

# Kinship Foster Care

*Frequently Asked Questions*

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# WELCOME

## *Welcome to Arrow Child & Families Ministries!*

We are delighted to have you as a kinship caregiver, and we are committed to providing you with the support and resources you need. Whether you are caring for the youth in your home temporarily until they are reunited with their birth parents or planning to take guardianship or adopt them, we are here to assist you every step of the way.

To help you get started, we have compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions, including common inquiries from other kinship caregivers, as well as essential information we believe you should know.

# Arrow Team Members and their Roles

There are a lot of people who will be here to help and support you along your journey here at Arrow! Below describes some of the key people you will work with and the services they will provide.

## Recruiter

The Recruiter is typically your first point of contact. They are out in the community getting the word out about Arrow and trying to find kinship families and foster/adoptive homes that can provide safe and loving homes to children in out of home care. The Recruiter will help fill out our application and then submit it to our Family Home Development team. After your application is submitted and reviewed, you will then begin working with your Family Home Developer.

## Family Home Developer (FHD)

The Family Home Developer is the individual assigned to your home after your application is submitted by the Recruiter. Your FHD is here to guide you through all the requirements to either foster or adopt. They will provide you with a list of all training and paperwork requirements and ensure you understand how to complete all the items on this list. You will turn all documents and training certificates into your FHD, and they will be updating your file to ensure there is a current list of remaining items to complete before licensure. They will make sure that your home meets all the state's minimum standards required to become a licensed foster or adoptive home. Once all items are complete and you have an approved home study, your FHD will license your home for foster care or approve your home for adoption. Then you will begin to work with our programs team.

# Family Engagement Specialist (FES)

You will be assigned a Family Engagement Specialist after you have completed your application and had an introductory visit or phone call with your Family Home Developer. The FES staff are designated individuals assigned to specifically support our kinship families. We recognize the complexities that kinship families face and the commitment you have made to continue caring for the child(ren) in your home where they feel comfortable, safe, and loved. Your Family Engagement Specialist is assigned to help you navigate any challenges you are having with the licensing process whether that is paperwork, training, or other home needs. They will provide technical assistance as well as connect you with internal and external resources. If you ever have questions about whether any costs related to becoming licensed can be reimbursed, they will be able to guide you in the right direction.

One thing that we want to make clear is that your Family Engagement Specialist (FES) is different than your Family Home Developer (FHD). Your Family Home Developer will be the person to let you know what paperwork and training will be required to get through the licensing process. Your FHD will regularly contact you and send you updates on your progress; it is important that you stay in contact with your FHD and alert him/her if you have questions or are having difficulty with a requirement. Additionally, you will turn in your paperwork and training certificates to your FHD. Your FES is there to add an extra layer of support and guidance and to assist you with finding resources for your home.

## Case Manager

After your home is licensed to foster or adopt, you will be assigned a Case Manager. Your Case Manager will be your new main point of contact. This individual is your “go to” person. They will be contacting you and visiting your home routinely. A Case Manager is here to ensure that the children in your home are getting all the services and support they need, while also ensuring that your home follows all standards to be a foster and adoptive home.

# Program Director/Clinical Supervisor

These roles exist to support our Case Managers and to oversee daily operations of the services for our kids in care. They meet routinely with our Case Managers to ensure the services and support needed by our kids and families are being delivered and/or met. They work to provide an additional layer of support.

# Behavioral Support Specialist

We have a separate program at Arrow called Behavioral Health Services that provides in-home services to all children in Arrow's care, age three and up. The primary objective of Behavioral Health Services (BHS) is to come alongside caregivers and children to help fill their toolbox with new, highly adaptive coping skills. Every child age three and over is automatically referred to BHS upon placement with Arrow. However, since the children are often already in your homes prior to licensure, your FES will talk to you about referring them while you are being licensed.



