Kinship Caregivers Support Program (KCSP) Policies and Procedures

This chapter serves as guidance and information on the provision of Kinship Caregivers Support Program (KCSP) services. The Kinship Caregivers Support Program is intended to provide supportive funding to kinship caregivers who would be at great risk of being unable to maintain the caregiving role without the supports KCSP provides.

Ask the Expert

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BACKGROUND

The Kinship Caregivers Support Program (KCSP) funds are to support kinship caregivers (grandparents and other relatives) statewide who are at great risk of being unable to maintain the caregiving role without additional financial support at the time a child(ren) come to live with their relatives, as well as after the initial period.

The KCSP funds are provided solely for Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), or their designated subcontractors to authorize services or items to support children within kinship families.

COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH FOR THE KCSP

- In carrying out the KCSP, each AAA must coordinate the activities of the agencies or the designated subcontractor with the activities of other public and private agencies or organizations providing services for kinship caregivers.

- The AAA and any of its KCSP subcontractor(s), must provide a listing/description of the KCSP for the public to view on the AAA's/subcontractor's website(s), and/or brochure(s) and in the Community Living Connections county resource directory

- The AAA and/or its subcontractor must conduct culturally relevant outreach to kinship caregivers and to possible referral agencies.

KINSHIP CAREGIVER ELIGIBILITY

Persons eligible to receive funding from KCSP include a grandparent (or step grandparent) or other adult relative who is:

A. raising a child(ren), age 18 or younger child*; and

B. related by blood or marriage to the child(ren); and

C. living with the child(ren) in Washington State; and

D. the primary caregiver of the child(ren) because the biological or adoptive parents are unable or unwilling to serve as the primary caregiver of the child(ren); and

E. the parent(s) is consistently absent from the home

F. raising the child(ren) either with a legal relationship, such as legal custody, adoption or informally; and

G. at risk of not being able to continue kinship caregiving without additional financial support services.

*Unless the youth who is older than 18 and attends high school and has documentation to verify school enrollment.

VERIFICATION OF PRIMARY CAREGIVING RELATIONSHIP

The KCSP staff should request that the Kinship caregiver provide current (produced within the last 12 months) verification of his/her primary caregiving relationship to the child(ren) they are raising from a reliable source. For example, if the caregiver has custody paperwork dated more than 12 months from request for KCSP assistance, another current form of documentation must be provided. The verification source must be documented in the client's paper or online GetCare file. And if that is not feasible, this should be noted in the caregiver's file.

Examples include:

A) legal custody court documents,

B) medical provider,

C) parental consent agreement, notarized when possible

D) school documentation,

E) tax return,

F) DSHS award letter for services, e.g., TANF Child Only Grant, Food Assistance,

G) Social Security information,

H) lease agreements where a relative child is listed, or Section 8 Housing vouchers which list relative children,

I) an official letter from the kinship caregiver's Tribal governing body, or social service office,

J) As a last option, a letter from a faith/religious community leader.

K) As a last resort signed "Declaration of Health Care Consent"

L) If the kinship caregiver does not have any documented proof, the KCSP staff must receive permission from the caregiver to contact an appropriate professional or agency, or to make a home visit to verify the primary kinship care relationship.

Verification Documents Relationship

1. If possible, obtain the documents from the client or collateral agency (e.g., other state agencies such as DSHS or DCYF) electronically.

2. If the family has ability to send and respond by email confirming the declaration of relationship, consent and understanding their responsibility of services this may be accepted as their signature.

3. If electronic or in person methods are not feasible, send a copy of screening/intake, consent, and declaration form by mail for signature with a postage-paid return envelope. Do not delay the services because these forms are not signed and returned.

4. We can rely on the documented verbal approval of the client to authorize services.

5. Document the person's name, date the screening took place on the screening/intake form and other necessary information in case notes.

Ineligible Caregivers

Persons who are ineligible to receive funding from the KCSP include kinship caregivers who are:

A. A licensed foster care parent receiving foster care payments for the relative child; or

B. A relative who is an unlicensed caregiver and has an assigned Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) case worker for the child(ren) in their care. They may be eligible for DCYF funds for concrete goods which are available through the assigned caseworker to support placement.

USES FOR THE KCSP FUNDS

The KCSP funds are to be used to purchase approved items or services which benefit the child(ren)/youth being raised by kinship caregivers to help pay for the cost of meeting one of more of their urgent needs. Alternate payment sources must be exhausted prior to authorizing payments. Those kinship caregivers experiencing the most urgent/ needs have the highest priority. Depending on the needs presented by the kinship caregivers, more than one need may be addressed on a limited basis by the KCSP funds during a three-month period, however, caregivers may utilize the funds for additional needs up to 2 times every 12 months.

