
**Handbook for
Grandparents
and
Other Relatives
Raising Children**



Table of Contents

Letter from the Board of Supervisors	4
Introduction	5
Handbook Instructions	7
Permanency Flowcharts	8-11
Basic Safety	12
Biological Parents	13
Child Abuse and Neglect	13
Child Care	15
Child Welfare Services	15
Child Welfare Service Case Flow	17
Information for Caregivers involved with Child Welfare Services	18
Clothing	25
Education	25
Elder Abuse	26
Estate Planning	27
Family Resource Centers	28
Financial Support	29
Grief and Loss	31
Health and Dental Care	31
Housing	32
iFoster	32
Legal Issues	33
Mental Health	35
Mentoring Programs	37
Nutrition	38
Parenting Education	40
Respite Care	43
Self Care	43
Substance Exposed Infants	43
Support Groups	44
Technology	44
Transportation	44
Utilities	44
Additional Resources	45
Notes	46



GREG COX
CHAIRMAN

San Diego County Board of Supervisors

January 12, 2015

Dear Grandparents and Caregivers:

Our San Diego County Board of Supervisors recognizes the importance of supporting grandparents and other relative caregivers as you take on the challenging responsibility of raising children in the absence of their parents.

With more than 24,000 grandparents in San Diego County having primary responsibility for meeting their grandchildren's daily needs, the demand for resources and support is great. This issue transcends regional, cultural, socio-economical populations in our county. We all know of a grandparent raising their grandchildren and we must do what we can to help.

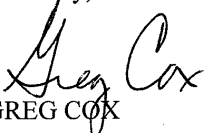
I highlighted this issue at my State of the County Address and at my urging, the Board unanimously voted to support efforts to garner community participation to identify the needs, resources and solutions for grandparents and other relative caregivers now responsible for raising children.

We have brought together many partners in our community to address this issue. The County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency is working with the First 5 Commission, the YMCA and 2-1-1 San Diego. Together, we are searching for ways to help you keep your family together and make your lives easier. The work you do is critical and you deserve our support.

On behalf of the County Board of Supervisors, I am proud to share with you this important toolkit designed with grandparents and other relative caregivers in mind.

We sincerely hope that you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,


GREG COX
Supervisor, First District

County Administration Center • 1600 Pacific Highway, Room 335 • San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-5511 • Fax (619) 235-0644 • www.gregcox.com
Email: greg.cox@sdcounty.ca.gov

Introduction

“A hundred years from now it will not matter the sort of house I lived in, what my bank account was, or the car I drove... but the world may be a better place because I was important in the life of a child.”

— ANONYMOUS

This Handbook is intended as a general guide to help you understand your caregiver status related to your grandchildren and to help you find and access services. It is not intended, nor should it be used, as specific legal advice for you. You may have factors and circumstances in your case that are different from the general circumstances described here and your specific circumstances may affect your legal rights and obligations in ways that are not covered in this Handbook.

Only an attorney you consult about your situation can give you legal advice about your specific legal rights and obligations about your grandchildren or other children you are caring for.

Millions of children across the country are being raised by grandparents, other relatives, and non-relative extended family members (godparents, family friends, etc.) and thousands of these families live in San Diego County. Children are placed in the care of their relatives for various reasons including abuse, neglect, substance abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence, incarceration, military deployment, serious illness, and death. Whatever the cause, when parents are unable to care for their children, grandparents and other relatives often step in to provide a safety net to keep families together.

Various studies have found that when children are unable to live with their parents, there are many benefits associated with being raised by a relative. Some of the benefits for these children include fewer placement changes, an increased likelihood of living with their siblings, a decreased likelihood of changing schools, more positive perceptions of their placements, fewer behavioral problems, a decreased likelihood of trying to run away, and an increased likelihood of reporting “always feeling loved.” Caregivers often report benefits, as well, including finding life more joyful, interesting, and meaningful.

Despite the gifts that children and caregivers receive, raising a relative’s child often brings very specific and difficult challenges. This handbook was developed by the YMCA of San Diego County and its community partners and funded by the County of San Diego Health and Human Service Agency to help grandparents and other relatives all across our county with handling these special challenges.



Handbook Instructions

Just as children are placed with relatives for many reasons, they are also placed in many different ways. Some grandparents or other relatives have an informal agreement with the child's parent to provide care for the child. Others may have obtained legal guardianship or adoption through the court or had children placed with them by the local Child Welfare Agency.

It is very important to understand your particular situation so that you can learn about your legal rights and identify the resources you may be eligible to receive.

In order to use this handbook effectively, complete the following steps:

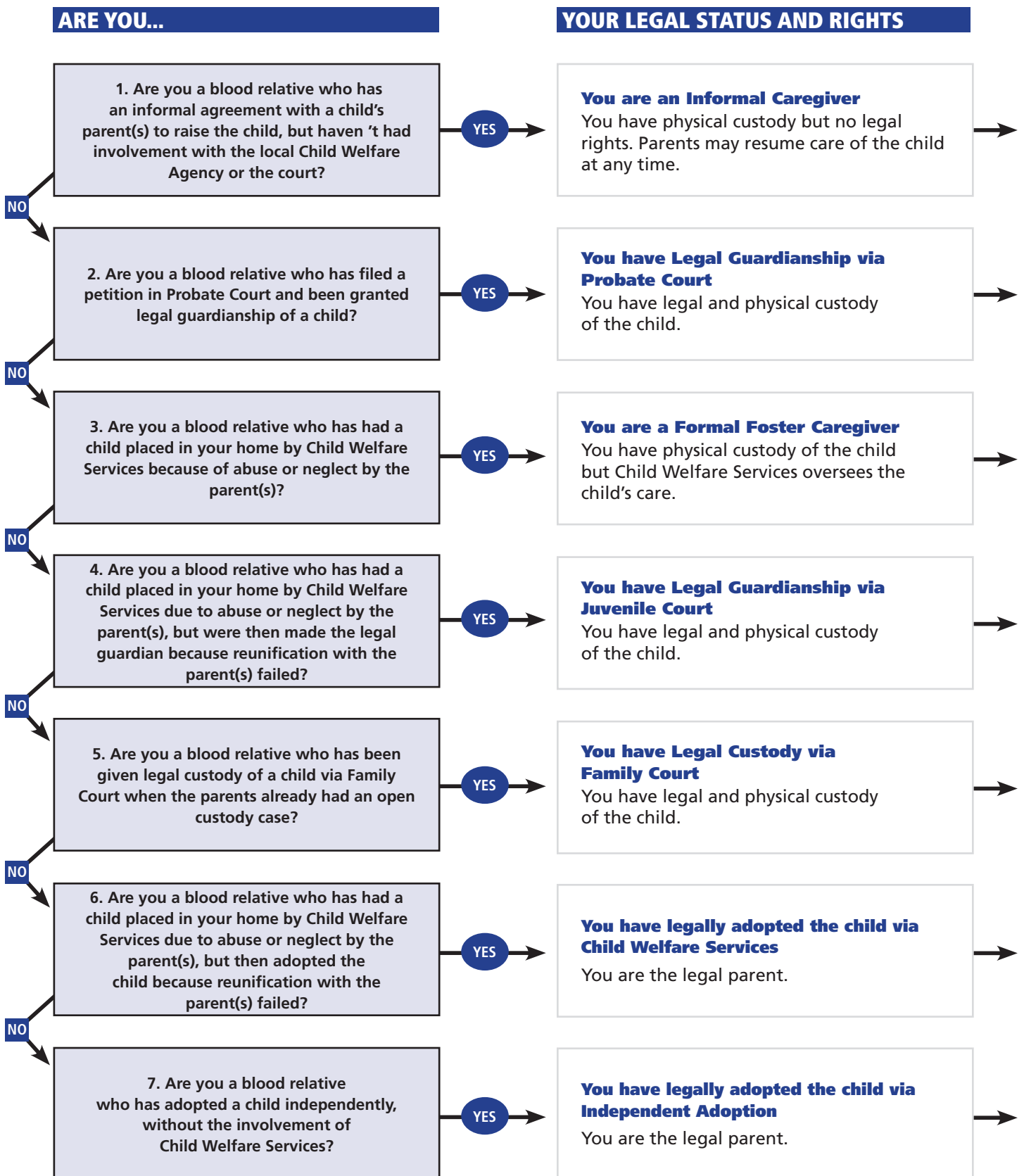
STEP 1: Answer the questions on the flow chart on the next page to determine your legal status and learn more about your legal rights, eligibility for public assistance, and options for gaining a higher level of permanency.

STEP 2: Review the rest of the handbook for the information and resources you need, keeping in mind your current legal status, as many resources apply differently to grandparents and other relatives in different situations.