# What is the Difference between Fostering and Adopting?

Now that you know more about all the different people you will work with here at Arrow, let's discuss frequently asked questions about fostering and adopting. First, let's define what fostering and adopting are and how they differ.

## Foster

The purpose of foster care is to provide a home for children who cannot live with their birth parents until they are reunited with them, or you assume legal permanent custody. Permanency means children are in a long-term, secure placement without child protective services involvement. This can involve returning to their birth parents, or the kinship caregiver gaining custody through Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) or adoption. Please see the definition of PMC below this section. While children are placed in a home as foster youth, the kinship caregivers will receive case management services and will be reimbursed for the care of the children at a daily rate that is based on the child's level of care. This reimbursement will be given on a monthly basis.





## Adoption

The purpose of adoption is to provide a permanent home for a child when their birth parents cannot care for them. Adoption requires the termination of parental rights for both birth parents. If you are seeking to adopt through Arrow and parental rights have been terminated, you can choose our Kinship Straight Adopt option. This means after completing your home study, we will assist you in finalizing the adoption. The children will not be placed as foster placements, so your home won't need to meet fostering requirements, resulting in less paperwork and training. Your FHD will inform you of the specific requirements based on whether you are fostering or adopting. Once a child is adopted, you no longer receive any type of kinship reimbursement or foster care reimbursement; however, if your child qualifies for adoption subsidy, then you will receive a monthly stipend based on the subsidy rate.

# *What are the different options for custody outside of adoption?*

## *What is the difference between PMC and PMC with PCA?*

Kinship families often come to Arrow seeking to provide long-term care for children without necessarily wanting to adopt, sometimes because parental rights are not yet terminated. You may have heard the term PMC (Permanent Managing Conservatorship) from your kinship worker. We want to ensure you understand this term, as well as PCA (Permanency Case Assistance), so you can make the best decision for your family.

## **Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC)**

Permanent Managing Conservatorship is a legal term in Texas used in child custody cases. It means that a judge appoints a person to be legally responsible for a child without adopting the child. This gives rights to a kinship caregiver to make decisions for that child; however, PMC alone does not provide kinship caregivers with financial assistance, Medicaid coverage or access to other benefits afforded to a child who has been in foster care.

# Permanency Care Assistance (PCA)

Permanency Care Assistance is a program that provides financial support to kinship caregivers who want to provide a permanent home to children/youth who are unable to be reunited with their parents. The PCA agreement is something that you sign when you obtain PMC if you meet the eligibility requirements. PCA provides the following:

- Financial support to kinship caregivers on a monthly basis
- Medicaid coverage for the child
- State college tuition assistance
- An Education and Training Voucher

PCA benefits continue until children turn 18, or 21 if the child is 16 years old or older when the PCA agreement is signed. ***But to be eligible for PCA you must 1) become a licensed foster home and 2) care for the child as a foster placement for at least 6 months.***



# *What are the benefits to Fostering instead of just remaining a Kinship Placement?*

Kinship families often come to us after having children in their home for months or even years and may wonder why fostering is needed or beneficial.

## *Here are some key benefits of fostering:*

### **1. Increased Monthly Financial Support:**

Caring for additional children can be financially challenging. Fostering offers higher monthly reimbursements than kinship assistance, which typically lasts only one year. Once licensed, you receive foster care reimbursement until you obtain PMC or adopt.

### **2. Eligibility for PCA (Permanency Case Assistance):**

To qualify for PCA benefits, you must be a licensed foster home and have the child as a foster placement for at least six months. PCA provides monthly financial support until the child turns 18 (or 21 if the agreement is signed when the child is 16 or older), along with Medicaid coverage, state college tuition assistance, and education training vouchers.

### **3. Case Management Services:**

Case Managers offer both internal and external resources to ensure all the needs of your child are met and help you access community resources for short- and long-term support.

### **4. Advocacy and Additional Support**

As a foster parent, you gain more support navigating the child welfare system. We serve as a liaison with various agencies involved with your home.

