

RELATIVE CAREGIVER GUIDE



INFORMATION FOR THE KIN CAREGIVER

**PORTAGE COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
CHILD WELFARE, FOSTER CARE, & KINSHIP CARE**

PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

You've recently been contacted by staff from Portage County Health & Human Services (PCHHS) about assuming physical care for one, or more, of your minor relatives...and you've agreed to do so. Their parent(s) may be unable to continue caring for them...at least for the time being...due to child abuse/neglect issues or as a result of the minor's involvement with parent-child conflict or juvenile justice issues.

This handbook will provide you with the information necessary to understand the legal processes involved when a Judge orders a child placed with a relative...your options for financial assistance (Medical Assistance, Day Care Assistance, Kinship Care and/or Foster Care)...your responsibilities...what to expect from your Social Worker and how to best be an advocate for your minor relative.

By becoming a relative provider, you're now a temporary parent figure for your related minor...while remaining in a family relationship with their parents. This is no easy task. This guide will address how you can, and should, focus on your minor child's needs while supporting their ongoing relationship with their parent(s).

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FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT OPTIONS

Now that you're caring for your minor relative...and a Judge has court ordered them placed in your home...what are your choices regarding financial help?

NOTE: You may choose not to accept or pursue any financial assistance. No further action need be taken.

- A. **MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND/OR DAY CARE ASSISTANCE ONLY:** You can choose to only apply for a Medical Assistance card (to cover therapy, medical and dental care) and/or a Day Care Subsidy to help cover day care costs related to your employment. Approved Court ordered caregivers are eligible to apply for a Wisconsin SHARES day care subsidy, for day care while you are working, and for medical coverage for your minor relative. Your social worker can supply you with an application to complete and return to this agency's Economic Support section or you may apply on line at: **www.access.wi.gov**. See attached example of the home page (view additional details in Appendix...**Financial Assistance & Support Options**).



ACCESS

Your Connection to Programs for Health, Nutrition and Child Care

[Español](#)



Before you go to the next page:

⚠ ACCESS will work best with Internet Explorer version 8 and 9. You may experience problems if you are using other browsers such as Firefox, Safari, or Chrome. If you have questions or need help with your application, please call Member Services at 1-800-362-3002.

Am I Eligible?

- > Nutrition, Health & Child Care
- > Prescription Drug Plans
- > Energy Assistance
- > Tax Credits

Apply for Benefits!

- > FoodShare
- > Health Care
- > Family Planning Waiver
- > Child Care

Login to Account

- > Check your benefits
- > Report changes
- > Renew your benefits
- > Manage health care

OR **Create an Account**

Wisconsin's health, nutrition and child care programs

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Community Partners

◆ Login

BadgerCare+ express enrollment for Children and registration for Community Access Points

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Providers

◆ Login

BadgerCare+ express enrollment for pregnant women and children

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Employers

◆ Login

Obtain information about reporting health insurance data

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SPECIAL NOTE RE: DAY CARE ASSISTANCE APPLICATION:

Your day care assistance eligibility will be based upon the child's parent's income, use of a "3 Star"...or higher...certified day care provider, your proof of qualified employment and your work schedule. If self employed, you will be asked to supply copies of your tax return to verify you own a "legitimate"/profit making business. To receive day care assistance for any month, you must have applied BEFORE THE END OF THAT MONTH. No exceptions.

Uncovered child care expenses due to your failure or inability to follow application procedures may result in you being responsible for those child care costs. The Social Worker assigned to your case can help you if you are having problems with this process (view details in Appendix).

- B. **MONTHLY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE/KINSHIP CARE:** If you wish to receive a monthly care assistance payment...you begin by applying for Kinship Care. We recommend you apply for Kinship as soon as possible, to insure payment. If you don't apply when the child is placed with you, by the Court...you risk not being eligible for Kinship. Kinship Care provides a \$220 per month, per child, payment. Your social worker can supply you with a Kinship application packet. The Kinship Care Coordinator will complete background

checks and go through a physical safety assessment of your home. They will also supply you with fingerprint cards and other application items. Once everything has been returned, they will approve or deny your Kinship application. If approved...The State of Wisconsin requires you must then apply for a Foster Care license in order to continue receiving a monthly care payment for your minor relative.

The Kinship Care Coordinator will pass on your Kinship information to the Foster Care Coordinator. They will send you additional application material, including questionnaires, blank health report forms, floor plan sheets, a licensing checklist...and others. It's important for your to complete and return these documents as quickly as possible since there are time lines for reaching a foster home license decision. If you delay, you face the possibility of losing your kinship payment. If you make completing your foster care application work a priority, and follow through quickly, this will not happen.

- C. **APPLICATION FOR A FOSTER HOME LICENSE** involves an even more in depth background check, required training (on line), which must be completed before a

licensing decision is made...invasive questionnaires, involving your history and current situation, personal references, health reports, your children's school report cards, a detailed home inspection and safety requirements which exceed those of a typical home.

Applying for a Foster Home license is a complicated process which relative caregivers often find irritating and unnecessary, because you are the child's relative. At the same time, in order to continue receiving any type of monthly care payment (even Kinship)...Wisconsin requires that you cooperate and follow through with the license application, without delay.

In order to become a licensed foster parent, you must meet foster home licensing requirements initially and throughout the time you continue to hold the license.

This includes:

- Meeting and maintaining all safety and space rules.
- Maintaining confidentiality (even as a relative...to other relatives, friends or neighbors).
- No physical discipline or punishment.
- Attending training.

