



GrandFamilies: What to Know About Caring for Your Grandchild in California

Have you been informed that your grandchild might need to live with you?

Have you been asked to consider becoming a foster parent for your grandchild?

If you answered “yes” to either of those questions, then this document is for you.

Did you know that about one-third of children in foster care live with relatives?¹ Grandparents especially shine as foster parents. Studies show that when grandchildren live with their relatives instead of with non-relative foster families, they often experience fewer changes in their living situations and express fewer negative emotions about being in foster care.²

As relative foster parents (in California, foster parents are called “resource parents”), you have the right to access similar services and supports as non-relative foster parents. However, to receive foster care payments, you’ll need to be approved as a “placement.” There are resources available to guide you through the financial aspects and emotional adjustments that come with having a grandchild under your care.

All families are unique, and this information may be helpful for you to think about your unique situation. The information provided in this resource does not constitute legal advice. All content is for general information purposes only.

What to expect if a social worker ...	
... reaches out to you in case your grandchild needs to be removed from their home in the future.	In California, children and young people in foster care have the right to live with a relative or an extended family member, whether related or not, or, for children from Native nations, with a family member as recognized by the tribe, if an appropriate and willing individual is available. ³

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau. 2021. “The AFCARS report, Preliminary FY 2020 Estimates (No. 28).” <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcarsreport28.pdf> Please note that there are limitations with AFCARS data and children in relative foster care may be underrepresented. In some states, children must receive foster care maintenance payments to be counted, and most children living with relatives do not receive this assistance. Some states do not distinguish between licensed relative foster parents and nonrelated licensed foster parents.

² Atkinson, Anne J. (2023). [A comparison of child welfare outcomes and cost savings achieved in diverse implementation contexts with 30 days to Family@ intervention](#), Journal of Public Child Welfare 17, 305–332. Winokur, M. A., Holtan, A., & Batchelder, K. E. (2018). [Systematic Review of Kinship Care Effects on Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being Outcomes. Research on Social Work Practice](#), 28(1), 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731515620843>.

³ Welf. & Inst. Code § 16001.9(a)(5). 25 USC 1915(b).



	<p>Before your grandchild is taken from their original home, social workers might have plans in place to support your grandchild’s family so that foster care isn’t necessary. They might also be getting in touch with you to get to know you better and consider you as a potential caregiver if the services provided at home aren’t enough in the future.</p>
<p>... asks you about being a part of a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA).</p>	<p>You may have discussions with social workers about a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) which involves you, your grandchild, their parent, and the County. This agreement allows for your grandchild to stay with you for up to six months, and this period can be extended if the child’s parents need more time to fulfill the County’s outlined plans.⁴ With a VPA, you can receive specific financial help to support your grandchild while they are with you.⁵</p> <p>It is important to know that in California you don’t necessarily need a VPA or involvement with the County for certain actions, like enrolling your grandchild in school or making medical or educational decisions. Instead, both you and your grandchild’s parent can complete a Caregiver’s Authorization Affidavit.⁶ A Caregiver Authorization Affidavit does not require formal involvement from any system and allows you to handle these important aspects of your grandchild’s life. Additionally, you may be eligible for Non-Needy Relative Caregiver’s Assistance (CalWORKs) cash assistance for the child only, regardless of your income (this is different from foster care payments).</p>
<p>... contacts you about serving as an emergency placement for your grandchild.</p>	<p>If a social worker reaches out to you regarding an urgent situation for your grandchild or if your grandchild is taken from their home by the child welfare agency and you request that they stay with you, a caseworker will perform an emergency assessment. This assessment involves a few steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a home inspection checking the safety of your home; (2) a state-level criminal records check of everyone over 18 living in your home; and (3) a Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) check to see if there have been allegations of prior child abuse or neglect.⁷

⁴ Welf. & Inst. Code §§ 360(a)(5), 16507.3 (c).

⁵ Welf. & Inst. Code § 16507.3(a) & (c).

⁶ See Fam. Code § 6550 *et. seq.* and Caregiver’s Authorization Affidavit, <https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/caregiver.pdf>.

