

Grandparents and Relatives with Children in Foster Care



Arkansas Voices for the Children Left Behind
With funding from Annie E. Casey Foundation

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Guide for Grandparents and Relatives with Children in the Foster Care System

This guide is written for grandparents and relatives in Arkansas who are seeking to raise their family member's child or children who have entered the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services due to dependency and neglect charges or an investigation of possible charges against the parents or guardians of the children.

Writing this guide has been an act of love and concern by us for the many children entering foster care in our state whose relatives and grandparents did not know the new laws and supports that are now offered and permit relatives to be sought as foster families for their family's children, including adoption or guardianship for these children. This means our child welfare system regards relatives as one of the greatest placement resources for their own family's children. We hope all relatives will learn about these changes and step up and care for their family's children who enter foster care. It is the best way to preserve the family when abuse or neglect happens to these children and parental separation and even termination of parental rights is necessary.

For far too long, Arkansas has not recognized and supported the placement of children in foster care with their family members, often preferring to place the children with strangers. There are many reasons that this rejection of relatives went on in the Arkansas foster care system. Now we have evidence that the federal government in Washington, D.C. has compared relative versus stranger placements with indications that families serving as foster care placements and family adoptions seem to serve the children better than non-relative placements. The research indicates the positive value of these children remaining with their own family members. More often, children seem to be more stable and secure when they are with their family members.

We care deeply about helping families to stay together, even if you are a relative and do not know these children at all or only a little bit. Children feel more connected to family members who may be strangers, if they are with kinfolks or even a family friend whom they have known.

As family members, you are a valuable resource for your family's children. Do not hesitate to let DCFS know you want to be a foster parent, an adoptive parent or a guardian. Let us keep our own children from lingering in foster care because no one wants them. There is financial support for some of these arrangements. Do

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not fear calling and asking to be considered. The law says they should be calling you within 30 days, but do not wait for their call. If your children enter foster care, it is always better to make the call as soon as you learn of their removal.

Please read this guide, and if you need more information, call us at 501-366-3647 or our Toll-Free WARM Line at 1-866-9-VOICES. We want to help.

Sincerely,
Dee Ann Newell and John Zalenski

From Members of the Arkansas Kinship Caregiver Network:

We, the kinship caregiver members of the Arkansas Kinship Caregiver Network, want to echo the comments by Dee Ann and John. We want to tell you of the many joys of caregiving your own family members' children, despite the many hardships and sacrifices that have to be made. We share the excitement of family members who now feel they will be considered by the child welfare system when their family member enters the system. Child welfare will now attempt to seek our relatives for placement, but we remind fellow relatives and grandparents that you should not wait to be found. Call up your county DCFS office the minute you learn your children are in foster care. Do not wait for them to find you, you find them and your chances of being with your family's child are improved.

We are glad that we have had a chance to review this guide and provide our input, as we are the true experts in raising our grandchildren and relatives' children, and we should be considered by all as the true experts.

To contact us, call Brenda Olive at 501-541-5334. We are a group of kinship caregivers from around the state who stay in touch and want to support other caregivers in any fashion.

From Members of the Arkansas Grandparents Left Behind Coalition

Dear Fellow Grandparents and Relatives with Children in the Foster Care System,

We are a small group of grandparents and relatives who were not considered for foster placement, adoption, or even visitation with our grandchildren and family

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member after the parent's rights were terminated. Under law and practice, we still cannot continue to see our family member in the custody of the state, even when they are lingering in foster care. Many of us sought to have the children placed with us, and some of us wanted to maintain a relationship although we were not in a position to adopt or be the guardian after the termination of our relative's parental rights. The child welfare system does not permit us to maintain contact.

However, some of us have been contacted by our grandchildren's adoptive parents who sought an "open adoption" and were told by DHS that it was not in the best interest of the children, without any reflection about the previous significance of our relationship to our children. Although the adoptive parents were fearful, they reached out to some of us anyway, and the results have been very positive. However, we must sneak around due to the fear that the long arm of the system or the court may have some ongoing power, although we have not been told this is really true. The fear lingers for us and for the adoptive families who would like us to stay engaged.

Our grief and loss is significant and painful, but it is not relevant, for it is the grief and loss of family experienced by the children who lose contact with us and are bewildered about where their family went. Why are the children left without some family contact, if we are truly concerned about the best interest of the children? Should there not be some consideration of the painful impact of complete family loss on the children, especially when an adoptive parent is agreeable to grandparent or relative contact and especially true for those children who linger in foster care with no real likelihood of adoption?

