

# Kinship Legal Guardianship

## *Pro Se* Manual

*Applying for kinship legal guardianship on your own*



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*Children's Legal Resource Center*

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### Introduction

Is the child of a relative or close friend living in your home? Has the child been living with you for more than the last 12 months? Is this arrangement likely to continue? Do the parents have serious problems that prevent them from caring for their child? Are you willing to raise the child to adulthood?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, then you may want to become the child’s kinship legal guardian. The Kinship Legal Guardianship law, which went into effect in January 2002, allows you -- the caregiver -- to become the child’s legal guardian. That means you act, in almost every way, like the child’s parent.

This manual is divided into three sections. **SECTION 1** describes what a kinship legal guardian is and the governing law.

**SECTION 2** explains the process you follow when the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) **was not involved** in making the decision that the child should live in your home. An explanation of the financial supports that may be available to you follows together with the eligibility requirements.

**SECTION 3** explains the process when DYFS **was involved** in the child being placed in your home and the financial supports that you may be eligible to receive along with the requirements for each.

There are different options available to you. It is important that you learn about all your options and consider the effect of a kinship subsidy on any benefits that you presently receive before making your final decision.

## SECTION 1: *WHAT IS A KINSHIP LEGAL GUARDIAN?*

As the *kinship legal guardian*, you will have almost all the same rights, responsibilities and authority relating to the child as a birth or adoptive parent. This includes:

- ▶ making decisions concerning the child's care and well-being;
- ▶ consenting to routine and emergency medical and mental health needs;
- ▶ arranging and consenting to educational plans for the child;
- ▶ applying for financial assistance and social services for which the child is eligible;
- ▶ ensuring the maintenance and protection of the child;
- ▶ responsibility for activities necessary to ensure the child's safety, permanency and well-being;
- ▶ applying for a motor vehicle operator's license; *and*
- ▶ approving an application for admission to college.

You may not change the child's name, adopt the child, or agree to an adoption of the child by another person without the parents' consent or a court order.

The *parents* retain:

- ▶ the right to visitation with the child as determined by the Judge;
- ▶ the authority to consent to adoption or a name change of child; *and*
- ▶ the obligation to pay child support.

The *child* keeps:

- ▶ his/her current home;
- ▶ a relationship with his/her parents, siblings and relatives; *and*
- ▶ the right to any benefits derived from his/her parents, (inheritance, eligibility for benefits, or insurance).

Kinship legal guardianship terminates when the child reaches 18 years of age or when the child is no longer continuously enrolled in a secondary education program, whichever event occurs later, or when kinship legal guardianship is otherwise terminated by a Judge.

## *Why become a Kinship Legal Guardian?*

As the child's kinship legal guardian, you legally formalize the living arrangement that presently exists. This type of court order provides stronger legal protection for the relationship between you and the child, meaning it is much more difficult for the biological parents to regain custody. This also allows you to legally make medical and educational decisions for the child without having to consult with either parent or obtain parental consent.

## *What should you consider when making your decision?*

### **Ask yourself the following questions:**

- ▶ Has the child been living in your home for at least the last 12 months?
- ▶ Is this arrangement likely to continue indefinitely?
- ▶ Are you physically able to raise this child to adulthood?
- ▶ Are you emotionally committed to raising the child?
- ▶ Have you successfully dealt with the child's needs concerning day care, school, medical, and dental?
- ▶ Can you support the child until she/he becomes an adult?
- ▶ Can you and the child continue to live in the same location or will you have to relocate because you are in senior housing or some other restricted housing?
- ▶ If you are married or in a permanent relationship, is your spouse or partner also willing to become the child's legal guardian? You may want your spouse or partner to become a legal guardian with you. That way, if something happened to you, your spouse or partner remains the legal guardian, so the child has stability. That individual must undergo the same background checks and participate in the assessment as a member of the household whether or not they become a legal guardian with you.

