds, or memory foam. If the baby leaves a dent in the bed, it's too soft.
- Don't expose babies to smoke.


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 **Education**


- All students in DFPS conservatorship must be enrolled in an accredited local public school within 2 days of placement.
- Every Texas school district has named a FOSTER CARE LIAISON to facilitate enrollment and services for students in conservatorship. Foster Care Liaisons can enroll students in the free National Breakfast and Lunch Program and secure previous school records.
- DFPS/CPS Regional Education Specialists provide required certificate training for special education and serve as a resource to caregivers and school staff.



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 **Education**

- Students in foster care are eligible to participate in the free Federal Breakfast and Lunch program. Eligibility is based on the child's income, (which is 0) not the family's income.
- Children ages 3, 4, and 5 in DFPS/CPS conservatorship as a result of an adversary hearing are eligible for the free pre-kindergarten programs offered at local public schools. Contact the Regional Education Specialist for a Letter of Verification.




ALL students in care receive an **EDUCATION PORTFOLIO** at the time of placement. The green binder contains enrollment documents, transcripts, report cards, and school work. Please keep the **EDUCATION PORTFOLIO** current and provide copies of materials to the worker.

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 **Education Portfolios**

Education Portfolios - Once DFPS is granted conservatorship, the caseworker must create a record (usually a green binder) containing all the key education documents needed to ensure that the child receives the most appropriate educational placement and services, and to facilitate the child's transfer between schools. Caseworkers must work with the caregiver to maintain these documents while the child is in conservatorship.

- The Education Portfolio is reviewed and used by: the child; the caregiver; the child's parent; the child's education decision-maker (if someone other than the caregiver); surrogate parent, if applicable; CASA, and the child's caseworker and other DFPS staff.
- Caregivers Must: Make the Education Portfolio readily available to each of these parties; maintain and update an Education Portfolio for each child in their care, provide the child's Education Portfolio to the DFPS caseworker when a child is discharged from the caregiver's home, and ensure that it contains the current education-related documents and records, including paperwork on the child's most recent withdrawal from school.




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 **Home Schooling**

You may choose to homeschool a child in DFPS custody UNLESS:

- a court order specifically does not allow the education of the child in a home setting; or
- the court finds, at a hearing, that education services delivered in the home setting is not in the best interest of the child because it does not meet the child's academic and social needs and goals.
- DFPS determines that federal law requires another school setting.

If you plan to homeschool, please notify the child's caseworker and consult with your Education Specialist for questions.




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## Visitation Matters

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### The Importance of Maintaining the Parent- Child Relationship.



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## Why is visitation important?

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- **Visitation is a right, not a privilege.**
  - Cannot be taken away as a consequence
- Visitation helps **honor** the child's family **connections, culture, and customs**
  - Preserves a child's sense of belonging to family
- Visitation helps **grow the relationship** which is the foundation of child development
  - Reduces a child's sense of abandonment and the pain of separation



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## Visitation - What to Expect:

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**From Caseworkers**

A visitation schedule which includes:

- Outlined schedule and rules of visitation between the children and their parents
- Location, time, transportation information, level of supervision (high, medium, low) and who is allowed to visit



Consider other modes of communication between required visits such as Skype, FaceTime, telephone, email, text, or other social media

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## Visitation - What to Expect:

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**From children**

- May reactivate child's feelings of loss, anxiety, and stress before, during and after visitation
- Behavior regression- nightmares, aggression, excessive whining, bed wetting
- Some may complain of physical pain before visitation

*\*Not all children display these behaviors, and some may thrive following visitation with their parents.*



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 **Visitation - What to Expect**

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**From parents**

- **Hesitation** about attending visits- may cancel or not show up for scheduled visitation
- **Resentment** towards the caregivers or other family members
- **Fear, anger, sadness, at CPS or caregiver regarding** separation from their children
- **Gratitude** for providing their children a safe, nurturing, environment during their time in care




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 **Visitation - How You Can Help!**

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- **Talk** to children prior to visitation and let them know what to expect
- **Respect** biological parents by not degrading them or speaking negatively about them to their children
- **Maintain contact** with the caseworker regarding child's behaviors and reactions to visits
- **Model** healthy parent child interaction during supervised visits
- **Provide** children with emotional support
- **Inform** parents of the child's daily routines, accomplishments, medical appointments, etc.



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 **Visitation - How You Can Help! (Cont'd)**


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- **Provide transportation** to and from visits. Note:
  - *Please notify the CPS caseworker as early as possible if you are unable to transport, so CPS can make transportation arrangements for the visit.*
  - *Transportation by Kinship caregivers is not mandatory*
- **Refrain** from giving an opinion of the visitation in front of the children
- **Discuss** concerns or reservations about visitation privately with the caseworker
- **Plan ahead** to help prepare the child's transitions to and from visits by offering the child verbal time notifications, letting them know ahead of time what the visitation timeline will look like, and expect that the child may be less cooperative than normal afterward.




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 **Sibling Visits**

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- When siblings are not placed together, caseworker and caregivers will work together so children can visit weekly while in care.
- May take place separately from parent child visit.
- Should occur at least once a week, unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- Do not have to be monitored by a CPS caseworker, and can be scheduled between caregivers.
- Are just as important as parent child visits, sibling visits maintain a child's sense of biological family ties.



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## Stages of Supervision

- Factors considered before CPS designates the supervision level:
  - Nature and severity of abuse/neglect, current court orders, parents level of engagement, drug usage, age of child, desire to see their parent(s), emotional, psychological, and physical state of child
- High- Parent cannot be alone with child; monitor must keep child within their sight, and must be able to hear everything that is said - highly structured.
- Medium- Monitor must remain close enough to observe but does not have to hear everything; parents may have some alone time.
- Low- Monitor is present for part of the visit, and parent is allowed to have alone time with the child.
- Unsupervised- No monitor needed; day trips, weekends, overnights with parents.
- Caseworker is to inform caregivers and parents of any changes to visitation plan/ schedule.