Written by a Grandparent Left Behind who continues to grieve the loss of her family member's children but must remain anonymous, representing a small group of grandparents and relatives in similar but not exact circumstances, as some were denied due to age, an insignificant, long-ago history of criminality, or simply the favoritism of the child welfare system for their selections. We are indeed happy that the federal law and the state child welfare system has changed to the degree it sees the value and hope of relatives and grandparents as placement preferences.

If you wish to join us, please contact Dee Ann Newell at deeann@arkansasvoices.org or call Dee Ann at 501-366-3647 or the toll-free WARM Line, 1-866-9-Voices.

A Guide for Arkansas Grandparents and Relatives

What You Need to Know When Your Family Member's Child Has Been Removed from His/Her Parents by the Courts and Enters the Arkansas Foster Care System

This guide for grandparents and relatives is intended to offer information about the child welfare system and to help you navigate the system, knowing what legal options you have to visit, gain custody, including adoption of your family's child.

The guide is written as a recommended outcome of the Arkansas Legislative Subcommittee, Aging, Children and Youth, following a series of hearings by the committee concerning grandparents and relative caregivers seeking contact and custody of their family's children who are in custody of the state. These hearings were held in the spring and summer of 2010. We deeply thank the legislators who participated in this study, including the lead legislator, Representative Johnny Roebuck and former Representative Mike Burris, and the many grandparents and relatives who testified. It is also part of a reconciliation grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation concerning grandparents and relatives "left behind in Arkansas." We are most appreciative of the support of AECF.

What You Need to Know if You Are a Relative or Grandparent of a Child That Has Entered Foster Care

When a judge orders a child to be removed from a parent or guardian's home, the intention is to keep the child safe, according to specific laws that allow the juvenile court and the child welfare agency involvement to intervene in the family. The decision to remove a child is to protect the child from abuse or neglect when it is dangerous for the child to stay in the home and under the care of the parent or guardian. It is a decision that weighs the potential harm to the child of staying in the home against the trauma of removing a child from the custody of his or her parents. Removing a child from his or her home is usually done as a last resort. To follow the law, judges must make sure that specific efforts were made, called "reasonable efforts," to keep the child safely at home, and the state must prove that services and supports were put in place to keep children safe with birth parents.

The judge can order the parents or guardians of the child to get help. At this time the child goes into temporary custody of the state of Arkansas, through its child welfare agency, the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

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This arrangement makes DCFS, the state, and the director of the agency legally responsible for the safety of the child, the well-being of the child (access to health and educational services), as well as for the child's future lifelong relationships with a family (what the system refers to as "permanency.") With the judge's agreement, DCFS can decide where the child will live, and, ultimately, if the child will be returned home to their parent(s) or guardians from whom they were removed or not.

According to a timetable, the agency continues to report, plan, and make recommendations to the judge about the placement of the child. This happens as the agency continues to investigate and gives the parents their needed help, the services that the court has approved for them. Through this process, the agency and the court hope to make a determination about whether abuse and/or neglect has happened. Part of this process means the agency must engage in a family-friendly assessment and a case-planning process to help parents or guardians improve their ability to care for their children. Returning children to the care of their parents or guardian — called "reunification" -- is the first responsibility of the state agency. If the parents or guardians seek help and work with professionals and other supportive persons to make corrections to the previous unsafe or abusive treatment of their child, the child or children must be reunited. This is a fact of state and federal law and required in order to be in compliance with the law. If the child and parent or guardian cannot be reunified, then the state agency is required to pursue adoption ("permanency") as the second goal. Planning for reunification with their parents or guardian and concurrently searching for an adoptive home are being pursued by the social worker at the same time. This is called "concurrent planning." The agency prepares for termination of parental rights, which "frees" the child for adoption while working at the same time to solve the problems that led to the removal of the child from his or her family in the first place.

If the court and the agency regard the parents or guardian as not having made the needed changes, the court will order a "termination of parental rights," meaning the parents or guardian are no longer legally responsible or attached to the child and DHS must search for a better home for the child. This course of action is gravely serious, creating a "legal orphan." If an adoptive family is not identified when this takes place, the child is at increased risk of growing up without a permanent family.