NOTES:

- No assumption of eligibility to public benefits should be made until eligibility has been determined by HHSA. Applications will be evaluated based on each program's eligibility rules.
- Individuals who purchase and prepare meals together are required to be in the same CalFresh household. Caregivers may request to exclude foster children from the household. If foster children are excluded, the foster care funds are also excluded. If foster children are included, the foster care funds are also included.
- If a child has a disability or special need, the child may qualify for SSI regardless of caregiver's legal status.
- If a child has a deceased parent, the child may qualify for Social Security Survivors Benefits regardless of caregiver's legal status.
- CalWORKs and MediCal benefits may be obtained for the entire family, if family meets eligibility criteria, or for the child only.
- Children ages 0-5 who receive MediCal may qualify for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program.
- The Caretaker Relative may be related by marriage or adoption to the applicant or eligible child. The Caretaker Relative may be a biological relative as specified below:
 - Grandparent (including Great and Great-great)
 - Brother or Sister (including half-sibling)
 - Uncle or aunt (including Great and Great-great)
 - Nephew or niece (including Great and Great-great)
 - First or Second Cousin

Permanency Flowchart – Blood Relatives

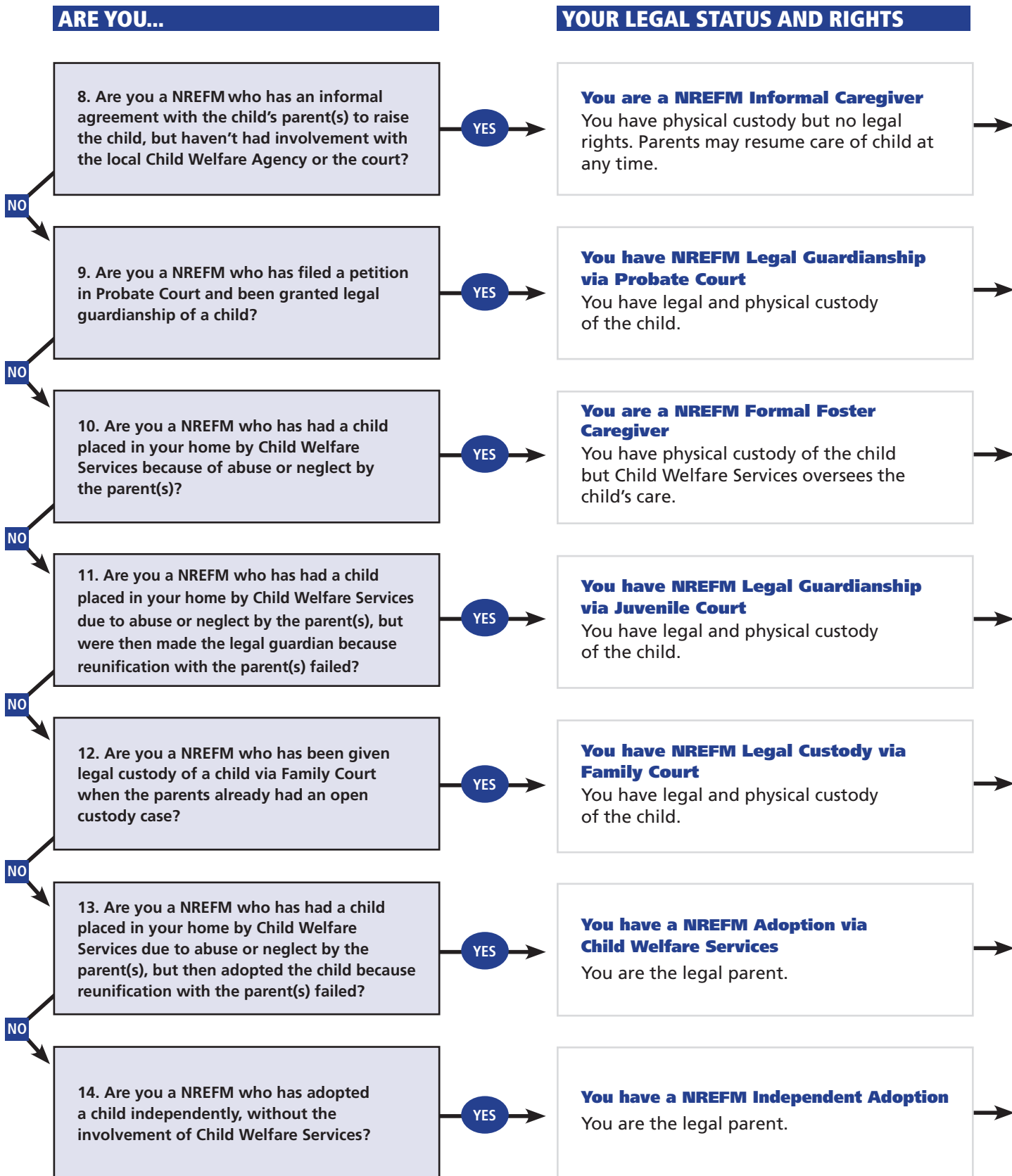


**PUBLIC BENEFITS THE CHILD
MAY QUALIFY FOR**

YOUR PERMANENCY OPTIONS

→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CalWORKs • Medi-Cal 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver Authorization Affidavit • Guardianship via Probate Court • Independent Adoption
→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CalWORKs • Medi-Cal 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Adoption
→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster Care Funds • Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) Funding • CalWORKs • Medi-Cal 	→	<p>If reunification with parents fails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption via Child Welfare Service • Legal Guardianship via Juvenile Court • Long Term Foster Care (APPLA – See page 27)
→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KinGAP • Medi-Cal (child only grant OR family grant) 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption via Child Welfare Services
→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Support • CalWORKs • Medi-Cal 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Adoption
→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption Assistance Program • Medi-Cal 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable
→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable

Permanency Flowchart – Non-Relative Extended Family Member (NREFM)



**PUBLIC BENEFITS THE CHILD
MAY QUALIFY FOR**

YOUR PERMANENCY OPTIONS



Basic Safety

Most grandparents and other relatives raising children know how to keep the children in their care safe. However, laws and regulations about children's care sometimes change so it can be helpful to get safety tips as a reminder.

Here are some safety tips for children of all ages that may be useful for you:

- Place babies in cribs on their backs (unless a healthcare provider directs otherwise) to help prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Children of all ages should always be buckled up in cars.
 - Children under the age of 8 must be secured in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat. Children under the age of 8 who are 4' 9" or taller may be secured by a safety belt in the back seat. Children who are 8 years and over shall be properly secured in an appropriate child passenger restraint system or safety belt. To receive a free safety seat and get the most current safety seat information, contact the Pacific Safety Council Keep Them Safe Program at (858) 621-2313.
 - A home without firearms is safer for children. If you must keep a gun, keep it unloaded and locked up and lock ammunition in a separate place. Also, teach the child to never touch a gun, leave the area if he or she sees a gun, and tell an adult right away.
 - Discipline should teach children what to do. Physical punishment may teach them that hurting others is okay.
 - Choose sturdy, well-constructed toys that match the child's age, abilities, and interests.
 - Follow all age and safety recommendations on labels.
 - Avoid toys with small parts if you have an infant or toddler.
- Avoid toys with sharp edges or points.
- Do not buy electric toys that must be plugged into an outlet if the child is under age 10.
- Inspect toys regularly and throw away broken toys.
- Never give a young child a balloon as he or she could choke on an un-inflated balloon or broken balloon pieces.
- Insist that the child wears a bike helmet that is certified by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and meets safety standards according to the age of the child.
- Children who use skates, skateboards, or scooters need a helmet, mouth guards, wrist pads, and knee pads.
- Teach the child his or her personal information including his or her full name, address, and phone number.
- Teach the child to dial 911 in an emergency.
- Have home fire drills — draw a map of your home with two escape routes and pick a spot outside where you will meet if there is a fire.
- Teach the child how to be safe around strangers and never to: open the door for people he or she doesn't know, tell callers he or she is home alone, accept rides from people he or she doesn't know well, give out personal information on the internet, or meet someone he or she met online.
- Talk to the child about not using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Also, tell the child never to accept a ride from a driver who has been drinking or using other drugs.



Biological Parents

Although children can be placed in the care of a relative for many different reasons, some of the most common reasons include parental substance abuse, mental health issues, and domestic violence. These issues not only cause problems in the lives of the biological parents, but can also put a strain on the relationship between the parents and caregivers and make it more difficult for the relative caregivers to raise the children in their care.

To obtain assistance with resolving family dynamics issues and setting appropriate boundaries, you can call the San Diego County Access and Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240 to find a mental health professional in your area. You can also call 211 to locate support services like Alcoholics, Narcotics, and Co-dependents Anonymous for family members of people with substance abuse, mental illness, and other tough issues. Bio-parents can call the San Diego County Access and Crisis Line to find referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment programs and services or the San Diego Domestic Violence Hotline at (888) DVLINKS ((888) 385-4657) for information about DV shelter bed availability, counseling referrals, batterer's treatment information, safety planning, and more.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Understanding child abuse and neglect is a good way to recognize warning signs and prevent the maltreatment of children.

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse and neglect means the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen, or the age specified by the child protection law of the State, by a person including any employee of a residential facility or any staff person providing out of home care who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare. The term encompasses both acts and omissions on the part of a responsible person.

Most states recognize four major types of maltreatment: **physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse**. Although any of the forms of child maltreatment may be found separately, they often occur in combination. In many states, abandonment and parental substance abuse are also defined as forms of child abuse or neglect.

The examples provided below are for general informational purposes only. Not all states' definitions will include all of the examples listed below, and individual states' definitions may cover additional situations not mentioned here.

Physical Abuse is nonaccidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child.

Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.

Neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs.

Neglect may be —

- **Physical** (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision)
- **Medical** (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)
- **Educational** (e.g., failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs)
- **Emotional** (e.g., inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs)

These situations do not always mean a child is neglected. Sometimes cultural values, the standards of care in the community, and poverty may be contributing factors, indicating the family is in need of information or assistance. When a family fails to use information and resources, and the child's health or safety is at risk, then child welfare intervention may be required. In addition, many states provide an exception to the definition of neglect for parents who choose not to seek medical care for their children due to religious beliefs that may prohibit medical intervention.

Sexual Abuse includes activities by a parent or caregiver such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

Sexual abuse is defined by CAPTA as "the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children."

Emotional Abuse (or psychological abuse) is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance. Emotional abuse is often difficult to prove and, therefore, child protective services may not be able to intervene without evidence of harm or mental injury to the child. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms are identified.

