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Introduction

Children's Services has developed this financial information guide to provide caregivers and staff with an overview of financial responsibilities of Child and Family Services (CFS) or Delegated First Nations Agency (DFNA) and caregiver parents have when a child is placed in care. It explains the financial process to access funds for children in care.

Equipment and Furnishings

Foster Parents

Foster homes are responsible for supplying equipment and furnishings appropriate to the requested age of foster children. This includes:

- Beds, dressers, car seats, cribs, tether straps, etc.
- Bedding, towels, toothbrushes, basic hygiene supplies
- Toys
- Smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, first aid kits and any required safety equipment and any required changes required by licensing



All equipment or furnishings must meet safety and licensing standards as per the Environmental Safety Assessment for Caregivers [FC3606]. For example, a foster home wishing to care for young children should be equipped with a car seat with tether strap, booster seat, cribs, etc. Any exceptional furniture or equipment needs should be discussed with the child's caseworker.

Kinship Caregivers

Kinship caregivers must meet safety standards as per the Environmental Safety Assessment for Caregivers [FC3606]. Kinship caregivers do not need to meet licensing standards and have their homes ready prior to a child's arrival. Frequently, children placed in kinship homes are placed without any prior planning and the kinship families are compensated differently than foster families.

Kinship Care Support Plan – Initial Costs

Kinship Care Support Plans are mandatory for all Kinship homes. If the home does not have the necessary furnishings or safety equipment required, a Kinship Care Support Plan [FC3899] can accommodate any of the initial startup costs.

Typical startup costs that can be covered are, but are *not* limited to:

- Cribs, beds, dressers, other furnishings
- Clothing, beddings, additional towels, basic hygiene needs
- Food, baby formula, diapers
- High chair, strollers, car seats
- Smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, plug-in cover, fire extinguishers, etc.
- Household repairs, e.g. window installation, door repair, etc.

The intent of the covering the startup cost is to remove any physical barriers to placement of children in the home. In some cases, managerial approval may be required.

Cost Sharing

It is the expectation that the child's caseworker will explore cost sharing with parents or legal guardians of the child. The child's caseworker will also explore cost sharing with adolescents in care when it is deemed appropriate. In cases where it is the responsibility of the parents or adolescent to obtain specific items, the child's caseworker will provide the foster parent with information on how the item will be obtained.

Typical areas where cost sharing may be explored are:

- Clothing (parents/guardians)
- Recreation (parents/guardians)
- Self-care products, clothing, etc. (famous name type, or prepping for independent living – adolescents)

However, when cost sharing, no child or youth should go without necessities while waiting for parents or guardians to come up with clothing or the agreed upon product.

General Guidelines for Compensation

If a child needs a service that is not outlined in this guide or the costs are more than the standard please contact your child's caseworker. Their supervisor or manager must approve exceptions.

- Always **keep receipts**.
- If you wish to be compensated for something, **get prior approval** – preferably in writing.
- **Document** expenses.



In making decisions about the cost, the supervisor and manager will consider the cost and the benefit to the child, other sources of funding and the community standard.

Daily Maintenance Payments to Caregivers

Basic maintenance (foster and kinship caregivers) and skill fees (licensed foster caregivers only) are paid to caregivers each month through direct deposit. Costs associated and covered under a child's Personal Healthcare Number (PHN), Treatment Services Cards or being billed directly to a CFS region or DFNA will be paid to the vendor directly by the responsible party, e.g., Blue Cross, Alberta Health and Wellness.

Any child-related cost that a caregiver is expected to pay up front, and be reimbursed for must be claimed by the caregiver using a child maintenance invoice. (There is no provincial form for this invoice, so its appearance may vary.) **However, the caregiver must complete the invoice and provide receipts for auditing purposes.** The caregiver then submits the invoice and documentation to the child's caseworker for reimbursement. It is therefore necessary that caregivers complete a **separate** invoice for each child in their home. This will ensure that payment to the caregiver is not delayed.

All requests for reimbursement should be submitted *with* receipts within the first 10 days of the following month, so reimbursement can be made in a timely fashion.