During this period of time, when the parents or a guardian are seeking help and the child is not living at home, DCFS places the child in the care of trained foster parents who will continue to care for the child in their home until the judge and DCFS decide on a permanent home.

Many times children who have been neglected or abused have serious problems caused by the trauma they have suffered and must be placed in foster homes where the foster caregivers have been specially trained to care for children with emotional and behavioral problems. There are not enough foster homes for all of the children in Arkansas' DCFS custody. In these cases children must be placed in a group homes or residential facilities. During the

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foster placement, both parents and children should be receiving needed services, including mental health services and other treatments.

The Good News for Grandparents and Other Relatives of Children Entering Foster Care

In light of this, there is good news for grandparents and other relatives who want to be the foster parents of their own family's child, become their guardians, or to adopt the child, becoming the parents of the child. In 2008, the U.S. Congress passed a new law called the Fostering Family Connections Act. The new law strongly recommends that foster care agencies across the nation FIRST look for family members, grandparents, relatives, and very close family friends (called "fictive" kin) to become the foster parents, guardians, or adoptive parents before placing the children with non-relative caregivers, known as "non-relative foster parents."

Why was this new federal law passed that will encourage the placement of children in foster care with grandparent and relatives?

The best answer is that research showed that children who are removed from their parents or guardians because of abuse or neglect fare better when placed with relatives, family members, or other significant people in their lives than they do when placed with strangers. Most of the research indicated that relative placements were more stable and the children felt more secure and safer when placed with a family member or significant friend. There were fewer movements of the child from foster home to foster home, meaning more stability, predictability and security for the child. Some states had not made relatives a choice for placements in any significant way, and the federal law was a way to insure that relatives were considered first, as caregivers, when parents or guardian were unable to parent adequately, or their rights were terminated.

The new law, as of 2008, requires the state child welfare agency to look for these relatives, on both the mother's and father's side of the family, and sends them a letter to tell them the child is in the care of DCFS. It also tells the family members that if they wish to care for the child, they must contact DCFS right away and let DCFS know they are interested in caring for the child. The law requires the letter of notification to relatives to be sent within 30 days of removing the child from their home. During this period relatives are supposed to be preferred as potential caregivers, and they should be supported to be considered for adoption or guardianship of the child.

When the child remains in foster care, there are supervised visits conducted with the parents intended to maintain attachments and improve parenting skills. These visits do not, at first, take place in the home but in the county offices of DCFS. Grandparents or relatives, whether or not they can serve as caregivers for a child, may be allowed to visit with the child during these visits. It is always better for a child to be aware that loving adults care about him

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or her. DCFS can ask the judge to orders no contact with the relatives, but this must be for some specific reason related to abuse or neglect of the child.

More About the New Federal Law and Relatives

(Reprinted from the National Fostering Connections Resource Center)

Description of the Federal Law

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 became Public Law 110-351 on October 7, 2008. Experts hail it as the most significant and far-reaching reform to federal child welfare policy in more than ten years. The new law aims to promote permanency and improved outcomes for children in foster care through policy changes in six key areas: 1) support for kinship care and family connections, 2) support for older youth, 3) coordinated health services, 4) improved educational stability and opportunities, 5) incentives and assistance for adoption, and 6) direct access to federal resources for Indian Tribes.

[Support for kinship care and family connection](#)

The Act provides new support for relatives caring for foster children. This includes a state option for federal reimbursement under Title IV-E for guardianship assistance payments; requirements for state to provide relatives with notice of the placement of a related child in foster care; codification of existing federal guidance permitting flexibility in foster care licensing for relatives; requirements for states to make reasonable efforts to keep siblings together in foster care; and grants to support family connections.

[Support for older youth](#)

More than 29,000 children "age out" of the foster care system each year without achieving permanency through reunification, adoption, or guardianship. Under prior law, Title IV-E reimbursable foster care (and adoption assistance payments) could not be made after a child turned 18. In addition, foster care payments could only be made on behalf of children in "a foster family home or child-care institutions."

[Support for older youth](#)

The Fostering Connections Act provides new supports and services to promote permanency and improved wellbeing of older youth in foster care. These include a state option to continue providing Title IV-E reimbursable foster care, adoption, or guardianship assistance payments to children after the age of 18; a requirement that personal transition plans for youth aging out are developed within 90 days prior to youth exiting foster care; extending eligibility for Independent Living Program services to children adopted or placed in kinship guardianship at

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age 16 or older; and extending eligibility for education and training vouchers to children who exit foster care to kinship guardianship at age 16 or older (those adopted after age 16 were already eligible).