# What is Adoption Subsidy?

Adoption subsidy was designed to help offset the financial costs both short-term and long-term for adoptive families. Adoption subsidy provides a monthly subsidy (like PCA) after a child is adopted until they turn 18 or legally supports themselves outside of the home, and it provides Medicaid coverage after adoption is finalized.

Kinship families can qualify for adoption subsidy; however, the child in their home must meet one of the following qualifications:

- 6 years old or older
- 2 years old and a member of racial or ethnic minority
- Belong to a sibling group placed in the same home
- Professional diagnosed disability that is a handicapping condition (a doctor's or SSI statement is required). This can be a mental, physical, or emotional disability.





# Licensing Process

This section addresses frequently asked questions about the licensing process. While all licensed foster and adopt parents, including kinship caregivers, must meet the state's minimum standard requirements, we can often be a little more flexible or creative in some areas due to the kinship situation.

Arrow strives to help families meet the required standards by offering resources and assistance with required items such as medication lock boxes, fire extinguishers, and fingerprint codes. The requirements for kinship caregivers who do not become licensed as foster parents or certified to adopt are often less strict than those who chose to foster or adopt, which can cause confusion when additional tasks are required.

We understand the licensure process can be frustrating and time-consuming and hope this provides clarity.

# *How long will it take to get licensed?*

Arrow is committed to helping you complete the licensing process in about 90 days.

To achieve this goal, we can set reminders and small task goals to keep you on track. However, the timeline also depends on how quickly you submit the required paperwork and complete your training.

To expedite the process, ensure all documents are clear, legible, and professionally submitted.

Some tasks, like fingerprints, fire inspections, TB tests, and CPR/First Aid training, require external scheduling and can take longer.

Prioritize these items to move through the process more quickly. Remember, becoming a foster or adoptive parent comes with great benefits and support, which you can access sooner once you are licensed.

# *What will happen if I don't get licensed in 90 days?*

Our goal is to help you get licensed within 90 days. Your FHD will send you emails with a list of things you still need to do and how close you are to the 90-day goal. If you don't finish everything in 90 days, you can continue with us.

We will encourage you to keep going and might give you some deadlines, especially for items that expire.

# *What if I need to be licensed by a certain date given to me by the court or my kinship worker?*

If you have a specific licensing deadline, please inform your FHD immediately. Deadlines set by a judge or worker are common, and we need to ensure your home meets all standards and complete your home study on time. Early communication is crucial for us to accommodate your needs effectively.

# *What is the best way to communicate with my FHD?*

We aim to communicate with kinship families in the most convenient way for them. However, email is often the quickest and easiest method for sharing documents and updates on the licensing process. Please inform your FHD if you have any barriers to email communication. Regularly checking your email is important to maintain open communication.



# *Do I have to do another Home Study if I already had one when I became a Kinship Caregiver?*

Unfortunately, yes, you do have to complete another home study. This is something that is mandated to us by the state since you are being approved through our agency. We do request the home study that has already been completed and use that as a guide; however, home study interviews will still need to be completed.

# *Why do I have to do another background check? Do I have to get fingerprinted?*

Although you did complete a background check when you became a kinship caregiver, the types of checks run for a foster parent are more extensive. When kinship caregivers are simply taking care of kinship placements without becoming formal foster parents, the arrangement is considered informal and does not involve the same level of state oversight. Therefore, the state does not require fingerprinting for these informal kinship care situations.

To become a foster or adoptive parent, fingerprinting is a state and federal requirement which is why you are having to complete it now.

# *What if I have already been fingerprinted through my employer?*

You may have been fingerprinted as part of your employment as a teacher, police officer, nurse, etc. and sometimes the same level of checks that are required for a foster parent are also done through your employer, but sometimes they are not. We will know whether the fingerprints you have already done will count when we run your background check. In most cases, you will need to fingerprint again.