Payment to caregivers is non-taxable. As it is not considered to be income and is based on child placement, requesting statements from CFS/DFNA offices regarding income to support applications for credit is discouraged.

Basic Maintenance

The basic maintenance rate is a per diem that covers all of a child's day-to-day costs. Maintenance is paid to caregivers automatically. When arrangements are made for a new placement, that home may be paid for the days the child has pre-placement visits. **In other words, both homes (previous placement and new placement) may be compensated at the same time for the same child.** This payment includes the basic maintenance rate plus the appropriate skill fee. This applies to both foster and kinship homes. The home doing the pre-placement visit may have to fill in an invoice to receive payment for the visits.

If you do not have an actual 'Treatment Services Card', keep in mind that the Child's ID number (found on the child's Delegation) is the same number as the 'Treatment Services Number'

Payments are deposited directly into the caregiver bank account. Caregivers are required to complete the application for direct deposit and vendor information forms. The caregiver will be mailed a statement showing how much they will receive. Items to be purchased by a caregiver using the basic maintenance include:

- Food,
- Clothing,
- Personal care items (toiletries and hair care products),
- General household costs (e.g., wear and tear, cleaning, paper supplies, insurance),
- Spending allowance (minor recreation toys, magazines, records and gifts),
- Non-prescription medications, and
- Gifts to the foster child and **gifts from the foster child to other family members** (Note: This very important for children to maintain natural family connections and can be easily forgotten).

A caregiver is required to allocate for these items from their basic maintenance on a monthly or weekly basis for the child. A caseworker may talk with a child to ensure that the child is receiving allowances or clothing **consistent to others in the home** or **consistent with community standard**.

Basic maintenance is paid from the date of when a child is first placed in the caregiver home to the last day the child was in your home.

Skill Fees – Foster Parents Only

Level 1 and level 2 skill fees are an acknowledgement of foster caregiver skill, training and experience. Skill fees are based on the classification of the foster home.



Foster caregivers are paid skill fees for each child in the placement and for each day the child is in the placement, including the day of arrival and the day the child departs from the home.

A level 2 foster home receives the level 2 skill fee even if a child placed in the home does not require a level 2 placement.

Respite Per Diem – Foster and Kinship Caregivers

An additional per diem is added to the basic maintenance to both foster and kinship caregivers. Please see Caregiver Rate Schedule [FC1263] for current daily per diem.

This funding is intended to enable and encourage foster caregivers to take necessary and healthy breaks from the day-to-day demands of caregiving. This amount is not intended to pay

for child specific or foster home specific respite that may be required and would be negotiated as part of a foster care support plan.

Foster families who are compensated by DFNAs have the option of receiving their respite funds either through support plans or special rates.

	Babysitting	Relief	Respite	Alternate Child Care
Reason	Short-term (not overnight)	Caregiver away for an extended period of time	Provided to caregivers under exceptional circumstances or for children with complex needs	Caregivers working out of the home and having child care providers who relate to the child in a parenting capacity i.e. Nannies
Duration	Up to 12 hours and usually in the caregivers home	Overnight, weekend, a week at a time	As outlined in a Support or Kinship Care Plan	Regular ongoing basis
Safety Checks	<p>Caregivers choose the babysitter and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maturity, skill level experience of the person number and needs of the children <p>The babysitter must be able to reach the caregiver in emergency.</p>	<p>Intervention Record Check and any other information that the caseworker requires.</p> <p>Caseworker and Foster Care/Kinship Worker are provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, address & contact number for the relief provider, Dates the child will be in relief Names of any other persons in the relief provider's home 	<p>Must be provided in another licensed foster parents' home or residential facility.</p> <p>Caseworker and Foster Care/Kinship Worker are provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, address & contact number for the relief provider, Dates the child will be in relief Names of any other persons in the relief provider's home 	<p>Intervention Record Check and Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Search are required.</p> <p>The Foster Care or Kinship Worker completes a face-to-face interview with the provider.</p> <p>Caregivers must provide the caseworker's contact information to the alternate care provider.</p>
Compensation	<p>Babysitting is subsidized according to the Foster Care Rate Schedule if for training or business related to fostering.</p> <p>For other reasons, the caregiver reimburses the babysitter.</p>	<p>Relief can be subsidized according to the Foster Care Rate Schedule if for training or through regional procedures for business related to fostering.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances, relief expenses may be reimbursed through a Support/Kinship Plan. Otherwise the caregiver compensates the provider.</p>	<p>Reimbursed through a Support/Kinship Plan.</p>	<p>Caregivers compensate or may have costs included through a Support/Kinship Plan.</p>