Ensuring improved outcomes for foster youth in [education](#) and [health](#)

Under prior law, states were required to maintain case plans for children in foster care that contained, "to the extent available and accessible," the health and educational records of the child, including the names of providers, the child's grade level performance, the child's school records, assurances that a child's placement in foster care took into account proximity to the child's school of origin, a record of the child's immunizations, known medical problems, medications taken, and other relevant health and educational information.

Education: The Fostering Connections Act builds on prior law by adding a new requirement that case plans ensure the educational stability of the child in foster care and by also requiring Title IV-E state plans show that each child receiving a Title IV-E foster care, adoption or guardianship payment is a full-time school student, or is incapable of attending school due to a documented medical condition.

Health: The Fostering Connections Act builds on prior law by adding a new requirement for states to develop a plan for the ongoing oversight and coordination of health services for children in foster care.

[Incentives and assistance for adoptions](#)

In 2006, more than 50,000 children in the United States were adopted from foster care. However, this represented less than half of the children that were "free" for adoption. Since 1997, the federal government has provided states with incentives to increase the number of children adopted from foster care. In 1996, Congress also enacted legislation to promote the adoption of foster children in the U.S. through the provision of a nonrefundable tax credit. The Act promotes increases in adoption in several ways. These include de-linking adoption assistance eligibility from criteria related to the now defunct Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program; extending and expanding the Adoption Incentives program; and requiring states to inform prospective adoptive parents of the federal adoption tax credit available to support the adoption of special needs children.

In Plain English

[An Introduction to the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008](#)

You may be wondering how the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (PL 110-351) will help children, youth and families like you who are involved with the child welfare system in the United States. These laws made many important changes that will help more children leave foster care more quickly and safely to permanent families with

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relatives or adoptive parents when children cannot return to their parents. The law provides support for young people at age 18 and older as they begin the transition from foster care to adulthood. In addition, Tribes will have the opportunity to receive direct federal support to strengthen services that address child welfare needs in their communities.

Sounds great, but how does the law accomplish all that?

The Fostering Connections law requires states to enact the changes through new state laws (passed by your state's legislature) and regulatory changes (by the executive branch agency responsible for administering child welfare in your state). The federal agency that oversees child welfare services in the US, [the Children's Bureau](#), is responsible for sending the states "guidance" or instructions about how to implement the various provisions of the law. The states are required to implement certain changes immediately, while others will roll out over the next few years. Some of the changes are optional and will be implemented only if the state chooses to do so.

FYI: ARKANSAS LAWS IMPACTING RELATIVES WITH CHILDREN IN THE STATE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Grandparent's Access to Grandchildren

State: Arkansas

Bill: [HB 2013, Act 1311](#); **Status:** Enacted; **Year:** 2009

Summary: This legislation requires the Department of Human Services to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives within 30 days of a juvenile transferred to the custody of the department. It requires court reports to include information and recommendations concerning placement and visitation with a grandparent or other adult relative.

Guardianship Subsidy

State: Arkansas

Bill: [SB 351, Act 325](#); **Status:** Enacted; **Year:** 2009

Summary: Amends Arkansas' relative guardianship subsidy program to add those children who are eligible for Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments and who have been in the care of a relative for at least six months to the list of eligible children under the state's program.

Sponsored by Senator J. Key, Representative J. Dickinson

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If you are a relative of the child (or a significant person, friend in the life of the child) and are seeking to foster the child, adopt the child, or acquire guardianship of the child removed from the parents, you will need to respond to the notification letter then to the Arkansas Division of Children and Families Services, which is required to send it to all potential relatives. The letter tells you what to do if you want to become the foster parent, guardian or adoptive parent. If you do not receive such a letter, but you wish to become one of these, you must notify DCFS as quickly as possible, within thirty days of the removal of the child if you possibly can do so.

After letting DCFS know your interest, you will be required to complete parenting classes approved by DCFS, a physical evaluation and sometimes a mental health evaluation, a home study for cleanliness, appropriate size and adequate home environment, and a financial study of your income and capability to raise the child, a criminal background check* and a Child Abuse Registry check. These requirements and studies will help DCFS to decide if you are a healthy choice to raise or foster your family member's child. DCFS will then let the judge know of their recommendation. The judge can order other background checks or trainings, if the judge wishes more information or more training for you before placing a child with you.