- Cooperating with the Social Worker and the case plan.
- Reporting changes in your home to the Foster Care Coordinator...including employment changes, health changes, legal involvement involving any household member, anyone moving in or out of your home, and so on...calling and reporting any time you aren't sure.

LEVEL OF CARE CERTIFICATION OPTIONS: You may choose to apply for either **Level 1** (\$220/month per child care payment) **OR** **Level 2 Foster Care Certification** (regular foster care rate...always higher than \$220 per month). If you choose to apply for Level 2...the State of Wisconsin requires every licensed adult in the home to complete a 10 session (3 hours each session) Foster Parent Foundation Training course, within the first 24 months of being licensed. These involve live classes held around the state. Failure to complete all 30 hours, within 24 months, will result in a Foster Home Level of Care certification reduction to Level 1 status...and the monthly payment reduced to the Kinship Care rate of \$220 per month per child.

In addition, Portage County requires Foster Parents, who are certified at Level 2, to complete 10 hours of approved training in your first year and every following licensing year. Every person whose name is listed on the foster care license must meet this requirement. Failure to do so will also result in the Foster Home's certification level being reduced to Level 1, and the monthly payment being reduced to \$220 per month per child.

UNLICENSEABLE RELATIVE CARE PROVIDERS: Relatives who do not meet Foster Care licensing standards may continue receiving a \$220 monthly payment if all of the following take place:

- They withdraw their Foster Care license application.
- The agency believes continued placement in your home is in the best interests of the child and your home is safe.
- The Court reviews and approves continued placement of your minor relative in your home.

CHILD CARE/DAY CARE ASSISTANCE: Approved Court ordered caregivers are eligible to apply for a Wisconsin SHARES day care subsidy, for employment related day

care. Your Social Worker can supply you with an application to complete and return to this agency's Economic Support section as soon as possible. You may also apply on line at: www.access.wi.gov. Your eligibility will be based upon the income of the child's parent(s), use of licensed or certified day care provider, who is certified as a "3 star (or higher) rated" day care provider. It's important to complete and submit your application before the end of the month in which you began to use day care. If you delay until the beginning of the next month...there won't be any day care assistance until the 1st of the month in which you applied. No exceptions.

Uncovered child care expenses due to your failure or inability to follow application procedures may result in you being responsible for those child care costs. The Social Worker assigned to your case can help you if you are having problems with this process.

- D. **SUBSIDIZED GUARDIANSHIP:** Depending upon circumstances, you may be approached about becoming a legal guardian for your minor relative. If you've already been licensed as a Foster Parent...either Level 1 or Level 2...you have the option

of entering into a Subsidized (paid) guardianship. If approved by the Court...the monthly guardianship subsidy will replace the monthly care payment you received as a foster parent. Your minor relative will continue to receive medical coverage, therapy, etc. You will continue to receive any day care subsidy you received as a kinship/foster parent, as long as you continue to meet S.H.A.R.E.S. employment requirements. If guardianship is approved...the agency will close your case and withdraw its services. As a court appointed Guardian, you assume legal authority to make all necessary decisions for your minor relative/legal ward. The agency will contact you, yearly, to confirm you continue to care for your minor relative and remain eligible for the subsidy. If, for any reason, your minor relative moves out of your home...notify your agency contact person immediately. You are not eligible to continue receiving your monthly payment if the child is not in your home or they turn 18 years old.

- E. **CLOTHING ALLOWANCE:** If you become a licensed foster parent, your minor relative is provided with a clothing allowance if this is your child's first foster home placement or it has been at least 4 months since

the child was last in care. Forward any receipts for clothing (circling the items purchased for your child) to your Social Worker. They will assure you are reimbursed on your next monthly care payment. Clothing Allowance ages/maximums are:

- 0-4 Up to \$225
- 5-11 Up to \$263
- 12-14 Up to \$300
- 15-18 Up to \$300

The clothing allowance only covers clothing...not diapers, wipes, etc. You will be reimbursed for the cost of clothing only, including tax. You may use the allowance throughout the time your related minor child is placed in your home, as a foster child. You do not have to use all of the allowance all at one time.

F. **MEDICAL MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT:** You may request reimbursement for mileage you have driven for your child's therapy, dental and medical appointments. You call the toll free #: 1-866-907-1493 (7 AM – 6 PM...Monday through Friday) at least 2 days ahead of your appointment. You'll need to identify yourself as a foster parent requesting medical mileage reimbursement. You'll need to complete a trip log (see attached Appendix) and send it to MTM (Medical

Transportation Management, Inc.). During the call to MTM...indicate you require reimbursement in order to provide the ride. If approved...you'll receive a Comdata card/debit card based upon \$.24 per mile of approved medical mileage.

- G. **OTHER EXCESSIVE NON-MEDICAL MILEAGE:** Discuss with your Social Worker if you provide an unusual amount of transportation due to medical appointments, out of the area, to multiple visits with the child's parent(s) every week or for transportation to visit incarcerated parents.

- H. **WOMEN, INFANTS, CHILDREN (WIC) CHECKS:** Your minor relative, ages infant through age 5, may be eligible to receive WIC checks (coupons) for certain formulas, juices and cereals. WIC is a nutrition program. Ask your Social Worker how to find out if they meet eligibility requirements.

THE COURT & THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Wisconsin State Statutes, Chapter 48-Children's Code, outlines the responsibilities and expectations of the Court system, Child Welfare agencies, and out-of-home care placements for children & youth. These laws direct your social worker on how they must manage each of their assigned cases.

It's important to recognize your social worker is not acting alone. What they do is directed by law.