# *What are the requirements for people who frequently visit my home?*

Anyone who is a “frequent visitor” to your home must undergo a background check but does not require fingerprints. The following is the definition for a frequent visitor as defined by regulatory standards. If you have anyone in your life that meets the criteria listed below, please let your FHD know and we will work with them on getting their background check completed.

- Is present at the home on a regularly scheduled basis, such as a housekeeper
- Visits more than three times in a 30-day period
- Stays or resides at the foster/adopt home three or more times per year, and the duration of each stay exceeds 48 hours.
- Stays or resides at the foster/adopt home for more than seven consecutive days

# What are the requirements for babysitters, short-term care providers, and respite providers?

We highly encourage all our families to have someone identified to be able to help care for the children. This allows you a much needed break every once in a while. There are different requirements based on the level of care they will be providing to the children. Please see the requirements below and definitions for babysitters, short term care and respite providers. Your FHD can help you process anyone you would like to have approved.

## ***Babysitter (up to 12 hours, no overnight stay)***

- Must be 16
- Complete the application and pass a background check
- Pediatric CPR/First Aid Certification – CPR skills must be completed in person

## ***Short Term Care (12-72 hours with an overnight stay)***

- Must be 21
- Complete the application and pass a background check
- Pediatric CPR/First Aid Certification – CPR skills must be completed in person

## ***Respite Provider (up to 14 consecutive days)***

- Must be 21
- Complete the application and pass a background check
- Pediatric CPR/First Aid Certification – CPR skills must be completed in person
- Complete additional Arrow and DFPS trainings

## *What are the requirements for my pets?*

All foster families must ensure their pets are up to date with the rabies vaccine, as per minimum standards. The only exception is a veterinarian's letter citing medical reasons. Additionally, homes must be free of excessive pet odors and ensure pets are safe around children.

## *How do I have to store medication in my home?*

All medications in the home must be securely locked and out of reach of children. This may involve a medication lock box or a cabinet with a child-proof lock. Schedule II medications, like psychotropic or narcotic drugs, must be double locked. For guidance on storage, consult your FHD.

## *Can I have weapons? How do they have to be stored?*

Weapons are permitted in a foster home; however, they do have to abide by certain regulatory standards. All weapons and ammunition must be kept locked separately from each other.

## *Are there rules about smoking or vaping?*

Smoking and vaping tobacco products are permitted for foster parents; however, it must be done outside of the home or in enclosed spaces where the children may spend time such as vehicles or garages.

## *Will Arrow pay any back pay that is owed to me by CPS?*

Arrow will begin reimbursing foster families monthly for each day that a child is in foster care with us; however, we are unable to provide back pay that is owed by CPS. We are happy to help you advocate with CPS regarding when you will receive payment that is owed to you. There is no reimbursement from Arrow for a family approved for adoption only.

## *What kind of out-of-pocket expenses will Arrow help pay for?*

We aim to cover basic expenses for fostering standards like fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, CPR/First Aid training, etc. Additional costs such as home repairs are reviewed case by case. Inform your FES of any reimbursement requests or if you need assistance purchasing items. We also strive to connect families with external resources when available.

## *What if my work schedule will not allow me to complete the pre-service training?*

Our training calendar for classes tries to accommodate families by offering a mixture of evening and weekend classes; however, if you are unable to attend certain classes due to conflicts then communicate this to your FES. We can offer some different training options as needed for families who cannot attend during the regularly scheduled time.

# *I have turned in all the paperwork and completed training; what is my next step?*

Once you've completed all paperwork and training, your FHD will schedule a home verification visit to ensure compliance with required standards and Arrow policies. After this visit, an internal File Audit ensures all requirements are met, taking around 14 days. There may be items reviewed in the File Audit that require correction or updating.