There are many court hearings held during the time of the dependency-neglect case against the parents or the previous guardian that let the judge listen to information presented from all of the parties and decide what will happen.

These are the types of hearings in child abuse and neglect cases:

- Probable Cause Hearing
- Adjudication Hearing (Trial)
- Disposition Hearing
- Review Hearing
- Permanency Planning Hearing
- Termination of Parental Rights Hearing

Each hearing has a different purpose and a required time to take place. This is a list of the types of hearings and the time frames for when those hearings must be held:

Dependency Petition filed

DCFS staff can remove the child based on serious concerns for the health and safety of the child for up to 72 hours without court approval. (If more than 72 hours, DCFS must request the court for custody of a child). If the court agrees with DCFS, they will issue an order telling DCFS that they can keep the child in state custody.

Probable Cause Hearing

The court must hold a hearing about the keeping the child in state custody within 5 business days of the emergency order given in the previous hearing. In this hearing, the court will decide if the child goes back home, stays in the temporary custody of DCFS, or lives with someone else.

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This is the hearing wherein the court can place children with relatives, if in the best interest of the child.

Adjudication Hearing

(30-60 days)

Within 30 to 60 days of the Probable Cause Hearing, an Adjudication Hearing will decide if the child has been abused or neglected. If the judge decides the child has not been abused or neglected, the child will be returned to his or her home.

Disposition Hearing

(Must take place within 14 days of the Adjudication Hearing)

The judge will decide in this hearing if it is in the child's best interest to stay in the custody of DCFS, be placed in someone else's custody, or be returned to the parent or guardian.

Review Hearing(s)

The purpose of the review hearings is for the judge to make sure that everyone is obeying the court orders and the case plan.

Permanency Planning Hearing

(At least every 6 months)

These hearings are held at least every 6 months, and the judge hears how the child is doing, if the court orders are being followed and the "case plan" is being carried out, how the family is doing in the services to promote better parenting, and whether the child can be returned.

At this hearing, the judge listens to all of the information about what has happened since the case first came into court. The caseworker and the other participants in the case will offer the judge their judgments about what he or she thinks is best for the child as far as the permanent plan for placement.

Permanency Planning Hearing

(Held no later than 12 months from date the child was removed)

This hearing is for the judge to decide whether to end the legal relationship between a parent/guardian and the child who was removed, place the child back in their home, or give guardianship or permanent custody to another adult.

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Role of DCFS if a Relative is Approved as a Foster Parent

Once you are approved as a foster parent and the child is living in your home, a caseworker will visit you regularly (at least twice in the first month of placement and at least once a month after that). You will also be invited to *Service Plan Review* meetings, which are held with DCFS or foster care agency staff to review the plan for the child and the services being provided.

As a kinship foster parent, you will need to work with the parents, cooperate with visiting arrangements with the parents, meet with DSS and/or foster care agency caseworkers, and take the child to medical, counseling, and school appointments. All of these activities are helpful in working toward the return of the child to his or her home.

Legal authority

Children who are in foster care with relatives are in the legal custody of DCFS. This means that you can make routine day-to-day decisions, but the consent of the parent or foster care agency is needed for medical treatment and other activities, including vacations or travel. The caseworker will help you arrange for consent as needed.

Role of the court

The court will monitor the case as long as the child is in foster care. The court will hold a *permanency hearing* eight months after the child's removal from home. This is a court hearing to determine whether the child's placement should continue and if the permanency plan is appropriate. Permanency hearings will be held every six months after the first permanency hearing as long as the child remains in foster care.*

You should receive a copy of the *permanency hearing report* 14 days before the hearing. You will have the right to receive notices about permanency hearings and the right to appear and speak at the hearings. The goal of the permanency hearing is to find a safe and permanent living situation for the child either by reunifying with the parents or through other permanency plans if reunification is not possible. The court will appoint an *ad litem* attorney for the child to represent the interests of the child.

Financial assistance

You will receive foster care payments to help care for the child based on the child's age and any special needs the child may have. The amount is usually greater than payments from Temporary Employment Assistance (TEA). You will also receive payments to help buy clothes for the child, for some of the child's activities, and for some transportation costs. You may be reimbursed for day care costs if you work. Almost all foster children are automatically eligible for Medicaid.

