

RELATIVE

AND NON-RELATIVE
Caregiver Handbook



**Family Partnerships
of Central Florida**

BREVARD | ORANGE | OSCEOLA | SEMINOLE



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Dear Caregiver,

Family Partnerships of Central Florida (FPOCF) would like to thank you for making the decision to open your home and your heart to the children placed in your care. We understand that as a caregiver, you may need some guidance as you begin this journey through the dependency process. We are here to support you and there are other supports available to you as well. Some vital information in this handbook can serve as a reference to use throughout the dependency case.

As the FPOCF Client Relations and Caregiver Support Specialist, I'm able to assist you with navigating the System of Care. I work closely with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Child Protective Investigators (CPIs), ACCESS caseworkers, Guardians Ad Litem (GAL), Dependency Care Managers (DCMs), and the Clinical Services Specialist (CSS). Once we receive information from DCF that a child or children have been placed in your care, I will contact you regarding benefits you may be able to apply for. The Clinical Services Specialist will contact you shortly after to discuss what the immediate needs of the children are and how to meet them.

It's our pleasure to work with you to ensure you receive the support you need, and the children in your care have of their needs met. The

FPOCF System of Care works in collaboration



with all partners to achieve outcomes that are in the best interest of the children and families we serve. Once again, thank you for caring for the children in their time of need.

Sincerely,

*Client Relations and Caregiver Support
Specialist,*

Family Partnerships of Central Florida



A Child Has Been Placed In My Care; Now What?

- The Child Protective Investigator (CPI) contacts FPOCF to provide information about the child that has been removed.
- The Clinical Services Specialist reviews information that may require immediate assistance or services for the child, and contacts Caregiver to discuss them.
- The Information and Eligibility Unit applies for Medicaid for the child.
- An Early Services Intervention (ESI) Staffing is held to transfer the case from The Department of Children and Families to the Case Management Agency.
- The Case Management Agency assigns the case to a Dependency Care Manager (DCM).

Common Terminology

Family Partnerships: FPOCF is the Community Based Care Lead Agency that manages the local child-welfare system of care for children and families in Brevard, Osceola, Seminole, and Orange Counties.

Dependency Care Manager (DCM): Provides the day-to-day oversight of child-welfare case management activities for families in the dependency system.

Client Relations Specialist (CRS): The CRS addresses concerns and grievances submitted by families served within

the system of care and helps caregivers navigate the dependency process.

Clinical Services Specialist: The Clinical Services Specialist assesses the needs of the child and works with the family to ensure successful placement.

Dependency Court: The court makes decisions concerning dependent children, including whether a child has been abused, neglected, or abandoned, and provides judicial oversight of dependency cases.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL): A volunteer, appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child in any dependency case.

Early Learning Coalition (ELC): The ELC provides assistance with daycare services.

ACCESS Florida: A web-based system used to apply for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, and Relative Caregiver funds.

CBHA: The Child Behavioral Health Assessment: Someone will contact you about completing the assessment.

Blue Book: A child’s confidential resource record that **MUST** accompany the child to all medical appointments. As the child’s temporary placement, if you have not yet received a “Blue Book”, please contact your care manager.

Caregiver Input Form: When completed by the caregiver, the form allows the court and the team to make informed decisions regarding the child’s best interest. (Form located in the Blue Book).

Caregivers Have A Right To:

- Receive clear expectations and guidance as needed.
- Receive all appropriate contact information from Family Partnerships (including the on-call emergency services number).

- Ask the Dependency Care Manager (DCM) for additional services or support to better care for the children and participate in decisions regarding the permanency of the children.
- File a complaint or grievance through the Client Relations Specialist without fear of retaliation.
- Receive advanced notice of court hearings, ask questions, and respectfully share opinions regarding the child at all court hearings. The DCM may submit the “Caregiver Input Form” (located in section 7 of the child’s blue book) to the court on your behalf, if you are unable to attend.
- Receive:
 - A Blue Book for each child in your care (see DCM if you do not have one)
 - A copy of the case plan
 - Notification and copies of all court proceedings
 - Any updates regarding the child in your care
- Receive auxiliary aids if you have a disability and interpreters if you are limited in your ability to speak, read, or understand English. Provision of these accommodations are mandated by Federal Civil Rights Laws to ensure that all clients, applicants, and employees have an equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from programs, services, and employment, regardless of disability or national origin. **For more information, call Family Partnerships.**

Caregivers Have A Responsibility To:

- Work alongside Family Partnerships and the dependency court system to always ensure the child’s continued safety and wellbeing.
- Treat the child placed in your home as your own by providing love, kindness, and care.
- Take the child to their medical, dental, and mental

health appointments. Additionally, ensure all medications are given to children as prescribed.