This is a long-term commitment to this child and should be carefully considered. If you decide to become a kinship legal guardian, you should feel ready to meet the responsibilities of raising this child to adulthood.

### ***When Can You Become A Kinship Legal Guardian?***

To become a kinship legal guardian, you must have a legal, biological or emotional relationship with the child who has lived in your home for at least the last 12 consecutive months, *and* the parents must have **a serious incapacity** that makes them unable, unavailable or unwilling to parent their child for the foreseeable future. Examples of serious incapacities include:

- a long-term jail sentence,
- a serious, long-term drug or alcohol problem,
- a serious, documented mental illness, or
- a parent has been missing for a significant period of time.

You have to be committed to and have the ability to provide a safe and permanent home for the child, and raise the child to adulthood. Once kinship legal guardianship is established, it's very difficult to change. To modify or change the final order, **clear and convincing evidence** must be shown that the parent's incapacity no longer exists and that termination of kinship legal guardianship is in the child's best interest. An order may also be changed if a Judge finds that you failed to or are unable to provide proper care of the child, or if the arrangement is no longer in the child's best interest.

You apply to become the child's kinship legal guardian through the Family Court in the county in which you and the child are living. There are people available to help you become a kinship legal guardian.

If the child or children were placed in your home by the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), then you need to call your caseworker or your caseworker's supervisor at DYFS to discuss whether a kinship legal guardianship arrangement is the appropriate permanent plan for the child or children. If you do not know the caseworker, ask to speak to the *relative care specialist*. **If DYFS was not involved** with placing the child in your home, then the **first step** is to call the ***Kinship Navigator Program at 1-877-816-3211***.

### ***Is public assistance available to kinship legal guardians?***

Funding is available, although not in all cases. There are eligibility requirements in some situations and the subsidy could impact other financial benefits you are already receiving.

### ***Informed Decision-Making is Critical***

Your particular financial circumstances must be part of the decision-making process. Do you have the resources to provide for this child until she/he turns 18 or finishes high school?

The type of legal arrangement between you and the child helps to define the financial supports that might be available to you. Whether DYFS placed the child in your home or the parent placed the child in your home also determines the types of financial supports you may be eligible to receive. Sometimes the support impacts upon other financial assistance that you might be eligible for or are already receiving. *It is important that you be fully informed **before** you make a final decision.*

To determine what financial options and legal arrangements are available to you, ask for information about all existing programs. Find out the following for each program:

- ▶ the application process, including the extent of State intrusion to assess your suitability,
- ▶ your responsibility to the child,
- ▶ your obligations to the State,
- ▶ benefits, *and*
- ▶ eligibility requirements for benefits,

Generally speaking, the greater the level of support, the greater the level of State intrusion into your family situation. SECTIONS 2 and 3 which follow include overviews of the programs that we are aware of. You still need to ask questions regarding your particular situation.

## SECTION 2: CASES IN WHICH DYFS WAS NEVER INVOLVED

### ***When Can You Become A Kinship Legal Guardian?***

To become a kinship legal guardian, certain facts must exist which you must clearly prove to the Judge. They are:

- ▶ You must have a legal, biological or emotional relationship with the child.
- ▶ The child must have lived in your home for at least the last 12 consecutive months,
- ▶ The parents must have ***a serious incapacity*** that makes them unable, unavailable or unwilling to parent their child for the foreseeable future. Examples of serious incapacities include:
  - a long-term jail sentence,
  - a serious, long-term drug or alcohol problem,
  - a serious, documented mental illness, or
  - a parent has been missing for a significant period of time.
- ▶ You are committed to and have the ability to raise the child to adulthood,
- ▶ You can continue to provide a safe and permanent home for the child, *and*
- ▶ You must show that it is in the child’s best interest to stay with you.