Your social worker is responsible for writing detailed reports about your minor child and their family. These become part of the Court record. They are also required to have at least monthly direct contact with each child placed in an out-of-home situation. They are responsible for gathering information, making decisions concerning the child and their family, and presenting information to the Court. They are also responsible for:

- Arranging for regular visits between parents and their child, to preserve and strengthen their relationship while out-of-home.
- Assisting parents in developing the skills to safely and appropriately fulfill their parental role.

- Connecting the child and their family with necessary services to enhance the potential for a successful reunification.
- Coordinating all services, developing & following a case plan.
- Finding a permanent and safe living arrangement for the child.

The legal system has many steps, hearings, and time lines which are set in statutes.

**SEE FOLLOWING 2 PAGES FOR:
COURT FLOW CHART AND TIME LINES**

Figure II-2
CHIPS Time Constraints Flow Chart

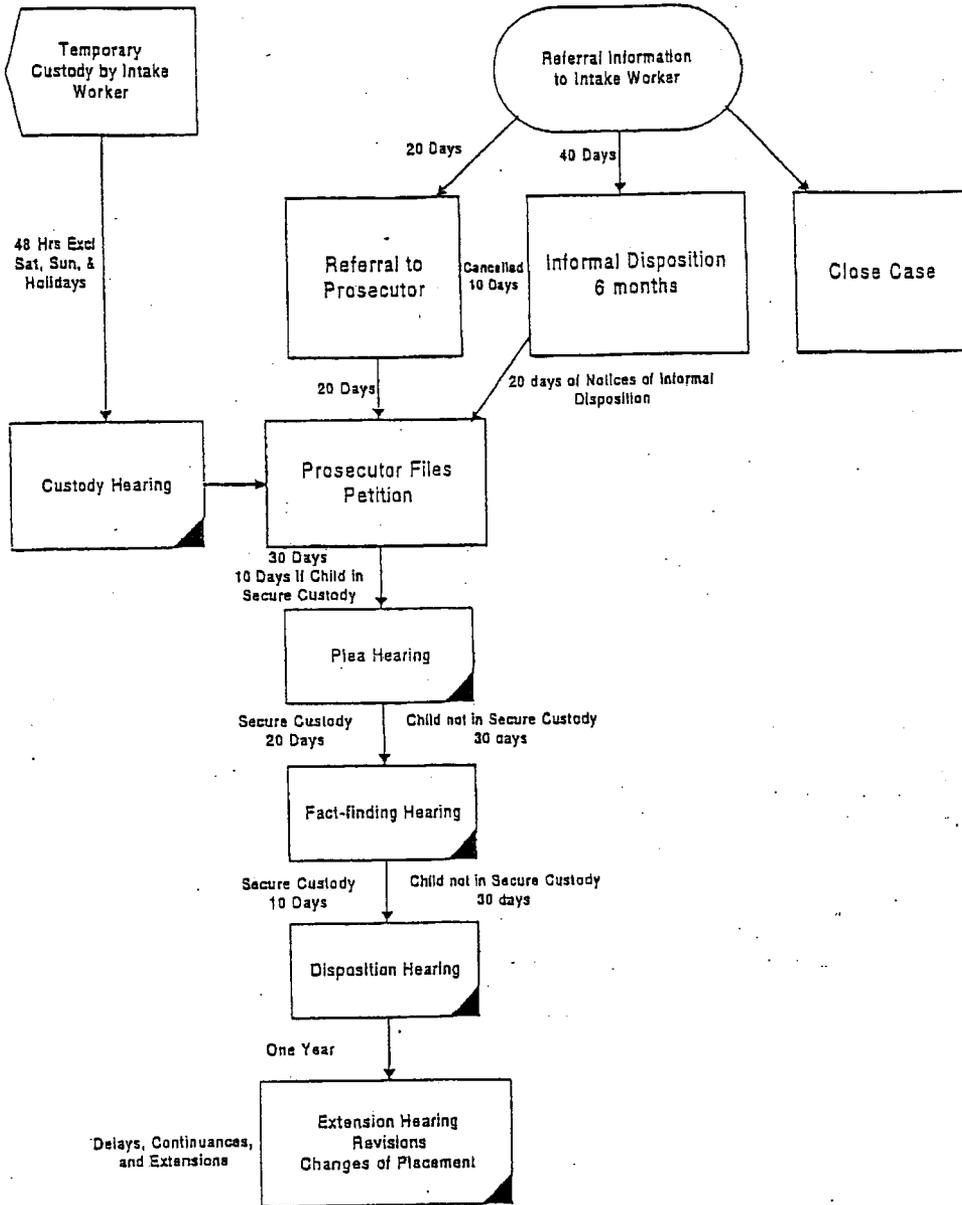
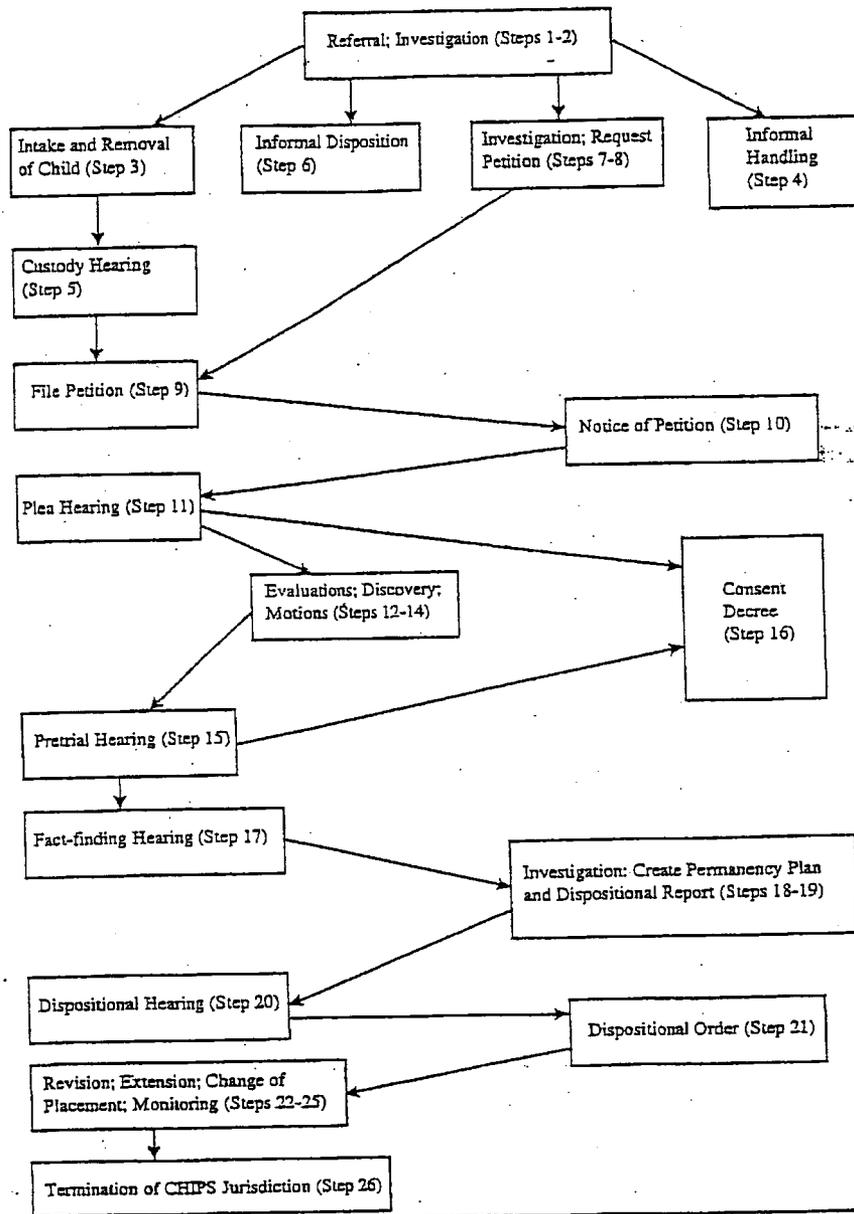