Next, a home study is conducted over 20-30 days, involving interviews with all household members. Afterward, the study is internally reviewed, taking 5-10 days. Finally, upon approval, you can schedule licensing or complete the adoption approval steps.





# After Licensing

We have gone through some common questions that come up as you are getting through the licensing process. Below covers some questions that are frequently asked once you have been approved as a foster/adoptive home. Some of these requirements may not apply to adopt only homes; however, this will be based on your individual home and the length of time it takes to get certified to adopt.

## *How often will people visit my home?*

At the time of licensure, a Case Manager will be assigned to the home. The children in your home will be their clients so they will be required to visit them on a regular basis. Typically, a Case Manager will visit you at least monthly, but it could be more often depending on the needs of the children in your home. Monthly visits may or may not be required for adopt only homes.

If you are receiving Behavioral Health Services, then typically they will visit about once a week but it could be more or less often depending on the needs of the children.

## *What kind of information do I have to report to Arrow? What kind of incident do I need to report?*

Your Arrow Case Manager will be your go to person on any kind of incident or major issue that happens in your home. We ask that if there are any major incidents such as an injury, hospital visit, medication error or major behavioral outburst that you contact your Case Manager or our 24 Hour On-Call Line immediately. When you are licensed, this will be reviewed with you in more detail. This is not just for our information, but to protect yourself from the possibility of investigation.

## *What kind of paperwork will I have to do?*

As a foster parent you will be required to complete documentation on the various aspects of your kinship placement's care while they are placed through Arrow. This may vary based on the children's needs but here are some of the basic paperwork requirements:

- **Foster Parent Notes** – are to be completed monthly and are due the 5th day of the following month.
- **Medication Logs**– A Medication Log is to be completed monthly and is due the 5th day of the following month. If your child is not prescribed any medication, you do not need to fill it out. Only fill out if you give your child any over-the-counter medication for that month. There is a section on the form to put all over the counter medication.
- **Fire Drills** – completed monthly and due on the 5th day of the following month.
- **Injury Form** – to be completed anytime the child has sustained an injury. Report to Case Manager or On-Call Line if after hours immediately to see if any follow ups are required. Form must be filled out and turned into Case Manager within 24 hours of the incident.

## *Will I have more training to complete after I am licensed?*

We know you have done a lot of training already. There is additional training required after licensure, but it is not as extensive as the training prior to licensure. There are several training courses that are required annually, many of these being the online training required by DFPS or those that are accessed through Arrow's website. Your TRI (Trauma Responsive Intervention) is due annually and completed live via zoom. Your CPR/First Aid training will also need to be kept current.

## *Why are there are so many rules about my home and what could happen if I don't meet them?*

We understand how overwhelming it can be to meet all the requirements to become a foster parent.

At Arrow, we aim to minimize unnecessary burdens while ensuring compliance with regulatory and contractual standards. Our requests are based on these standards to maintain a safe environment for the children in your care.

Your compliance helps prevent citations or investigations, allowing you to focus on caring for the children.

## *Will Arrow still help pay for out-of-pocket expenses?*

Yes! We strive to pay for any of the out-of-pocket costs that are accrued solely based on keeping your home in compliance as a foster parent. Some of these costs include things like new fire extinguishers, adding smoke detectors, medication boxes, etc. We are also open to considering other larger purchases that are needed on a case-by-case basis. Please let your Case Manager or FES know of any costs you would like to have reimbursed or paid for and we will evaluate whether we can assist you.

## *When will we start getting foster care reimbursement?*

Reimbursement is distributed on the 20th of the month, paid a month behind.

To start receiving reimbursement, kinship families must be licensed. Then a “foster care placement” will be scheduled, typically completed by the child’s case worker and Arrow Case Manager together.

You will sign new paperwork for the child placed in your home. Reimbursement is via physical check, mailed on the 20th. Direct deposit may take 1-2 billing cycles for it to process, during which a physical check is sent.

Any changes in rates or policies require re-signing by all foster parents.