



# Grandparents

You are not alone!

## When DCF is involved

This factsheet deals strictly with custody issues when DCF is involved. However there are FIVE ways a grandparent may legally care for his or her grandchild and those issues are addressed in a different factsheet, entitled "Choices On Custody" and can be found on [www.massgrg.com](http://www.massgrg.com).

### DCF Custody:

1. When DCF obtains custody of a child via a Care and Protection (C&P) petition, a grandparent may inquire/apply to be a foster parent for the child. DCF will conduct a criminal background check as well as a DCF history check in addition to a physical standards assessment of the grandparent's home in order to determine that there is space for the child and no hazards in home.
2. Once the grandchild is placed in the grandparent's home, the grandparent will automatically begin to receive foster care payments. The grandchild will automatically receive MassHealth through DCF. The child will receive quarterly clothing allowances.
3. A social worker (Family Resource Social Worker) will be assigned to work with the grandparent once they are approved as the foster parent for the purpose of completing a home study. Another social worker (On-Going Social Worker) will be assigned to work with the child and the biological parents, community services, etc. and will create a service plan with the family. The On-Going Social Worker will conduct monthly home visits at the grandparents' home to see the children in their placement setting.
4. DCF will make all major decisions on documents; expect Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and certain medical procedures and medication issues.
5. When DCF has custody of a child, it is expected that the DCF social worker will supervise visits between the child and the biological parent(s). The visits typically take place at the DCF Office.
6. During court proceedings, all parties (except grandparents) have attorneys. DCF has an attorney, each biological parent has an attorney, and the child has an attorney. The court will assign a court investigator at the beginning of the case to conduct an independent investigation. A Probation Officer (P.O.) is also assigned to monitor the case for the court. The DCF social worker prepares a court report for the Judge to review the progress of the case at each court date.
7. DCF must approve anyone else over 14 years old, other than the approved grandparent, who plans on being a caretaker for the child. This requires a criminal background check and a DCF history check of the anticipated caregiver. If the child is going to go to this caretaker's home, DCF must conduct a physical standards check of the home.
8. The Juvenile Court expects that DCF will identify an appropriate permanent goal for each child in DCF custody. Typically the initial goal for a child in DCF custody is to reunify the child with the biological parent(s). At some point if that goal seems uncertain, DCF may change the goal to guardianship or adoption and may discuss both options with the grandparent who is caring for the child. It is important that the grandparent be included in permanency planning for all children.
9. When working with DCF, it may be difficult, at times, to reach the social worker assigned. Families are encouraged to contact the supervisor or the manager if immediate assistance is required. In an emergency after hours, the kinship foster parent should contact the **DCF Hotline at 1-800-792-5200**.

For further information on grandparents raising grandchildren, please go to [www.massgrg.com](http://www.massgrg.com).

**If you are a grandparent caring for a grandchild and do not have legal custody through the courts, DCF will not recognize you as the legal guardian.**

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