Figure II-1: Flow Chart of Steps in the CHIPS Process



B. Children's Court Rights:

Relative Caregivers/Foster Parents:

- Have the right to attend court hearings to understand what is going on with the child.
- Have the right to attend permanency plan meetings and give input on how the child is doing.
- Have the right to be given notice of all court hearings scheduled
- Have the right to object to a child's change of placement if the child has been placed in th home for 6 months, or longer

Children:

- Have the right to be raised by their parents/family if it is safe.
- Have the right to be in a safe and secure placement, if they cannot live with their parents.
- Have the right to be given notice of all hearing, is they are age 12 or older.
- Have the right to a Guardian ad Litem (legal advocate) to look out for their best interest.
- Have the right to a Public Defender (attorney) if over the age of 12...who works for that child's stated interests.

Parents:

- Have the right to raise their own child, if they can do so safely
- Have the right to be informed of all hearings
- Have the right to legal counsel
- Have the right to review their case file
- Have the right to ask for a substitute judge
- Have the right to a hearing in front of a judge or court commissioner
- Have the right to a jury trial
- Have the right to demand that the County prove its case
- Have the right to call witnesses
- Have the right to cross examine opposing witnesses
- Have the right to appeal a court decision

C. PHYSICAL CUSTODY VERSUS LEGAL CUSTODY:

PHYSICAL CUSTODY: refers to where the child lives and who is responsible for meeting their daily needs. It does not allow the caregiver to make serious medical and legal decisions for a child.

LEGAL CUSTODY: granted by a judge and allows someone to make serious medical and other legal

decisions for a minor. Legal custody typically remains with the child's parents, even when their child is in Foster/Kinship/Relative care. At times, a judge may give legal custody to a Child Welfare agency. This is not the same as guardianship.

D. LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP:

Guardians are appointed by a judge to act as permanent caregivers, for a minor, in situations where family reunification or adoption may not be the best available options for that child. Legal guardians are granted the right to sign and make all decisions for the child in their care (their legal ward).

E. PERMANENCY PLANNING:

Federal law requires agencies to place a priority on achieving safety and permanence for children removed from their parents' homes. The agency must work with the child's family to either improve the situation so their child can safely return home or find another, safe, permanent living arrangement. Each child will have a Permanency Plan which outlines the permanency goals and when those goals are expected

to be achieved. The Permanency Plan is reviewed every 6 months...once by a community review panel and once by a Judge. A Permanency Plan may also be updated, as necessary.

F. CONCURRENT PLANNING:

Concurrent planning is a process of identifying two permanence goals and actively working on both goals at the same time. For example: The Social Worker may be working towards reunification while also working on a back-up/concurrent goal of adoption or guardianship. These processes are done simultaneously to insure children either reunify safely with their parents or move to another permanent living arrangement as quickly as possible.

G. WORKING WITH YOUR SOCIAL WORKER:

Your working relationship with your minor relative's Social Worker is very important. The Social Worker is your child's advocate and is responsible for assuring they are living in a safe and appropriate home. They are there to assist you in understanding the long and confusing legal process and in overseeing every case

on their case load. They also work with parents to overcome barriers which might get in the way of them making enough progress to resume caring for their child. The Social Worker is responsible for assuring parent(s) and child continue to have contact with each other through regularly scheduled visits (some supervised) and telephone calls.