If you can establish the above, then you may apply to become the child’s kinship legal guardian. The process is simple. Although you do not need a lawyer to become a kinship legal guardian, you can hire a lawyer. Each county’s attorney referral program is listed at the back of this manual. If you decide to represent yourself in the court process, you are referred to as a “*pro se* litigant.” There are people available to help you ***navigate*** through the process. Whether or not you decide to hire an attorney to represent you, the first step is to call the ***Kinship Navigator Program at 1-877-816-3211***.

### ***Process to Become a Kinship Legal Guardian***

The Kinship Navigator Program was created to help caregivers ***navigate*** their way through government systems and find local support and resources. The Kinship Navigator Program has *wrap-around* services and can provide financial assistance to those who

meet the eligibility criteria. The Kinship Navigator Program staff will ask you questions to determine what services you may qualify for. They will also ask about your household income. The Kinship Navigator Program will refer you to a community agency in your area that will meet with you to discuss the case. It may take 30 days for the agency to contact you to begin the process, so try to be patient.

The person(s) from the agency will need information from you to be given to the Judge as part of your *Kinship Legal Guardianship Assessment*. **Family Court staff will not accept your request, called a “petition,” to become a kinship legal guardian without the completed assessment.**

The *Kinship Legal Guardianship Assessment* includes the following information:

- ▶ how the child came to live in your home,
- ▶ your relationship to the child,
- ▶ what the parents' problems are,
- ▶ the whereabouts of the parents and their wishes, if known;
- ▶ information regarding any property or assets that the child may own, *and*
- ▶ your commitment and ability to raise the child.

While the assessment is being completed, certain background checks must be completed on you and any adults living in your home. These include a criminal history check, a domestic violence central registry check, and a child abuse registry check. The regional agency will explain this process and assist you in completing these background checks as well.

There may be a fee for the Kinship Legal Guardianship Assessment. If your income is less than 150% of federal poverty guidelines, the Kinship Navigator Program may pay the cost of your assessment and it is likely that you will received a subsidy of \$250 per month once you become the kinship legal guardian.

If you are a relative or already a legal guardian, and your income is over 150% of federal poverty guidelines you will not receive an ongoing subsidy, but the Kinship Navigator Program can still provide

you with information and may be able to cover the cost of the assessment and some other services. You are eligible for help if you are under age 60 and your income does not exceed 350% of federal poverty guidelines or if you are over age 60 and your income does not exceed 500% of federal poverty guidelines. If you are a family friend, not a relative, you have to pay the cost of the assessment.

Once the Kinship Legal Guardianship Assessment is completed, the Kinship Navigator provides you with a form *Petition for Kinship Legal Guardianship*, which you complete and attach to the assessment. The paperwork is then filed in the Family Part of the New Jersey Superior Court in the county where you and the child live. There is no fee for filing a Petition for Kinship Legal Guardianship.

### ***Scheduling the Hearing***

Once the petition and completed assessment have been filed and the background checks have been received, court staff will schedule the court hearing. Court staff will provide you with written notice of the date and time to come to court. A notice must also be sent to both parents, and to anyone else who had court-ordered custody or visitation with the children in the past. Attached to the hearing notice sent to the parents will be the Petition and the Kinship Legal Guardianship Assessment.

If you have any special needs, such as an interpreter, you should notify the court prior to the hearing. Court staff will prepare the file and the orders for the Judge to sign after making a decision.

### ***Appearing in Court***

Although the hearing may be somewhat informal, there are certain rules that apply.

At the beginning, you will be asked to swear or affirm to tell the truth. You should wait for the Judge to tell you to speak before presenting your case. You will be given time to tell your side of the story and to ask the Judge to appoint you as the child's kinship legal guardian. If you have any concerns about the parents having contact with the child, you should explain the basis for those concerns to the Judge. If

you have any questions about the process or your rights, you should ask these questions while you are in court.

If you have documents to support your case, you should try to have the original documents to present to the Judge. Sometimes it is easier if you write down what you want to say in court, in case you get nervous. Making a written list of items you want to tell the Judge lessens the chances of forgetting what you want to explain.