In addition to the types of abuse discussed above, other circumstances that may be considered abuse or neglect in some states are described as follows:

- Abandonment is now defined in many states as a form of neglect. In general, a child is considered to be abandoned when the parent's identity or whereabouts are unknown,

the child has been left alone in circumstances where the child suffers serious harm, or the parent has failed to maintain contact with the child or provide reasonable support for a specified period of time.

- Substance abuse is an element of the definition of child abuse or neglect in many states.
- Prenatal exposure of a child to harm due to the mother's use of an illegal drug or other substance.
- Manufacture of methamphetamine in the presence of a child.
- Selling, distributing, or giving illegal drugs or alcohol to a child.
- Use of a controlled substance by a caregiver that impairs the caregiver's ability to adequately care for the child.

For more information about child abuse and neglect and preventing child maltreatment, please visit www.childwelfare.gov

Child Care

For many grandparents and other relatives who need or want to work, paying for child care, especially for young children can be extremely difficult. Here are some child care resources that may help you:

For children between the ages of 0-5, call:

- Head Start/Early Head Start at (888) 873-5145 to find out if you qualify for free or low-cost, home-based child care or preschool.
- YMCA Childcare Resource Service to get on the County-wide Centralized Eligibility List for subsidized child care AND to get referrals for licensed child care facilities in your area:
 - Centralized Eligibility List: www.childcaresandiego.com
 - Referral Line: (800) 481-2151

For school-age children:

- Call the child's school and ask if free or low-cost before and after school care is available. Apply as instructed.

Child Welfare Services

As you know, not every grandparent or other relative raising children is involved with Child Welfare Services or the local child welfare agency. For those of you who are, here is some information to help you better understand the agency and its process.

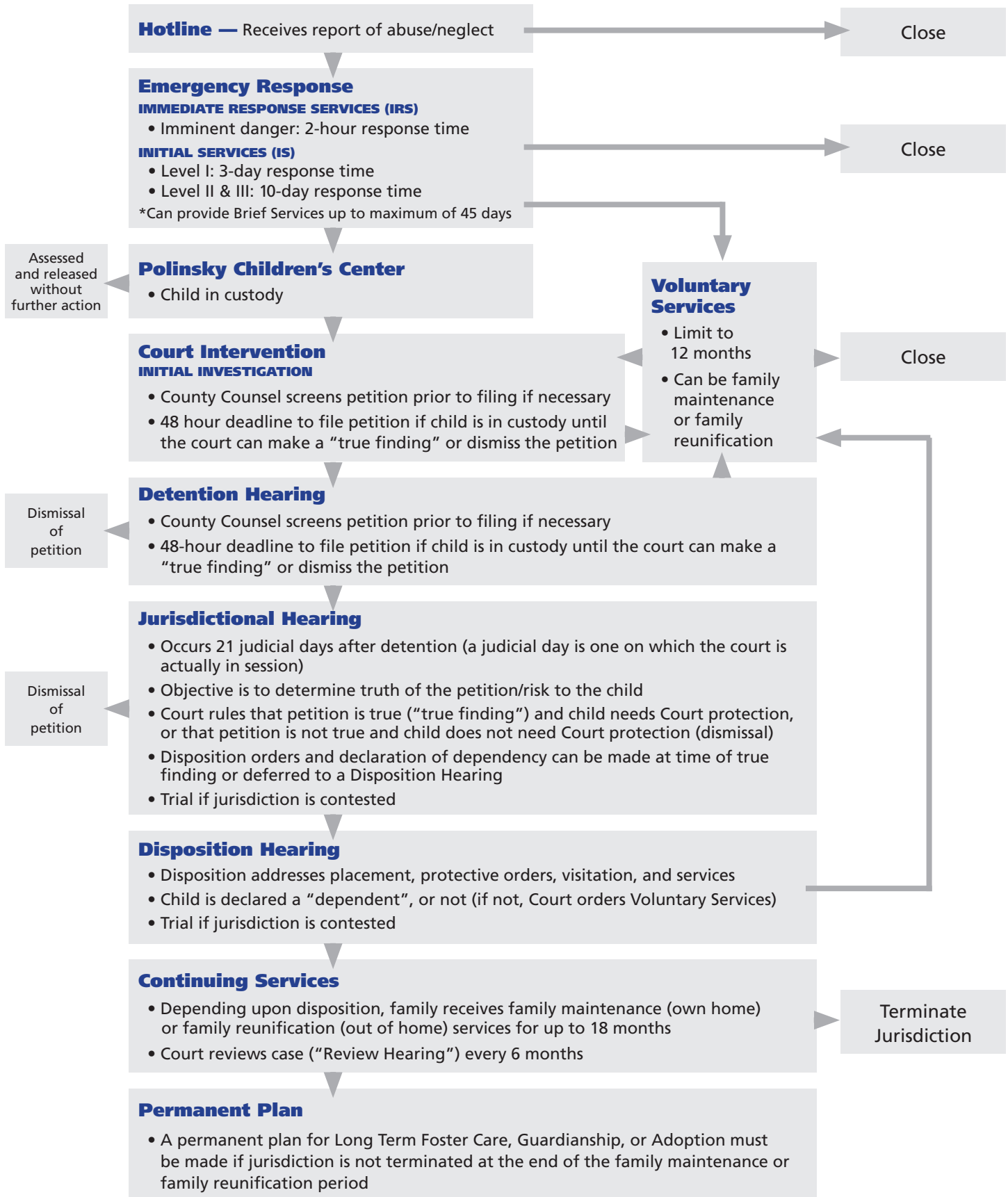
- When a doctor, teacher, therapist, social worker or other legally mandated professional suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, it is their duty to call the Child Abuse Hotline and make a child abuse report. Other members of the community can also make reports, but it is not legally mandated.
- When a report is made that meets legal criteria, a Child Welfare Social Worker is assigned to investigate the report. A social worker may visit your home or child's school unannounced to talk to you or the child about the incident that was reported.

An investigation can have the following results:

- The referral may be closed with no further action.
- Child Welfare Services may refer the family to community resources.
- Child Welfare Services may open a Voluntary Services Case, which means that the case with Child Welfare Services will be open for about six months while the parent or guardian addresses the concerns regarding the child's safety. Children often remain in the home during a voluntary case, but sometimes children are placed with a relative or in foster care.
- Child Welfare Services may petition the court to open a Dependency Case, which means that the case with Child Welfare Services may be open for 6-18 months while the parent or guardian addresses the concerns for the child's safety. Children are made dependents of juvenile court and usually removed from the home during a dependency case. When children are removed, efforts are made to reduce trauma by placing the child with relatives if the relatives meet state requirements. This may be done on an emergency basis if all requirements are met. When placement with relatives is not an option, children may also be placed temporarily at Polinsky Children's Center, in a foster home, or in a group home.
- In order to open a Dependency case, the social worker must file a petition within 48 hours of taking the child into custody.
- A Detention Hearing is then held the following weekday after the petition is filed to determine if there is enough evidence to keep the child in custody until the court can review the petition and either make a "true finding" or dismiss the petition.
- The court reviews the petition and makes a "true finding" at the Jurisdictional Hearing held twenty-one days after the child was taken into custody to determine whether or not the child needs court protection.
- If the court determines that the child needs court protection, a Disposition Hearing is held to address placement, protective orders, visitation, and services and the child is declared a "dependent of the court." The Disposition Hearing may be held in conjunction with the Jurisdictional Hearing.
- The family may receive services with the child in the home (family maintenance) or out of the home (family reunification) for up to 18 months.
- During this period, the court will hold a Review Hearing every six months to review the case.
- When services are terminated, a Permanent Plan for the child is made, which could include return of the child to the family, long term foster care, guardianship, or adoption.
- If you have questions about the child's case or are unsure what type of case the child has, contact the child's social worker for more information.
- If you do not know who the child's social worker is, call Child Welfare Services Central office at (858) 694-5191 to find out his or her name and phone number.
- If you are not able to get the information you need from the child's social worker or have other concerns, call the social worker's supervisor (contact information should be available on the social worker's voicemail) or the Office of the Ombudsman at (619) 338-2098.

For more detailed information about the process described above, see the Child Welfare Services Case Flow Chart on the next page.

Child Welfare Service Case Flow



Important Information for Caregivers Involved with Child Welfare Services

PLEASE NOTE: THIS SECTION APPLIES ONLY TO FAMILIES THAT ARE CARING FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THEIR BIOLOGICAL PARENTS AND PLACED WITH THE CAREGIVER IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY BY CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

General

- Ability to provide care and supervision for the type of children to be serviced, including ability to communicate with the children.
- Knowledge of the laws and regulations pertaining to foster and kinship homes and Title 22 regulations, and the ability to comply.
- Ability to maintain financial and other records.
- Complete an orientation provided by the licensing/approval agency.
- Ability and willingness to follow all orders of the Juvenile Court, including specific instructions regarding visitation between the child and the parent(s).
- Be educated, trained, or experienced in areas related to the qualifications.

Please discuss any difficulties or problem areas with your social worker as waivers (exceptions) can be made to many of the requirements described in this section.

Criminal Record Clearance (waivers may be available)

All caregivers are subject to federal, state and local criminal record review, including fingerprint clearance and clearance of state and local child abuse records. If an adult in the home has resided out of state within the last five years, child abuse records in that state must be checked.

Finances

- Most children qualify for some type of financial reimbursement for their care while in a Relative/NREFM home.
- Children who qualify for the Title IVE Foster Care Rate will receive it. (Your social worker will be able to explain if the child qualifies for this rate.)
- For children who do not qualify for the Title IV rate, the caregiver can apply for CalWorks and Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) funding (public assistance for low income families) because the child in your home is considered a "family of one."
- There are some unusual situations where a child does not qualify for any type of reimbursement funding.



Emergency Plans

Each caregiver shall post emergency telephone numbers, discuss emergency situations with children, and practice emergency procedures every six months, and at the time of new placements.