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## Frequent Visitors



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## Frequent Visitors

A frequent visitor is anyone who comes to your home more than twice a month or spends the night, or may watch the child in your home. Frequent visitors might be important parts of your support system, or people in your family. This is okay! CPS needs to know who the frequent visitors are, including anyone taking care of the children.

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## Frequent Visitors

A Frequent Visitor is defined as a person who meets one or more of the following criteria:

- visits or plans to visit 3 or more times during a 30-day period;
  - visits or plans to visit for more than 7 days at a time;
  - visits or plans to visit for more than 48-hours at a time, at least twice a year; or
  - visits or plans to visit on a scheduled basis.
- All frequent visitors to Kinship homes must submit to background checks prior to having contact with the child. The caseworker will collect visitors' dates of birth, social security or legal permanent resident numbers, current address, and addresses for any residences outside of Texas during the previous five years;
  - CPS will then conduct and review a CPS background check and a criminal history check for each frequent visitor to assess whether that individual is approved to have contact with the child.
  - These are the minimum requirements for frequent visitors. However, CPS may also request background checks from less frequent visitors on a case by case basis.

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## Emergency Plan

Caregivers of children in DFPS care are required to evacuate their home if an evacuation is mandated for the area in which the caregiver lives. Your Kinship Development Worker (KDW) is responsible for ensuring that kinship caregivers complete a Disaster Plan.

Each Kinship home must have a written Disaster Plan on file with CPS as these homes need to be prepared and have an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency. A copy of the completed Disaster Plan must be provided to you and the original placed in your case file.

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## Emergency Plan

Within 24-hours of the advisory, KDW will:

- a. Make telephone contact with each of their assigned families located in the advisory area
- b. Verify the information on the Disaster Plan
- c. Remind the family that evacuation is required if mandated for their area
- d. Remind the family to take at least a two-week supply of medication for the child, if applicable
- e. Instruct the family how to contact DFPS in order to report the children's whereabouts and conditions after they reach their evacuation destination.

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## Training

- **Medical Consent**-Texas law requires DFPS to name a medical consenter for a child in conservatorship unless the judge allows the parent to continue the authority. The medical consenter makes healthcare decisions for the child. You are being asked to complete this training because DFPS is naming you as medical consenter or back up medical consenter for a child in DFPS conservatorship.
- **Trauma-Informed Care Training**- DFPS provides this training to assist caregivers gain a greater understanding of trauma informed care and child traumatic stress.
- **Psychotropic Medication Training**- If the child you are caring for is prescribed psychotropic medication, this training explains expectations for the safe and effective use of psychotropic medications. Talk to your child's doctor about any specific questions you may have about the medications your child is taking.



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## Foster Home Verification

- Any prospective or current kinship caregiver may pursue foster home verification regardless of the child's case plan.
- However, foster care placements, like kinship placements, are meant to be a temporary arrangement until the permanency plan can be achieved.
- Kinship caregivers can become verified through CPS's FAD Program or a private child placing agency. A list of private agencies is available at: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/AdoptionPartners/private.asp>.



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### Things to consider

- Are you at least 21 years old and a responsible mature adult?
- Do you have steady income?
- Will you share information about your background and lifestyle through a home screening?
- Will you provide references from relatives and friends?
- If you're married or divorced, can you show proof?
- If you're married, are both spouses willing to become foster parents?
- Do you have a high school diploma or a GED, or can you pass a test that includes basic reading, writing and math?
- Will you submit fingerprints for FBI criminal history check for all adults, 18 years and older, in your house?
- Will you attend 25 to 35 hours of training to learn about abuse and neglect and how it affects children?
- Will your home likely pass fire, health, and safety inspections?
- Are your pets vaccinated or are you willing to get them vaccinated?
- Will you learn CPR and first aid and become certified?
- Will you be screened for tuberculosis (TB)? Will the people in your house be screened for TB?



### Foster Home Verification Expenses

- FBI Fingerprints
- CPS background checks
- Fire and Health Inspections of the home
- CPR/First Aid
- 25-35 hours of training (depending on agency)
- TB Test on all household members
- Statement of caregiver's health by a physician
- Pet Vaccinations
- 5 lb Fire Extinguishers
- Smoke Detectors
- Carbon Monoxide Detectors



### Documents to Provide (copies)

- Birth Certificate or Passport
- Driver's License or TX ID - all household members
- Marriage License - applicants only
- Divorce Decrees - applicants only
- Spouse Death Certificate - if applicable, applicants only
- Current Pet Rabies Vaccination - dogs, cats, ferrets
- Proof of Income - 60 days worth of proof of income
- Proof of Insurance - life, health, & vehicle
- TB test or screening - all household members
- Proof of education - applicants only



### Benefits of Being Verified

- Increased monthly financial support
- Contingency plan for reunification
- Smoother transition for finalizing an adoption
- Eligibility criteria for Permanency Care Assistance
- Provides additional support system
- Kinship placements maintain children's cultural heritage and family connections
- Helps to preserve Kinship placement which decreases disproportionality





## Case Information or Complaints

If you need information about your case or have a case-related complaint concerning a decision by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, we recommend utilizing the chain of command by first speaking to the caseworker, the supervisor and the program director. You can contact the Office of Consumer Affairs. They will research case actions to ensure that DFPS policy and procedures were followed and make recommendations. You can reach the DFPS Office of Consumer Relations at 800-720-7777.



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## Questions & Answers



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Please remember these three things:

- Communication is key,
- Ask questions, and
- Utilize your Kinship Development Worker

Thank you for your time!

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