

PROCEDURE

Series:	Operations	COA: CFOP: 170-10
Procedure Name:	Non-Relative Caregiver Funding	
Procedure Number:	OP1198	
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Applicable to:	All BFP Staff and Contracted Providers	

PURPOSE: This policy has been established to ensure non-relative caregivers are made aware of available benefits, as they care for children who have been removed from their homes by a dependency judge and placed with a non-relative caregiver. Effective July 1, 2014, the Florida Legislature expanded the Relative Caregiver Program in s. 39.5085, F.S., to include non-relative caregivers. The statutory framework for the Relative Caregiver Program includes both relatives and non-relatives, the funding for financial assistance comes from different sources, and therefore the program must be operated separately. The Department of Children and Families continues to process and operate the Relative Caregiver Program for relative caregivers pursuant to CFOP 175-79. This operating procedure will outline the policies and procedures for the Relative Caregiver Program for nonrelative caregivers.

References

Florida Statutes: 39.5085, 39.521(2)(r), CFOP 175-79, Chapter 65C-30, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), CF-FSP 5399, 65C-28.008

Chapter 39, F.S., provides the legal authority for non-relative caregiver financial assistance. Nonrelative caregiver financial assistance payments are funded with general revenue appropriated by the Florida Legislature.

1. **Definitions** Child Welfare Professional. As defined in Chapter 65C-30, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), an individual who is primarily responsible for case activities that has met the criteria for Florida Certification as a Child Protective Investigator, Case Manager or a Licensing Counselor.
2. **Financial Need.** The financial need of the non-relative caregiver to provide for the needs of the child placed with them by the court.
3. **Non-relative.** An unrelated person, not connected by blood or marriage, or relative outside of the fifth degree of specified relationship. January 15, 2019 CFOP 170-10 9-2.
4. **Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance Payments.** Payments to assist with the added expense of housing, food, clothing, incidentals, supplies, and any other costs or services that aid in the care, safety and well-being of the dependent child.

5. Unified Home Study (UHS). As defined in Chapter 65C-30, F.A.C., an assessment of a potential caregiver residing in Florida to determine if he or she is responsible and capable of providing a physically safe environment and a stable, supportive home for children under his or her care and that he or she will be able to meet the children's well-being needs.
6. Notification Requirement. The child welfare professional recommending the non-relative caregiver placement must inform the nonrelative caregiver about Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance and must note in FSFN that the information was provided.
7. Home Study Requirements.

(1) A Unified Home Study (UHS) must be completed for any court recommended non-relative caregiver. The non-relative caregiver must be capable of providing a safe, stable home environment for the dependent child and assure the child's safety and well-being.

(2) The home study requirements established in s. 39.521(2)(r), F.S., must be used to gather and assess the information necessary to complete the Unified Home Study for the proposed nonrelative caregiver.

(3) The child welfare professional completing the Unified Home Study must document under "Financial Security, Resources and Child Care Arrangements" that the Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance was explained to the caregiver and any available information such as a fact sheet or brochure, if available, was provided.

(4) The Unified Home Study must be completed and filed with the court prior to the court's consideration of the non-relative caregiver as a placement option for the dependent child. The Unified Home Study must be completed in FSFN.

(5) The Department must not place the child or continue the placement of the child in the home of the non-relative caregiver if the results of the Unified Home Study are unfavorable without a court order approving the placement with the nonrelative caregiver after the court considered the Department's documented concerns.

(6) If the dependent child is of sufficient age to express a preference, the reasonable preferences and wishes of the child must be considered when determining if the placement with the nonrelative caregiver is in the best interests of the child.

Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance Payments.

(1) Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance payments must be made to the non-relative caregiver, on behalf of the child, to assist with the added expense of housing, food, clothing, incidentals, supplies, and any other costs or services that aid in the care, safety and well-being of the dependent child.

(2) Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance payments must be made to the non-relative caregiver on behalf of the child in an amount based on the child's age as listed in Rule 65C-28.008, F.A.C. January 15, 2019 CFOP 170-10 9-3

(3) Contingent upon continued availability of funding and continued eligibility, nonrelative caregiver financial assistance payments must continue until the child reaches age 18, is adopted, is no longer placed in the home of the nonrelative caregiver, moves from the state of Florida, or the nonrelative caregiver becomes licensed as a foster placement, whichever is sooner.

1. Eligibility, Application And Approval by the Child Welfare Professional.

a. Eligibility Criteria.

(1) Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance is available to those non-relative caregivers who would be unable to serve as a caregiver without financial assistance, and thus would expose the child to the risk of placement in foster care without the assistance.

(2) Non-relative caregivers who receive Supplement Security Income (SSI) on the behalf of the child will be denied non-relative caregiver financial assistance payments for the child. (3) Nonrelative caregivers who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Social Security Survivor Benefits on the behalf of the child in an amount less than the monthly payments for NCFA, as set forth in subsection

(3)(d) of Rule 65C-28.008, F.A.C., shall be eligible to receive NCFA. The amount of the monthly NCFA payment shall be the difference between the monthly NCFA payment set forth in subsection (3)(d) of Rule 65C-28.008, F.A.C., and the amount of the child's SSDI or Social Security Survivor Benefit.