When a child is in foster care, DCFS will generally seek child support from the child's parents. These child support payments go to DCFS to offset the costs of foster care services provided to the child and the foster parents.

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If the child is an immigrant:

Children who are without legal status to be in the United States may not be eligible for TEA, Medicaid, and other benefits. However, a youth in foster care may be able to achieve legal status by applying for **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)**. A child or youth who has this status can obtain a green card, become a lawful permanent resident, and get financial aid for college, and work in the U.S. For many youth in foster care who are undocumented immigrants, this is their only chance to file for legal status, and it has to be done before the youth turns 21. Ask the child's law guardian/attorney for the child and DCFS about whether the child can apply for this status.

Children who live with a guardian or have been adopted after having been found dependent by the court also may be eligible for **SIJS**.

If the child is Native American:

The Indian Child Welfare Act was written to protect the cultural connections that help Native American children keep their heritage. When a Native American child needs placement outside the home, he or she must be placed with a member of the child's extended family (including members of the family who are not Native American) or in homes or facilities that have the approval of the child's tribe. The tribe must be notified any time a Native American child needs placement.

Adoption

A child needs a permanent home. There are many reasons why a child becomes available for adoption. The child cannot return home safely and parental rights have been terminated (ended); the parent surrendered (gave up) parental rights; or the parent has died.

"What if I choose adoption?"

If the child is freed for adoption, a relative approved by DCFS can file a petition for adoption in family court.

How It Works

You may want to adopt the child, but you can do this only if the child is freed for adoption. A child is freed for adoption if:

The parents have surrendered their parental rights, or
The parents' parental rights are terminated based on grounds of abandonment, permanent neglect, mental illness or mental retardation, severe or repeated abuse, or death.

This is known as "termination of parental rights" (TPR).

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Becoming an adoptive parent

You may want to adopt a child who is related to you but has been living with non-related foster parents. You can file a petition to be considered as an adoptive parent, but the foster parents will be given preference if they have had the child in care with them for more than a year and they are willing and able to adopt. The final decision will be made by the judge.

Whether or not you were the child's foster parent, you will have to meet certain requirements to adopt the child. These include:

- A home study
- A check of the Statewide Central Registry of Child Abuse and Maltreatment in Arkansas (and any other state you or other adult household members have lived in during the previous five years)
- Finger printing of every person age 18 or over living in the household so that a state and national criminal history record review can be conducted*
- A medical report from a health care provider
- Reference checks

* A new Arkansas law permits the agency to waive the criminal record hurdle if the individual case so merits.

If you have been approved as an adoptive parent for a child, you will be invited to permanency hearings and will have the right to be heard.

Legal authority

Adoption is a permanent legal arrangement granted by a court. When you adopt the child, you will be the child's legal "parent" with all the rights and responsibilities of the birth parents.

Financial assistance

As the child's parent, you will be legally and financially responsible for the child's care, education, and support. This means that you cannot apply for a Temporary Employment Assistance (TEA) grant based solely on the child's income and resources. Also, you cannot pursue child support from the birth parents once the adoption is final.

There may be an adoption subsidy for the child until age 18, provided by DCFS, based on therapeutic/disability needs of the child. When the adoption is finalized the involvement of the caseworker, the agency and the judge will end. It is important to note that you may experience the need for post-adoption support at any time while your adopted child is growing up. It is important to stay connected to a wide variety of supportive people such as church community members or other adoptive parents. This will help you do the very best job you can caring for your child, and it will help you care for yourself as well.

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The following writings are the transcriptions of “grandparents left behind” testimony given during the legislative interim study on grandparent and relative caregivers, concerning their stories of being denied access or permanency placement of their grandchildren. It is our hope that the federal law, fostering family connections, as applied by the state child welfare system will remedy some of the aspects of these stories such that these kinds of stories of “grandparents left behind” begin to disappear.

You can review the entire testimonies of state agencies, grandparents, and other relatives at

[http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2011/CommitteDocuments/860/DocsAndReports/10-169 Public Caseworker%20 12-20-2010.pdf](http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2011/CommitteDocuments/860/DocsAndReports/10-169%20Public%20Caseworker%2012-20-2010.pdf)



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Little Rock, AR 72207**

**Since 1994, seeking justice for children left behind, including social, racial,
economic, educational, family, and health justice.**

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