

# 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.



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# 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?

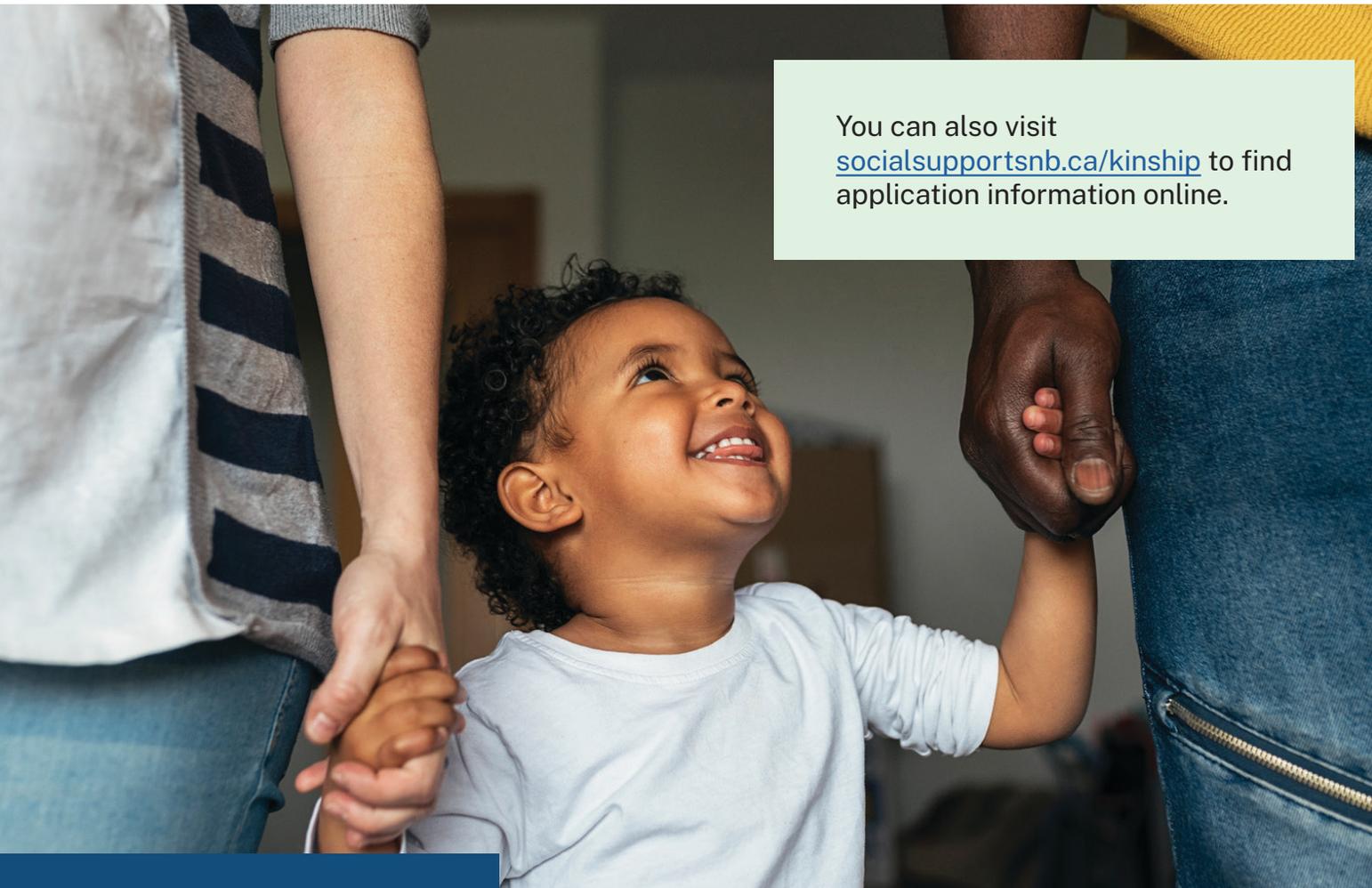
The length of time varies depending on the arrangement and the child or youth's needs. Some arrangements are temporary (for example, up to 24 months), while others may be long-term or permanent. Although not required, many kinship care providers in New Brunswick choose to continue supporting the young 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.

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**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.

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**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.