Automatic Relief/Respite

All foster and kinship caregivers will be reimbursed for two days a month of relief or respite for each child placed in their home at a minimal dollar amount per day per child (see Caregiver Rate Schedule [FC 1263] for current amount). Prior approval is not required and the caseworker must be informed of the provider. Foster parents can bank up to 6 days of relief/respite to be used at one time. This automatic relief/respite is available to all foster parents *not* receiving relief or respite supports through a Foster Care or Kinship Care Support Plan.

Families receiving regular respite through a Foster Care or Kinship Care Support Plan are not reimbursed for two days a month of relief or respite a month for the child or children under that Support Plan. It is assumed all their respite or relief needs will be covered under that Support Plan.

The above chart provides definitions and requirements for relief/respite and babysitting. This can help the caregiver define who and what relief and respite is.

Special Rates – Foster Caregivers Only

Special rates may be paid to foster caregivers providing care to children in their care with specialized needs as per the Foster Care Placement Needs Scoring Chart [FC3603].

Special rates *replace* the usual skill fee. Special rates are intended to compensate foster caregiver for the increased level of skill, training, experience and effort involved in caring for a specialized child. **Special rates are reviewed every six months.**

Kinship caregivers who care for children with high needs should be compensated with a comprehensive Kinship Care Support Plan.

Infant Care Expenses

Infants are defined as being between the ages of 0 and 36 months of age.

Infant Care Initial Expenses

In general, caregivers who are prepared to take infants will already have equipment ready for infant placements; however, there are times when an infant placement is unexpected, i.e. as part of a sibling group or as an emergency placement. At times, twins or triplets may be placed.



Caregivers may be reimbursed *with receipts* for baby equipment up to a maximum of \$500 when an infant (aged 0-36 months) is placed in their home. Caregivers may require initial or additional baby equipment in order to accept an infant placement, including a crib, car seat, baby monitor, change table, high chair and/or stroller (or a similar item). The equipment is intended to ready the foster home placement for additional infants and in most cases would remain in the foster home when the child leaves.

Kinship caregivers are provided with these items through the Kinship Care Support Plan [FC3899].

Infant Care Costs

Caregivers will be reimbursed \$150 per child per month for the costs of formula, diapers and basic baby care supplies (baby clothing and items such as bottles, soothers, bunting bags etc.). **Prior approval is not required.**

Foster parents will *submit their expenses with receipts to the child's caseworker*. Items specific to the child will go with the child if the child moves from the home.

Infant care costs are to be provided to Kinship caregivers, but the amount is to be reflected on the Kinship Care Support Plan [FC3899].

Transportation



All child-related transportation costs (mileage and parking) are reimbursed according to the same rate as Children's Services employees. Child-related transportation includes medical appointments, cultural, recreation, family visits and any other transportation required pursuant to the child's case plan. Trips must be child specific and cannot be claimed for multiple children.

Any other costs associated with child-related transportation and meetings, i.e. meals for caregivers and the child, snacks etc. must be discussed and pre-approved by the child's caseworker. These are determined on a case-by-case basis and not guaranteed by policy. Some factors that may be considered:

- Distance between appointments, i.e. Lac La Biche to the Glenrose vs Millwoods to Glenrose
- How often is the appointment?
- Best interest of the child – being supported by the caregiver vs a driver
- Will the child's biological family be attending?
- Support Plan vs Invoice based on receipts

This is an issue that needs to be discussed in advance with the child's caseworker, the family's support worker and possibly the child's biological family. Prior authorization is required.

Vehicle Inspections

Caregivers will be reimbursed the costs of a vehicle inspection if one is requested according to CFS/DFNA procedures.

