



Characteristics of Successful Kinship Caregivers

To be a successful kinship caregiver it takes patience, acceptance, flexibility, tolerance and a sense of humor. The following characteristics also help make a successful kinship caregiver:

- Helps children feel they are at “home” by making room for them and their belongings. It is important for the Caregiver’s home to be welcoming, safe and child-friendly.
- Sets up a daily routine of mealtimes, bedtime, and other activities so that the children have some predictability in their lives.
- Works on communication skills. Children feel comforted knowing they can talk to someone they can trust.
- Finds shared activities to build and nurture the new relationship to make their family feel secure and happy in their new home.
- Becomes involved in the children’s activities including school, sports, music, etc.
- Uses friends, family members , support groups and faith-based communities as a support system.
- Finds humor in daily life (even in crisis) and practices self-care.
- Practices positive discipline that emphasizes education, not punishment, and that rewards good behavior with praise.
- Sets up rules, and explains the rules to the children. Then, enforces them consistently.

KINSHIP CAREGIVER CHALLENGES

- **Financial Need-** Many families need financial assistance when they become kinship caregivers because they are adding to their existing family, but not to their existing income. Caregivers can qualify for Temporary Assistance for Families (TAF) or Grandparents as Caregivers. Contact the local DCF office to apply and be sure to ask what documentation they will need to complete the application.

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- **Medical Coverage-** Options for medical coverage include private insurance and Medicaid/Healthwave. If the caregiver is still working and carries private insurance they should ask the insurance provider about coverage for dependent grandchildren in their custody. Applications can be made at any DCF location.
- **Legal Barriers-** Legal documentation should be established so necessary decisions can be made about schools and any medical issues that may arise.
- **School-** To enroll a grandchild in school, caregivers will need: birth certificate, immunization records, previous school records and proof of residency.
- **Obtaining Documents-** Birth Certificate: Kansas Department of Health & Environment: Office of Vital Statistics, (785) 296-1400. Social Security Card: Social Security Administration: 1-800-722-1231 or any local Social Security office.
- **Family Roles-** Be aware that the family role is going to change. The caregiver is now the authoritative figure, instead of the fun grandparent.
- **Healthy Marriages-** Relationships can be strained; be sure to keep lines of communication open and get help when needed.

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Kansas Children's Service League



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Parenting questions? Call the Parent Helpline.
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