Tell only the facts that you know to be true. If someone else has information that is relevant, you should bring that person to court as a *witness*. You cannot tell the Judge what someone else told you. That is called *hearsay* and is generally not permitted in court.

The parents will then be given an opportunity to tell their story. You need to be respectful, listen to what is said, and wait until the Judge asks for a response before speaking again. This may be difficult, but it is important for the Judge to learn all the facts and to listen to both sides.

The Judge will either decide to make you the kinship legal guardian of the child, determine that more information is needed and schedule another hearing or deny your request. The decision will be written into a *Court Order*.

If the Judge grants your request to become the child's kinship legal guardian, a *Judgment for Kinship Legal Guardianship* will also be signed. This Judgment will clearly state the decision-making authority you have over the child and should be kept with your important papers. Copies of this Judgment can be given to the school, doctors or others needing written documentation.

### ***Support Available in NON-DYFS Cases***

There are several programs through which you can obtain financial assistance for the child living in your home.

#### ***The Child-Only Grant***

This financial support is paid through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, which is paid by your county's Board of Social Services and maybe referred to as *welfare*. Relatives

who have physical custody of the child can apply for the child-only TANF grant which is up to \$162 per month and includes Medicaid coverage for the child.

4	\$64,400.
5	\$75,390.
6	\$86,380.

While there is no income eligibility for you to meet, meaning that your income and financial circumstances are not considered in determining whether you are eligible to receive this assistance, the child's income is considered. There is no assessment of your home, others living in your home or your ability to care for the child.

You need to establish yourself as the *parent-person* by legally proving you are related to the child by blood or marriage (generally through birth certificates), or that you are the child's legal guardian. You do not have to have a custody order from the Family Court, although you might consider obtaining such legal authority if the child is to remain in your home for any extended period of time.

The assistance will continue until the child turns 18 as long as the child remains in your home. Payments may be extended until age 19 if the child is still in high school and expected to graduate before age 19 or until age 21 if the child is enrolled in special education.

*Kinship Legal Guardianship Subsidy*

Recognizing that relative caregivers need assistance, the State created the *Kinship Navigator Program*, an information and referral resource for kinship caregivers that also provides *wrap-around* services and child care subsidies for eligible caregivers. You should call to find out how the office can assist you. The telephone number for the ***Kinship Navigator Program is 1-877-816-3211.***

Caregivers who are under age 60 are eligible for child care and wrap-around services if their household income does not exceed 350% of federal poverty guidelines. These income levels presently are:

<i>Family Size</i> *	<i>Maximum Income</i>
2	\$42,420.
3	\$53,410.

\* Family size should count all members of the household, including the relative child.

Those over age 60 with household incomes up to 500% of federal poverty also qualify for child care and wrap-around services. These income levels presently are:

<i>Family Size</i>	<i>Maximum Income</i>
2	\$60,600.
3	\$76,300.
4	\$92,000.
5	\$107,700.
6	\$123,400.

Becoming the child's kinship legal guardian is the threshold to obtaining an additional subsidy through the Department of Human Services. The Kinship Navigator Program can help you apply for these funds. New guidelines become effective July 1 each year.

If you become a child's kinship legal guardian, you can receive a subsidy of up to \$250 per month plus Medicaid if your household income does not exceed 150% of federal poverty guidelines. *Income* includes not only salary, but retirement benefits, disability, interest income, some public benefits and child support you may have received. These income amounts currently are:

<i>Family Size</i>	<i>Maximum Income</i>
2	\$18,180
3	\$22,890
4	\$27,600
5	\$32,310
6	\$37,020
7	\$41,370
8	\$46,440

This \$250 stipend will continue, provided you meet the eligibility requirements annually and the New Jersey Legislature continues to fund the program. While it is anticipated that State funding for this program will continue and hopefully increase, your legal obligation as the kinship legal guardian to support the child is not dependent on the State's budget allocation. ***The monthly stipend may impact the***

***amount of other public benefits that you receive so make sure to ask questions.***

***Adoptive Parent (Non-DYFS Cases)***

If you decide to adopt a relative's child, you become the parent and can only receive financial assistance from your county Board of Social Services if your income meets the eligibility requirements. You will also be subject to the work requirements and the 5-year cap on benefits under Work First New Jersey.

