Kinship Care: Considerations for Caregivers

What is it? [1]



Kinship Care is a program to help support a child who lives outside of their home with a relative or like-kin caregiver. This placement can be temporary or long-term. Kinship Care does not require the relative or like-kin caregiver to be licensed. The program makes it possible to avoid placing a child in a community foster home or another out-of-home care system.

What is a relative? [2]

According to Wisconsin law, a "relative" includes any of the following:

- Parent or stepparent
- Brother or sister
- Stepbrother or stepsister
- Brother-in-law or sister-in-law
- Half brother or half sister
- First or second cousin
- First cousin once removed
- Uncle or aunt
- Niece or nephew
- Step uncle or step aunt
- A parent of the child's sibling who has legal custody of that sibling
- Any person of a preceding generation as denoted by the prefix of grand, great, or great-great, whether by blood, marriage, or legal adoption
- The spouse of any person named in this list, even if the marriage is terminated by death or divorce
- For a child of a tribal nation, a relative may also be an extended family member recognized through blood, marriage, adoption, including adoption under tribal law or custom

What is like-kin? [3]

According to Wisconsin law, "like-kin" is someone who has a close, family-like relationship with a child or the child's family. They cannot be the child's current or former licensed foster parent. Examples of individuals who could be like-kin are teachers, family friends, neighbors, and godparents. For a child of a tribal nation, "like-kin" includes additional individuals identified by the child's tribe according to tribal tradition, custom, or laws.



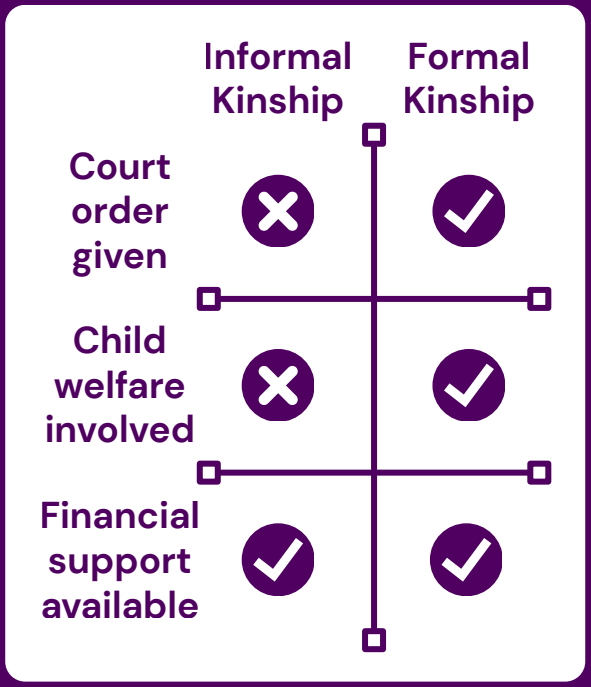
What is formal vs. informal Kinship Care? [4]

Informal Kinship Care

Informal Kinship Care means the family has made a private decision for the child to live with another caregiver. There is no court order and no child welfare involvement. Informal Kinship Care may be easier for some families, but it leaves caregivers with limited legal authority. This means they may not be able make certain decisions for the child such as medical care or school.

Formal Kinship Care

Formal Kinship Care means there is a court order and that child welfare is involved. Formal Kinship Care caregivers may be eligible for financial support and services.



Need help navigating Kinship Care?

Start with your county or tribe's **Kinship Care Coordinator**. They can help determine:

- Whether or not you're eligible.
- What type of kinship care applies to your situation.
- Whether CPS or the court is involved.
- Whether you may qualify for financial support.
- What steps you need to take depending on your situation.





Have questions?

Contact the Well Badger Resource Center!

Call 1 (800) 642-7837. For other ways to contact us, visit our Get Help page.

Sources

1. Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. (n.d.). *Kinship care in Wisconsin.* https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/kinship
2. Wis. Stat. § 48.02(15) (2025). https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/48/i/02/15
3. Wis. Stat. § 48.02(12c) (2025). https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/48/i/02/12c
4. Wisconsin Family Connections Center. (n.d.). *The Wisconsin caregiver's guide to kinship care.* https://wifamilyconnectionscenter.org/the-wisconsin-caregivers-guide-to-kinship-care/