Approved items and services for which the KCSP funds can be used, but are not limited to include:

A. First/last month's rent or utility hook-ups for relatives who must move, in order to take a child into their home.

B. Rent and/or utility assistance may be available on a case-by-case basis after all other rent/utility supports are accessed and when a family is at risk of eviction and/or utility shut-off (a shut off/eviction notice is not required). *Documentation of the amount owed is required (i.e., lease, bill, statement).

C. Household items, e.g., child bedding, furniture, cleaning supplies, toilet paper

D. Child's personal care items, e.g., diapers, hygiene products which meet the need(s) of the child.

E. Payment for legal packets or mediation services. Facilitation of guardianship or adoption action is an option for relatives when all relevant parties agree upon the action. These services may include payment for court facilitators, court fees, Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and/or Court Visitor, home study, and attorney fees. AAAs should establish lids for legal fees. For example, $1,000 for court fees, etc.

F. Gas and bus vouchers/car repairs needed to transport or provide for the child.

G. Food**

H. Children/Youth's clothing (may include adult sizes).

I. Counseling for the kinship caregiver and child(ren) to address issues such as trauma.

J. School related supplies and fees, e.g., uniforms, musical instrument rentals, field trips, computers/tablets when these items are unavailable from other sources and required for academic use.

K. Sports and youth activity registrations, fees, uniforms, and related equipment.

L. Durable medical equipment or assistive technology devices/equipment to benefit the child not covered by Medicaid or other health insurance.

M. Medications for the child not covered by Medicaid or other health insurance.

N. Tutoring.

O. Safety items, e.g., medication lock boxes, safety locks.

P. Interpreter services; or

Q. Supervision for child(ren) during kinship caregiver appointments.

R. Computer/tablets may be purchased for the kinship caregiver when necessary for tele-med appointments, mental/behavioral health appointments and online support groups for the child and/or caregiver. Expenditures for computers/tablets may not exceed $800.00 per household. All other resources for obtaining computers/tablets must be exhausted prior to purchase.

* If a caregiver is receiving a child only TANF grant, they may be eligible for the DSHS Economic Services AREN (Additional Requirements for Emergent Needs) program to cover one-time shelter costs.

**Although the KCSP policies do not restrict what types of foods/beverages can be purchased with KCSP funds, HCLA encourages kinship providers to encourage healthy food/beverage purchases. Policies can be developed at the AAA level to restrict certain food and/or beverage purchases.

INAPPROPRIATE USES OF KCSP FUNDS

KCSP funds cannot be used for ongoing benefits to meet basic needs such as: continued rent or utility payments, or children's medical or dental services.

Other examples of inappropriate uses of these funds include the purchase of:

A. clothes for household members other than the relative children.

B. tobacco products.

C. food/drink items, e.g., alcohol, not appropriate for children's consumption; and

D. electronic items, e.g., video games, gaming systems.

Computer/tablets may be purchased for the kinship caregiver when necessary for tele-med appointments, mental/behavioral health appointments and online support groups for the child and/or caregiver. Expenditures for computers/tablets may not exceed $800.00 per household. All other resources for obtaining computers/tablets must be exhausted prior to purchase.

Exceptions can be made by ETPs for items needed for educational purposes, medical, mental health, or support group purposes and not available through other avenues.

SERVICE PROVIDER REQUIREMENTS

Service providers (e.g., legal providers, mental health counselors, interpreters) who receive KCSP payment must be certified or licensed through Washington State, with the exception of persons who only supervise the child(ren) during caregiver appointments or providing tutoring services.

Any person who will provide a service(s) for children without supervision (e.g., counselors, care providers or tutors) must pass and have documentation of a WA State Patrol background check before providing services and before payment can be authorized. The contracted KCSP provider is responsible to ensure background checks are in place.

DETERMINING INDIVIDUAL KINSHIP CAREGIVER FUNDING LEVELS

A. AAAs or their designated subcontractors will screen kinship caregivers according to standardized procedures developed by the AAA to determine if and how much financial support may be available to meet specific needs of kinship caregivers.

- The AAAs are responsible for handling and approving the KCSP Exception to Policy (ETP) cases. The AAAs must send copies (by email) of the approved and denied ETP requests to the HCLA KCSP Program Manager who can also be consulted on individual cases.