Relative caregivers of any kind must be honest about what is happening in their home and with the parent of the child they are caring for. Cooperation with the Social Worker is required:

- Do not withhold information from the Social Worker
- Accept your minor relative must and will have regular visits/phone calls with their parent and may be upset after seeing their parent and having to say good bye again.
- Cooperate in arranging family visits and in sending along clothing, medication and other items for the child.
- Understand you are working with the Social Worker for the benefit of the child and should be in regular contact with them about all aspects of the child's life in your home.

- Remember the Social Worker is assigned to your minor relative. They can support you in caring for the child but need to focus on all the emotional, behavioral, medical and legal issues related to the case. They are not your Social Worker. If you have personal issues, you may need to consider seeking assistance through your own therapist or other support person. A healthy caregiver is more likely to be able to effectively support the child and weather the sometimes long process of involvement with the Child Welfare System.

DUAL ROLES OF THE RELATIVE CAREGIVER

As a parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt/uncle, cousin, etc. of the parent who has not been able to provide safety for their child...you are now caught between your feelings about the parent, your minor relative and having other responsibilities and expectations placed upon you by the legal system and agency.

You are expected to be a partner with the agency, and it's Social Worker, even though you may feel protective or defensive of the parent...your relative. You may feel angry at your relative for putting their child, and you, in this position or of having been "let down" by them again. Like it or not...you have one foot set in your family situation and one foot in the Child Welfare system. How do you manage?:

- Work with your county Social Worker...they can help you understand your role and rights as a relative caregiver, help you find ways to communicate with the parent and their child and suggest how to set boundaries for the child's parent as a part of your new relationship as their child's caregiver. Social Workers can assist in knowing what to expect and how to manage the child's sense of loss, grief and separation

from their parent/family.

- Don't work against the Social Worker...work with them.
- Learn about grief, separation and loss...for your own sake, as well as that of the child and their parent. All of you will experience some form of this, due to the circumstances.
- Set limits and boundaries with the parent of the child. It's your home and you are entitled to privacy and the right to limit when and how often the parent can visit or call. Plus...visits and calls are often scheduled at the direction of the Social Worker. Don't add to the schedule without discussing with the Social Worker first.
- Maintain confidentiality...especially if you become licensed as a foster parent. You could face losing your foster home license if you share information about your minor relative's family or legal situation with others (even though they may also be relatives)....it's part of the responsibilities of holding a foster home license.
- Ask how to best balance the needs of your family and the demands the Child Welfare system will place on you.
- Work with your child's therapist to help them cope

with their anger, anxiety and uncertainty.

- Admit this is a sad, upsetting situation for everyone in your family.
- Seek out information on grandparents & other relatives caring for their young relatives and learn from others how to juggle being a relative and a court ordered caregiver.

A. **SHARED PARENTING:**

Shared parenting means sharing the parent role with your child's parent. Reunification happens more quickly when there is ongoing contact between parent and child. Plus, the parent is more likely to make positive changes with the support of the relative caregiver. Your help and respect for them as the child's parent...and cooperation with them is important. In the end, the person who benefits most when everyone cooperates is the child. Seeing you and their parent treating each other with respect and getting along shows the child that adults can get through difficult times by talking and working together to solve problems.

Shared parenting has been shown to increase the

likelihood of a positive ending to your family's crisis. How do you share parenting and show respect for the parent?:

- Never say negative things about the parent to their child. Save those feelings and comments and discuss them with the Social Worker.
- Check with your Social Worker to find out if it would be appropriate to inform and invite the parent to the child's school functions or other activities.
- Keep the parent informed about their child's life, accomplishments and interests.
- Share school art projects, pictures and report cards with the parent.
- Encourage the child to make cards, draw pictures or make something to take along to visits with their parent.
- Have the child make birthday and Mother's/Father's Day cards and send them to the parent...include art. Do the same with Christmas or other holidays your family celebrates.
- Ask the parent for a picture of themselves to place in their child's bedroom, in your home.
- Let the parent know when their child has a medical appointment and invite them to join you.

- Keep them advised of their child's health issues.
- Avoid power struggles over things like a child's hair cut or the child's clothing during visits to the parent's home. Allow the parent to make decisions about a hair style or if it's time for a haircut. Ask them first and respect their wishes...even if you disagree. They've lost so much control over their child already...you will avoid conflict by doing so. Speak with the parent, before a home visit, about what type of clothing, and other items, you should send and if they will be able to launder items or not. Not everyone has easy access to laundry facilities...don't assume anything without discussing it first.
 - Ask the parent about their child's likes, dislikes, sleep schedule, interests, fears, and personality.
 - If the child has ethnic hair and skin care needs, or has allergies or sensitivity to personal care products, consult with the parent about what products they use, where they purchase them. Let them show you what to do. The Social Worker also has information on how to care for ethnic hair and skin.

B. FAMILY INTERACTION INFORMATION

- Family interaction will occur unless suspended by a Judge.
- Relative caregivers cannot prohibit or interfere with family contacts.
- Family contact cannot be used as a punishment, reward or threat to a child.
- Parents who call constantly: Limit calls to a specific time which is convenient for you and fair to the parent. The Social Worker will work with you to arrange a telephone schedule.
- Parents who arrive at your home, unannounced: The Social Worker has designed a family interaction plan which will outline when visits occur. Ask the Social Worker how they suggest you handle an unannounced visit, by one of the parents.
- Parents who arrive in a state of tension, anger, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol: Ask your Social Worker how they suggest you handle this. Ask the questions when the child arrives in your home...before any scheduled visits take place. If it happens during a scheduled visit, assess the threat of danger, potential injury to the child and

their ability to control the situation. Then, you should immediately contact the Social Worker. If this happens after hours or on a weekend visit, call the after hours, on-call Social Worker at (920) 586-2343. Leave your name and telephone number. They will be paged and return your call. Only call the after hours emergency number if it's an emergency. Other calls and messages can be left on your Social Worker's answering machine at the office.