(4) The following criteria apply to Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance payments: (a) A completed Unified Home Study; (b) A court order adjudicating the child dependent; (c) A court order placing the child in the care and custody of the Non-relative Caregiver and finding that the placement is in the best interest of the child; and, (d) A signed statement by the Non-relative Caregiver expressing financial need to continue to care for the child long term.

(5) A non-relative may receive the NCFA payment for a minor parent who is in his or her care, and for that minor parent's child, if both children have been adjudicated dependent and meet all other eligibility requirements. The minor parent may not receive a TCA payment for him or herself and his or her child while the non-relative receives the NCFA payment for either or both of them. If the minor parent applies for TCA for him- or herself and his or her minor child, the NCFA payment must be terminated.

(6) Non-relative caregivers may not receive the NCFA payment for an unrelated child who is eligible for the Relative Caregiver payment based on their half-sibling's placement with a relative caregiver. If the unrelated child becomes ineligible for the Relative Caregiver payment due to a change in the eligibility of the related half-sibling (for example, the related child is adopted, leaves the home, or turns age 18), the non-relative caregiver may apply for and receive the NCFA payment for the unrelated child, if otherwise eligible and funds are available.

b. Application.

(1) The application (Application for Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance, form CF-FSP 5398, available in DCF Forms) includes general demographic information, a financial January

15, 2019 CFOP 170-10 9-4 attestation by the non-relative caregiver, an eligibility criteria checklist and a certification by the child welfare professional that all requirements are met.

(2) The child welfare professional recommending the non-relative caregiver placement must assist the non-relative caregiver in determining whether Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance is appropriate or whether another Department or community program can assist the family and strengthen the placement.

(3) When a non-relative caregiver expresses interest in Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance, the child welfare professional recommending placement must provide the application form to the non-relative caregiver within two business days. The child welfare professional must assist the nonrelative caregiver in completing the application.

(a) The non-relative caregiver must sign the financial attestation portion of the application, Section II, to indicate his or her financial need for assistance to care for the child long term.

(b) The child welfare professional must verify the information in the application for Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance. Once the information is verified by the child welfare professional, he or she must sign the certification contained in Section V of the application indicating the non-relative caregiver meets all eligibility requirements. The complete and certified application should be uploaded and attached to the Unified Home Study in FSFN, and then emailed to the following address within two business days: HQW.nonrelative.caregiver@myflfamilies.com. When email is not available, applications can be mailed via the postal service to the following address: Department of Children and Families Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency Attention: Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator 1317 Winewood Boulevard, Building 3, 4th Floor Tallahassee, Florida 32399

(c) If additional information is needed, the child welfare professional must contact the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator at the Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency (ESS) for clarification and assistance. All communication with the non-relative caregiver regarding financial assistance must be documented in FSFN within two business days of the communication.

2. Processing the Application (ESS).

a. Upon receipt of the complete and certified application from the child welfare professional, the ESS Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will review the application within five business days.

b. The effective date of the application will be the later of the following:

(1) Date the non-relative caregiver signed the attestation of need and requested Nonrelative Caregiver payment assistance.

(2) Date all technical requirements referenced in Section II, Section III, and Section IV of the application were met.

c. Once the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator approves the application, he/she must update FSFN to allow for payments. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment

Administrator must add the Department Approved Service type for “Non-relative Caregiver Payments” to the Provider Record in FSFN. Additionally, the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator must create a new out-of-home placement record in FSFN utilizing the Department Approved Service type for “Non-relative Caregiver Payments.” This change in the FSFN Record will allow for payments to be generated but will not count as a placement change for the dependent child. January 15, 2019 CFOP 170-10 9-5

d. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will review the application and complete the Notice of Action (form CF-FSP 5399, available in DCF Forms) indicating whether the application was approved or denied. If the application is denied, the reason for the denial and the non-relative caregiver’s right to appeal will be included in the Notice of Action. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will send the completed Notice of Action to the non-relative caregiver via e-mail, if available, or by mail within five business days of the receipt of the application. The CBC case manager or designee will be copied on the notification.

e. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator must document the approval or denial of the application for Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance in Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) within two business days.

