

When children are removed from their homes by the child welfare system because of abuse and/or neglect, kin are given preference as the first placement choice when foster care is needed and relatives can provide a safe, stable home as defined by foster care policy. Extended family has played a role in caring for children whose parents were unable to do so.

Kinship care can be either an informal agreement or a formal situation. **Informal Kinship care** arrangements occur without the involvement of the Department of Health and Human Resources. **Formal Kinship care** is defined as relatives acting as certified foster parents for children in the custody of the state.

Before accepting the responsibility of caring for a relative child, the following issues should be considered.

- Are you and your family ready to make the changes necessary to take on the added responsibility of caring for a relative's child?
- What is your emotional relationship with the child's parents?
- How much care will the child require?
- Are family members supportive and willing to help care for the child?
- Will you be able to take time away from work or other responsibilities for an adjustment period?
- How do family members feel about this change?
- Are you able to bear the cost of caring for another child?
- How do you feel about the child's birth parents?
- Are you prepared to deal with problems the child may have due to past experiences?
- What are your expectations of the situation?
- Are you physically able to care for the child?
- What services are available to help you?
- Will the child be able to stay in contact with friends and other relatives?
- Do other relatives want to care for this child?

To obtain services for a child you are providing care for, you will need to have the following documents and records:

- Birth Certificate - original
- Social Security Card - original
- Signed custody papers - notarized
- Shot records
- School records
- Medical records
- Dental records

## Kinship Care