Reporting Requirements

The caregiver must report the following to the Department:

Danger to child incidents

- Death of any child from any cause.
- Any injury to any child that requires medical treatment.
- Any unusual incident or child absence that threatens the physical or emotional health or safety of any child.
- Any suspected physical or psychological abuse of any child.
- Communicable diseases as reported to the caregiver by a health professional.
- Poisonings.
- Catastrophes, such as fires, floods, car accidents, etc.
- Fires or explosions which occur in or on the premises.

Changes to Report to Child's Social Worker and your Relative Home Approval/ Placement Social Worker

- Any change in the caregiver's residence or mailing address is to be reported 10 calendar days prior to the move or as soon as you learn of the upcoming move.
- All changes in household composition must be reported within 10 working days.
- Any new household members planning to move in to your home (including any additions to the family) require immediate notification and a criminal record clearance *before* they move in to your home.

Absences

When the caregiver intends to be absent from the home for 48 hours or longer, your Relative Home Approval/Placement social worker must be notified in writing or by telephone and include the following information:

- Dates of intended absence
- Whether the child will accompany the caregiver or remain in the home.
- Telephone number where caregiver may be contacted.
- Name, address, and telephone number of approved substitute caregiver (see babysitters)

Children's Records

- The caregiver must maintain a separate, complete and current record or file in the home for each child placed, including a current placement agreement with the name, birthdate and date of placement in the home, and a needs and services plan with educational records and case plan information for each child.
- The file should also contain a written consent which authorizes the caregiver to obtain routine medical and dental care in an emergency if the Department cannot be reached.
- A record of all medical, dental and mental health appointments must be maintained, including the doctor's name and the dates of appointments.
- All information and records regarding children is confidential and may not be disclosed to any third party without authorization from the Department.

Personal Rights

Each child shall have personal rights that must be protected by the caregiver. These rights include safe accommodations, freedom from corporal punishment, freedom to attend religious services of his/her choice, not to be locked in any room, not to be placed in any restraining device, not to be given any medications unless directed by their physician, and many others. These rights are described in detail in the separate Child's Rights document provided to the child and caregiver.

Discipline

Any form of discipline, that violates a child's personal rights is prohibited. No corporal punishment is allowed. Classes on positive discipline are available free of charge. Call 1-800-200-1222 for current classes.

Telephones

All Relative/NREFM foster family homes shall have telephone service unless alternative telephone access is approved and documented.

Transportation

Caregivers shall ensure that all transportation provided for children in care is provided in vehicles that are in safe operating condition (per Title 22 regulations) and that the drivers comply with all applicable laws. Children under the age of 8 must be secured in a car seat or booster seat in the back seat. Children under the age of 8 who are 4' 9" or taller may be secured by a safety belt in the back seat. Children who are 8 years and over shall be properly secured in an appropriate child passenger restraint system or safety belt. Passengers who are 16 years of age and over are subject to California's Mandatory Seat Belt law. The caregiver shall ensure that no minor is transported in a motor vehicle where someone is smoking a pipe, cigar, cigarette, or e-cigarette.

Food Service

The caregiver shall provide, or ensure that the child receives, at least three nutritious meals per day, which meet each child's dietary needs. Whenever children in placement eat at the home, they will have their meals with family members in a family setting. Infants under seven months shall be held during bottle-feeding.

Responsibility for Providing Care and Supervision

- The caregiver shall provide care and supervision as necessary to meet each child's needs.
- The caregiver shall provide the services identified in each child's case plan.
- The caregiver is responsible for ensuring care and supervision of the child of any minor parent in placement and the direct care and supervision of the child of a minor parent during the hours that the minor parent is unavailable.

Activities

The caregiver shall provide opportunity for and encourage participation in groups, sports, leisure time, family, special school and daily living skill activities.

Building and Grounds

Bedrooms

The bedroom arrangements in the home must, at a minimum, meet the following requirements for everyone in the home, including adults, where relevant:

- No more than two children shall share a bedroom.
- Children of the opposite sex shall not share a bedroom unless each child is under five years of age.
- No room commonly used for other purposes shall be used as a bedroom. For example: living rooms, halls, stairways, unfinished attics or basements, garages, storage areas and sheds or similar detached buildings.
- No bedroom shall be used as a public or general passageway to another room.
- Except for infants, children shall not share a bedroom with an adult.
- In bedrooms shared by adults and infants, no more than two infants and no more than two adults shall share the room.
- If two children have been sharing a bedroom, and one of them turns 18, they may continue to share the bedroom as long as they remain compatible and the agency has granted an exception.
- Each bedroom shall have portable or permanent closets and drawer space to accommodate child's clothing and personal belongings.

Beds

The caregiver must provide each child with an individual bed, which is equipped with a clean, comfortable mattress, clean linens, blankets and pillows, all in good repair.

- Linen shall be changed at least once per week or more often when necessary to ensure that clean linens are in use by children at all times.
- Beds shall be arranged to allow easy passage between beds and easy entrance into the room.
- The caregiver shall provide each infant with a safe and sturdy bassinet or crib, appropriate to the child's age and size.
- Bunk beds of more than two tiers shall not be used.

-
- Bunk beds shall have railings on the upper tier to prevent falling.
 - Children under five years of age who are unable to climb into or out of the upper tier unassisted shall not be permitted to use the upper tier.

Home hygiene and safety standards

- The home shall be clean, safe, sanitary and in good repair at all times for the safety and well-being of the children. The caregiver shall take measures to keep the home reasonably free of flies and other insects.
- All outdoor and indoor passageways, stairways, inclines, ramps, open porches and other areas of potential hazard are to be kept free of obstruction.
- The caregiver who accepts a child with a disability is expected to make special provisions, including changes to the buildings and grounds to protect and assist the child in maximizing the child's potential for self-help.
- Additional equipment, aids and/or conveniences shall be provided in home, accommodating children who need such items.
- The caregiver shall maintain at least one toilet, sink and tub or shower, in safe, clean operating condition.

Pools

An adult must provide supervision at all times when children are using a pool or a body of water. The adult must be able to swim if swimming would be necessary to rescue a child.

The following rules apply to homes with swimming pools (or other "bodies of water" such as hot tubs, fish ponds, etc.) which have children under 10 years of age or a child that is developmentally disabled, mentally handicapped or needs special care and supervision:

- The water must be inaccessible when not in use by having a pool cover or by surrounding the pool with a fence. Pool covers shall support the weight of an adult and be placed on the pool and locked while not in use.
- Gates shall swing away from the pool, self-close and have a self-latching device located no more than six inches from the top of the gate.
- Fences shall be at least five feet high and must not obscure the pool from view.
- Where an above-ground pool structure is used, the ladder must be removed when pool is not in use.
- All in-ground pools and above-ground pools which cannot be emptied after each use shall have a working pump and filtration system.

Babysitters

When the caregiver hires a babysitter for the children in the caregiver's home for a period exceeding 24 consecutive hours, the babysitter must first be cleared for criminal and child abuse history. The CWS social worker can complete the child abuse clearance. When the caregiver leaves the child(ren) with a babysitter in the babysitter's home, the babysitter must be licensed by Community Care Licensing to provide care for a dependent child if the babysitter also provides care for children from another family. The babysitter may obtain information regarding obtaining a day care license by calling Community Care Licensing at 619-767-2200.

Other Safety Standards and Regulations

- Caregiver shall maintain a comfortable home temperature for children at all times.
- Caregiver shall ensure the safety of the child in homes with fireplaces and open-faced heaters and wood stoves.
- The caregiver shall provide lighting in all rooms and other areas to ensure the comfort and safety of all persons in the home.
- Faucets shall deliver hot water at a safe temperature.
- Garbage shall be stored, located and disposed of in a way that will not permit the transmission of disease or odors, create a nuisance, or provide a breeding place or food source for insects or rodents.
- All caregiver homes not equipped with sprinkling systems shall have an approved and functioning smoke detector installed in the hallway of each sleeping area, or outside each sleeping area, which is clearly audible within each sleeping area.
- Security window bars shall have safety release devices located on the inside of the window.
- The caregiver must provide access to yard or outdoor activity space, which is free from hazards to life and health.

Storage Space

- Medicines, disinfectants, cleaning solutions, poisons, firearms and other dangerous items shall be stored where inaccessible to children.
- Storage areas for firearms and other dangerous weapons shall be locked. Alternately, use trigger locks or remove the firing pin from the firearm.
- Firing pins shall be stored and locked separately from firearms.
- Ammunition shall be stored and locked separately from firearms.

Court Orders

The Juvenile Court has/will be making specific orders for visiting with the parent(s), siblings or grandparents, that the child attends therapy, etc. It is critical that you follow these orders exactly. The social worker will explain these orders to you. Be sure that you understand each order as it pertains to your responsibilities.

Planning for the Child's Future

The Agency's goal is the reunification of the child with his or her parent(s) whenever possible. If the child cannot be returned home after twelve (12) months (six months if the child is under three years old), the law requires that a permanent plan for adoption, guardianship or long-term placement be made for the child. You may be given the option of providing a permanent home for the child or assisting the child to move on to a permanent home.

Role of the Social Worker

The social worker is:

- The case manager for the child and his/her family.
- Responsible for ensuring the safety of the child.
- Responsible for assisting the parent(s) to successfully accomplish the case plan goals.
- Responsible for ensuring that the court orders are followed.
- Responsible for arranging and monitoring services for the child.
- Your link with the Agency and the court.

If you have any concerns, you should first address it with the social worker. If that doesn't resolve the issue, contact the social worker's supervisor. If that still does not resolve the issue, you can contact the supervisor's manager.

If that still does not resolve the issue, you have the right to contact the Ombudsman Office for Child Welfare Services at (619) 338-2098.

