

# Kinship care in New Brunswick

1st Edition



Information and support for people caring for, or considering caring for, a child or youth they have a close relationship with.

# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

This guide is designed to support kinship care providers, and your feedback helps us make it better.

Please share your thoughts, suggestions, or questions anytime by visiting [socialsupportsnb.ca/feedback](https://socialsupportsnb.ca/feedback) or scanning the QR code below.



This guide was last updated March 2026

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# Welcome and overview

## About this guide

Becoming a kinship care provider is a big decision. Whether you're considering this role or already caring for a child or youth you have a close relationship with, this guide will support you every step of the way.

We built this guide with feedback from caregivers in New Brunswick. Many shared that clear information, understanding available supports, and feeling more prepared are key to success in this important role.

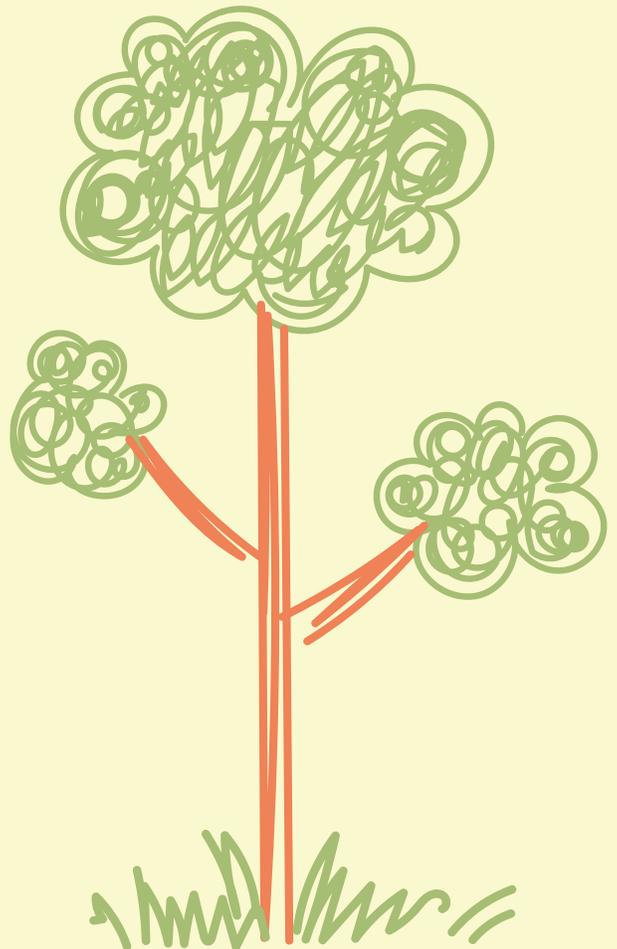
### Inside, you'll find helpful details about:

- how kinship care works
- your responsibilities and what to expect
- understanding legal information and decision-making
- managing relationships with parents, extended family, and others in the child or youth's life
- the supports and services available to you
- how to access help when needed

The guide also includes answers to commonly asked questions and guidance to help you feel prepared and confident.

↪ **This information is intended to be shared!** Please feel free to print and distribute.

(!) Please note that this guide is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional, medical, legal, or financial advice. Programs and information can change over time, so please check details with the services and agencies mentioned in this document.



## A message to kinship care providers

Thank you for stepping up to care for a child or youth you have a close relationship with. We understand this role can be both rewarding and challenging. It requires patience, hard work, and dedication, while you also balance your family's needs and daily life.

The care you provide creates a safe, stable, and familiar place for the child or youth during a time that can feel uncertain or difficult for everyone. Beyond care, you offer comfort, support, and a meaningful connection.

It's okay to feel overwhelmed or to have questions along the way, that's normal. Support is available to guide and assist you, so you don't have to face every challenge alone.

Your role is essential, and your efforts have a lasting and positive impact on the child or youth in your care.

Thank you  
for making  
a difference  
in a way only  
★YOU★ can.



## Overview: Roadmap to kinship care

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### Your role as a kinship care provider

As a kinship care provider, you provide love, support, and stability to a child or youth **you already have a close relationship with.**

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### Getting started

Are you considering providing care for a child or youth you know and care about?

- Learn **how kinship care works** and what's involved by exploring this guide.
- Take time to consider whether this commitment is **right for you** and your family.

Your social worker is here to answer questions and support you along the way!

### Getting approved as a kinship care provider

A social worker will work with you to better understand your family's situation, relationships, and readiness to take on this important role.

Together, you'll explore three key areas:

- Creating a **safe home environment**
- Understanding the **child or youth's needs**
- Understanding **your (the kinship care provider's) needs**



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### Next steps

Once the assessment is complete, your social worker will **share the outcome** and **explain what happens next**.

### Working as a team

If you are approved as a kinship care provider, you'll become part of the child or youth's support team. You'll work closely with social workers, social worker technicians, and/or human service counsellors to meet the child or youth's needs and **support their long-term goals**.



### Planning for the future

The goal of kinship care is to support the child or youth in safely returning to their parents when it is in their best interest. Kinship care often begins as a temporary solution, but if the child or youth cannot return home, you'll work with your social worker on a long term plan.



### Supports and resources for kinship care providers



Monthly payments



Seasonal allowances



Health card



Tailored supports



# Understanding kinship care

*What to know, what to expect, and how to decide if becoming a kinship care provider is right for you and your family.*

## What is kinship care and why does it matter?

Kinship care gives children and youth a safe, loving home when they cannot live with their parents. This care comes from someone they know and trust, such as a family member, relative, or anyone that they have a close relationship with.

Children and youth often need kinship care during difficult times when their parents are unable to provide a safe environment. They may be any age, from babies up to 26 years old, depending on their needs and situation. By stepping into this important role, kinship care providers help children and youth have the chance to grow and thrive in a familiar setting, surrounded by love and stability.

### **Kinship care is important because it:**

- Keeps children and youth connected to people and places that feel familiar and comforting.
- Supports their sense of belonging, culture, and identity.
- Provides a stable and supportive environment during challenging transitions.
- Helps build lifelong relationships that support the child or youth's well-being.

## Who can be a kinship care provider?

Anyone with a close relationship to a child or youth may be eligible to provide kinship care. You do not need to be married, wealthy, or have a specific educational background to provide kinship care. What matters most is your connection and commitment to the child or youth's well-being.

Our top priority is finding children and youth a home where they feel safe, loved, and connected to someone they already know and trust.

### **You may be eligible to become a kinship care provider if:**

- You are 19 years of age or older.
- You have a living space that provides a secure, healthy environment for a child or youth. If your home doesn't meet these needs, the Department of Social Development can help.

## When kinship care may be needed

Kinship care may be needed for many reasons. It depends on the child or youth's circumstances and needs.

### Here are some common scenarios:

- **Emergency situations:** Kinship caregiving may start urgently when a child or youth cannot stay in their family home due to safety concerns or a crisis. *For example, you might be asked to care for a grandchild if they are experiencing abuse or neglect.*
- **Temporary arrangements:** A child or youth may need short-term caregiving while their parent or guardian works through personal challenges, such as accessing treatment or resolving a legal matter. *For example, a cousin might look after a child or youth while their parent gets support for mental health or addiction.*
- **Planned transitions:** In some cases, the need for caregiving is identified early. Families and professionals will work together and create a plan. *For example, you may learn over time that your sibling's child or youth will need a stable living situation, giving you the opportunity to prepare your home and discuss the arrangement before the child arrives.*

When children or youth cannot return to their parents, they may need a long-term or permanent home with kin. What starts as an emergency or temporary arrangement can become permanent if it is in the best interest of the child or youth and the kinship care provider is able and wanting to continue care.

### Myth-busting kinship care

#### What you might have heard...

Caregivers must live in New Brunswick to be eligible for kinship care.

#### The truth is...

Kinship care providers living outside of New Brunswick may still qualify.

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#### What you might have heard...

A 19-year-old is too young to be considered as a caregiver.

#### The truth is...

Anyone 19 or older may qualify for kinship care.





## Understanding your role as a kinship care provider

As a kinship care provider, you provide love, support, and stability to a child or youth you already have a close relationship with. You play an important role in their life, helping them feel safe, valued, and part of a family.

### As a kinship care provider, you will:

- Provide a safe, stable, and nurturing home for the child or youth, whether temporarily or permanently. Support daily activities, like homework, meals, and routines.
- Encourage and guide the child or youth as they grow and develop.
- Make sure the child or youth has what they need to grow and thrive, with help from their care team when needed.
- Work closely with the child or youth’s social worker, teachers, parents, and other professionals to support their overall well-being.
- Staying involved in creating and following a support plan.
- Help the child or youth stay connected with family, friends, and culture, where it’s safe and appropriate.
- Be part of the team working toward the long-term goals for the child or youth.
- Follow plans for visitations or contact with parents, when appropriate.

Your role is vital because it ensures the child or youth has a strong foundation during a time of change or uncertainty. By sharing your heart and home, you can make a lasting difference in their life.



### Myth-busting kinship care

#### What you might have heard...

Kinship care is about rescuing the child or youth.

#### The truth is...

Kinship care provides a safe and supportive environment but also focuses on maintaining the child or youth’s relationships with their parents and family whenever it is in their best interest.

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#### What you might have heard...

All a child or youth needs in kinship care is love.

#### The truth is...

While love is essential, children and youth also need stability, clear routines, and ongoing support for their unique needs to thrive.



### Stories and experiences from our kinship community:

#### New Brunswick kinship providers are committed for the long term!

Over 90% of families said they plan to continue supporting the young person they are caring for into adulthood.

