



County of San Diego

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR RELATIVES

I am the relative of a child who is being removed from their home. What should I do?

If you want to be involved in helping the child or family, please contact the child's social worker or their supervisor.

If you do not know the name or number of the assigned social worker you can call the Worker Information Line at 858-694-5191.

What can I do to help?

Connections with relatives and family friends are important for all children, especially for children whose families are in crisis. You can give the family support and encouragement as the parents try to resolve the problems that led to the child being removed from home. You can also help by calling and visiting the child, inviting them to your home for holidays and other occasions, remembering their birthdays, etc.

The Agency holds family meetings where relatives are encouraged to attend. For instance, a Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting is usually held to make decisions about placement. You may want to consider having the child live with you until they can safely return home. You can also assist the child's social worker in locating other relatives and family friends who might be able to help the child and family, including those who live out of state.

What about the child's brothers and sisters?

In most cases, the goal is to keep brothers and sisters together, but this is not always possible. Even if brothers and sisters have to live in separate homes, you may be able to help them keep in touch through visits and family events.

If I want the child to live with me, what do I need to do?

You may request to be approved as a relative caregiver. By law these relatives, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and adult brothers and sisters, must be considered first for placement when the child first comes into the Juvenile Court system and needs out of home care.

Your home must be formerly approved in order to care for the child(ren).

The requirements for approval include:

- Criminal record clearances are obtained for all adults living in the home
- All adults are screened for prior child abuse histories
- The home must meet health and safety standards
- There must be a demonstrated ability to care for and supervise the child
- The relative must agree to ensure the child's personal rights are protected

There is someone in my household who has a criminal background. Does that mean the child can't live with me?

No, you can still be considered. Some crimes may be exempted allowing for placement in your home. Each case is reviewed completely. The social worker will give you detailed options based on the findings of the case.

If I am unable to care for the child immediately can I have him placed with me later?

Children need stability and frequent moves are very disruptive. Child Welfare law gives preference to relatives initially and if the child requires a change of placement later. The social worker must factor in a relative's ability to fulfill the child's reunification or permanent plan requirements as well as whether the relative has established and maintained a relationship with the child. However, if the child is in a stable placement he or she cannot be moved simply because a relative is now available.

What kind of financial and social support will I receive if I choose to be a caregiver?

The child's social worker will do the following things:

- Assist you in obtaining financial support
- Work with you to access health and dental care for the child
- Give you information on what to do and who to call if problems occur
- Have contact with you and the child at least once a month
- If eligible, provide a yearly clothing allowance for the child
- Provide assistance with emergencies
- Help arrange parent-child visits, counseling and other services the child may need

If my home is approved will the child get to live with me?

Not necessarily. You and other relatives may be assessed and approved. This allows the social worker to have a group of interested relatives to choose from. The child will be carefully placed based on many factors. The approved home should meet the child's best interests without further disrupting their life and activities.

Things that must be considered are the child's proximity to the following:

- Their current school
- Their friends, brothers and sisters, their parents, other relatives
- The programs and activities the child currently participates in

- The willingness of the relative to work with the social worker and birth parent on the goal of reunification
- The ability and willingness of the relative to adopt or take guardianship of the child if reunification does not occur

What about visits between the child and the birth parents? How does that work?

The social worker and the court will determine how often the child and parent can visit and under what circumstances. Relatives and other caring adults can help in many ways to ensure that visits are safe and productive. They may assist with supervising visits, provide a safe place for the parent and child to visit, transport parents and children to and from visits, keep the social worker informed about the quality of the visits or child's reactions.

What happens if the child cannot return home?

The social worker will look for a permanent home for the child. By law the child's caregivers have priority to adopt or take guardianship of the child. This is why you are asked at the beginning stages of the case about your willingness to provide a long term home for the child.

If you decide to adopt or accept guardianship, there may be ongoing financial and medical assistance available through the Adoption Assistance Program or the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment program. Information about these programs is available online at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/entres/forms/English/pub344.pdf> or from the child's social worker.

If you decide not to keep the child in your home long term the Agency will make a determination about the best plan for the child. The Agency may decide to seek out other relatives willing to commit to adoption or guardianship, identify an adoptive home for the child or explore other options such as San Pasqual Academy.

I live out of state. How can I get involved?

In some circumstances, a child may be placed with a relative out of state. This process requires that a home approval be conducted by the state you live in. The social worker can discuss this option with you. You can also be supportive by maintaining contact through visits, phone calls, email, social media and regular mail.

If the child has American Indian heritage, how can I help the child maintain connections with his or her cultural heritage?

The social worker is required to ask all relatives about the child's connections with American Indian tribes so the child can benefit from any services and other relatives, who may be enrolled members of American Indian tribes, please let the social worker know.

If I want to give information to the court about the child, how do I do that?

You may write a letter to the judge. This letter will also be seen by everyone in the case (parents, social workers and lawyers). You can tell the court how you know the child, what things you have done with the child, and share your concerns about the child. There is a Relative Information Form you can give to

the court. You can ask the social worker to give you this form or you can ask for it at the Court Clerk's office.

In summary the Agency is eager to work with relatives to provide support and for the children and families we work with.