The state Fair Hearing Process is available to you if the other avenues do not resolve the issue.

You are encouraged to elevate concerns through this path when they remain unresolved.

Kinship Care Education and Support Groups

There is no formal requirement for Relative/NREFM caregivers to attend classes or workshops, but there are many that are offered free of charge that will help you better meet the needs of the children in your care.

Issues of interest to all care providers include:

- Positive discipline
- Family Relationship Issues in Relative Care
- First aid and CPR
- Legal issues
- Court issues
- Child Abuse and Neglect issues
- Substance abuse issues

These classes and more are offered all over the county by the Grossmont College Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Care Education Program. Call 1-800-200-1222 for more information.

A flier is published every two months, describing the classes. Some classes have refreshments and/or childcare provided.

Kinship Support Groups are also available throughout the county.

Clothing

Purchasing adequate clothing as children grow can be difficult for many grandparents and other relatives raising children. If the child is a dependent of the court, he or she may qualify for an annual clothing stipend and caregivers can ask the child's Social Worker for more information. For children who are not eligible for a clothing stipend, caregivers can locate local discount clothing stores and programs by calling 211.

Education

From enrolling the child in school to accessing special services, navigating the school system can be extremely challenging for grandparents and other relatives raising children. Here is some information to help you:

- If you're having trouble enrolling the child in school because you don't have legal rights over the child, try downloading a Caregiver Authorization Affidavit at <http://www.saccourt.ca.gov/forms/docs/pr-023.pdf>
Complete the form and take it to the child's school. You can also try getting a letter from one or both of the parents giving you permission to enroll the child in school.
Please note that the Caregiver Authorization Affidavit may only be accepted at public schools and not private institutions.

For children 0-5:

- Call First 5 San Diego and request information about services that will help make sure the child will be prepared to enter kindergarten.
- Call Head Start/Early Head Start at (888) 873-5145 to find out if you qualify for free or low-cost, home-based preschool or child care.

For school-age children:

- Call Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK) at (877) 609-3218 for free information about Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and other special resources at school (if you think the child has special behavior problems or learning needs).
- Call the San Diego County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Program at (858) 503-2628 for information about education liaisons, free tutoring and other educational services for foster youth.

For teens who are thinking about college:

- Call the San Diego County Office of Education at (858) 292-3500 for information about programs that help high school seniors in foster and kinship care learn about grants and loans they may be eligible to receive, how to apply for financial aid and how to apply for college.
- Talk to the child's school counselor to get more information about the college application process.

Here are some other tips that you may find helpful:

- Enroll the child in school as soon as possible (many children who live with a grandparent or other relative have already missed a lot of school).
- Call your local school district to find out which school the child should attend.
- Ask which documents you will need to enroll the child in school.
- Share your situation with school staff. Knowing the child's background can help school personnel better understand his or her behavior or other issues.
- If possible, go to open houses and meetings at school. Being involved with the child's school is important and you may even meet other grandparents or relatives raising children!
- Encourage a love of reading by reading aloud to young children every day if possible, providing reading materials for children of all ages, and letting the child see you reading as well.

Elder Abuse

Understanding elder abuse is a good way to recognize warning signs and prevent the maltreatment of elderly and dependent adults. Elder abuse may include physical abuse, neglect, self-neglect, financial abuse and causing mental suffering. Often, victims of elder abuse can be abused in more ways than one. For example, an abuser may hit the elder (physical abuse) in order to convince him or her to turn over money to the abuser (financial abuse).

If a situation appears to be life-threatening or a crime is in progress, call 9-1-1 or your local law enforcement. If you believe elder or dependent abuse has occurred, call Adult Protective Services at (800) 510-2020, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Estate Planning

Grandparents and other relatives raising children are often concerned about what might happen to the children in their care in the event that the grandparent or other relative passes away or develops a health problem that would prohibit child rearing. Estate planning is the act of making a plan in advance and naming whom you want to receive the things you own (and the children you are raising) after you die and should:

- Include instructions for passing your values (religion, education, hard work, etc.) in addition to your valuables.
- Include instructions for your care if you become disabled before you die.
- Name a guardian and an inheritance manager for minor children.
- Provide information for family members with special needs without disrupting government benefits.
- Provide information for loved ones who might be irresponsible with money or who may need future protection from creditors or divorce.
- Include life insurance to provide for your family at your death, disability income insurance to replace your income if you cannot work due to illness or injury, and long-term care insurance to help pay for your care in case of an extended illness or injury.
- Provide for the transfer of your business at your retirement, disability, or death.
- Minimize taxes, court costs and unnecessary legal fees.
- Be an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Your plan should be reviewed and updated as your family and financial situations (and laws) change over your lifetime.

For more information about estate planning, speak with an attorney. To find an attorney that does estate planning, you can visit www.estateplanning.com/member



Family Resource Centers

To apply for CalWORKs,
CalFresh, and/or Medi-Cal
in person, please visit
one of these
San Diego County Family
Resource Centers

Community Resource Center – Fallbrook
130 E. Alvarado Street, Fallbrook, CA 92028
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Community Resource Center – Ramona
1521 Main Street, Ramona, CA 92065
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – El Cajon
220 S.1st Street, El Cajon, CA 92019
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – Lemon Grove
7065 Broadway, Lemon Grove, CA 91945
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – Metro
1130 10th Avenue, San Diego, CA 92101
CalFresh

Family Resource Center – North Central
5055 Ruffin Road, San Diego, CA 92123
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – North Coastal
1315 Union Plaza Court, Oceanside, CA 92054
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – North Inland
649 West Mission Avenue, Escondido, CA 92025
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – Northeast
5001 73rd Street, San Diego, CA 92115
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – Southeast
4588 Market Street, San Diego, CA 92102
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – South Region
690 Oxford Street, Chula Vista, CA 91911
CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal

Family Resource Center – Centre City
1255 Imperial Ave. 5th Floor, San Diego, CA 92101
CalWORKs, Medi-Cal

Financial Support

Many grandparents and other relatives raising children live on limited incomes and the expense of raising a child can make money even tighter. Concrete supports, like financial assistance, are extremely important for grandparents and other relatives raising children. You may be eligible for just one form of on-going monthly support. Refer back to the Permanency Chart (pages 8-11) to remind yourself which forms of support you may be eligible for and then read this section for more information. The different types of potential financial support for grandparents and other relatives raising children are:

CalWORKs

- CalWORKs Child Only Grants (or “non-needy caregiver cash aid”) provide money and Medi-Cal benefits for the support of the child and are based on the child’s income only. Call 211 for assistance with your application, information about your local welfare office and items to bring when you apply. Please note that when you receive CalWORKs funding, the County Health and Human Services Agency attempts to locate one or both parents for repayment.
- CalWORKs Family Grants provide money and Medi-Cal benefits for everyone in a household that meets income requirements. Call 211 for assistance with your application, information about your local welfare office, and items to bring when you apply.
- If you’ve already applied for CalWORKs, but have questions about your application or benefits, call the ACCESS Customer Service Center at (866) 262-9881 toll free.
- If you receive SSI you are NOT eligible for CalWORKs or CalFresh but the other members of your family may be eligible. Your SSI income is not counted in the CalWORKs or CalFresh program budget. Your SSI benefits are meant to cover your own living expenses, but not the expenses of other family members.
- To qualify for CalWORKs you must be a California resident and either a U.S. citizen or certain Qualified Non-Citizen.
- You must provide proof of some information you gave in the application. More information about verification you may need to provide may be found at www.mybenefitscalwin.org under Cash Aid Options and CalWORKs/RCA Required Documents.

Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) Benefit Payment:

- AAP is a financial benefit to cover child rearing expenses for the child who has been adopted via Child Welfare Services. To learn more about the program and find out if you’re eligible, talk to the child’s social worker. Children with special needs may receive additional funding. The child’s social worker can assist in determining if the child is eligible to receive a special care rate. Additionally, the passing of Assembly Bill 12 will allow for possible AAP benefits to continue until the child is 21 instead of 18. For more information about AB12, visit <http://www.cachildlaw.org/Misc/AB12FactSheet-02.13.09.pdf>

The AAP benefit is:

- Based on the child’s special needs, age, sibling group, adverse parent background and/or race/ethnicity.
- Reassessed every two years or per request of the caregiver to address changing needs of child.
- Able to cover the cost of group homes or residential treatment programs.

Foster Care Funds

- Foster care funds provide money and Medi-Cal benefits for the support of the child while the child is a dependent of juvenile court. Some, but not all, relatives are eligible to receive funds. If you are caring for a child who is currently a dependent of juvenile court, but have not received foster care funds or Medi-Cal, call the child's social worker who will assist with determination of eligibility for the foster care or CalWORKs programs. Children with special needs may receive a special care rate, which provides additional funding. Discuss the child's potential need with his/her social worker. Additionally, the passing of Assembly Bill 12 will allow for financial assistance to possibly continue until the child is 21 instead of 18. For more information about AB12, visit <http://www.caichildlaw.org/Misc/AB12FactSheet-02.13.09.pdf>

Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) Program

Funding equal to the basic foster care rate for approved relative caregivers with whom an eligible child is placed. A child must meet all the following criteria:

- Be a dependent or ward of the California juvenile court, or be placed under a voluntary placement agreement.
- Reside in California and be placed with an approved relative caregiver.
- Be ineligible for federally funded foster care benefits (your eligibility worker may be able to help you determine this).

In addition, an ARC Program Application must be completed for each child, even if the child is already receiving CalWORKs. Please contact the child's social worker for more information.

Child Support

- Child Support can sometimes be obtained by grandparents and other relatives raising children, especially when a relative has been given legal custody through Family Court. For more information about receiving child support, call the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) at (866) 901-3212.

Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (KinGAP)

- KinGAP is a California state financial benefit to cover child rearing expenses for the child whose relative has taken guardianship of them via Child Welfare Services. To learn more about the program and find out if you're eligible, talk to the child's social worker. Children with special needs may receive a special care rate, which provides additional funding. The child's social worker can assist in determining if the child is eligible to receive a special care rate. Additionally, the passing of Assembly Bill 12 will allow for KinGAP payments to possibly continue until the child is 21 instead of 18. For more information about AB12, visit <http://www.caichildlaw.org/Misc/AB12FactSheet-02.13.09.pdf>

The KinGAP benefit is for relative caregivers who:

- Have been assessed by County Child Welfare Services
- Have been receiving funding from the foster care program
- Have had the child placed in their home by Child Welfare Services for at least six consecutive months
- Are no longer in need of supervision by a social worker or the court
- Have taken legal guardianship of the youth after juvenile court dependency has been dismissed

Supplemental Security Income (SSI):

- SSI pays benefits to disabled adults and children who have limited incomes and resources. Call the Social Security Disability Help Center at (619) 282-1761 or your local Social Security Office at (800) 772-1213 for assistance applying for SSI benefits for a child. If the child is a dependent of juvenile court, the child's social worker and eligibility worker will apply on the child's behalf. Call the child's social worker to discuss.

Social Security Survivor Benefit

- Social Security Survivor's Benefit pays benefits to children whose parents are deceased or disabled. Call your local Social Security Office at (800) 772-1213 for assistance applying for the Social Security Survivor's Benefit. If the child is a dependent of juvenile court, please notify the child's social worker of any benefits received or the potential benefits the child may be eligible to receive.

Grief and Loss

Children can be placed in the care of their relatives for many different reasons. Sometimes it is because one or both of the child's biological parents has died. A child can experience feelings of loss anytime he or she is not being raised by a biological parent; however, dealing with the death of a parent is usually extremely difficult. Children who are being raised by a relative because their parent has died may be eligible to receive up to a year of free bereavement counseling at a local hospice agency. Call 211 for more information about bereavement counseling and other services available at a hospice agency near you.

Health and Dental Care

Grandparents and other relatives raising children often have concerns about accessing appropriate health and dental services for the children in their care.

Refer back to the Permanency Chart (pages 8-11) to remind yourself which health programs you're eligible for and then read this section for more information.

- It is important to take the child in for a physical examination as soon as possible to address any health issues he or she may have, especially if the child hasn't seen a doctor or dentist regularly in the past.
- If you're having trouble accessing medical care for the child because you don't have legal rights over the child, try downloading a Caregiver Authorization Affidavit at: <http://www.saccourt.ca.gov/forms/docs/pr-023.pdf>
Complete the form and take it to the child's doctor. You can also try getting a letter from one or both of the parents giving you permission to access medical care for the child.

Medi-Cal

- Children being raised by a relative usually qualify for Medi-Cal, which provides free or low-cost health and dental coverage for children and families (please note that Medi-Cal only provides dental benefits for children under 18 years of age). If you're a relative caregiver who is not raising a formal foster child, you can call 211 for assistance with your application and information about your local office or apply online at www.mybenefitscalwin.org

If you're a relative caregiver who is raising a formal foster child, he or she should be automatically provided Medi-Cal benefits by the County. If you have not received the child's Medi-Cal card or have questions about using the program, call your child's social worker.

- If you've already applied for Medi-Cal, but have questions about your application or benefits, call the ACCESS Customer Service Center at (866) 262-9881.
- If you need help resolving an issue related to Medi-Cal, another insurance carrier, or a past due medical bill, call the Consumer Center for Health Education and Advocacy at (877) 734-3258.
- Sometimes, children can be covered by a relative caregiver's private health insurance in addition to Medi-Cal after obtaining legal guardianship or adoption — check with your employer.
- If you have other health coverage, you can still apply for Medi-Cal. Your health plan or HMO will be billed for services it covers. Medi-Cal will be billed for services your health plan does not cover.
- The County may need proof of information you gave in your application. More information about verification you may need to provide may be found at www.mybenefitscalwin.org under Medical Services and Medi-Cal Required Documents.

Housing

Grandparents and other relatives raising children often face challenges related to stable housing. Many grandparents and other relatives are faced with not having enough space to absorb children into their homes or must move due to age restrictions on their housing. If you find yourself struggling to secure or keep stable housing, here is some information that may help:

- The Housing Authority of San Diego County has programs — like the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program — for low-income households to help them pay their rent. A portion of the rent is paid on behalf of the families directly to their landlords. If you would like to apply for rental assistance, you may submit an application online at www.sdhcd.org or if you require specific accommodation to complete the application, please call (858) 694-4801.
- San Diego County has a housing directory that contains listings and contact information for affordable housing complexes located throughout the county, as well as resources to assist with fair housing issues. To view this directory, visit http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/sdhcd/docs/housing_resource.pdf
- Call 211 for information about other housing programs in your area.

iFoster

iFoster is a leading National Non-Profit organization dedicated to providing life-changing resources that aid vulnerable children and youth. iFoster programs are free and can be found at www.ifoster.org to members of the foster, adoptive and kinship communities; youth who have emancipated out of the system; and the organizations that support them. The iFoster resource categories are K-12 Education, Post High, Computers and Communication, Recreational Activities, Advisers and Support, Clothing and Personal Care, Household Finance and Transportation, Child Care and Parenting help, Health and Wellness and Food.

Legal Issues

As you learned in the introduction section of this handbook, children can be placed in the homes of grandparents and other relatives in many different ways and it is extremely important to understand your specific situation so that you can learn about your legal rights and permanency options. Refer back to the Permanency Chart (pages 8-11) to remind yourself which legal status currently applies to you and what permanency options you have, then read this section for more information.

Informal Care

You have an informal agreement with the child's parent(s) to raise the child, but haven't had involvement with the local Child Welfare Agency or the court. You have physical custody of the child, but no legal rights because legal custody remains with the biological parents, who may resume care of the child at any time.

- In order to access medical care and enroll the child in school, download a Caregiver Authorization Affidavit at <http://www.saccourt.ca.gov/forms/docs/pr-023.pdf>. Complete the form and take it to the child's doctor and school. You can also try getting a letter from one or both of the parents giving you permission to access medical care and enroll the child in school.
- If you want to obtain legal guardianship of the child, call the Guardianship Assistance Program at (619) 450-7642 or the San Diego Volunteer Lawyers Program at (619) 235-5656 for assistance with the process. Probate cases may be referred to Juvenile court for review, which could result in biological parents being offered reunification services.
- If you want to legally adopt the child, call San Diego County Adoptions at (877) 423-6788 for assistance with an independent adoption.

Legal Guardianship via Probate Court

You have filed a petition in Probate Court and been granted legal guardianship of the child. You have legal and physical custody of the child and have authority to make decisions regarding the child's care.

- If you want to legally adopt the child, call San Diego County Adoptions at (877) 423-6788 for assistance with an independent adoption.

Formal Foster Care

You have had a child placed in your home by Child Welfare Services because of abuse or neglect by the parent(s). You have physical custody of the child but the child is a dependent of Juvenile Court and Child Welfare Services oversees the child's care.

- If reunification with the bio-parent(s) fails and you're identified as an appropriate long-term placement for the child, three options to discuss with the child's social worker are:
 - Adoption via Child Welfare Services in which you become the child's legal parent, parental rights are terminated, and court dependency is terminated.

-
- Legal Guardianship via Juvenile Court in which you become the legal guardian of the child until age 18, parental rights are not terminated, and court dependency is terminated.
 - Long-term foster care or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) in which you remain the physical guardian of the child, but the child remains a dependent of Juvenile Court and Child Welfare Services oversees the child's care.

Legal Guardianship via Juvenile Court

You have had a child placed in your home by Child Welfare Services due to abuse or neglect by the parent(s), but were then made the legal guardian because reunification with the parent(s) failed. You have legal and physical custody of the child and have authority to make decisions regarding the child's care.

- If you want to legally adopt the child, call the Child Abuse Hotline at (858) 560-2191 to request that juvenile court dependency be reinstated so that you can begin the process to legally adopt the child via juvenile court.

Legal Custody via Family Court

You have been given legal custody of a child via Family Court because the parents already had an open custody case when a report of abuse or neglect was made. You have legal and physical custody of the child and have authority to make decisions regarding the child's care.

- If you want to legally adopt the child, call San Diego County Adoptions at (877) 423-6788 for assistance with an independent adoption.

CWS Adoption

You have had a child placed in your home by Child Welfare Services due to abuse or neglect by the parent(s), but then adopted the child because reunification with the parent(s) failed. After court termination of the biological parents' parental rights, you become the legal parent.

Independent Adoption

You have adopted a child independently, without the involvement of Child Welfare Services. After court termination of the biological parents' parental rights, you become the legal parent.

Emancipation

Emancipation is a legal way for children to become adults before they are 18. Once a child is emancipated, his or her parents or guardians do not have custody or control of him or her anymore, however, emancipated minors are still required to go to school, obey the law, and get a parent or guardian's permission before getting married. Emancipation is usually forever, but the court can cancel the emancipation if the minor asking for the emancipation lies to the court or is no longer able to support himself or herself.

For more information about emancipation, you can read the Legal Services for Children's Emancipation Manual at http://www.lsc-sf.org/wp-content/uploads/emancipation_manual.pdf or contact the Emancipation Clinic in San Diego at (877) 534-2524.