B. Kinship caregivers may apply to the AAA or its subcontractor(s) for financial assistance up to two times per year. More than one need may be addressed on a limited basis by the KCSP funds during a three-month period; however, caregivers may utilize the funds for additional needs up to 2 times every 12 months. The window of time begins when the first service is provided.

C. If the child(ren's) needs in a kinship care family exceed $1,500 during a 12-month period, an ETP must be approved by the AAA.

Each AAA will establish limits as to how much financial support may be available to meet specific needs of kinship caregivers.

D. KCSP funds must be used for eligible expenses incurred after being approved for the program. The only exceptions are eligible expenses incurred prior to approval for things such as rent, utilities or overdue payments.

E. The AAA or its subcontractor(s) will manage the authorizations and have in place or develop a payment system for approved goods and services, which can include: 1) vouchers 2) purchase orders, and/or 3) credit cards for approved staff; and/or 4) food and gas cards which exclude other items from being purchased. Only a check may be provided to a third-party service provider accompanied by a receipt, invoice, or other valid documentation.

F. Direct payments to kinship caregivers are not allowed.

G. AAAs are responsible to ensure that when purchasing goods/services or one-time set-up fees/deposits on behalf of an eligible kinship caregiver, documentation within the client file must include:

1. Kinship caregiver's name.
2. Eligible relative children's first and last names, their birthdates, gender, and last four digits of their social security numbers (if available).
3. A description of the approved goods and/or services including authorized amount.

4. Confirmation that the purchase is consistent with needs identified by the caregiver for the benefit of the kinship child(ren) and is consistent with program requirements; and
5. Proof (e.g., receipt, invoice, etc.) that the goods or services were purchased, and received by the kinship caregiver and are within the program costs limitations and guidelines.

H. AAAs will decide the process that works best for their service area; however, agencies must be able to produce all back-up documentation upon request, e.g., copies of invoices, receipts, cancelled checks, and client case notes.

I. Kinship caregivers must sign an agreement acknowledging that funding may only be used for authorized items and or services and their responsibilities (e.g., returning purchase documentation). Local AAA policies will determine the consequences for purchases over the authorized amount or for any unqualified expenditures.

J. The KCSP funds will not affect the TANF grant eligibility for the kinship caregivers.

Telephonic or Video Conferencing Screening Process

Eligibility standards do not change because the screening is occurring by telephone or video conferencing. Staff will complete all screening questions.

1. If possible, obtain the documents from the client or collateral agency (e.g., other state agencies such as DSHS or DCYF etc...) electronically.

2. Send a copy of screening/intake, consent, and declaration form by mail for signature with a postage-paid return envelope. Do not delay the services because these forms are not signed and returned.

3. If the family has ability to send and respond by email confirming the declaration of relationship, consent and understanding their responsibility of services this may be accepted as their signature.

4. A digital picture of signature is also allowed.

5. Document the person's name, and date the screening took place on the screening/intake form and other necessary information in case notes.

REFERRALS TO THE KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

If an AAA operates a separate Kinship Navigator Program (KNP), KCSP recipients must be offered a referral to the local Kinship Navigator to discuss their other needs.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE KCSP

Financial Reporting

To allow for accurate tracking of KCSP funds, ALTSA requires that AAAs account for expenditures separate from other programs.

The KCSP expenditures are reported in three categories:

- Program Administration: (up to 10% of the AAA allocation may be used for general administration). AAAs can choose to pass on their allocation for program administration to their subcontractor,
- Service Delivery: (up to 15% of the AAA allocation may be used for costs associated with outreach, payment authorization, screening, background checks); and,
- Goods and Services: Payment for goods or services needed by the children of eligible kinship caregiver families.

Program Reporting

The AAAs/KCSP subcontractors must utilize the Community Living Connections (CLC) reporting system to enroll caregivers, record KCSP caregiver services and complete the Kinship Intake for each participating kinship caregiver family.

Narrative Reporting

Annually, and no later than October 1st of each year, AAAs are required to submit the following information to the HCLA Kinship Care Program Manager:

1) At least two case examples describing the circumstances and the needs of a participating caregiver, what assistance was provided to the caregiver through KCSP, and the impact the intervention had on the kinship caregiver and their family to help or continue stability for the children in their care. This information is used to explain to the legislature and other interested parties the effectiveness of and need for support for the KCSP.

2) Copies of any new public relations material(s) developed for the KCSP (including brochures, newspaper articles, flyers, etc.).

REVISION HISTORY

DATE	MADE BY	CHANGE(S)	MB #
3/24/2020		COVID Temporary Revision	
5/21/2020		COVID Temporary Revision	
12/15/2022		Revised	