3. Reassessment of Eligibility (ESS).

a. Eligibility for Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance shall be reassessed annually by using the “Application for Nonrelative Caregiver Financial Assistance” (form CF-FSP 5398, available in DCF Forms).

b. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator shall conduct the reassessment by sending application form CF-FSP 5398 to the non-relative caregiver. The application form CF-FSP 5398 must be completed and returned by the non-relative caregiver within 10 calendar days from the mail date. Failure to timely return a completed form CF-FSP 5398 will result in termination of the NCFA payment for the child effective the following month, allowing for 10-day notice of adverse action.

c. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator shall review the returned form CF-FSP 5398 to determine continued eligibility for the NCFA payment within five business days of receipt. If the form is returned timely, but is incomplete, the payment administrator must attempt to contact the non-relative caregiver to obtain the missing information before terminating the NCFA payment.

d. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator shall document the continued eligibility or ineligibility in FSFN within two business days of completing the eligibility reassessment.

4. Financial Assistance Payments (ESS). (NOTE: All Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance payments are subject to availability of funding.)

a. Upon receipt of a completed and certified application for Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance from a child welfare professional, the ESS Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will initiate the process to generate payments to the non-relative caregiver.

b. Non-relative caregivers will become eligible to receive payments effective the day that all of the eligibility requirements specified in Sections II, III, and IV of the application (Application for Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance, form CF-FSP 5398, available in DCF Forms) were met. This includes the non-relative caregiver signing Section II of the application.

c. Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance will be paid using a pro-rated daily amount for the days the child resided in the non-relative caregiver's home during a calendar month.

d. Payments will be issued one month in arrears. For example, financial assistance payments for July will be issued in August. The August financial assistance payment would then follow in September, etc. January 15, 2019 CFOP 170-10 9-6

e. When a child's absence from the non-relative caregiver's home requires a placement change in FSFN (e.g., extended detention stay, long term hospitalization or placement for treatment services), but the child remains in the care and custody of the non-relative caregiver, the non-relative caregiver financial assistance payment will be suspended for up to 60 days. If on the 61st day the child remains absent from the home, the Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance payments will be ended, and the non-relative caregiver will need to reapply for Non-relative Caregiver Financial Assistance if/when the dependent child returns to the non-relative caregiver's home.

f. As long as funding continues to be available, non-relative caregiver financial assistance will continue until the child reaches age 18, is adopted, is no longer placed in the home of the non-relative caregiver, moves from the state of Florida, or the non-relative caregiver becomes licensed, whichever is sooner.

g. When a placement change occurs, it is the responsibility of the child welfare professional/CBC designee or non-relative caregiver to immediately notify the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator of the placement change. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator shall end the child's placement in FSFN. The types of placement change that must be reported immediately, but no later than five calendar days, by the child welfare professional/CBC designee or nonrelative caregiver to the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator include:

- (1) When the child is adopted;
- (2) When the child is no longer placed in the home of the non-relative caregiver;
- (3) When the child moves from the state of Florida;
- (4) When the non-relative caregiver becomes licensed as a foster placement; or,
- (5) When there is a change in the non-relative caregiver's address.

h. When a payment ends due to a lack of funding, or due to a disqualifying event (e.g., the child no longer lives in the non-relative caregiver's home, turns age 18, is adopted, moves from Florida, or the non-relative becomes licensed as a foster parent), the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will complete the Notice of Action (form CF-FSP 5399, available in DCF Forms) indicating the reason for terminating the payments. The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will send the completed Notice of Action to the non-relative caregiver via e-mail, if available, or by mail within 30 days of receiving notice of the change. The CBC care manager or designee will be copied on the notification.

i. Once the court closes the dependency case, placing the child in permanent guardianship with the non-relative caregiver, and terminates the Department's protective supervision, the financial assistance payments continue until the child reaches 18, is adopted, is no longer placed in the home of the non-relative caregiver, or moves from the state of Florida as long as all required reassessments are completed timely.

(1) Upon receipt of the court order placing the child in permanent guardianship, it is the responsibility of the child welfare professional to notify the ESS Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator via email at HQW.nonrelative.caregiver@myflfamilies.com of the closure.

(2) The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator must change the child's out-of-home placement in FSFN and initiate a service in FSFN. This change will allow for continued payments.

(3) The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator will also transition primary worker responsibility from the child welfare professional to the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator January 15, 2019 CFOP 170-10 9-7 when the child welfare professional has concluded all of his or her work with the family and is ready to end all of his or her assignments to the case.

(4) Upon transition, the child welfare professional or CBC designee will be responsible for ending the assignment of the child welfare professional when all case management responsibilities have concluded.

(5) The case will remain open in FSFN and will be maintained by the Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator as long as payments are generated to the non-relative caregiver.

(6) If the child's placement changes or if there is a change in the non-relative caregiver's address, or ability to care for the child, it is the responsibility of the non-relative caregiver to notify the Nonrelative Caregiver Payment Administrator at HQW.nonrelative.caregiver@myflfamilies.com or by calling (850) 487-2760.

(7) The Non-relative Caregiver Payment Administrator must terminate the non-relative caregiver service in FSFN when noticed of any change in the child's placement.

BY DIRECTION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:



PHILIP J. SCARPELLI
Chief Executive Officer
Brevard Family Partnership Family of Agencies

APPROVAL DATE: 4/21/2020