## What children and youth need from kinship care providers

### Children and youth thrive when their caregivers:

- Understand their unique needs and feelings about not living with their parent(s), especially if they are withdrawn or unsure about the situation.
- Create a stable, safe, and loving environment where they can feel secure.
- Support their connection to family and help with the possibility of returning to their parents (if it is in their best interest).
- Encourage them to explore their interests, like art, sports, or music, and help them feel part of the community.
- Respect and honour their routine, culture, traditions, language, religion, and identity.
- Advocate for their best interests, views, and preferences.
- Help them build life skills to prepare for adulthood, including encouraging teens and young adults to work toward independent living.

- Provide patience and understanding to their situation and needs.
- Work closely with social workers, teachers, and family as part of a team dedicated to the child or youth's best interests.

### Common questions answered:

#### Are all kinship care arrangements formal?

Kinship care arrangements can be either formal or informal, depending on the situation. The Department of Social Development manages formal arrangements. Families usually manage informal arrangements on their own. *For more information about the different types of kinship care arrangements, refer to the [Legal information and decision-making section](#) of this guide.*



## Challenges kinship care providers may face

As a kinship care provider, you may experience unique challenges while supporting the child or youth in your care.

### These can include:

- Making decisions in the best interest of the child or youth even if you want something different.
- Managing complex emotions or mixed feelings about the child or youth's parents.
- Addressing the unique needs of the child or youth, which may include emotional, behavioural, or developmental challenges.
- Finding and accessing support services to help meet the child or youth's needs.
- Helping the child or youth manage their emotions and behaviours after visits with their parents or family members.
- Balancing the needs of your own family or household alongside your caregiving responsibilities.

For more information on understanding and addressing these challenges, refer to the [Understanding the child or youth's needs section](#) of this guide.

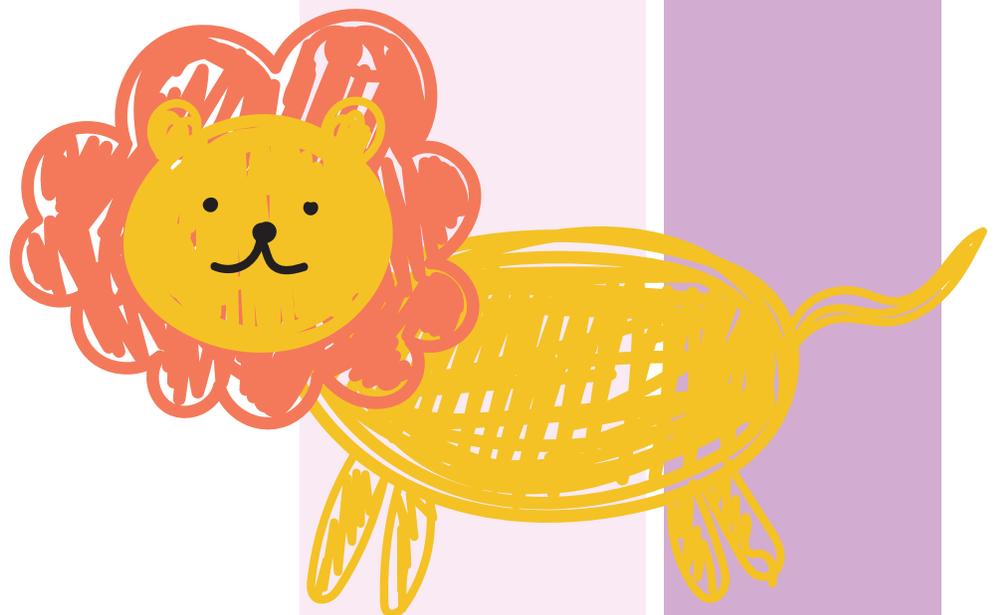


Stories and experiences from our kinship community:

### Preparation and support are key!

When asked, kinship care providers in New Brunswick told us that preparation and support make a big difference. Having access to the right tools and guidance helps make caregiving more manageable and successful.

*“Being prepared helped me feel confident and capable.”*



 *Common questions answered:*

**What supports or funding are available if I say yes?**

Financial and practical supports are available to help you meet the child or youth's needs. Social Development may help with items like prescriptions, childcare, or other essentials.

*For a complete list of what is covered, please refer to the [Financial supports section](#) of this guide.*

**Who can I talk to if I have more questions, or I am unsure?**

You can always reach out to your social worker for support, guidance, and answers to your questions. They're there to help you navigate the process and make informed decisions that are right for you and the child or youth.





# Steps in becoming a kinship care provider

*What to expect after agreeing to care for a child or youth through a kinship care arrangement.*

## Different ways kinship care may begin

Kinship care can start in many ways. Every family's situation is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all path to kinship care.

### For example:

- **We may reach out to you:** Sometimes, Social Development contacts family members, relatives, or close connections to a child or youth when there is an urgent need for care. In these cases, a social worker may contact you directly to discuss whether you're able to provide a safe and loving home.
- **Someone else might recommend you:** A child or youth's parent, relative, or someone involved in their care may suggest you as a potential kinship care provider. If this happens, a social worker will contact you to explore the possibility.
- **You may be invited to an Immediate Response Conference (IRC) and/or Family Group Conference (FGC):** These meetings are organized by the Department of Social Development to help plan for a child or youth's safety and well-being. They bring together immediate family, extended family, and other people who are close with the child or youth.

During these meetings, kinship care providers are often identified as part of the support plan for the child or youth.

- **You can offer to help:** If you know a child or youth in your network who needs care, you can take the first step by contacting Social Development yourself. This is done by following the application process described below.
  1. **Call Social Development at 1-833-733-7835.**
    - Press 1 for English or 2 for French.
    - Then, press 1 to speak with a social worker.
  2. **Provide the following information:**
    - Your name and contact information.
    - That you have a close relationship with a child or youth who cannot live with their parents right now.
    - The name of the child or youth you wish to care for.
    - That you want a social worker to contact you to discuss kinship care.
  3. **After you apply, a social worker will review the details of your request. They may:**
    - Reach out to the child or youth and/or their parents, and
    - Contact you about a possible kinship arrangement, if they determine it is appropriate.

*Common questions answered:*

### How long would I be expected to care for the child or youth?

The length of time varies depending on the arrangement and the child or youth's needs. Some arrangements are temporary (for example, up to 24 months), while others may be long-term or permanent. Although not required, many kinship care providers in New Brunswick choose to continue supporting the young person into adulthood. A social worker will explain the expected duration and discuss the family's situation with you, which may change over time.

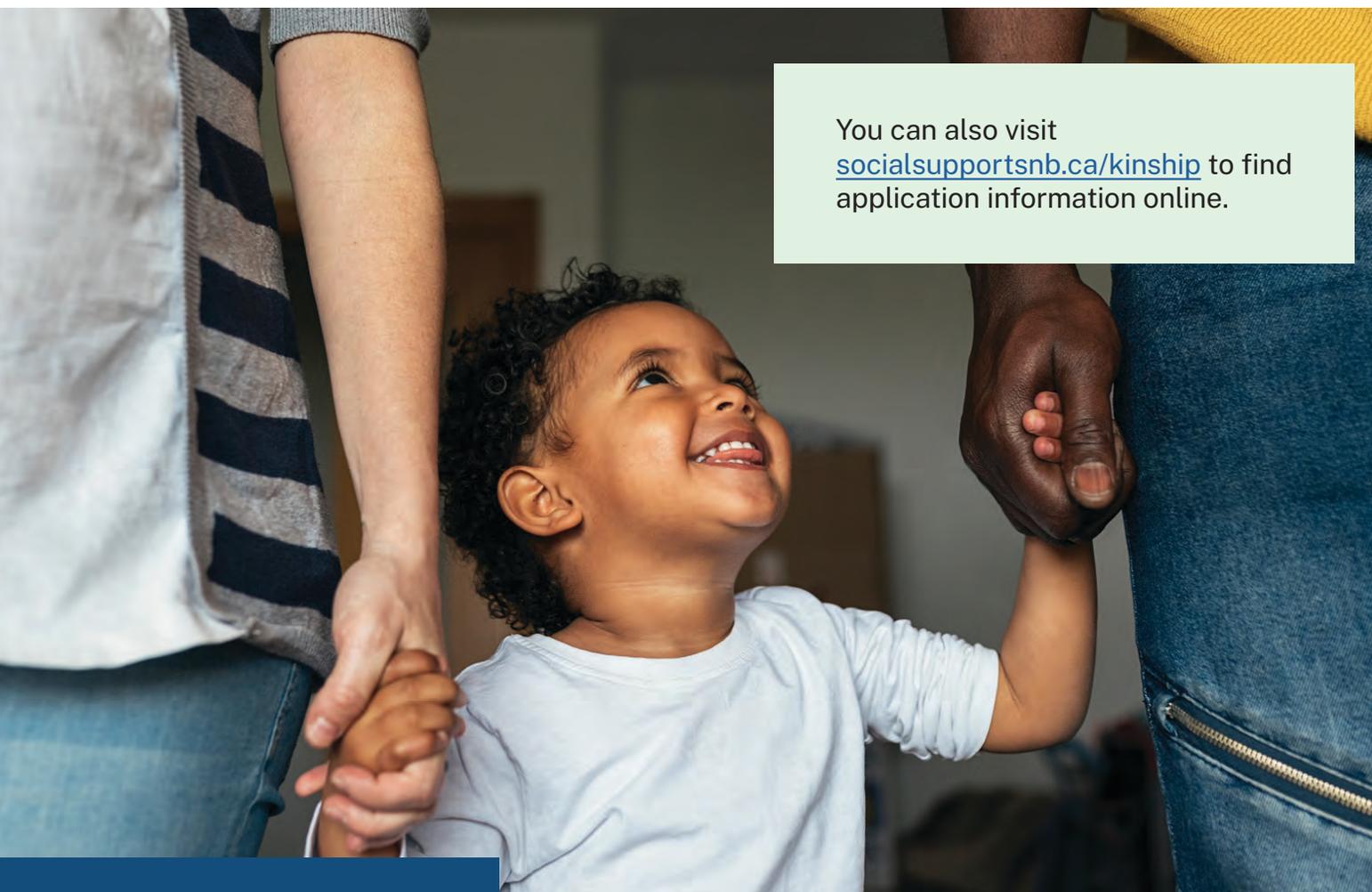
### Do I have a choice?