- If a parent asks for an unscheduled visit and suggest the Social Worker need not know about it: Do not agree and notify the Social Worker immediately. This is your responsibility as a court ordered, relative caregiver. Agreeing to an unscheduled visit could lead to your minor relative being removed from your home due to safety concerns for the child, noncooperation with the agency and the treatment plan.
- If a parent fails to show for a visit/telephone call: Contact the child's Social Worker as soon as possible. If the child asks where their parent is...don't make up an excuse to soften the disappointment...indicate, "I don't know," and engage the child in doing something else. Expect

them to be sad/angry/upset/act out.
Acknowledge their feelings and do a positive
activity with them, instead.

SELF CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER

Caring for a minor relative is rewarding, difficult, confusing, emotionally draining and demanding...all at the same time. In order to ensure the best possible care for a child, it's important for you and your family to monitor your stress level and let the Social Worker know if you are feeling overwhelmed. You also need to take care of yourself or you won't be able to do a good job of taking care of your minor relative.

HOW TO GO ABOUT TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF:

- Seek a licensed therapist/pastor, if needed, to sort through your mixed feelings/anger/sadness about the crisis in your family.
- Find neighbors, friends or other relatives, who are safe and stable people, willing to watch your minor relative so you can run errands, attend appointments or just relax. Everyone needs a break and some time alone with their spouse or other children in the home.
- Exercise, get enough sleep and eat nutritious meals. Minimize use of alcohol as a means of coping.
- Don't allow yourself to become caught between your relative (the parent) and the agency and legal system. The parent is responsible for their choices and actions.

You are responsible for taking care of their child and following the case plan for the child in your care.

- Openly discuss how you're doing with the Social Worker. They may suggest respite or some other means of helping you manage. Ask questions and ask for help, when you need it. Don't wait until it becomes unmanageable.
- Seek out information about relative caregiving. Attend training on self care and issues related to why your minor relative is in your care, such as addiction and mental health issues.
- Review The Emotional Journey of Relative Caregiving in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

Portage County Health and Human Services appreciates and respects relative caregivers. The commitment you've made to your minor relative, and the hard work involved, does not go unnoticed. You are providing safety and stability to a child during a crisis in their young life.

We also appreciate you being in the unique position of parenting a relative's minor child while having some pretty intense emotions and opinions about what has taken place.

We thank you for being there for your minor relative and hope this guide will answer some of your questions and offer guidance and explanations as to why the agency must act as it does, in response to federal and state law.

We hope the information on financial assistance options provides you with what you need to know to make the decision, early on, about which direction you need to pursue. Finally, if you need other information or resources...ask. We'll do what we can to find answers or options for you.

Portage County Health & Human Services Department

817 Whiting Avenue

Stevens Point, WI 54481

(715) 345-5350

or

(866) 920-2525

APPENDIX

- A. The Emotional Journey of Care Giving**
- B. Financial Assistance & Support Options Information**
- C. Wisconsin Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus Mileage Reimbursement Trip Log**



The Emotional Journey of Relative Care Giving

Many relative caregivers have said they just didn't know how hard everything would be until the day came when they realized that they were now the "parent" to their relative's children.

Many also didn't know that parenting again would bring them on a roller coaster of emotions and change the way they feel about everything, including their own definition of family.

Change is Hard

Often children are placed in the homes of relative caregivers like yourself because of safety concerns for the children or your relative's inability to be an appropriate parent.

Maybe you are hoping that your relative will turn things around and come to see how her behaviors are affecting her children's lives.

Maybe the children were only supposed to be with you for a few months and those few months have now turned into a couple of years.

When the children were first placed, you probably worried more about the children. But as more and more time passes, you may be beginning to understand the amount of loss and stress this family change has brought you.

Journey of Feelings

The feelings that you experience are probably total opposites and range from being happy one moment to angry and sad the next. You're not alone—many caregivers feel like this.

Emotional Ups

Not everything is stressful, however. Or if they are stressful, many families thrive in spite of it. Jeff and Cindy Ziegler are an aunt and uncle in southern Wisconsin who took in their niece.

Jeff Ziegler says, "It was fun to see her meld into the family and be just another part of it. I also enjoyed the candid conversations of what her life was like and how she helped to improve it."

He goes on to say, "She seemed to appreciate that we were home with our children and cared

what they were up to.

She had a chance to be a kid instead of being the care giver in the family."

Other caregivers have had similar feelings that have include:

Comfort that you're able to provide a safe,

nurturing environment.

Pride and accomplishment when the children learn a new skill, like tying a shoe.

Patience in learning how to parent your relative's children and navigate systems like foster care, energy assistance, or Women Infants and Children (WIC).

Inspiration from other relative caregivers who are doing the same thing as you everyday. How do they do it and why don't the news shows talk about this more?

All in all, the experience was quite wonderful. As time went by, we all forgot the ugly parts and revel in all the good times and fun we had.

Continued on page 2

Encouragement from your family and friends that you are really doing the right thing—even when it feels like nothing is going right.

Happiness when you see the smiles on the faces of the children or hear their laughter

Love from the hugs and kisses you get.