⁷ Welf. & Inst. Code §§ 309(d), 361.4, 361.45.



	<p>During an emergency placement, you may be eligible for funding to support you in caring for your grandchild, such as Emergency Caregiver Funding, or CalWORKS cash assistance.⁸ The county is required to make reasonable efforts to help you get the things you will need like a crib or a car seat.⁹ You may be eligible for additional funding through Approved Relative Caregiver (ARC) funding¹⁰ or Aid to Families with Dependent Children—Foster Care (AFDC-FC) (foster care) payments.¹¹ A social worker should explain these various programs to you, and if they don't, just ask!</p>
<p>... is completing a Resource Family Approval (RFA) application for you.</p>	<p>After your grandchild is urgently placed in your care, the County must follow the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process, unless your home was previously licensed or approved by your grandchild's tribe.¹² The RFA home assessment begins within five business days after placement because it is an essential step to qualify for foster care benefits for your grandchild.¹³</p> <p>For kinship placements like yours, both the home environment and permanency assessments must be completed within 90 days of your grandchild coming to live with you, unless good cause exists for a delay based on the needs of the child.¹⁴ The home environment assessment involves a home inspection, background check, and caregiver assessment, and the permanency assessment is an evaluation of your ability and willingness to care for your grandchild in the long term.¹⁵</p>

⁸ You can receive CalWORKS funding for a child living in your home not based on your income or resources but based on the income and resources of the child. This program provides basic aid only at a rate that is below the foster care benefits rate. See ACL 16-45. For more information see <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calworks/>.

⁹ Welf. & Inst. Code § 309(d)(3).

¹⁰ Welf. & Inst. Code § 11461.3. For more information see <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/foster-care/approved-relative-care>.

¹¹ Welf. & Inst. Code §§ 11401, 11402 & 11402.1. For more information see <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/ord/entres/getinfo/pdf/eas12b.pdf>.

¹² Welf. & Inst. Code § 309(d)(2).

¹³ Welf. & Inst. Code § 309(d)(2).

¹⁴ Welf. & Inst. Code § 16519.5(d)(4)(A) & (e)(1)(A).

¹⁵ Welf. & Inst. Code § 16519.5(c)(1)(A)-(F), (d).



What to know if you have concerns about ...	
... your immigration status	<p>When your grandchild is removed from their family’s home, as a relative, you must be considered as a placement option regardless of your immigration status¹⁶ (or your income,¹⁷ actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression,¹⁸ or physical disability¹⁹).</p> <p>However, if you do not have a lawfully present immigration status in the United States, it is important to know that you are making yourself known to a governmental agency and you should discuss any concerns you may have with an immigration attorney.</p>
... your history with the criminal legal system	<p>Having a history of interactions or convictions with the criminal legal system does not automatically disqualify from you becoming a kinship caregiver for your grandchild. Depending on the content of your criminal record report, your caseworker might help you apply for an exemption that permits your grandchild to be placed with you.²⁰ If the exemption application is unsuccessful, the court has the authority to override the result of a criminal records check for the sake of your grandchild’s well-being.²¹</p> <p>However, if you have any open warrants, you should be aware that you are making yourself known to a governmental agency and communicate those concerns with a criminal attorney.</p>

¹⁶ Welf. & Inst. Code § WIC 361.3(a).
¹⁷ California Department of Social Services (CDSS) All-County Letter (ACL) 22-33, page 4. Noting that the RFA requirement to demonstrate financial stability within the household can be waived on a case-by-case basis, and that the child will be financial support through various programs.
¹⁸ Welf. & Inst. Code § 16518.5.
¹⁹ Welf. & Inst. Code § 361.3(a)(8)(B). The Legislature has declared that a physical disability, such as blindness or deafness, is no bar to the raising of children, and a county social worker’s determination as to the ability of a disabled relative to exercise care and control should center upon whether the relative’s disability prevents him or her from exercising care and control.
²⁰ Health & Safety Code § 1522(g).
²¹ Welf. & Inst. Code § 319(h)(3).