Yes, deciding to become a kinship care provider is your choice. It's important to reflect on your own situation, ask questions, and feel confident about your decision.

### Can I change my mind later?

Yes, you can decide at any time that you're no longer able to provide care for the child or youth. Please reach out early if your situation changes or may change. Social Development will work with you and others to find the best option for the child or youth if required.

You can also visit [socialsupportsnb.ca/kinship](https://socialsupportsnb.ca/kinship) to find application information online.



# Getting approved as a kinship care provider

Kinship caregiving is a big step, and every family's journey is unique. Regardless of how your journey begins, the next steps will help ensure you and the child or youth have the right supports in place.

A social worker will work with you to better understand your family's situation, relationships, and readiness to take on this important role. **Together, you'll explore three key areas:**



## 1. Creating a safe home environment

Creating a safe, stable, and comfortable home is an important foundation for kinship caregiving. During this part of the process, the social worker will visit your home to assess your living environment and ensure it meets the needs of the child or youth.

### Together, you'll focus on:

- Making sure the home is safe and meets the child or youth's basic needs.
- Ensuring that everyone living in the home can contribute to a positive and supportive environment.
- Creating a space where the child or youth feels physically and emotionally secure.

### | *Background record checks explained*

To protect the safety and well-being of the child or youth, this part of the process also includes important record checks:

- **Social Development record check:** This allows the department to review their records to see if any adults in your home have been involved or mentioned in any reported, investigated, or confirmed cases of abuse or neglect involving a child, youth, senior, or person with a disability.

- **Criminal and vulnerable sector record check:** This check, completed through the police, is required for all applicants. During the assessment process, your social worker will determine if other adults (19 or older) in your home or immediate family members with a criminal history also need to complete one.

### This includes:

- **Criminality check:** Identifies any past criminal activity.
- **Vulnerability check:** Identifies potential risks to the safety of vulnerable groups, such as children, youth, seniors, or persons with a disability.

### | *Why does my past matter?*

These checks are not meant to judge you. They are in place to protect the safety and well-being of the child or youth.

A history of past child and youth protection services involvement or criminal activity among family members does not automatically disqualify you from caring for a child or youth. Each case is reviewed individually, with the goal of creating a safe, nurturing environment for the child or youth.





## 2. Understanding the child or youth's needs

Every child or youth is unique, and this is a chance to explore what they need to feel safe, supported, and valued. A social worker will work with both you and the child or youth to understand what they need to grow and thrive.

### Together you'll focus on:

- Supporting their physical, emotional, and behavioural well-being.
- Helping them stay connected to important family relationships.
- Celebrating and preserving their cultural identity.
- Creating routines that bring stability and help them feel at home.



## 3. Understanding the kinship care provider's needs

Your well-being is just as important as the well-being of the child or youth. This is a chance to explore your strengths and determine how to best support you as you prepare for your caregiving role. Together with your social worker, you'll explore what you need and develop a support plan that outlines how your support team can best assist you. This plan is revisited regularly to ensure it continues to meet your needs and those of the child or youth in your care.

### Together, you'll focus on:

- Supporting your physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
- Identifying and strengthening your support system.
- Understanding your caregiving approach and household routines.
- Recognizing your personal strengths and areas for growth.
- Exploring how caregiving might affect your family and household dynamics.

 **Myth-busting kinship care****What you might have heard...**

If a family has experienced intimate partner violence, the aggressor's family members cannot be considered for kinship care.

**The truth is...**

Relatives of the aggressor may still be considered if they can provide a safe home and play a role in safety planning for the child or youth.

.....

**What you might have heard...**

A kinship care provider cannot be approved if they have insufficient furniture or don't meet all home standards.

**The truth is...**

There is flexibility when it comes to home requirements, and help is available. Social Development can assist caregivers in bringing a home up to standard so they can provide care.

**What you might have heard...**

If needs are identified during the assessment process, the kinship care provider cannot be approved.

**The truth is...**

If things like home improvements or additional resources are needed during the assessment process, the kinship care provider can still be approved with a support plan in place.

.....

**What you might have heard...**

Children or youth must stay in foster care until the kinship care provider's assessment is complete.

**The truth is...**

If a child or youth needs a safe place to stay, you may receive a conditional placement approval to care for them while the full assessment process is completed. This allows the child or youth to be placed with someone they already know and trust, instead of with strangers. The top priority is the child or youth's safety and well-being.



## How long does the approval process take?

### Approval timelines can vary:

- In urgent situations, you may receive a conditional placement approval to start caring for the child or youth right away, even if some steps in the approval process or criteria are still being finalized.
- Completing the full approval process, including background checks and assessments, can take months.

## How will I be notified?

A social worker will contact you directly to let you know the outcome.

### ***If you are approved***

Your social worker will explain the next steps including when the child or youth will move into your home, if they aren't already living with you.

Once the child or youth begins living with you, you'll step into your role as a day-to-day caregiver. Your social worker will provide guidance and connect you with resources to help during this transition.

### ***If you are not approved***

If you are not approved, your social worker will explain why and help you explore other options, like finding another caregiver in the child or youth's network. They can also help you explore other ways to maintain and strengthen your relationship with the child or youth.

## Child and youth well-being

Children and youth have many rights, such as protection from harm, privacy, access to education, and the chance to grow up in a safe, nurturing environment. They also have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. Their wishes are an important part of determining what is in their best interest.



*Common questions answered:*

### **Why do I need to be assessed if I already know the child or youth, or if you reached out to me to help?**

Assessments are part of the legal and safety requirements for placing a child or youth in kinship care. They help identify any supports you may need as a caregiver and ensure everything is in place to meet the child or youth's unique needs.



## What happens in the first few days or weeks?

This depends on the urgency of a child/youth's situation. In many cases, a social worker will visit your home to ensure it's a safe and welcoming environment.

## What is a conditional placement approval?

In urgent situations, you may be approved to start caring for the child or youth right away, even if some steps in the approval process or criteria are still being finalized. For example, you might receive a conditional placement approval to care for a child or youth if your home has been evaluated as safe and you have declared that you have no criminal record or history with the Department of Social Development involving reports of abuse or neglect.

If a conditional placement approval isn't granted, the child or youth may temporarily stay in another safe and supportive home (for example, foster care, a group home, or with another kinship care provider). This ensures they are supported and cared for while you complete the approval process.

For information on the financial supports available for kinship care providers, refer to the [Financial supports section](#) of this guide.

### Myth-busting kinship care

#### **What you might have heard...**

If a kinship care provider is not approved, the child or youth must go into foster care.

#### **The truth is...**

If a caregiver isn't approved, more than one kinship care provider will be explored, including family members, relatives, or anyone with a close relationship to the child or youth.





# Understanding the child or youth's needs

*Practical tips for building routines, supporting emotional needs, and recognizing trauma in children and youth.*

When a child or youth comes to live with you through kinship care, it can be an emotional and overwhelming time for them. Leaving their home, family, and familiar routines is a big adjustment. Many children and youth in kinship care have gone through hard experiences like abuse, neglect, trauma, or separation.

As they adjust, they may have a lot of different emotions. These feelings can come from the pain or uncertainty they've experienced. They may also have mental health, developmental, or learning challenges (diagnosed or undiagnosed) that can affect how they cope.

It's important to understand how hard experiences like this can affect how child or youth act, think, and feel. This type of understanding is called trauma-informed care.

## How to support the child or youth

Trauma-informed care focuses on creating a safe and caring environment where children and youth can feel secure and start to heal. This means knowing that behaviours, even challenging ones, often come from fear or pain.

By being patient, kind, and consistent, you can help the child or youth feel supported as they adjust to living with you.

Every child or youth copes with change in their own way. Below are common challenges they might face, what to watch for, and simple ways you can help.

**Remember, you are not alone!**  
**Professional support can make a difference for both you and the child or youth.** Counsellors, psychologists, family therapists, school support staff, or even supportive family and friends can help when you need it. If you're not sure where to start, talk to your social worker for advice.



### | Why it matters:

Children and youth in kinship care often carry the effects of trauma from past experiences, such as neglect, abuse, or separation from their parents. These challenges can affect their mental health, emotions, and behaviours. Supporting their emotional and mental wellness helps you build trust, promote healing, and teach coping skills they can use throughout their lives.

### | What to look for:

- **Mood changes:** Sudden shifts in mood, including anger, sadness, or irritability.
- **Sensitivity:** Overreacting to small issues or being easily startled (hypervigilance).
- **Social withdrawal:** Avoiding family activities or social interactions.
- **Trust issues:** Difficulty trusting adults or adapting to routines.
- **Physical symptoms:** Complaints like headaches or stomachaches without medical reasons.
- **Sleep problems:** Nightmares or trouble sleeping.
- **Behaviour or appetite changes:** Noticeable shifts in eating habits or school performance.

### | How you can help:

- **Reassure them:** Use comforting words like, “You’re safe here” or “It’s okay to feel this way.”
- **Create outlets for expression:** Let them express their feelings in ways that are comfortable for them such as drawing, journaling, music, or storytelling.
- **Encourage healthy coping activities:** Introduce activities like physical exercise, art, or quiet time.
- **Maintain routines:** Consistent schedules for meals, bedtimes, and family activities can build a sense of stability.
- **Be observant:** Watch for patterns. For example, behaviours may change after visits with parents or during emotionally significant times, like holidays. Offer extra comfort when needed.
- **Provide safe spaces:** Give them a quiet place to retreat when they feel overwhelmed.
- **Reach out for professional support:** If you or the child or youth is struggling, consider connecting with a professional, such as a counsellor, therapist, or school support staff. Talk to your social worker about connecting with professional resources that can offer additional support.



