

NOTICE TO RELATIVES

Date of Notice: ____ / ____ / ____

Name:
Address:

Dear _____:

This notice is to inform you that a court order was or will be issued for the children identified below to be removed from the custody of the child's parents and placed in the custody of the Department of Children and Family Services.

Child (ren)'s first name, gender and age:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

You have been identified as a grandparent or adult relative (circle one) of this child or children. If you are currently willing and able to be considered for placement of this child or children, or if you want to provide support to the child or establish/maintain contact with the child, please notify me by telephone, e-mail, or mail as soon as possible.

Worker Name:	
Agency:	
Address:	
Telephone:	E-mail:

If you are willing to participate in the care and placement of the child, you may be eligible for financial and medical assistance for the child's health needs, you may participate in legal proceedings, or you may be eligible to become a licensed foster parent or legal guardian. If you do not respond to this notification and choose not to participate in the care and placement of the child, the child may remain in foster care until reunification with the child's parents or another permanency plan is made.

Relatives are encouraged to become licensed foster parents. If placement should occur, you will be contacted about licensure.

If you have questions regarding accepting placement or providing support of your relative, please contact me at the telephone number, e-mail address or mailing address above.

Sincerely,

What You Need to Know About Being a Relative Caregiver

What is a Foster Care Placement? *A foster care placement occurs when a child cannot be left safely in his or her home and the court has determined that DCFS should have custody of the child. The Department is required to make and document reasonable efforts in locating relative placements at the initial placement and for any subsequent moves where a home environment is appropriate. A relative, such as yourself, in partnership with DCFS, can take on the responsibility of caring for the child until a permanent home—such as returning the child to his or her home, private guardianship or adoption—can be arranged for the child. A relative caregiver receives monthly payments for costs associated with being in foster care, such as housing, food and clothing.*

A child in foster care is entitled to casework and other services such as counseling, medical benefits, and educational services. The child is also entitled to visits with parents, siblings and other family members as determined by the court and the child's service plan. A relative caregiver must follow the instructions of the court and the Family Service Plan regarding supervised and unsupervised visits with parents, siblings and other relatives. There are serious potential consequences for both the relative and the child's parents if those directions aren't followed.

Services and instructions for the child's parents will also be spelled out in by the court and the Family Service Plan in order to help the parents correct the conditions that led to the child's removal from their home. The parents must cooperate with DCFS, and comply with the court orders and the Family Service Plan in order to be reunited with their child. If that is not possible, an alternative permanency plan for the child will be developed.

A caseworker is assigned to work with the child, the child's parents and the child's caregiver to identify services that are needed and to provide and arrange for those services. This is the person with whom you will work most closely if you want to become the child's relative caregiver.

What are my responsibilities as a relative caregiver? The worker will make an initial safety check of your home before placing the child with you. This safety check includes child abuse and criminal background checks for you and certain other members of your household.

The placing worker will also ask you to read and sign a Relative Caregiver Placement Agreement. This agreement states that your role as a relative caregiver has been explained to you, and that you agree to keep the child safe from harm, cooperate with the Family Service Plan, and, unless specifically told otherwise, facilitate an ongoing relationship between the child and his or her parents and siblings. It also explains why pursuing licensure as a foster family home is beneficial to both you and your related child.

What payments may I be entitled to? There are two different payment levels for a child placed in the home of a relative:

- An unlicensed relative caregiver receives a monthly amount equal to the state's "Standard of Need" rate, which can vary depending on the number of related children you care for and the county where you live.
- A licensed foster family home receives the Full Foster Care Board Rate, which is a substantially higher monthly amount for each related child you care for, depending on the age of each child.

How do I apply for a foster home license? The placing worker will give you an application for a foster home license. Everyone in your home age 13 and older must authorize and undergo a background check as part of the licensing process. Adults (persons age 18 and older) must be fingerprinted. The background check process includes a review of the state's child abuse and neglect records, criminal history records and the Sex Offender Registry for Illinois and any other state you have lived in during the past five years. A licensing worker will conduct an assessment of your home to ensure that it is clean, well-heated, lighted and ventilated, free from observable hazards and has enough room and is a safe environment for a child in your care.

There are other permanency options. Whether or not you become licensed, you may want to consider other permanency alternatives, such as private guardianship or adoption.

- **Private Guardianship** means that the court appoints you as the child's private guardian (instead of DCFS). As a private guardian, you assume the right and responsibility to make important decisions that will have a permanent affect on the development and life of the child.
- **Adoption** means that you provide a permanent home for the child.

The placing worker can tell you about foster care, private guardianship, adoption and more, and answer your questions about caring for a related child. The child's caseworker can also tell you about Department subsidies, equal to the full foster care board rate, that are available for adoptions and some private guardians who meet the eligibility requirements.