- Attend meetings and court hearings when necessary.
- Ensure child and family confidentiality.
- Notify your DCM of any changes including change of address, employment, household members, etc. If you have not been assigned a DCM, contact the Client Relations Specialist at Family Partnerships.
- Ensure the children in your care are visited by the DCM at least once a month.
- Contact Law Enforcement IMMEDIATELY if a child runs away or is missing. Once law enforcement has been contacted, inform Case Management as soon as possible. On weekends or after hours you must contact the on-call number: **321-213-5820**.
- Complete any required trainings identified during the dependency case.
- Comply with court ordered visitation with parents.

Contact the Client Relations and Caregiver Support Specialist, at 321-752-4650 for training information.

DEPENDENCY PROCESS

1

As a caregiver you are able to attend and speak at all court hearings.

A report is made to the Florida Abuse Hotline because someone suspects a child is being abused, abandoned, or neglected. In home services cannot alleviate the immediate safety concerns.



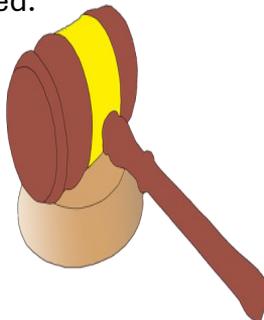
2

The Department of Children and Families is sent out to the home to evaluate the safety of the child in the home. If the child is considered unsafe and it's determined services in the home will not result in the child being safe, the child is removed from their home and sheltered and after completion of a positive home study, placed in a relative or non-relative caregiver. If a kinship home is not available, the child is placed in a family foster home.



3

A shelter hearing takes place with 24 hours, and the judge decides if there is probable cause for the removal of the child and grants or denies the shelter petition and allegations presented. The temporary placement of the child is also discussed and possibly court ordered.



4 The Department of Children and Families Children’s Legal Services files a Petition for Dependency and the petition is served to the parents. An arraignment is held no later than 28 days after the shelter hearing, where the parents enter a plea to the petition either admitting, denying, or consenting to the allegations.

If the parties agree to a case plan, the court may accept it at this time. If they do not agree, an Adjudicatory hearing is set. A case plan outlines what needs to happen for the child to return home. It outlines tasks the parents need to complete and addresses the child’s needs. Once the court approves the case plan, Family Partnerships, parents, and caregivers are obligated to fulfill the case plan requirements.



5 Once the petition is filed, the case is transferred to the case management agency. An assigned Dependency Care Manager works with the parents to develop a Case Plan to address any safety concerns regarding the family.

DEPENDENCY PROCESS

As a caregiver you are able to attend and speak at all court hearings.

6 At the adjudicatory hearing, the judge hears evidence to determine whether the child was abused, abandoned, or neglected, or at imminent risk of abuse, abandonment, or neglect. According to Florida statute, this hearing will be held no later than 30 days from the date of the arraignment on the dependency petition.



7 If there is an adjudicatory hearing, the court is required to hold a disposition hearing within 30 days to determine what the case plan tasks and goals should be. All parties may present evidence as to what tasks should be required and what the plan for permanency should be. Please refer to the Florida statutes for the most current information.

8 The initial Judicial Review hearing must be held no later than 90 days after the disposition hearing. In no event shall the Judicial Review be held later than six months after the date the child was removed from the home. The Judicial Review shall take place every six months thereafter until permanency, which identified in the case plan. The permanency goal is reviewed at each Judicial Review, at which time the court is provided a status update on the case. Case Management provides updates on the parent’s compliance with the case plan, and reports on the parent’s visitations. The information you provide as a caregiver is important; If you are unable to attend court proceedings please use the “Caregiver Input Form” located in your child’s blue book.

helpful tip



Below are some **S.M.A.R.T.** ideas for things you may want to share in court

School related issues

Medical or psychological needs

A Adjustments in your home

R Requests for services

—

Contact Us For More Information

www.fpcf.org

321-752-4650

info@familypartnerships.org

Relative Caregiver

If you are a Relative Caregiver, you can apply for **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF/Cash)** and **Food Stamps (FS)** through My ACCESS as soon as a child is placed in your care. Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement is required for both benefits (all household income is included for FS determination).