## Understanding grief and loss

### | Why it matters:

Grief and loss are common experiences for children and youth in kinship care. They may struggle with feelings of sadness, anger, confusion, or fear as they adjust to being separated from their parents or family. Supporting a child or youth through their grief helps them process their emotions in healthy ways, build resiliency, and promote healing.

### | What to look for:

- **Sadness:** Feeling down or upset for longer periods of time.
- **Anger or fear:** Reactions that seem intense or unexpected.
- **Behaviour changes:** Withdrawing, acting out, or becoming more defiant.
- **Trouble with school:** Struggling to concentrate or falling behind in learning.
- **Sleep problems:** Difficulty sleeping or experiencing frequent nightmares.
- **Emotional triggers:** Strong emotions around visits, holidays, or special dates.

### | How you can help:

- **Validate their feelings:** Reassure them that it's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused. Use phrases like, "It's normal to feel this way after something so hard."
- **Create safe spaces to express emotions:** Let them share their feelings in their own way, such as talking, drawing, journaling, or play.
- **Provide consistent reassurance:** Remind them they are safe and loved in your care.
- **Stay patient and supportive:** Grief is a process and may take time. Offer gentle guidance and remain open to their needs.
- **Encourage healthy outlets:** Introduce activities like art, music, or physical activity to help them release emotions and process their grief.
- **Seek professional support when needed:** Grief can sometimes feel too big to manage alone. Counsellors or therapists can help the child or youth work through their emotions in a healthy way. Your social worker can help you access these services.



## Building emotional connections

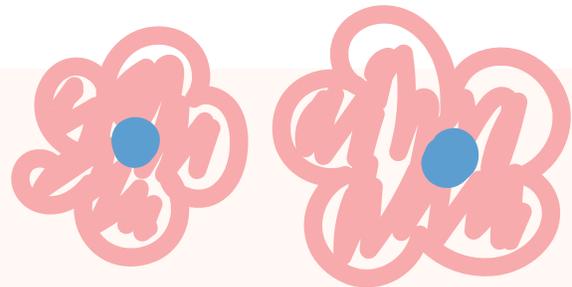


### | Why it matters:

Children and youth in kinship care often navigate complex feelings around their relationships and sense of belonging. These emotions may come from missing their parents, adjusting to a new home, or feeling torn between loyalties. As a caregiver, your support helps build trust, strengthen bonds, and create a stable foundation for their emotional well-being.

### | What to look for:

- **Guilt or self-blame:** Feeling like they are responsible for being separated from their parents.
  - **Sadness or confusion:** Struggling to understand or cope with past family experiences.
  - **Mixed emotions about bonding:** Difficulty forming a relationship with you while feeling loyal to their parents.
- ### | How you can help:
- **Respond gently:** Use reassuring phrases like, “It’s okay to miss your parents, and it’s okay to feel safe here with me.”
  - **Address guilt with empathy:** Say things like, “This isn’t your fault; you didn’t cause this to happen.”
  - **Encourage expression:** Let them process their feelings at their own pace through drawing, journaling, writing, or talking.
  - **Celebrate their progress:** Recognize their efforts with positive feedback, such as, “I’m proud of how you shared your feelings today.”
  - **Reach out for professional support:** If you or the child or youth is struggling, consider connecting with a professional, such as a counsellor, therapist, or school support staff. Talk to your social worker about connecting with professional resources that can offer additional support.





## Creating stability with routines

### | Why it matters:

Consistent routines help children and youth feel safe, supported, and in control of their environment. Predictable schedules can reduce stress, promote healthy habits, and strengthen your bond with them as their caregiver.

### | How you can help:

- **Set consistent schedules:** Establish regular times for meals, chores, bedtime, and family activities.
- **Use visual aids:** Create sticker-based charts, weekly planners, or simple calendars to help them understand and follow routines.
- **Give transition reminders:** Offer gentle cues before changes, such as, “In 10 minutes we’ll start getting ready for bed.”
- **Provide small choices:** Allow them to make decisions to feel more in control, like picking a bedtime story or choosing their breakfast.
- **Build traditions together:** Create meaningful rituals, like a weekly family movie night or a special morning routine.
- **Guide through reminders:** Offer supportive prompts to ease transitions between activities.



## Supporting identity and culture

### | Why it matters:

Honouring and celebrating a child or youth’s identity and culture is essential for building confidence, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting pride in who they are.

### | How you can help:

- **Celebrate their culture together:** Engage in activities like cooking traditional meals, listening to music, exploring language, attending local events, or celebrating cultural holidays.
- **Learn about their heritage:** Take the time to educate yourself about their cultural background, especially if it differs from your own.
- **Include meaningful traditions:** Ask which routines, customs, or traditions are important to them and incorporate these into your family life.
- **Connect with their community:** Introduce them to groups, mentors, or events that share and support their cultural background.
- **Highlight cultural identity at home:** Display items like books, art, or decorations that reflect and celebrate their culture.



## Navigating behavioural challenges



### | Why it matters:

Children and youth in kinship care may display challenging behaviours as they process emotions and adapt to new caregiving arrangements. Understanding the root of these behaviours and responding with patience and consistency can help them feel secure and supported.

### | What to look for:

- **Acting out:** Behaviours such as hitting, yelling, or tantrums.
- **Testing boundaries:** Refusing to follow rules or challenging limits you've set.
- **Difficulty focusing:** Struggling to concentrate or stay on task.

### | How you can help:

- **Stay calm:** Take deep breaths or step away briefly to gather yourself before responding.
- **Praise positive behaviour:** Recognize their efforts and offer rewards like stickers or extra playtime to reinforce good behaviours.
- **Set clear expectations:** Establish consistent boundaries to create a predictable environment.
- **Help them process emotions:** Support them in naming and understanding their feelings, such as frustration or sadness.
- **Model healthy coping strategies:** Demonstrate techniques like deep breathing or problem-solving to help them manage challenges.
- **Reach out for professional support:** If the child or youth is struggling with challenging behaviours, consider reaching out to a professional, such as a counsellor, therapist, or behavioural specialist. Talk to your social worker to explore the resources and supports that are available.





## Encouraging open communication

### | Why it matters:

Open communication is key to building trust and understanding. When children and youth in kinship care feel heard and supported, they are more likely to share their thoughts, process their emotions, and develop healthy relationships. By fostering an environment where it's safe to talk, you can help them navigate their experiences and build confidence in expressing themselves.

### | How you can help:

- **Give them time:** Allow them to open up at their own pace without pressuring them to talk.
- **Listen without judgment:** Validate their emotions by saying things like, "That sounds upsetting. I understand why you'd feel that way."
- **Ask open-ended questions:** Encourage conversation with prompts like, "What was the best part of your day?"
- **Model openness:** Share your own emotions in ways that are age-appropriate to show that it's okay to talk about feelings.
- **Create non-verbal outlets:** Offer alternatives like journaling, drawing, or other creative activities to help them express their emotions.

## Training and education opportunities

To better prepare you for the challenges of supporting children and youth, consider taking advantage of available training and resources:

- **PRIDE training (Parent Resources, Information, Development, and Education):** This online program covers trauma, attachment, supporting developmental needs, and behavioural strategies. It helps foster, adoptive, and kinship care providers better understand the experiences of children or youth in their care and offers practical suggestions. If you are interested, contact your social worker.
- **Workshops or events:** While the NB Adoption Foundation's programs are designed to support adoptive parents, kinship care providers are welcome! Connect with others who share similar experiences and learn new caregiving skills. *For more information, visit the [NB Adoption Foundation's Adoption Support Network website](#) (or search online for 'NB Adoption Foundation Adoption Support Network').*





# Financial supports

*Financial supports available for kinship care providers to help with the costs of caring for a child or youth.*

The Department of Social Development offers financial supports to help you meet the child or youth's needs. In this section you'll find information on expenses that may be covered and how the process works.

If you have questions about what is covered or how to access financial supports, speak with your child or youth's social worker. They will help explain what is available and guide you in submitting any required paperwork.

## Health cards

The child or youth in your care will receive a health card to access essential medical services and supports.

### ***How does the child or youth get a health card?***

The child or youth's social worker will automatically submit a request for a health card, you don't need to do anything.

### ***What does the health card cover?***

**Medical needs and services covered by the health card include:**

- **Prescriptions:** Visit the [New Brunswick Drug Plan Formulary](#) (or search online for 'New Brunswick Drug Plan Formulary') to see which medications are eligible.
- **Dental care:** Routine exams, x-rays, extractions, and some preventative treatments such as sealants and fluoride.
- **Vision care:** Yearly eye exams, lenses, and frames.

Additional support for services such as counselling, therapy, or developmental assessments may also be available based on the child or youth's needs. Talk to your social worker for more information.

### ***How does the health card work?***

Simply show the health card at the pharmacy when filling a prescription. The pharmacy will save the information for future visits, just like how private insurance cards, such as Blue Cross, are processed.

### ***Can the child or youth be added to a private insurance plan?***

Children or youth in kinship care usually cannot be added to a family's private insurance plan unless the caregiver has legal guardianship or adopts the child or youth. For more information, contact your insurance provider. They can help you understand what coverage might be available for your family's situation.

 *Myth-busting kinship care*

**What you might have heard...**

The financial support provided for kinship care providers will help meet all my household expenses?

**The truth is...**

Being a kinship care provider should not result in financial sacrifice. However, the financial supports are for the care and support of the child/youth and not as a way to 'make money'.

**What you might have heard...**

Kinship care providers are not foster parents and don't receive similar supports or services.

**The truth is...**

While kinship care providers' needs are unique, they can access the same financial supports, services, and resources as foster parents.





