

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 or scanning the QR code below.



This guide was last updated March 2026



Looking ahead: what to expect in the future

Understanding transitions and exploring permanency.

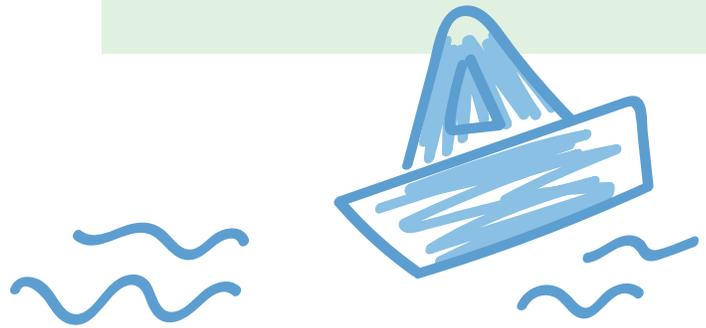
Kinship care ensures the well-being of children and youth by providing a safe and supportive environment. While some arrangements are long term, others are temporary. Transition periods can be challenging, but with preparation and support, you and the child or youth can navigate these changes successfully.

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.





Preparing for the end of kinship care



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:

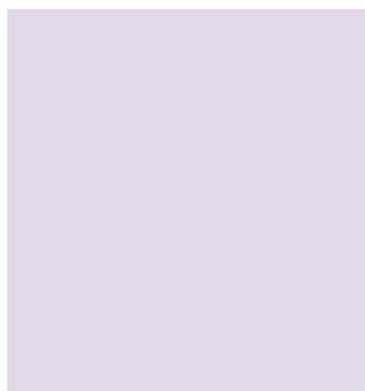
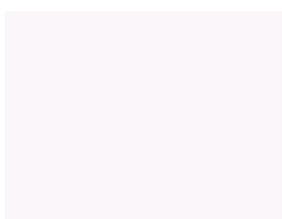
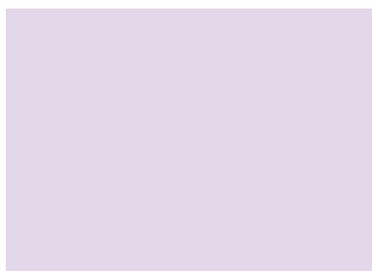
- The child or youth can safely return to live with their parents.
- Returning to their parents is no longer an option, and other long-term plans for the child or youth are developed.
- The kinship arrangement no longer meets the child or youth's needs.
- The kinship care provider can no longer continue 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.

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.