**SECTION 3: DYFS CASES**

***When Can You Become A Kinship Legal Guardian?***

If DYFS placed the child in your home or was involved in placing the child and you are willing to become the child's kinship legal guardian, then you should contact DYFS, especially if the child has been with you for 12 months or more and it is unlikely the child will be reunited with the parents. When a child is in placement for one year and efforts to reunify the child with a parent are unsuccessful, DYFS is required by law to find the child another permanent home. DYFS should ask you if you are interested in adopting the child. Adoption is ideal for children who cannot be reunified with birth parents, and the most permanent legal arrangement.

To free a child for adoption, DYFS must first ask the Judge to take away or terminate the parents' rights. After the adoption, you would become the *legal* parent. You may love the child and be willing to raise the child, but not want the parents' rights ended. The child still needs a *legal* permanent home, which will provide stability for the child to at least age 18, if not longer. Kinship legal guardianship can provide that legal permanent placement in these situations.

***Process to Become a Kinship Legal Guardian***

If there is a pending court case brought by DYFS, the attorney for DYFS can ask the Judge to make you the kinship legal guardian, as a way of resolving the court case. This attorney, called a Deputy Attorney General or DAG, makes a *Motion to Amend the Complaint*. The parent's attorney can request that you be appointed kinship legal guardian, but DYFS and the law guardian, who is the attorney who represents the child, must agree.

In DYFS cases, to be eligible to apply for kinship legal guardianship, certain facts must exist which DYFS must clearly prove to the Judge. They are:

- ▶ You must have a legal, biological or emotional relationship with the child.
- ▶ The child must have lived in your home for at least the last 12 consecutive months,

- ▶ The parents must have *a serious incapacity* that makes them unable, unavailable or unwilling to parent their child for the foreseeable future. Examples of serious incapacities include:
  - a long-term jail sentence,
  - a serious, long-term drug or alcohol problem,
  - a serious, documented mental illness, or
  - a parent has been missing for a significant period of time.
- ▶ You are committed to and have the ability to raise the child to adulthood,
- ▶ You can continue to provide a safe and permanent home for the child, *and*
- ▶ DYFS must show that it is in the child's best interest to stay with you.

*In addition* there must be evidence of the following:

- ▶ The services that DYFS offered to the parents were not accepted or did not fix the problem that caused the children to be placed in your home; *and*
- ▶ Adoption for the child in your home is unlikely and not feasible.

If the long term plan for the child, called the *permanency plan*, is for you to become the kinship legal guardian, the DYFS caseworker will complete a *Kinship Legal Guardianship Assessment* with your help. Much of the information for the assessment may already be in the case record. You are not charged for the assessment.

The assessment includes the following information:

- ▶ how the child came to live in your home,
- ▶ your relationship to the child,
- ▶ what the parents' problems are,
- ▶ the whereabouts of the parents and their wishes, if known;
- ▶ information regarding any property or assets that the child may own, *and*
- ▶ your commitment and ability to raise the child.

At the same time that the assessment is being completed, certain background checks must be completed about you and any adults living in your home. These include a criminal history check, a domestic violence central registry check, and a child abuse registry

check. Some of these background checks may have already been completed. Sometimes they need to be updated. You need to cooperate with DYFS in getting this paperwork finished.