## Monthly financial support

### When do payments start?

You are eligible for monthly payments **starting from the date the child or youth begins living with you.** This is typically the same date you are authorized to start caring for the child or youth.

Because payments are issued on a set day each month, there may be a short wait before your first payment. Your first payment will include any amounts owed from the date the child or youth moved in.

Support is available for immediate or emergency expenses, such as food, clothing, transportation, or babysitting, if needed while you wait. Speak with your social worker if you have additional expenses not listed here.

### Monthly payments rates

The following tables show the monthly payment rates for Kinship Care Providers, (effective January 2026). If the child or youth needs extra support beyond the regular rate, please talk to your social worker.

Payment rates may change over time. Visit the Social Supports NB website [Kinship Care page](http://www.socialsupportsnb.ca/kinship) (www.socialsupportsnb.ca/kinship) for the latest updates.

*For more information about the types of kinship care arrangements listed in the following tables, refer to the [Legal information and decision-making section](#) of this guide.*

Kinship services & support after kinship services		0-4 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	11+ YEARS
Lodging		\$150.00	\$151.00	\$154.00
Food		\$185.00	\$218.00	\$271.00
Clothing / personal care		\$98.00	\$117.00	\$157.00
Transportation		\$51.00	\$51.00	\$51.00
Babysitting		\$65.00	\$65.00	\$65.00
Diapers / wipes /formula		\$185.00	---	---
Daycare lunches / snacks		\$140.00	---	---
School lunches		---	\$140.00	\$140.00
Recreation / special occasions		\$35.00	\$35.00	\$35.00
Fee for service		\$439.00	\$439.00	\$439.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$1,348</b>	<b>\$1,216</b>	<b>\$1,312</b>

Children and youth in the minister's care living with kin		0-4 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	11+ YEARS
Lodging		\$150.00	\$151.00	\$154.00
Food		\$185.00	\$218.00	\$271.00
Clothing / personal care		\$98.00	\$117.00	\$157.00
Transportation		\$51.00	\$51.00	\$51.00
Babysitting		\$65.00	\$65.00	\$65.00
Diapers / wipes / formula		\$185.00	---	---
Daycare lunches / snacks		\$140.00	---	---
School lunches		---	\$140.00	\$140.00
Recreation / special occasions		\$35.00	\$42.00	\$51.00
Fee for service		\$439.00	\$439.00	\$439.00
Canada Child Benefit		\$176.00	\$176.00	\$176.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$1,524</b>	<b>\$1,399</b>	<b>\$1,504</b>

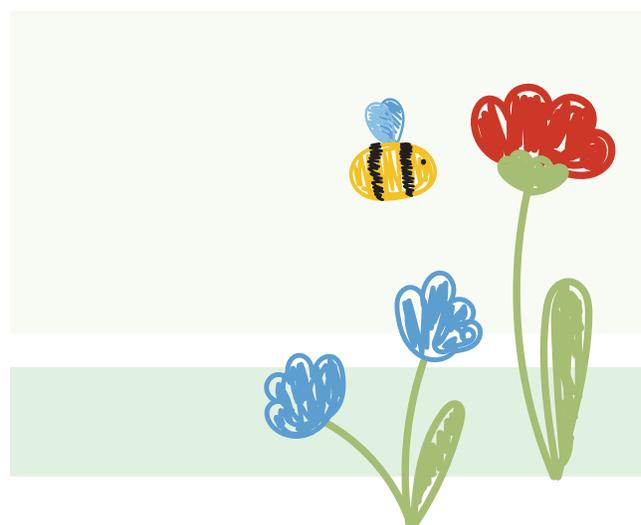
Kinship care seasonal allowances		0-4 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	11+ YEARS
Spring clothing		\$88.00	\$98.00	\$140.00
Fall clothing		\$71.00	\$96.00	\$130.00
Winter clothing		\$136.00	\$180.00	\$210.00
School supplies		\$0.00	\$161.00	\$211.00
Christmas		\$143.00	\$153.00	\$163.00
Birthday		\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00

### When and how are payments made?

Monthly payments are made by direct deposit on the third Monday of every month. If that falls on a holiday, payments will be processed the following business day.

### How much money will I receive?

You will receive a monthly amount based on the age of the child or youth. This support is meant to help with living expenses, such as food and clothing.





## Canada Child Benefit (CCB)

If you're a kinship care provider in New Brunswick, you may qualify for the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). The benefit is a monthly payment to help with the cost of raising children under the age of 18.

### **Who needs to apply for the CCB?**

If you are caring for a child or youth through kinship services, support after kinship services, or as their legal guardian, you will need to apply for the CCB. If the child or youth's parent is currently receiving the benefit, their payments will stop, and the funds will go to you instead. If the child or youth returns to their parent, the parent will need to reapply for the benefit.

### **How much can you receive?**

If you are eligible, the amount you receive is based on your income.

For example, if your [adjusted family net income](#) (AFNI) is under \$32,797, you get the maximum amount for each child or youth:

- **under 6 years of age:** \$6,997 per year (\$583.08 per month)
- **6 to 17 years of age:** \$5,903 per year (\$491.91 per month)

Payments gradually start decreasing when the adjusted family net income is over \$32,797.

### **How to apply**

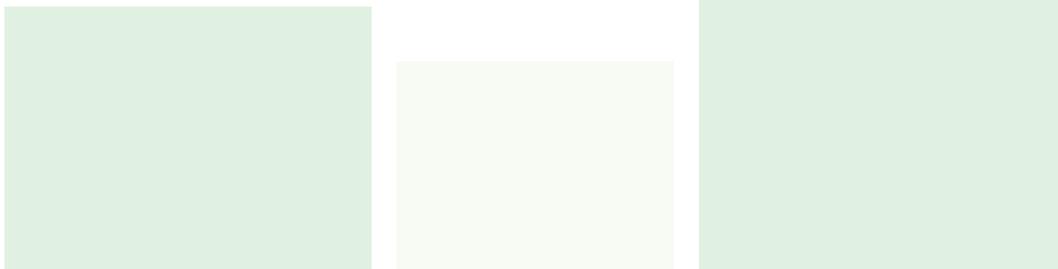
For more information and to apply, visit the [Government of Canada's website](#) (or search online for 'CCB').

Your child or youth's social worker can provide a letter to confirm your caregiving arrangement as needed. You can also use their [Child and family benefits calculator](#) to estimate how much money you could receive based on your income.

### **When does Social Development apply for the CCB?**

If the child or youth you are caring for is in the legal care of the government (Minister), the Department of Social Development will apply for the CCB. In this case, part of the benefit is included in your monthly payment, while the rest is used by the Department of Social Development to cover costs related to the care and support of the child or youth.

*For more information about the different types of kinship care arrangements, refer to the [Legal information and decision-making section](#) of this guide.*



## Additional financial supports

You, the child or youth's social worker, and the child/youth will work together to create a plan that meets their specific needs. This plan may include financial support for additional services or unique needs beyond the monthly amount.

### Examples of additional expenses that may be covered include:

- **Essentials:** For example, bedroom furniture, clothing, or school supplies.
- **Childcare costs:** For example, babysitting, daycare, and after-school program fees.
- **Extracurricular activities:** For example, camps, sports teams, art classes, or music lessons.
- **Help during a crisis or challenging situation:** For example, family conflict mediation, parenting advice, or developmental support.
- **Services for the child or youth:** For example, counselling or developmental assessments.
- **Supports for caregivers and families:** For example, counselling or family therapy.
- **Medical needs:** For example, prescriptions or dental care (for more details, see the "Health card" section below).

Financial support for additional needs is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Talk to your social worker if you think there are other supports or services you may need.



### Stories and experiences from our kinship community:

When asked, many kinship care providers in New Brunswick shared that they didn't know counselling services were available for them or the child or youth in their care. If you think **counselling or other professional services** could help, talk to your social worker to learn more about the options available to support your family.

*"I had no idea counselling was something we could access-it would have helped sooner."*

### How do I get paid for additional expenses?

If you're approved for additional financial supports, your social worker will guide you through the process to claim approved expenses.

#### Here's how it works:

- All additional expenses must be approved by the child or youth's social worker in advance.
- You'll use a template invoice provided by your social worker to record each type of expense (for example, babysitting, transportation, etc.).
- Save and attach receipts for each expense.
- Submit the completed invoice by the end of the month for review and approval by your social worker.



# Supporting youth transitioning into adulthood

*Guidance for helping young adults prepare for independence and achieve their goals.*

The transition to adulthood can be a challenging time for any young person, especially those who did not grow up living with their parents. As a kinship care provider, you play an important role in making that transition easier. You don't have to have all the answers; your support already means so much! Every milestone, whether big or small, becomes a meaningful step toward their future success.

## **With your guidance and encouragement, youth can:**

- Learn new skills.
- Take charge of their own lives.
- Build confidence in their abilities.
- Prepare for independence while still knowing they can rely on you for support.



### *Stories and experiences from our kinship community:*

A young adult who went on to university shared that they felt unsure about whether they could return to their kinship care provider's home during Christmas and summer breaks. **Clear communication and reassurance can make a big difference in helping young adults know they still belong.**

### **Did you know?**

In New Brunswick, kinship care providers can continue supporting youth as they enter adulthood. **Social Development offers financial and other supports for young adults up to the age of 26.** During this time, the focus shifts from daily caregiving to helping youth build skills and confidence for independent living.

## Supports and services for youth transitioning to adulthood

The following tools and resources can help young people build new skills, explore opportunities, and take on the challenges of adulthood with confidence.



### Learning new skills

- **Life skills checklist:** With so many life skills to learn, it can feel overwhelming to know where to start. The **Life skills checklist** is a practical, step-by-step tool designed to help you support youth as they build confidence, and the skills needed for adulthood. This detailed checklist covers key areas of adulthood, including financial literacy, healthy living, housing, personal safety, educational planning, and more! You can explore the tool online at [socialsupportsnb.ca/lifeskills](https://socialsupportsnb.ca/lifeskills).