Here are some additional permanency tips you may find useful:

- Keep a copy of caregiver authorization affidavits, placement agreements, and guardianship or adoption paperwork with you at all times.
- Consider keeping a journal of when the child's parent calls, visits, writes, or sends gifts to the child AND when he or she promises to call or visit but doesn't follow through. This record may help you in possible future legal proceedings.
- Gather important documents including: birth certificates for yourself, the child, and the child's parent, marriage licenses or divorce decrees if your name has changed since the child was born, financial records to show that you have been financially supporting the child, records of events (like the journal mentioned above), and the child's social security card.
- Be sure to attend all legal proceedings and hearings.
- Set a professional tone in court by following the rules of the court, dressing professionally, keeping your cool, and sticking to the facts.
- Call 211 for other legal resources.

Mental Health

Many children who are being raised by a grandparent or other relative have experienced some kind of trauma including abuse, neglect, or the loss of a parent. Children who have experienced loss or trauma often have behavioral, developmental, and mental health needs that differ from those of other children.

Children being raised by a grandparent or other relative may feel:

- Confusion about why the parent is not caring for him or her.
- Anger about negative events that have taken place, especially abuse or neglect.
- Grief if the child's parent has died or is alive but absent from the child's life.
- Guilt — blaming him- or herself for family problems or for wanting to live away from the parent.
- Shame about family problems or the fact that they don't live with their parents like other kids.
- Lack of trust of adults due to past abuse or neglect.
- Fear due to past abuse or neglect.
- Divided loyalties — a child may feel torn between love for the birth parent and the caregiver.

How to talk to children being raised by a grandparent or other relative about their feelings:

- Too much information can be overwhelming while too little can cause confusion and anxiety.
- Don't pretend that nothing is wrong — be honest, but age appropriate.
- Talk to the child about how they are feeling and remember to be respectful by paying attention when he or she talks and really listening rather than jumping in with advice right away.

-
- Accept the child’s feelings and don’t dismiss them as unimportant.
 - Ask the child’s school counselor or therapist for suggestions about how to talk to the child about their parent’s absence.

Expect questions — children often wonder things like:

- Why did this happen?
- Is it my fault?
- Who will take care of me?
- Why can’t I have a normal family?

Make sure to seek professional help if you feel that what the child experienced before coming to live with you has caused serious emotional or behavioral problems or if you notice any of these warning signs:

- Depression
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Use of alcohol or other drugs
- Anger out of proportion to the cause
- Poor concentration
- Excessive worries or fears
- Destruction of property
- Social isolation
- Low energy
- Going back to earlier behaviors like thumb sucking or bedwetting
- Behaviors like throwing temper tantrums, lying, hitting, yelling, and biting that:
 - Happen often or continue past the expected age
 - Seem too extreme to be normal
 - Affect the child’s ability to function at school or at home

Individual and family counseling, health and development assessments, and parenting classes can often help the child develop social and emotional competence and address emotional and behavioral issues:

- For children between the ages of 0-5 who are not dependents of juvenile court, call First 5 San Diego at (888) 5 FIRST 5 and request a FREE Healthy Development Assessment. More information about services may also be found at www.first5sandiego.org
- For children between the ages of 0-5 who are dependents of juvenile court, ask the child’s social worker how he/she can be assessed by the Developmental Screening and Enhancement Program (DSEP) and if you can see the assessment report. Once you review the report, ask the social worker for help accessing services to address the needs of the child.
- For school-age children who are not dependents of juvenile court, access individual/family counseling services by:

- Calling the child’s school counselor and asking if Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) services are available. This program pays for therapists from outside community agencies to visit schools a few times per week to do on-going, individual counseling with students who have Medi-Cal or no insurance.
- Calling the San Diego County Access and Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240 to receive referrals for mental health services in your area for individuals with Medi-Cal or no insurance. The Access and Crisis Line can also help with services for alcohol or drug abuse, suicide prevention, medication needs, and more.
- For school-age children who are dependents of juvenile court, access individual/family counseling services by:
 - Asking the child’s social worker if the court has ordered therapy/counseling for the child. If so, ask the social worker for a list of TERM approved therapists in your area or take the child to the services arranged by the social worker.
 - Trying the tips above for non-dependent children.

Mentoring

Children who are being raised by a grandparent or other relative might benefit from having additional positive adult role models in their lives. Mentoring programs can match the child with a caring adult mentor who will make a commitment to spend time with the child playing sports, playing board games, or just talking. Your child will get another caring adult in his or her life and you will get a break while the child is with his or her mentor.

In order to find out more about mentoring programs in San Diego County:

- Call Big Brothers Big Sisters Program at (858) 536-4900 or visit www.sdbigs.org
- Visit www.sdmentorcoalition.org for a list of other mentoring programs in your area.



Nutrition

Many grandparents and other relatives raising children have limited incomes and it can be difficult to afford healthy food. Like financial assistance, food assistance programs are a concrete support that are very important for grandparents and other relatives raising children. If you're concerned that you can't afford healthy food for your family, read the information below.

You may qualify for:

CalFresh (formerly called Food Stamps)

- If your family meets income requirements, you may qualify for CalFresh, which provides a debit card to purchase groceries. Call 211 for assistance with your application and information about your local welfare office or apply online at www.mybenefitscalwin.org
- If you've already applied for CalFresh, but have questions about your application or benefits, call the ACCESS Customer Service Center at (866) 262-9881.
- You can buy food as well as plants and seeds to grow food. You will not be charged sales tax on items you buy with CalFresh. You cannot buy non-food items such as pet food, vitamins, medicines, alcohol, tobacco, or paper products. You may not buy hot or prepared food. **Exception:** *You may participate in the CalFresh Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) in San Diego County if you are elderly (60 or older), disabled and/or homeless. If you are eligible for the RMP, you can use your CalFresh benefits to purchase food at approved restaurants. A list of participating restaurants, identified by the Restaurant Meals Program logo, can be found by visiting the RMP website at www.SanDiegoRMP.org or by calling 2-1-1.*
- The county has up to 30 days to approve or deny your CalFresh application. If you have an emergency need for food you may be eligible for Expedited Services.
 - Having a criminal record does not affect your eligibility for CalFresh unless you have been convicted of a drug related felony. A record of arrests (with no convictions) has no bearing on your eligibility for CalFresh.



- If you receive SSI you are not eligible for CalFresh, but the other members of your family may be eligible. Your SSI income is not counted in the CalFresh program budget. Your SSI benefits are meant to cover your own living expenses, but not the expenses of other family members.
- The County may need proof for some of the information you give in the application. The County will need to have your verifications before your application can be certified. If you are eligible for Expedited Services, you will need to show your identification. The other information can be given to the County later. You will need to show ONE document for each type of verification requested.
- More information about verification you may need to provide may be found at www.mybenefitscalwin.org under Food and Nutrition and CalFRESH Required Documents.

Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC)

- If your child is between the ages of 0-5, he or she may qualify for WIC, which provides vouchers for fruits, vegetables, milk, whole wheat bread, cereal, eggs, cheese, peanut butter, baby foods, and more. Call 1-888-WIC-WORKS (1-888-942-9675) to find your local WIC office.

Please note:

- Any child on Medi-Cal automatically qualifies for WIC.
- Undocumented children can qualify for WIC.
- A caregiver's income is only taken into account if the child does not have MediCal or is not placed with the caregiver as a foster child.
- A caregiver does not need to have guardianship of the child in order to obtain WIC benefits - notices of action of a placement or a written note from the child's mother can be accepted.

National School Lunch Program

- If your child is school age, he or she may qualify for the National School Lunch Program, which provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. You can apply for school meals at any time throughout the school year by submitting a household application directly to your school. Your school will provide you with an application upon request. If your child receives public assistance, be sure to include the amount he or she receives and the case number, which should automatically qualify your child for the program.

Food Banks

- If you're in need of emergency food, you might want to consider visiting your local food bank. To find a location or program near you, call the San Diego Food Bank at (866) 350-3663 or visit their website at www.sandiegofoodbank.org

For other nutrition tips, talk to your child's doctor and visit www.choosemyplate.gov

Parenting Education

Many relatives raising children have raised children of their own; however, parenting a second time around or parenting children who have experienced trauma can be different. Taking a parenting class with a curriculum that has evidence proving its effectiveness can often help caregivers by teaching about child development, nurturing and attachment, and positive discipline.

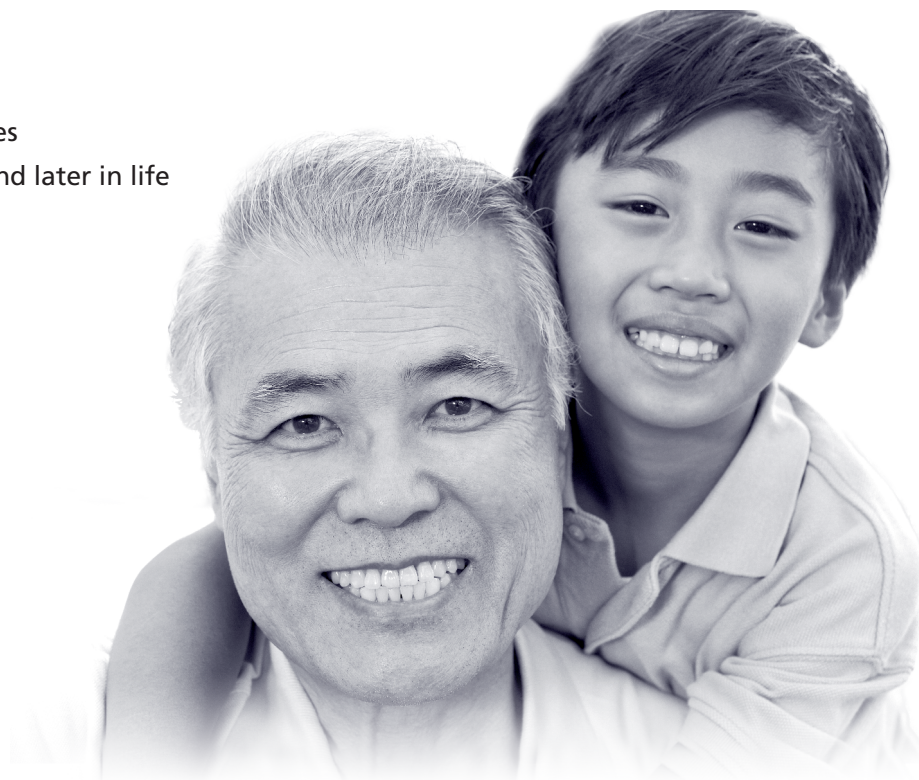
For more information about parenting classes and resources:

- Call Grossmont College Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Care Education Program at (800) 200-1222 or visit www.fakce.org
- Call 211 and ask about evidence-based parenting classes like Triple P — Positive Parenting Program — or Incredible Families for help with implementing positive discipline, understanding the child's behavior, improving challenging child behaviors, and feeling less stressed.
- Call 211 and ask about early intervention programs for babies and young children like the Nurse Family Partnership Program, First 5 Programs, and Parent Child Interaction Therapy.