The attorney for DYFS files a *Notice of Motion to Amend Complaint*. This motion asks the Judge to amend the existing court complaint to make you the kinship legal guardian as a resolution to the court case. The motion may be granted, denied or a court hearing may be scheduled for the Judge to obtain more facts. At the hearing, you may become a witness for either DYFS, one of the parents or the law guardian. That attorney should help you prepare for the court hearing. If granted, the Judge will issue a *Final Order* under a new docket number and dismiss the DYFS court case.

You will receive a *Judgment for Kinship Legal Guardianship* signed by the Judge. This Judgment will clearly state the decision-making authority you have over the child and should be kept with your important papers. It will not indicate that this case was a DYFS matter. Copies of this Judgment can be given to the school, doctors or others needing written documentation.

### ***Financial Support Available in DYFS CASES***

#### ***Para-Foster Parent***

If you are caring for a child, but cannot prove your legal or blood relationship required to receive a *child-only grant* from welfare, you may receive assistance through DYFS as a para-foster parent. To apply you need a letter or written statement from the county Board of Social Services that you are not eligible for assistance as a *parent-person*. DYFS should still visit your home and complete criminal background checks on you and other adults living in your home. If DYFS approves your request, it will pay you the equivalent of the child-only grant and provide Medicaid coverage for the child. You may receive some other services too. You will be subject to DYFS requirements to establish a permanent legal home for the child.

#### ***Relative Care Permanency Support Program***

If you are a relative or family friend who needs financial assistance to accept a child into your home from DYFS because of safety or risk of harm issues, DYFS has funding to provide \$250 per month for up to

15 months, along with Medicaid coverage and a one-time clothing allowance. This funding of \$250 per month is available to children placed by DYFS after January 1, 2002. Your household income and financial circumstances are not considered in determining whether you are eligible for assistance. DYFS may seek reimbursement of the subsidy from income that the child receives directly such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or child support.

All the adults in your home and your home must to be approved. The standards are less stringent than the foster care licensing standards and you can receive support during this evaluation process. DYFS will still provide services to the parents in an effort to reunify the child with the parents and must find another permanent legal home if reunification with the parent(s) is not achieved in a timely manner. You also have the option of becoming a licensed foster parent.

#### *Foster Parent Payment*

If DYFS places the child in your home as a result of abuse or neglect, you can be approved as a foster parent, whether or not you are a relative. You can receive the monthly foster parent board rate, Medicaid coverage for the child and other needed services such as child care. The board rate will vary depending upon the age and special needs of the child, and currently is about \$450 per month. Foster care is temporary and you can be specially approved for a particular child.

To become a foster parent your home must be licensed by the Office of Licensing. This includes a home study, and certain background checks on you and all adult members of your household. You are required to complete 24 hours of training, and undergo medical, personal and other reference checks by DYFS.

As a foster parent, you are subject to DYFS supervision and DYFS decision-making on behalf of the child. This includes visits between parent(s) and child. The law requires DYFS to find another permanent legal home, preferably through adoption, for a child who cannot be returned to his/her parents in a timely manner. You need to assist DYFS in meeting its legal obligations to the child and family.

#### *DYFS Legal Guardianship Subsidy Program*

In some cases where reunification is unsuccessful, termination of parental rights and adoption may not be possible. If the child has been living in your home for at least one year and you are committed to raising the child to adulthood, DYFS through its attorney, can ask the Judge to appoint you as the child's kinship legal guardian. If the plan is approved, the Judge will sign an order appointing you as the child's permanent kinship legal guardian. The monthly stipend of \$250 will continue until the child reaches age 18 as long as funding is allocated in the State's budget for this program each year. *The payment will stop if you move out of New Jersey.* The subsidy may count as "income" in determining eligibility for other public benefits. For example, Social Security will probably reduce a child's SSI payment once the legal guardianship subsidy is received.

#### *Adoption Subsidy (DYFS Cases)*

New Jersey, like other states, provides subsidies to families who adopt *special needs* or *hard-to-place* children. The state receives federal funding to maintain this program.