### Education and training

- **Help paying for tuition, training programs, or other educational opportunities:** The New Brunswick Youth in Care Scholarship covers the full cost of tuition and mandatory fees for youth and young adults who were/are not able to live with their parent(s). For more information including who qualifies, visit the [NBCC Foundation Inc. website](https://www.nbccfoundationinc.ca) (theNBCCfoundationInc.ca).
- **Employment or skills training programs:** Youth can join workshops, mentorships, and programs designed to build job skills or prepare for the workforce. Visit the Government of New Brunswick website [jobs and workplaces page](#) (or search online for 'Jobs and workplaces GNB').



### Housing and living supports

- **Housing or rent subsidies:** Financial help is available for youth/young adults looking for help finding or paying for a place to live. Visit the Government of New Brunswick website [Housing and property page](https://www.gnb.ca/housing) (www.gnb.ca/housing) for information on supports available for renters and homeowners.
- **Transportation assistance:** As part of their support plan with the Department of Social Development, youth are eligible for help with transportation to school, work, or other important appointments.



## Emotional well-being and advocacy

- **New Brunswick Youth in Care Network (NBYICN):** This network connects youth and young adults from across New Brunswick who are or were in care. It's a place to build a sense of belonging with others who understand the experience of being in care. For more details, visit the [NBYICN website](#) (or search online for 'New Brunswick Youth in Care Network').
- **Partners for Youth CONNECT (PFY):** This initiative helps youth aged 14 to 24 access counselling therapy. Youth can begin with a simple referral process by completing the [referral form](#) (or search online for 'Partners for Youth Connect referral form').
- **Child and youth advocate):** The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate provides independent support for young people, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights are respected. They can help youth navigate challenges related to housing, education, health, or other services, and offer guidance if a young adult feels their needs or concerns are not being addressed. For more information, visit the [Office of the Child and Youth Advocate website](#) ([www.defenseur-nb-advocate.ca](http://www.defenseur-nb-advocate.ca)), call (506) 453-8653, or email [advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca](mailto:advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca).



## More ways to help youth find support

- **Visit the Social Supports NB website [Supports for children and youth who have been in care page](http://www.socialsupportsnb.ca/supports)** ([www.socialsupportsnb.ca/supports](http://www.socialsupportsnb.ca/supports)). To access resources for youth who live or who have previously lived in care.
- **Call 2-1-1** anytime to speak with trained navigators about available programs in New Brunswick. You can also browse the [211 website](http://nb.211.ca) ([nb.211.ca](http://nb.211.ca)) to explore available supports on your own.
- **Speak with your social worker** for personalized guidance and support.





# Navigating relationships with parents and family

*Understanding contact rules, visitations, and managing family dynamics.*

## Contact and visitations

Maintaining healthy relationships between the child or youth and their parents or family members is important. It's equally important to establish clear boundaries and follow the rules outlined in your arrangement.

If you're unsure about what's allowed or have questions about contact rules, you can discuss them with your social worker.

### Contact rules

The type and frequency of contact with parents or family members will depend on the needs and best interests of the child or youth. Contact may include in-person visits, phone calls, or written communication.

### Supervised vs. unsupervised visits

Visits with the child or youth's parents or family may be supervised or unsupervised, depending on the situation.

Supervised visits are arranged when there are safety concerns or other reasons to ensure the visit is monitored.

### Setting boundaries

You will be expected to respect the rules around contact and visits as outlined by your social worker or the kinship arrangement.

It may also be necessary to set personal boundaries with family members or parents to ensure the environment remains safe and supportive for the child or youth.

### Taking notes and sharing observations

You may be asked to write down how the child or youth is feeling or acting before and after visits, as well as anything else you observe or notice during the visit.

Taking notes can feel uncomfortable at times. However, these notes are important for your social worker. They can help identify patterns, adjust visits if needed, and ensure the child or youth's well-being is always the priority.



## Managing conflict

Conflicts with biological parents or family members can arise and may be emotionally challenging to navigate.

**Here are some tips to help manage conflicts while maintaining the best interests of the child or youth:**

- **Stay child/youth-focused:** Keep the child or youth's safety and well-being at the center of all interactions and decisions.
- **Communicate calmly and clearly:** When speaking with parents or family members, remain calm and respectful, even in difficult conversations.
- **Stick to the plan:** Follow the agreed-upon contact rules or visitation agreement. If the other party doesn't adhere to these rules, document the situation and discuss it with your social worker.
- **Get support from your social worker:** If conflicts escalate or feel unmanageable, reach out to your social worker. They can help mediate or provide additional resources to resolve the situation.

Remember, managing family relationships is not something you have to handle alone. Your social worker and support team are there to guide you and help navigate challenging dynamics.



# Caring for yourself while caring for others

*Supporting your mental, physical, and emotional health while caregiving.*

Taking care of yourself is an important part of ensuring you're able to provide the best care for the child or youth in your home. Supporting your well-being helps prevent burnout, manage stress, and maintain your ability to respond to challenging situations with patience and care.



## Managing stress and burnout

Caring for a child or youth, especially one who has experienced trauma, can be rewarding, but it can also feel emotionally and physically exhausting at times. It's important to prioritize your own well-being so you can continue to provide support and care for the child or youth. Recognizing signs of stress early allows you to take steps to recharge and prevent burnout.

| *What you can do:*

- **Reach out for mental health support:** Explore therapy, counselling or other mental health resources on the Government of New Brunswick [Accessing Healthcare website](#) (or search online for 'Accessing Healthcare in New Brunswick').

**Call 9-8-8** for the province's free provincial addiction and mental health helpline.

- **Set realistic expectations:** Remember, it's okay if things don't go perfectly. Focus on doing your best instead of striving for perfection.
- **Take breaks:** Many caregivers say getting a break makes a big difference. Ask your Social Worker about requesting a babysitter or 'respite' to have a break and recharge.
- **Practice mindfulness or relaxation techniques:** Strategies like deep breathing, guided meditation, or taking a walk can help relieve stress.
- **Look after your physical health:** Make time for regular exercise, healthy meals, and routine medical check-ups. Physical health plays a big role in managing stress.
- **Delegate when possible:** Ask friends or family to assist with tasks like cooking, errands, or caregiving.
- **Set small goals:** Break larger challenges into manageable steps, like running one errand or scheduling an appointment, to make tasks feel more achievable.



- **Prioritize personal time:** Schedule regular time for yourself to engage in hobbies, exercise, or activities that bring you joy.
- **Ask for help:** Let others assist with caregiving or household tasks or provide emotional support.
- **Talk to a friend or family member:** Social time and regular check-ins can help maintain strong, supportive relationships.
- **Speak with your social worker:** Share your challenges with your social worker. They can connect you with resources or recommend support tailored to your situation.



## Connecting with others with similar experiences

Sometimes it might feel like no one understands what you are going through, but you don't have to do it alone. Speaking with others who understand your situation can offer emotional relief and valuable insights.

| *What you can do:*

- **Attend workshops or events:** Gain new caregiving skills and meet others through training sessions or special events.

While the NB Adoption Foundation's programs support adoptive parents, kinship care providers are welcome! Connect with others who share similar experiences and learn new caregiving skills. For more information, visit the [NB Adoption Foundation's Adoption Support Network website](#) (or search online for 'NB Adoption Foundation Adoption Support Network').



*Stories and experiences from our kinship community:*

### Connection and training provide valuable support.

Many kinship care providers shared that they were unaware of opportunities to connect with others in similar situations. Others didn't realize there were training options available to help manage the impacts of trauma. Accessing the resources below can offer much-needed guidance and a sense of community.

*"The children's trauma was harder to deal with than I expected."*



### On tough days, remind yourself:

- **You are not failing.** It's okay to wish you had said or done something differently; you're learning as you go.
- Every effort you make to provide love and care leaves a lasting, positive impact on the child or youth in your home.
- Feeling overwhelmed doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. This is hard work, and you're human.





# Legal information and decision-making

*Understanding your rights, responsibilities, and the legal options in kinship care.*

Kinship care has its own legal rules, but you don't have to navigate them alone. Understanding your rights and responsibilities can help you provide the best care for the child or youth in your home. The following section explains common legal arrangements, your role, and where you can find support.

## Types of formal kinship care arrangements

The following table summarizes the different types of formal kinship care arrangements:

Kinship care arrangements focus on the **needs and best interest** of the child or youth.

	What it is	Who has legal decision-making authority	Care status	How long it lasts
Kinship services	A temporary care arrangement (with the parents' approval) where a family member or someone close to the child or youth cares for them.  <b>The goal is to reunite the child or youth with their parent(s).</b>	<b>Parents</b> keep full legal rights and decision-making authority.  <b>Kinship care providers</b> are responsible for day-to-day care and decisions. For example, meals, clothing, routines, and activities.	<b>Not in care:</b> <i>The child or youth is not in the care of the government (Minister).</i>	Up to 24 months. May be extended for Indigenous children or youth based on cultural needs.
Support after kinship services	A permanent arrangement (with the parents' approval) for children or youth who cannot return to their parents after kinship services.  Unlike kinship services, <b>the plan does not include the child or youth reuniting with their parent(s).</b>	<b>Parents</b> keep full legal rights and decision-making authority.  <b>Kinship care providers</b> are responsible for day-to-day care and decisions. For example, meals, clothing, routines, and activities.	<b>Not in care:</b> <i>The child or youth is not in the care of the government (Minister).</i>	Available up to age 26.