For general information about parenting and child development, read the section below.

The purpose of positive discipline is to help the child:

- Stay safe
- Learn right from wrong
- Develop values
- Learn to respect others
- Build self-esteem
- Develop self-control
- Understand consequences
- Be successful at school and later in life



Remember to:

- Be firm, but flexible.
- Focus on providing a learning experience rather than just gaining control.
- Teach what to do and what not to do — and why.
- Make consequences that seem logical and fit the misbehavior.
- Praise positive behavior.
- Be consistent.
- Teach good values.
- Show the child your love everyday.
- Adjust rules and responsibilities as the child gets older.
- Be a good role model.

Bonding with a Baby

- Nurturing and attachment are crucial elements for the healthy growth of a baby's body and mind. You might be seeing that your baby has brief periods of sleep, crying and alertness many times each day; often cries for long periods of time for no apparent reason; loves to be held and cuddled; responds to and imitates facial expressions; loves soothing voices; grows and develops each day; and learns new skills quickly.
- Some things you can do for your baby include responding when your baby cries; holding and touching your baby as much as possible; using feeding and diapering times to look into your baby's eyes, smile, and talk; reading and singing to your baby; spending time on the floor with your baby playing with toys and puzzles, and talking to your baby's pediatrician if you feel you are having trouble bonding with your baby.

Parenting a School Age Child

- School age children go through big changes as they spend more time at school and work to develop an identity of their own. You might be seeing that your school age child is maturing unevenly (their bodies are growing, but they still may be having temper tantrums and need reminders to do things like brush their teeth); very concerned about fairness and rules; capable of doing chores and homework more independently; capable of getting distracted easily and may lack organizational skills; and starting to develop deeper relationships with peers.
- Some things you can do for your school age child include modeling the behavior you want to see; making a few important rules and enforcing them every time; talking about your expectations; supporting healthy growth with nutritious meals and plenty of sleep; limiting time spent watching TV, playing video games, or using the computer; being involved with the child's school; offering support and understanding when problems with peers arise; and talking with the child about sex, alcohol, and drugs before he or she learns it from peers.

Connecting with a Teen

- As teens become more independent, relationships with friends become very important. Although it may sometimes feel like your teen doesn't need you anymore, he or she still needs your love, support, and guidance. You might be seeing that your teen is craving more independence; questioning rules and authority figures; testing limits; acting impulsively, and making mature decisions sometimes, but childish ones at other times.
- Some things you can do for your teen include sharing family meals and "ordinary" time by taking everyday opportunities to bond; getting involved with your teen's interests, hobbies, and school activities; getting to know your teen's friends; showing that you are interested in your teen's ideas, feelings, and experiences, and setting clear limits, but allowing your teen to help make rules and consequences.

Parenting a Child with Special Needs

- Children develop in many ways and at different rates, but when milestones don't develop within the broad expected timeframe or don't appear at all, caregivers may become concerned. You might be seeing that your special needs child is delayed in his or her development of gross and fine motor skills, language, and cognitive and social skills.
- Some things you can do for your special needs child include calling the child's primary care physician to request a developmental screening or First 5 San Diego at (888)-5FIRST5 to request a free Healthy Development Assessment. If the child is diagnosed with a developmental delay or disability you can meet with other families whose children also have the child's identified disability; learn the specifics about the child's special needs; access community resources for the child by calling the San Diego Regional Center at (858) 576-2957 or Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK) at (877) 609-3218; locate a support group for ongoing support; and access respite care.



Respite Care

Raising a child is a full-time job and grandparents and other relatives often need a break. Read the information below to find out if you're eligible to receive respite care, which is a temporary break or rest for the caregiver, through a community service provider. And don't forget to use your informal support system as well — consider asking a friend or family member to babysit!

- Grandparents and other relatives who are 55 and older can call the YMCA Kinship Respite Program at (619) 543-9850 to get information about applying to send the child to part-time child care, am/pm care, day camp, or overnight camp for free.
- Grandparents and other relatives who are raising a court dependent child can call Maxim Healthcare Services at (619) 298-7548 to receive limited respite care from registered providers when needed for emergencies, stress alleviation, or required trainings. Respite services cannot be used for routine babysitting, vacations, employment, or to allow the caregiver to provide respite care for other children.
- Grandparents and other relatives who are raising a child with special needs can call:
 - The San Diego Regional Center at (858) 576-2957
 - YMCA Childcare Resource Service at (619) 667-2955
 - Military Branch's Exceptional Family Member Program (for active duty military personnel only)

Self Care

It's important for grandparents and other relatives raising children to remember to take care of themselves because it reduces stress and helps increase parental resilience. You might feel lonely if your new role cuts you off from friends and activities, embarrassed about what friends or neighbors may think, resentful of the loss of freedom, guilty about feeling resentful, or overwhelmed. These feelings are completely normal, but are important reasons to think about self care. Besides getting respite care, some other things you can do to take care of yourself are get plenty of physical activity, maintain a healthy diet, and engage in hobbies and enjoyable activities with friends.

Substance-Exposed Infants

Some children who are being raised by grandparents or other relatives are born to mothers who abused substances during pregnancy. Illegal drugs as well as legal substances like alcohol, caffeine, and over-the-counter medications can have lasting effects on an unborn child. Studies show that taking drugs during pregnancy may increase the chance of birth defects, premature babies, underweight babies, and stillborn births. Negative effects can be seen after birth as well and can include problems with behavior, cognitive performance, information processing, memory, attentiveness and even brain structure changes that persist into early adolescence. If you know or suspect that an infant in your care was exposed to substances in utero, you can call First 5 San Diego at 888-5FIRST5 to request a free Healthy Development Assessment and services.

Support Groups

Maintaining and increasing social connections is very important for grandparents and other relatives raising children. Grossmont College Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Care Education Program offers support groups for grandparents and other relatives raising children throughout San Diego County. To find a support group in your area contact Grossmont College at (800) 200-1222 or www.fakce.org or YMCA Kinship at (619) 543-9850 or www.yfs.ymca.org

You may also call Grandparents Connection at (619) 931-9548, to access a support group in Southeast San Diego.

Additional support for families who have adopted a child is available through the Adoption Support Services Program at San Diego Youth Services. For more information, call (619) 221-8600, ext. 2240.

And remember, using informal support is important too! Build a safety network of family and friends who might be able to help with things like clothing, furniture, and child care in an emergency or when you need a break.

Technology

Like the general public, grandparents and other relatives raising children, have varying levels of comfort using computers and other forms of technology. Gaining education and experience using technology can not only make your life easier, but is also an important way to connect with the children and teens in your care and make sure they are staying safe while using social media. For more information about technology programs and classes you can call 211, your local library branch, or community college. To find the library branch nearest you, please visit <http://sdcl.org>, select hours and locations, and enter your zip code. To find the community college nearest you, please visit www.cccco.edu and enter your zip code.

Transportation

Transportation can be a challenge for many grandparents and other relatives raising children. For more information about various forms of public transportation available within San Diego County, please visit www.sdmts.com. For information about specific programs available through community service providers, please call 211.

Utilities

The SDGE Care Program provides a 35% discount on monthly utility bills for families who receive public assistance. To apply for the Care Program by phone call (877) 646-5525. To apply for the Care Program online or for more information about other SDGE assistance programs visit <http://sdge.com/residential/assistance-programs/california-alternate-rates-energy-care-program>

Additional Resources

Other resources may be available to help you care for the child. For information about other resources that may help, please contact YMCA Kinship at (619) 543-9850 or www.yfs.ymca.org or call 211 or visit www.211sandiego.org/grandparents

If you're considering moving outside of San Diego County, you can call the California Kinship Navigator at (800) KIN-0047 or (800) 546-0047 to find services available in other counties in California. For additional information about resources, services, and policy changes affecting grandparents and other relatives raising children visit www.gu.org
www.grandfamilies.org
www.grandfactsheets.org
www.ifoster.org

To obtain more information about this handbook, please contact YMCA Kinship at (619) 543-9850 or www.yfs.ymca.org

Information contained in this handbook was gathered from a variety of websites and other resources including:

www.gu.org
www.sdcounty.ca.gov/hhsa
www.cdss.ca.gov
www.childwelfare.gov/preventing

Channing Bete Company, Inc: Raising Your Grandchild, Channing Bete Company, Inc: Loving Discipline for Children Ages 1 through 5, Channing Bete Company, Inc: Loving Discipline for Children Ages 6-12, Channing Bete Company, Inc: Positive Discipline for Your Teen, and Channing Bete Company, Inc: Guiding Through Adolescence.