TANF Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

- The determination for this benefit is made by ACCESS Florida and is based on the child's income, assets, and shelter expenses.
- Sibling income is included—No other household member's income is included.
- If only one child is placed in your care, the child's income cannot exceed \$180, which would be the maximum benefit amount.
- If you have 2 children placed in your care, the combined income for both children cannot exceed \$241, which is the maximum amount 2 children can receive.
- Benefit amount is dependent on number of eligible children placed in home.

The Client Relations and Caregiver Support Specialist, will speak with you about the benefits you may be eligible for.

Relative Caregiver Funds

- You may be able to receive this benefit once a child is adjudicated dependent by a Florida Court and other eligibility criteria are met (also based on Florida Residency).

- If you are already receiving TANF benefits when the child is adjudicated, your Dependency Care Manager (DCM) will submit a Relative Caregiver form to update the case, and change the TANF funds to Relative Caregiver Funds.

If you are not receiving TANF benefits when the child is adjudicated, you will apply for TANF through ACCESS Florida and your Dependency Care Manager (DCM) will submit a Relative Caregiver form.

- The Relative Caregiver Fund is a child only benefit. Household and/or sibling income will not be included in the determination.
- Relative Caregiver payments for children with no countable income are as follows: Ages 0-5 \$242, 6-12 \$249, 13-17 \$298.

Family Partnership does not determine eligibility for any benefits applied for.



Non-Relative Caregiver

If you are a **Non-Relative Caregiver (NRCG)**, you can apply for **Food Stamps (FS)** as soon as a child is placed in your care, cooperation with Child Support Enforcement is required (all household income is included for FS determination). When the child is **adjudicated** dependent by the court, you may request **NRCG Funds**.

Non-Relative Caregiver Funds

- You may be able to receive financial assistance once a child is adjudicated dependent by a Florida court, and other eligibility criteria are met (also based on Florida Residency).
- Your Dependency Care Manager will complete a paper application with you and submit the application for you.
- NRCG monthly payments for children with no countable income are as follows: Ages 0-5 \$242, 6-12 \$249, 13-17 \$298.

Medicaid

- When a child is placed in your care, you do not have to apply for Medicaid through ACCESS Florida. Family Partnerships applies for Medicaid and assigns the child to the Sunshine Child Welfare Specialty Plan.
- Contact our Nurse Care Manager if you have any questions regarding the child's Medicaid plan.
- A Medicaid card or number for the child in your care will be provided to you.
- If you would like to apply for Medicaid for yourself, speak to the Client Relations and Caregiver Support Specialist, regarding eligibility requirements.

- If you receive permanent guardianship of the child, the Medicaid (that Family Partnerships of Central Florida applied for) will close and you will need to re-apply for Medicaid through ACCESS Florida.
- If you adopt the child, you do not have to apply for Medicaid. The Medicaid for the child will continue and you will become the primary caregiver and have the ability to make changes.

The Client Relations and Caregiver Support Specialist will speak with you about the benefits you may be eligible to apply for and possibly receive.

Family Partnership does not determine eligibility for any benefits applied for.

Level 1 Child-Specific Foster Home

- The licensure type that designated for relative/non-relative/fictive kin caregivers seeking to be licensed when there is an existing relationship with the child.
- Caregivers seeking Level 1 Licensure must meet all safety related licensing requirements.
- Some of the non-safety related licensing requirements may be waived.
- Placement is specific to the child(ren) identified on the caregiver's license.
- Caregivers must complete fingerprint-based background screening of criminal records pursuant to s.39.0138,F.S. (same screenings required for placement of child with a non-licensed caregiver.)
- Caregivers must complete a minimum of 2 pre-service educational resource hours.

Benefits of Level 1 Licensure

- Families receive benefits faster than with the Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Program.
- Educational resources are provided to educate the family about the child welfare system and trauma.



- Families receive benefits faster than with the Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Program.
- Additional Case Management/Caregiver Support
- Gateway into meeting one of the Guardianship Assistance Program's eligibility criteria.

Level 1 Licensure Caregiver Funds

- Monthly foster care board rate payments for Level 1 licensure is \$333.00 monthly.

Information for Relative and Non-Relative Caregivers

You can apply for Food Stamps (FS) through My ACCESS as soon as a child is placed in your care. Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement is required, and all household income is included in the determination.