Compassion for the children when they cry because they miss their parent(s).

Hope for the children, your relative, and yourself as you all go through a time of big change.



was taking away from my own children to spend so much time on her problems.”

Other caregivers have lows that include:

Fear that you do not have enough resources to provide for the children like you desire.

Anger that the child's parents are not doing all that they can or should be doing to make the situation better for the children.

Guilt when feeling angry and responsible for your relatives poor choices or

inability to parent.

Sacrifice of your time, energy, financial resources, and role as the grandfather or cousin or uncle to be the parent instead—so many sacrifices yet so little appreciation.

Loss and disappointment of everything that was familiar, including your goals and future plans. Your world has turned upside down, yet few acknowledge your personal loss. What you had planned in this stage in your life now looks completely different.

Frustration if the reunification plan isn't working out like you hoped.

Sadness for yourself—that you're giving up a piece of yourself and your established role to parent these children.

Confusion. Some days it can feel like you don't know which way is up or down.

Emotional Downs

About the emotional struggles, Ziegler says, “The lows were a while in coming but they came. She *did* start to resent the fact that she was one of the family and that she needed to live up to the same standards as the rest of the children in the house. Bed times, permission, her share of the duties, homework schedules, and someone that made her be accountable were things she was not used to and was quite unhappy about it.”

Ziegler says, “After a couple of months, she forgot about all the ‘stuff’ that was happening at her house and defended those who had caused her all that pain.”

“Being compared to those who gave her no limits was also a problem for me,” he says. “I felt bad when she would lash out at me. I also thought I

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Embarrassment that your relative isn't able to be the parent due to many possible reasons like mental health issues, incarceration, drugs, alcohol, violence, or abandonment.

Isolation when you feel like you're the only in this situation.

These losses can also leave you without very many people to talk to because of the stigma, fear of judgment, lack of social recognition, understanding, and support of others. Your feelings *do* matter and if your support system doesn't understand, your emotional journey can seem that much more difficult.

Find out if there is a local support group or find a couple of close adults who understand your situation. Find a counselor if you are having difficulty finding a neutral support network or need professional help. Talking about things and finding others who have experienced similar situations can really help. For a support group, go to our caregiver resource page at: <http://wifostercareandadoption.org/site/indexer/594/content.htm>

You're Not Alone

So how can you recognize your feelings in order to deal with them? You can start by recognizing that the behaviors of your adult relative are not necessarily a reflection on you, your family, or your parenting (if you're a grandparent).

By knowing this, hopefully you'll be able to talk about your situation more and ask for help. If you haven't checked out a support group for relative caregivers, now might be the time that you make that call.

After all, it might not be an easy journey that you are on but you are not alone. Many others

have walked in your shoes and have felt the same exact way as you.

Finally, sometimes you just need some time to regain some perspective. As Ziegler says about their experiences, "All in all, the experience was quite wonderful. As time went by, we all forgot the ugly parts and revel in all the good times and fun we had. After the fact, my niece was incredibly thankful for the opportunity to have been one of our family and never misses a chance to tell me that."



Resources from the FCARC Library
Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family by Sylvie de Toledo & Deborah Edler Brown
<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/viewmaterial.asp?aid=5456>

Relatives Raising Children: An Overview of Kinship Care
 by Joseph Crumbley & Robert Little
<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/viewmaterial.asp?aid=4300>

To Grandma's House We Stay
 by Sally Houtman
<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/viewmaterial.asp?aid=5482>

Parenting Someone Else's Child: The Foster Parents How To Manual by Ann Stressman
<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/viewmaterial.asp?aid=4929>

Understanding Your Special Needs Grandchild: A Grandparents Guide by Clare Jones
<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/viewmaterial.asp?aid=5115>

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT OPTIONS:

There may be assistance available to help pay for health care and child care costs for your minor relative. Your social worker can provide applications for these programs, or you can contact Economic Support directly through the options listed under the specific programs. It is important to file applications for these programs as soon as possible to ensure the earliest possible eligibility.

BADGERCARE+:

To obtain health coverage for your minor relative, you may apply for Badgercare+ by:

- Completing an application online at access.wi.gov
- Completing an application obtained in-person at Portage County HHS
- Completing an application via mail by requesting application materials be sent to you from the IM Central Consortium Call Center at 888-445-1621

In addition to coverage for your minor relative, you may be eligible for Badgercare+ for yourself and/or your family. One application can be filed requesting eligibility for yourself and/or your family as well as your minor relative.

Backdated coverage may be possible for up to 3 months prior to the month in which an application is received.

WISCONSIN SHARES CHILD CARE SUBSIDY:

You may be eligible for assistance in paying for child care costs for your minor relative and/or your family. To obtain child care subsidy assistance, you may apply by:

- Completing an application online at access.wi.gov
- Completing an application obtained in-person at Portage County HHS
- Completing an application via mail by requesting application materials be sent to you from the IM Central Consortium Call Center at 888-445-1621

Eligibility for Wisconsin Shares can begin no earlier than the 1st of the month in which an application was received at the child care agency, as long as all requirements have been met by the applicant.

A few important points about Wisconsin Shares eligibility are as follows:

- A caretaker relative's income will not be relevant to eligibility in the following circumstances:
 - There must be a court order for the child's placement in the relative's home **AND**
 - Caretaker relatives must either be receiving or on a waiting list for kinship care payments **AND**
 - Eligibility is only being requested for the minor relative and no natural or adoptive children of the caretaker relative.

When these circumstances are not met, a caretaker relative may still be eligible for Wisconsin Shares, but their household's income will be relevant to the eligibility determination.

