

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



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.

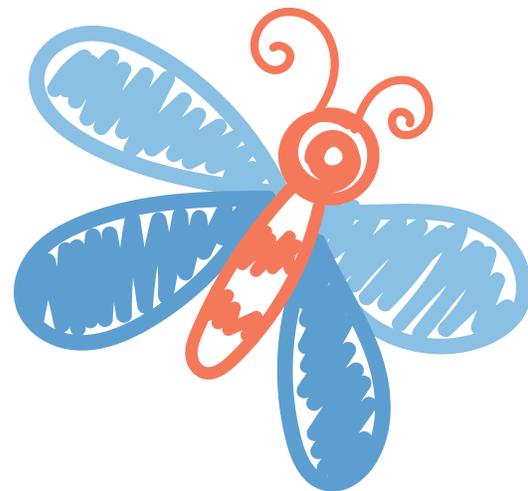
.....

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.

.....

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.