What it is	Who has legal decision-making authority	Care status	How long it lasts	
<p>A temporary arrangement where a child or youth lives with a family member or someone close to them. They are officially in the care of the government (Minister) under one of the following court orders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• custody agreement</li> <li>• custody agreement extension</li> <li>• custody order</li> <li>• custody order extension</li> </ul>	<p><b>Government (Minister)</b> holds parental rights and full legal decision-making authority.</p> <p><b>Kinship care providers</b> are responsible for day-to-day care and decisions. For example, meals, clothing, routines, and activities.</p>	<p><b>Temporarily in care:</b> <i>The child or youth is in the care of the government (Minister).</i></p>	Up to 24 months.	Child/youth in care living with kin
<p>A kin custody order offers a way for children or youth and their families to have long-term stability without taking away the parent's legal rights.</p>	<p><b>Kinship care providers</b> are legally responsible for day-to-day care and decisions. For example, consent to participate in routine school, social, and recreational activities, and to receive medical care.</p> <p><b>Parents</b> keep their parental rights to decide on major decisions. For example, the child or youth's education, religion, medical care, and/or the child or youth's property.</p>	<p><b>Not in care:</b> <i>The child or youth is not in the care of the government (Minister).</i></p>	<p>The court decides how long a child or youth stays under a kin custody order.</p> <p>The order must be renewed before it expires.</p> <p>It can be renewed until the young adult's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Afterward, they'll have access to supports and services to help them transition into adulthood.</p>	Kin custody order
<p>The child or youth lives with a family member or someone close to them under a court-ordered guardianship.</p>	<p><b>The government (Minister)</b> holds full legal rights, including responsibility for day-to-day care and decision-making.</p>	<p><b>Permanently in care:</b> <i>The child or youth is in the permanent care of the government (Minister).</i></p>	Available up to age 26.	Guardianship
<p>Legal authority (guardianship) is transferred from the Minister to a kinship care provider through a court application.</p>	<p><b>The kinship care provider becomes the child or youth's legal guardian and</b> has full legal rights, including responsibility for day-to-day care and decision-making.</p>	N/A	Permanent up to age 26.	Transfer of Guardianship to kin
<p>The kinship care provider adopts the child or youth, becoming their permanent, legal parent.</p>	<p><b>Kinship care provider</b> has full legal rights, including responsibility for day-to-day care and decision-making.</p>	N/A	Permanent.	Kin adoption

## Informal kinship care arrangements

Informal kinship care arrangements happen when families privately decide that a child or youth will live with a relative or someone close to them. These plans are made with the parents' permission but do not involve formal processes or support from the Department of Social Development.

If you're considering this option, you may wish to contact the Department of Social Development first. They can explain formal processes and other types of support that may be available through other arrangements. *For more information, refer to the [Steps in becoming a kinship care provider section](#) of this guide.*

## Where to get legal information and support

For general legal information, you can contact [Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick \(PLEIS-NB\)](#) ([legalinfonb.ca](http://legalinfonb.ca)). They can help you better understand your rights and responsibilities as a kinship care provider. Please note that they cannot evaluate your specific situation or offer legal advice.

If you need specific legal advice or guidance, you may wish to speak with a lawyer. You can access the [Law Society of New Brunswick's Public Directory](#) to search for a lawyer who practices in your area. You can also search online for 'Law Society of New Brunswick' and click on 'Lawyer search' found at the top right of their website.

## Advocating for the child or youth's best interests

As a kinship care provider, you play an important role in ensuring the child or youth's well-being is prioritized.

### Children and youth have many rights, including:

- Being protected from harm.
- Having their privacy respected.
- Participating in decisions that affect them.
- Enjoying leisure, play, and cultural activities.
- Growing up in a safe and nurturing environment.
- Accessing education.
- Staying connected with family and others who support their development and growth.

### Advocating for their well-being means:

- Acting in the best interest, including their overall well-being.
- Taking action if they are at risk of harm.
- Supporting their development and helping them reach their full potential.
- Ensuring they are connected to people who love and support them.
- Assisting youth and young adults through life's transitions.
- Staying informed and speaking up when needed.
- Ensuring they have the resources to succeed in every stage of life.

## Common questions answered:

### What documents will I receive as a kinship care provider?

In formal arrangements, you will receive documents that confirm your role and the child or youth's needs.

Your social worker can explain what documents you'll receive and how to use them.

#### These may include:

- Custody agreements or court orders.
- Caregiver identification issued by the Department of Social Development.
- The child or youth's Medicare card, birth certificate, or other ID.

### What happens if a parent tries to take the child or youth back?

**If a parent tries to take the child or youth back, contact your social worker immediately.** They can assess the situation and help determine the best steps to address the issue.

If you do not have legal rights in the kinship care arrangement, a parent may have the right to take the child or youth back. However, the safety and best interests of the child or youth remain the top priority.

In formal kinship care arrangements (those involving legal documentation), a written agreement or court order may explain how to handle disputes. Your social worker or legal advisor can help you understand your options and make sure the child or youth's needs come first.

#### If something doesn't feel right:

- Communicate your concerns with your social worker.
- Keep detailed records of observations or concerns.
- Ensure the child or youth's views and preferences are heard.



## Situations that require court involvement

Your social worker will explain if court involvement is necessary and help you prepare if needed.

### Kinship care arrangements may need court involvement to:

- Formalize legal arrangements. For example, a kin custody order, custody order, or transfer of guardianship.
- Resolve disputes. For example, a disagreement with a parent about the care arrangement.

### *Preparing for court*

If you are asked to attend court, being prepared can make the process easier.

#### To prepare:

- Talk with your social worker to understand what's needed and how to prepare.

- Be ready to explain how you plan to meet the child or youth's needs.
- Organize important information about communication with the child or youth's parents or other people involved, such as emails, texts, or notes from conversations.

This information will be included in an affidavit prepared by Social Development staff for the court. An affidavit is a written statement where someone swears that the facts, they are sharing are true. Your role will be to:

- Check the affidavit carefully to make sure that the information is correct.
- Sign the affidavit to confirm its accuracy.
- Testify in court if needed.
- Gather any other documentation related to the child or youth's care or well-being, if required. Social Development will provide documents like the child or youth's ID and copies of agreements or court orders directly to the court.



## Legislation related to kinship care

Kinship care in New Brunswick is governed by two important laws that work together to support the well-being of children and youth:

### *Child and Youth Well-Being Act*

The Child and Youth Well-Being Act is founded on prioritizing the best interests and well-being of children and youth. It emphasizes the importance of early detection and intervention to help them thrive. Hearing and respecting their voices is a key part of the Act.

#### *| Important parts of the Act for kinship care providers*

- **Section 5(2)(b):** Highlights the importance of family in creating a secure and supportive environment for children and youth.
- **Section 5(2)(e):** Focuses on ensuring children and youth have a safe and stable environment. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining family relationships and connections and considers how disruptions may impact their well-being.
- **Section 29:** Describes the supports available for youth up to age 26 who previously received kinship services and remain with kin after formal kinship services end.
- **Section 41(1):** Encourages families and other important connections to work together in supporting the child or youth.
- **Section 43(1):** Recognizes the value of providing kinship services in the home of a caregiver who has a close relationship with the child or youth.
- **Section 54(1):** Outlines the priority of children or youth living with someone they already know and trust.

- **Section 55(1):** Describes foster parent agreements.
- **Section 67:** Explains kin custody orders as a way to provide long-term stability for children or youth without requiring a full legal process.

### *Child and Youth Social Services Regulation*

This Regulation provides the practical steps and rules used to put the Child and Youth Well-Being Act into action.

#### *| Important parts of the regulation for kinship care providers*

- **Section 12(3):** Explains how kin who are foster parents can apply for approval of their home as a foster home.
- **Section 14(4.1):** Describes the support available to help kinship caregivers ensure their living environment meets the needs of the child or youth.

If you have questions about how these laws apply to your situation:

- Speak with your social worker, or
- Refer directly to the Child and Youth Well-Being Act and Youth Social Services Regulation. You can find the act by visiting the [Government of New Brunswick's Acts and Regulations page](#) (or search online for 'Child and Youth Well-Being Act NB').



# Looking ahead: what to expect in the future

*Understanding transitions and exploring permanency.*

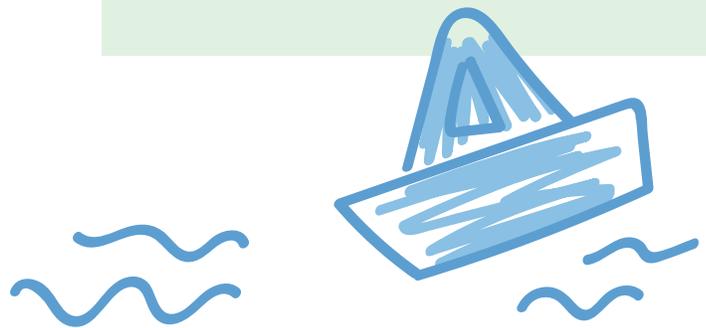
Kinship care ensures the well-being of children and youth by providing a safe and supportive environment. While some arrangements are long term, others are temporary. Transition periods can be challenging, but with preparation and support, you and the child or youth can navigate these changes successfully.

## When kinship care arrangements change

Care arrangements may end or be extended depending on the child or youth's needs and circumstances. Changes could include returning to the care of parents, extending the arrangement, or exploring permanency options such as:

- kin custody orders,
- guardianship,
- transfer of guardianship, or
- adoption.

For more information about the types of kinship care arrangements, refer to the [Legal information and decision-making section](#) of this guide.



## Reasons a kinship care arrangement may end

Kinship care decisions are always based on the best interests of the child or youth.

### A kinship care arrangement may end for reasons such as:

- The child or youth can safely return to live with their parents.
- Returning to their parents is no longer an option, and other long-term plans for the child or youth are developed.
- The kinship arrangement no longer meets the child or youth's needs.
- The kinship care provider can no longer continue caring for the child or youth.
- Youth or young adults 16 or older choose to live on their own or somewhere else.
- The child, youth or young adult no longer considers the kinship care provider's home their primary residence.
- The parent no longer agrees with the kinship and/or the support after kinship services agreement.
- The youth reaches the age of 19. If they choose, kinship care can continue up until the young adult's 26th birthday. The goal is to support them with education, job training, work, and staying connected to the people who matter most to them.