#### **In New Jersey *hard-to-place* children have:**

- ▶ Medical/dental conditions requiring frequent treatment;
- ▶ Physical handicap that makes or is expected to make the child partially or totally incapacitated for education and/or employment;
- ▶ Substantial disfigurement;
- ▶ Diagnosed psychological or psychiatric problem or serious intellectual incapacity that seriously affects the child's ability to relate to his peers or authority figures;
- ▶ The child is one of a group of three or more siblings, and it is considered necessary that the group be placed together;
- ▶ The child or his siblings meets the hard-to-place criteria, and it is considered most appropriate that the children be placed together;
- ▶ The child is 10 years of age or older;
- ▶ The child is over two years of age and a member of an ethnic group for whom adoptive homes are not readily available;
- ▶ Any other condition that may be approved by the Director; or
- ▶ The child is over five years of age, has been living with foster parents for at least 12 months and adoption by the foster parents is the most appropriate plan for the child. A child under five may be

deemed hard-to-place and qualify for subsidy under this subsection if he/she is a member of an ethnic group from whom adoptive homes are not readily available.

**Adoptive parent for *hard-to-place* children must meet certain standards, including:**

- ▶ Be age 18 before the adoption has been finalized and shall be at least 10 years older than the person(s) sought to be adopted.
- ▶ Be capable of raising the child in a decent, moral environment.
- ▶ A NJ resident and/or any other state, if approved for adoption by a licensed agency in that state and meet all interstate requirements.
- ▶ Have sufficient financial resources to provide for the basic health, education, general well-being and normal development of the adopted child with the addition of the subsidy.
- ▶ The ability to manage family financial resources efficiently to meet the basic cost of raising the child in a suitable way.
- ▶ Be in reasonably good physical and emotional health, as attested to by an examination by a physician, if necessary.
- ▶ Be free from any physical or mental illness or disability that would jeopardize the normal health, education, and well-being of the adopted child.
- ▶ Be able to provide for the normal development of the adopted child and provide for the general health, education, and well-being of the adopted child.

DYFS must determine and approve the qualifications for subsidy payments **prior** to the completion of an adoption proceeding. Payment includes 100 percent of the monthly foster care board rate until the child turns 18. Medicaid continues to cover the medical expenses of these children. The adoptive parent may also receive payment of expenses resulting from a qualifying condition not covered by Medicaid or other insurance, such as equipment for a child of extraordinary needs. Adoptive parents can also receive a payment of up to \$2000 for adoption expenses such as legal fees and court costs.

*County Bar Association Attorney Referral Programs*  
Atlantic County Bar Association - (609) 345-3444  
Bergen County Bar Association - (201) 488-0044  
Burlington County Bar Association - (609) 261-4862  
Camden County Bar Association - (856) 964-4520  
Cape May County Bar Association - (609) 463-0313  
Cumberland County Bar Association - (856) 692-6207  
Essex County Bar Association - (973) 622-7753  
Gloucester County Bar Association - (856) 848-4589  
Hudson County Bar Association - (201) 798-2727  
Hunterdon County Bar Association - (908) 689-4644  
Mercer County Bar Association - (609) 585-6200  
Middlesex County Bar Association - (732) 828-0053  
Monmouth County Bar Association - (732) 431-5544  
Morris, Sussex, and Warren County Bar Association - (973) 267-5882 (between 9AM and 1PM)  
Ocean County Bar Association - (732) 240-3666  
Passaic County Bar Association - (973) 278-9223  
Salem County Bar Association - (856) 935-5629  
Somerset County Bar Association - (908) 685-2323  
Union County Bar Association - (908) 353-4715

***Please Note:***

*This short pamphlet is intended as a reference guide for people who are thinking about applying to become a child's kinship legal guardian. It describes the process and is not intended to offer advice or legal guidance.*

*Children's Legal Resource Center  
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*Visit [www.kidlaw.org](http://www.kidlaw.org) for written materials on children's legal rights in all areas.*