- In situations where a caretaker relative's income is not relevant, the natural parent(s)' income at the time of the child's placement will be used for eligibility determination.

- All caretaker relatives must be in approved activities to be eligible for Wisconsin Shares. The most common approved activities are employment, self-employment and post-secondary education.
- Child care authorizations can only be established to licensed or certified child care providers who participate in Wisconsin's YoungStar Program.
- It will be necessary to provide verification of the following items, at a minimum:
 - Identity
 - Proof of Wisconsin residency (mail, bill, driver's license, etc.)
 - Verification of approved activity, most commonly done through:
 - Most current 30 days of paystubs for employment verification
 - Most current year's tax return for self-employment
 - School schedules for post-secondary education
- Although the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy may provide some financial assistance, it may not cover the total cost for child care. Any difference between the subsidy rate and the provider's rate is the responsibility of the caretaker relative(s).



Wisconsin Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus Mileage Reimbursement Trip Log

Mail or fax completed logs to:

MTM, Inc.
Attention: Trip Logs
16 Hawk Ridge Dr.
Lake St. Louis, MO 63367
Fax: 1-888-513-1610

Instructions:

- You must call MTM, Inc. prior your health care appointment to schedule a trip for mileage reimbursement.
- Use this form to ask for payment of mileage after your appointment. You cannot be paid, unless this form is completed and returned to MTM, Inc.
- You will receive a trip number when scheduling rides with MTM, Inc. You must write the trip number down on this log. You must submit the trip log within 60 days of the first trip listed on this form.
- Your health care provider must sign this log for each trip listed. Any health care provider at your appointment can sign this log. *This includes nurses, therapists, physician assistants, or nurse practitioners.* It does not have to be the doctor.
- If you need a log for future trips, you can make copies of both sides of this blank log, download a log at www.mtm-inc.net/Wisconsin, or call 1-866-907-1493 and ask MTM, Inc. to mail you a blank log.
- A one-way trip is from your home to your appointment. A round trip is from your home to your appointment and then back home. For trips with an extra stop enter each stop on a separate line, for example:
 - 1st trip- home to doctor
 - 2nd trip- doctor to pharmacy
 - 3rd trip- pharmacy to home
- If you do not have a log when you go to your appointment, ask your health care provider for a note on their facility letterhead. The note should show the date of appointment and have health care provider's signature to verify you were seen. Once you have a trip log, attach the note from your health care provider in place of a signature.
- If your log is not complete MTM, Inc. will not be able to process your payment and the log will be returned to you. Mileage cannot be paid unless you received an approval from MTM, Inc. before your covered service and get a trip number.
- Make a copy of your completed log and keep it for your records.
- If you have questions about how to complete this form or the mileage reimbursement process, please call MTM, Inc. at 1-866-907-1493.

Patient Info	First Name:	Last Name:	ForwardHealth ID #:
	Address:		Phone:
	City:	State:	Zip:
Payment Info	ComData Card payable to :	Relationship to member: <input type="checkbox"/> Self <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	Date of Birth:
	Address:		Phone:
	City:	State:	Zip:



Wisconsin Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus Mileage Reimbursement Trip Log

Mileage Reimbursement Trip Log

Trip #1	Trip Number (Call MTM, Inc. for this prior to trip):	Appointment Date:	Appointment Time:	Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Round Trip <input type="checkbox"/> One-Way
	Address where trip started: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			Health Care Provider Phone:
	Health Care Provider Name:		Health Care Provider Address:	
	I certify that this patient was seen for a Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus covered service.	Signature & Title of Health care Provider: ▶		
Trip #2	Trip Number (Call MTM, Inc. for this prior to trip):	Appointment Date:	Appointment Time:	Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Round Trip <input type="checkbox"/> One-Way
	Address where trip started: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			Health Care Provider Phone:
	Health Care Provider Name:		Health Care Provider Address:	
	I certify that this patient was seen for a Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus covered service.	Signature & Title of Health care Provider: ▶		
Trip #3	Trip Number (Call MTM, Inc. for this prior to trip):	Appointment Date:	Appointment Time:	Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Round Trip <input type="checkbox"/> One-Way
	Address where trip started: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			Health Care Provider Phone:
	Health Care Provider Name:		Health Care Provider Address:	
	I certify that this patient was seen for a Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus covered service.	Signature & Title of Health Care Provider: ▶		
Trip #4	Trip Number (Call MTM, Inc. for this prior to trip):	Appointment Date:	Appointment Time:	Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Round Trip <input type="checkbox"/> One-Way
	Address where trip started: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			Health Care Provider Phone:
	Health Care Provider Name:		Health Care Provider Address:	
	I certify that this patient was seen for a Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus covered service.	Signature & Title of Health Care Provider: ▶		
Trip #5	Trip Number (Call MTM, Inc. for this prior to trip):	Appointment Date:	Appointment Time:	Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Round Trip <input type="checkbox"/> One-Way
	Address where trip started: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			Health Care Provider Phone:
	Health Care Provider Name:		Health Care Provider Address:	
	I certify that this patient was seen for a Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus covered service.	Signature & Title of Health Care Provider: ▶		
Trip #6	Trip Number (Call MTM, Inc. for this prior to trip):	Appointment Date:	Appointment Time:	Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Round Trip <input type="checkbox"/> One-Way
	Address where trip started: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			Health Care Provider Phone:
	Health Care Provider Name:		Health Care Provider Address:	
	I certify that this patient was seen for a Medicaid/BadgerCare Plus covered service.	Signature & Title of Health care Provider: ▶		
I have completed this form and I verify that the information on this trip log is true.		Signature of Member, Parent/Guardian, or Representative: ▶		