In any of these situations, your social worker will work with you to plan the next steps and ensure the child, youth, or young adult has the support they need.



## Preparing for the end of kinship care

Transitions can be challenging for children and youth in kinship care. With thoughtful planning, open communication, and supportive actions, you can help ease the process and ensure they feel cared for during the change.

### | What you can do:

- **Talk early and openly:** Discuss the transition with the child or youth in an age-appropriate way. Give them the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings.
- **Help the child or youth adjust:** Assist with tasks like packing belongings, while offering emotional reassurance and reminding them they are loved and supported.
- **Provide closure:** Spend intentional time together to create positive goodbye rituals, such as creating keepsakes (for example, photos, artwork, or letters) to remind them of their importance in your life.
- **Reassure them:** Let them know you were part of their life before they lived with you and will continue to be part of their life after.
- **Work with your social worker:** Work together to plan the next steps for the child or youth's care and discuss emotional supports for everyone involved.



## Managing unexpected changes

Although sudden changes to kinship care arrangements are uncommon, they may happen if circumstances change unexpectedly.

| *What you can do:*

- **Communicate with your social worker:** They will guide you through the transition and ensure the change is as smooth as possible for you and the child or youth.
- **Provide emotional support:** Depending on the situation, you may still play a role in helping them adjust to their new living arrangement.



## When kinship care lasts longer than expected

Sometimes kinship care arrangements may last longer than you planned for or expected.

| *This may occur for:*

- **Indigenous children or youth with cultural considerations:** Extensions may ensure their continued connection to family, community, and cultural traditions.
- **Special circumstances:** Certain situations, such as medical or developmental needs, may require longer-term support.
- **Parents not being ready:** If the parents are not yet able to provide a safe and stable environment, the kinship care arrangement may continue while long-term plans are developed.
- **The wishes of the child or youth:** Their voice is an important part of deciding whether a longer stay is in their best interest.

| *What you can do:*

- **Speak openly with your social worker:** Share the supports you may need during extended care. If you feel unable to continue with the arrangement, let them know as soon as possible to plan next steps.
- **Plan for extended care together:** Your social worker can help outline a plan for meeting the child or youth's needs while also supporting you as a caregiver.

## Exploring permanency options

If a long-term kinship arrangement is in the best interests of the child or youth, you may consider formalizing your caregiving role through the following permanency options:

- **Kin custody order:** Caring for the child or youth as the primary caregiver, with some decision-making authority.
- **Transfer of guardianship:** Taking on legal responsibility for the child or youth's care, including decisions about education, medical care, and overall well-being.
- **Adoption:** Becoming the child or youth's permanent legal parent, with all parental rights and responsibilities.

These options are significant emotional and legal commitments. Your social worker will guide you through the process and help you make an informed decision.

### ***How does a transfer of guardianship work?***

If the Minister of Social Development or another guardian currently has legal responsibility for the child or youth, guardianship may be transferred to you if it is deemed appropriate.

## What to expect during a transfer of guardianship:

- **Legal process:** Transferring guardianship involves filing a legal application and gaining court approval.
- **Background checks and assessments:** Your social worker will update the Kinship Care Assessment to review your home environment, the child or youth's needs, and your support requirements to ensure everything is still a good fit.
- **Guidance from your social worker:** Your social worker will explain each step and assist you through the process.

### *| How long does the transfer of guardianship process take?*

The timeline for transferring guardianship depends on factors such as legal requirements, your readiness, and the child or youth's specific circumstances. On average, the process may take months. Your social worker may be able to provide a more accurate estimate based on your situation.



# Key contacts and resources

*A quick reference to important phone numbers and resources.*

If you have questions, need clarity, or feel like something isn't quite right, your Social Development support team is here to help.

## When should I reach out for help?

**You might want to reach out to someone from your support team if:**

- Things aren't going smoothly (for example, there are delays, miscommunications, etc.).
- You're not receiving the support you thought you would.
- You're unsure who your worker is or you're having trouble reaching them.
- You don't agree with a decision or feel something isn't right.
- You're not getting regular updates or clear information.
- You're unsure what's coming next or what steps to take.
- You're feeling overwhelmed or lost and need help sorting things out.
- You have questions and don't know where to turn for answers.

## Who do I contact if I need help?

If you need guidance, have questions, or are looking for support, reach out to yours or the child or youth's support team.

**Depending on your location or arrangement, this may include the following professionals:**

- **Child and youth protection services social worker(s):** Ensures the safety and well-being of children and youth. They protect against harm, like abuse or neglect, and help families get the support they need. This may include counselling, short-term foster care, or other support services. They also work with teachers, doctors, or police to meet the child or youth's needs.
- **Temporary or permanent in care social worker(s):** Supports children and youth who are in the care of the government (Minister) because they are not able to live with their families, either short or long term. This may be due to safety concerns, neglect, or other circumstances.
- **Social worker who assessed you as the kinship care provider(s):** Evaluates potential kinship caregivers to ensure they are a good fit to care for a child or youth.

- **Social worker technician(s):** Assist social workers in supporting non-clinical activities. They carry out plans, help individuals and families access resources like housing, healthcare, or financial aid, and follow up to make sure everyone's needs are met.
- **Human service counsellor(s):** Assist social workers in supporting non-clinical activities. They carry out plans, help individuals and families access resources like housing, healthcare, or financial aid, and follow up to make sure everyone's needs are met. Unlike social worker technicians, who work directly for the Department of Social Development, human service counsellors are contracted workers providing services on behalf of the department.

## Can I contact my or the child or youth's social worker?

You can contact your, or the child or youth's social worker anytime you need advice, have concerns, or want to share updates about the child or youth.

## For example, you might reach out:

- To share updates on the child or youth's well-being (for example, health, school, or behaviour).
- If you have questions, concerns, or are facing challenges as a caregiver.
- If there are changes in your situation, such as moving or if the child or youth is no longer living with you.
- If there's an urgent situation involving the child or youth, such as safety concerns or unexpected changes.

## *What if I don't know who my, or my child or youth's Social Worker is?*

If you don't know who your or your child or youth's social worker is or don't know their contact information, please call the Department of Social Development at **1-833-733-7835**.

## *Does my, or my child or youth's social worker change?*

It's possible that your social worker may change during the arrangement. If this happens, you will be notified of the change and provided with the new contact information.



## Important contact information

Please use the space below to record important contact information:

### Contact #1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_  
(for example, social worker, etc.)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact #2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_  
(for example, social worker, etc.)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact #3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_  
(for example, social worker, etc.)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Other important contacts



### Emergency social services

If you have an emergency after hours:

☎ 1-800-442-9799

Examples of emergencies include:

- The child or youth runs away.
- The child or youth refuses to return to the kinship home.
- The parents convince the child or youth to leave the kinship home.
- The child or youth is missing.
- Something serious or harmful happens to the child or youth.



### Mental health and well-being

- **Mental health and addiction support (Helpline):** Help is available 24/7 through this free confidential bilingual helpline.  
☎ 1-866-355-5550  
🌐 [Addiction and mental health resources](#) (or search online for 'Addiction and mental health resources GNB').
- **Kids Help Phone:** Canada's only 24/7 e-mental health service offering free, confidential support to young people in English and French.  
☎ 1-800-668-6868  
🌐 [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)
- **Accessing Healthcare in NB:** Information on accessing the healthcare services you need.  
🌐 [Accessing Healthcare in NB](#) (or search online for 'Accessing Healthcare in NB').



## Help finding programs and services

- **211 New Brunswick:** Do you need to know what supports exist in your community? 211 can help! The service is free, confidential, and available 24/7 in more than 150+ languages.  
 2-1-1  
[nb.211.ca](http://nb.211.ca)  
[Download the 211 app](#)
- **Social Supports NB:** A user-friendly website that helps New Brunswick seniors, families, and caregivers navigate government programs and community services.  
[socialsupportsnb.ca](http://socialsupportsnb.ca)



## Advocacy and legal help

- **Child and youth advocate:** If you have concerns about how decisions are being made for the child or youth, or if you feel their best interests, rights, or needs aren't being fully considered.  
 506-453-8653  
[defenseur-nb-advocate.ca](http://defenseur-nb-advocate.ca)  
[advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca](mailto:advocate-defenseur@gnb.ca)
- **Public Legal Education and Information Service (PLEIS):** For general legal information and resources.  
 (506) 453-5369  
[legalinfonb.ca](http://legalinfonb.ca)  
[info@legalinfonb.ca](mailto:info@legalinfonb.ca)



## Education and schooling

- **Education and Early Childhood Development school directory:** Contact information for schools in your area can support you in managing educational needs for the child or youth in your care.  
[School directory](#) (or search online for 'Education and Early Childhood Development School Directory NB').



## Local community support organizations

- **The New Brunswick Foster Family Association (NBFFA):** A non-profit community organization focused on supporting foster families. It offers peer support programs, advocacy, scholarships, and annual gatherings. While NBFFA's programs are designed for foster parents, kinship caregivers are welcome to explore available resources and community connections.  
[nbffa.ca](http://nbffa.ca)  
[info.nbffa@gmail.com](mailto:info.nbffa@gmail.com)
- **The New Brunswick Adoption Foundation (NBAF):** A non-profit community organization that offers resources, a peer-to-peer support network, and educational programs for prospective and adoptive families (Kinship care providers and foster parents are also welcomed!).  
[nbadoption.ca](http://nbadoption.ca)  
[info@nbadoption.ca](mailto:info@nbadoption.ca)