- If the children in your care receive any type of Social Security income or child support income, you are required to take a certified copy of the court order placing the child in your care to the Social Security office, or to the Department of Revenue's Child Support Enforcement office. You will be applying to become the payee on the child's account, to receive the funds on behalf of the child in your care.
- If you are determined to be eligible for any benefits, you will need to reapply at least every 6-12 months depending on the benefits you receive. If the parent lives in your home, you cannot receive any type of cash assistance (TANF and Relative/Non-Relative Caregiver Assistance) for the children, even if the court allows the parent to live in your home.
- If you have been given a daycare referral, you will need to speak with someone at Early Learning Coalition (ELC) regarding the referral.

Contact Information:

Melbourne: 321 752-3290 or 321-752-3291

Rockledge: 321-637-1800

- If a child under the age of 5 has been placed in your care, you are able to apply for Women Infant and Children (WIC) to receive healthy foods and nutrition education.

Information for Relative and Non-Relative Caregivers

Child Resource Record (Blue Book)

- The blue book contains copies of basic information to include legal documents, demographic, school, and medical information. You will continue to add information to the book as it becomes available while the child is in your care and return the book to case management when the case closes or when the child leaves your home.
- All sections are mandatory for Children in Licensed Foster Care; however, not all sections of the Blue Book pertain to Relative/Non-Relative Caregivers.



Resources Grandparents

Raising Grandchildren

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County is a program developed to enhance the wellbeing of relative caregivers and their families. This program has many available resources and supports available to all relative caregivers who are committed to caring for children in lieu of foster care placement. Support groups are available at various locations. For more information on the many resources and supports available to assist you with navigating the child welfare system, contact Grandparents Raising Grandchildren at 321-631-7776.



Florida Keys to Independence

The Florida Keys to Independence Act reimburses youth removed from their homes and caregivers for the costs associated with driver's education, driver's licenses, and other costs related to getting a driver's license and motor vehicle insurance. This includes children

between the ages of 15-21 placed with a foster family, relative/nonrelative, in a group home, or in a residential facility.

www.keystoindependencefl.org





Independent Living

As required by Federal law and Florida statute, in preparation for adulthood all youth, ages 13-18, who have an open Dependency case, are required to participate in case planning, attend court hearings, and complete a Transition Plan that guides the youth as he/she enters adulthood.

A representative from Crosswinds Youth Services contacts all youth to assist with developing the Transition Plan, completing a formal Independent Living Skills Assessment, and a Living Skills Plan, which are filed with the court.

At age 13, caregivers are required to provide life skills to the youth in their care. Life skills training includes financial literacy, household management, educational and career planning, and other relevant life skills which will prepare the youth for adulthood.

If you have questions, please contact the Independent Living Point of Contact with Family Partnerships at 321-752-4650 or Crosswinds Youth Services at 321-452-0800.

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/independent-living/care-givers.shtml>

Acknowledgement of Receipt

My signature below indicates I have received the Relative and Non-Relative Caregiver Handbook, which includes a link to the Family Partnership website where I can find the following information:

- ♥ Family Partnerships of Central Florida Mission Statement
- ♥ Definitions
- ♥ Client Rights and Responsibilities
- ♥ How to file a Grievance

Print Name

Date

Signature

Note: The original, signed “Acknowledgement of Receipt” form will be placed in the case file.

Please let the person who is providing this to you know if you require an alternate version of this Handbook (Spanish, large print and/or audio).

Additional Resources

ACCESS Florida: 866-762-2237

Brevard County Courthouse: 321-637-5413

Family Partnership of Central Florida (FPOCF): 321-752-4650

- Client Relations
- Client Relations and Caregiver Support Specialist
- Clinical Services Specialist
- Nurse Care Manager

Brevard Health Alliance (BHA): (Main line): 321-241-6800

Department of Revenue (Child Support): 850-488-5437

Department of Children and Families (DCF): 321-634-

3600 Early Learning Coalition (ELC):

Melbourne: 321-752-3290 or 321-752-3291

Rockledge: 321-637-1800

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT): 866-356-3281

Family Allies (Case Management Agency):

Central Care Center (Rockledge): 321-634-

6047 **South Care Center (Palm Bay):** 321-837-

7500 **After-Hours On Call:** 321-213-5820

Florida Relay: 711 or TTY 1-800-453-5145

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG): 321-631-7776

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL): 321-690-6823

Internal Revenue Service (IRS): 1-800-829-

1040 **Mobile Response Team (MRT):** 321-213-

0315

WIC (Women, Infant, Children & Nutrition): 321-639-5800

Call 211 for assistance in finding available



For more information, contact us at:

www.fpcf.org

321-752-4650

info@familypartnerships.org