

If you are a relative of a child who you believe has been removed from the care of the child's parent, or legal guardian and you wish to identify yourself to the Department of Children and Family Services as a possible placement resource for the child please contact our Child Protection Hotline at:

1 (800) 540-4000 (within California)

(213) 639-4500 (out-of-state)

1 (800) 272-6699 (TDD)

When you contact the Child Protection Hotline be prepared to provide the name and date of birth of the child, names of the child's parents, and the parents' dates of birth, if known. In addition, you will need to provide your name, address, telephone number, and your relationship to the child. If the child in question is under the care of DCFS, you will be provided with the name and telephone number of the child's social worker. Below is a link to a document which will provide you with information regarding the various options for you to participate in the child's care and placement, support the child's family, and provide information to the child's social worker and the court regarding the child's needs.

Important Information for Relatives

Q1: I am the relative of a child who is being removed from his or her home. What should I do?

A1: If you want to be involved in helping the child or family, please contact the child's social worker, probation officer or their supervisor.

Q2: What can I do to help?

A2: Connections with relatives and family friends are important for all children, especially for children whose families are in crisis. You can give the family support and encouragement as the parents try to resolve the problems that led to the child being removed from them. You can also help by calling and visiting the child, inviting them to your home for holidays and other occasions, remembering birthdays, etc. You can assist the child's social worker or probation officer in locating other relatives and family friends who might be able to help the child and family, including those who live out of state. You may also want to consider having the child live with you until the child can safely return home.

Q3: What about the child's brothers and sisters?

A3: In most cases, the goal is to keep brothers and sisters together, but this is not always possible. Even if brothers and sisters have to live in separate homes, you may be able to help them keep in touch through visits and family events.

Q4: If I want the child to live with me, what do I need to do?

A4: You may request to be approved as a relative caregiver. Consider if you can provide for the child on a long-term basis if the child is not able to return to the home of his or her parents. By law, preferential consideration for placement of the child is given to adult grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. Certain requirements must be met:

- Criminal record clearances are obtained for all adults living in the home;
- All adults are screened for prior child abuse histories;
- The home must meet health and safety standards;
- There must be a demonstrated ability to care for and supervise the child; and,
- The relative must agree to ensure the child's personal rights are protected

Q5: There is someone in my household who has a criminal background. Does that mean the child can't live with me?

A5: No, you can still be considered. Some crimes may be exempted allowing for placement in your home. Each case is reviewed carefully. The social worker or probation officer will give you detailed options based on the findings of the case.

Q6: What kind of financial and social support will I receive if I choose to be a caregiver?

A6: Once a child is placed in your home you are eligible to apply for financial support which may be available either through the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act (CalWORKs) program or foster care funding. The child's social worker will do the following things:

- Assist you in obtaining financial and medical assistance;
- Work with you to access health and dental care for the child;
- Give you information on what to do and who to call if problems occur;
- Have contact with you and the child at least once a month;
- If eligible, provide a yearly clothing allowance for the child;
- Provide assistance with emergencies; and
- Help arrange parent-child visits, counseling and other services the child may need.

Q7: If my home is approved will the child get to live with me?

A7: Not necessarily. You and other relatives may be assessed and approved. This allows the county to have a group of interested relatives to choose from. Where the child will live will be carefully considered based on many factors. The approved home should meet the child's best interests without further disrupting the child's life and activities. Things that must be considered are the child's proximity to the following:

- Their current school;
- Their friends, brothers and sisters, parents, other relatives; and
- The programs and activities the child currently participates in.

The caregiver's willingness to work with the social worker and the birth parents with the goal of reuniting the child with the birth family is another important factor when deciding about who will care for the child.

Q8: What about visits between the child and the birth parents? How does that work?

A8: The social worker and the court will determine how often the child and parent can visit. Relatives and other caring adults may help in many ways to ensure that visits are safe and productive. They may be able to provide a safe space for visits, transport parents and the child to and from visits, and be a supportive familiar presence for the parent and child.

Q9: What happens if the child cannot return home?

A9: Living with a family permanently is the primary goal. When a child isn't able to return to the parents, the family the child is living with is usually considered first as a permanent family. You may be asked about becoming the child's legal guardian or adopting the child. Ongoing financial and medical assistance may be available through the Adoption Assistance Program, the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment program or CalWORKs. Information about these programs is available online at:

<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/pub344.pdf> and from the child's social worker.

Q10: I live out of state. How can I get involved?

A10: In some circumstances, a child may be placed with a relative out of state. The social worker or probation officer can discuss this option with you. You can also be supportive by maintaining contacts and visits.

Q11: If the child has American Indian heritage, how can I help the child maintain connections with his or her cultural heritage?

A11: The social worker is required to ask all relatives about the child's connections with American Indian tribes so the child can benefit from any services available to American Indian children. If you can help answer questions about yourself and other relatives who may be enrolled members of American Indian tribes, please let the social worker/probation officer know.

Q12: If I want to give information to the court about the child, how do I do that?

A12: You may write a letter to the judge. The letter will also be seen by everyone in the case (parents, social workers, and lawyers). You can tell the court how you know the child, what things you have done with the child, and share your concerns about the child. Beginning in January 2011, there will be a Relative Information Form you can give to the court. You can ask the social worker or probation officer to give you this form, or you can ask for it at the court clerk's office.