Additional Compensation

Caregivers who accept the placements of a child outside of their current matching criteria (i.e. age, sex etc.) may be eligible for compensation of costs associated with any equipment or supplies necessary to facilitate or support the placement, with the caseworker's approval.

Absences

There are times when a child may be absent from the caregiver home for various reasons.

Approved Absences

Caregivers are entitled to basic maintenance during temporary approved absence of a child from the placement, providing the intent is for the child to return to the placement. Temporary absences include extended visits, assessment and treatment programs, secure services, a youth justice placement or when a child is removed from a caregiver home during an assessment of care concern. The intent is to support caregivers who are maintaining the space and continued involvement with the child.

During an approved absence, foster parents are compensated as follows:

- Full basic maintenance and any skill fee for the first seven days,
- 50% of the basic maintenance and 50% of any skill fee for an additional 7 days.

If the foster parent is actively involved with a child who is hospitalized or out of the home for an approved temporary absence, the caseworker's manager may approve an extension of full basic maintenance and/or skill fee payments in order to maintain the placement.



Absent Without Leave (AWOL)

Where a child is AWOL, caregivers receive the basic maintenance rate and skill fee for a maximum of five days.

Entitlements of Children in Care

Recreation Fund



Each child in care is entitled to an annual recreational fund. This fund is intended to cover costs of recreational activities such as sports, creative arts or music lessons, as well as recreational equipment and supplies. There is no age restriction on the recreation fund.

Vacation/Camp Allowance

Each child in care is entitled to full annual vacation/camp allowance. This fund may be applied towards summer camp and/or the costs related to a child accompanying caregivers on vacation or participating in holiday activities. No receipts are required for vacation trips.



Note: Recreation and Vacation/Camp Allowance may be combined together in any combination if required; however, the intent is that children have a right and a need for recreational activities and for vacation or camp.

Please ensure that children have both and children have a good balance of both types of activities.

Education Related Expenses

Caregivers will be reimbursed for all out of pocket expenses related to a child's education. Costs associated with extra-curricular activities require prior approval from the caseworker.

Graduation

Graduation costs for a child graduating from a junior high or senior high school program can be paid for by the CFS or DFNA. The supervisor must approve of the payment and the supervisor will take into consideration the community standard. All costs must have prior approval.

School Trips

School trips that involve lengthy travel require consultation with supervisors and prior approval. When children in care have the opportunity to go on school trips, the following is considered when obtaining approval.

- Cost,
- Whether the child will participate in organized fund-raising projects,
- Contributions by the child,
- Contributions by the guardian if other than the director, and
- If the requested school trip is consistent with the child's case plan.



If the school trip involves out of province or country travel, obtain approval from the required authorities according to Approving Travel policy.

Ensure that all fees and approvals are completed by the timelines indicated by the school.

Tutors

Obtain approval from the casework supervisor to pay for tutorial services. Provide payment of a tutor according to regional procedures.

Alternate Educational Options

The caregiver must contact the child's caseworker to obtain approval to enroll a child in an alternative educational initiative. The program must meet the child's educational needs and be consistent with the child's case plan.

- Distance/Correspondence Learning
 - If the child is under sixteen years old, obtain approval from the principal of the child's school.
 - If the child is under sixteen years old and not enrolled in school, contact Alberta Distance Learning.
- Summer School
- Private School

Post-Secondary Education

Information and support should be provided to the youth in post-secondary educational planning. Utilize the Transition to Independence Plan and Success In



School Plan as tools to identify educational plans, career aspirations and training needs.

Provide information about the Advancing Futures Bursary Program and Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP).

Refer to program website Advancing Futures (<http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/15616.html>) for eligibility criteria.

Assist and encourage the youth with all planning for post-secondary education.

Preschool or Daycare Programming

Costs relating to recommended (by doctor or psychological recommendation) preschool or daycare placements to address the child's developmental needs may be authorized with the approval of the caseworker's supervisor. Foster caregivers who enroll children in daycare or preschool due to their own work commitments will not have the fees reimbursed.

Kinship caregivers who utilize preschool or daycare will have this approved through the Kinship Care Support Plan [FC1263]. Kinship caregivers do not require recommendations by a doctor or psychologist to use the services of a daycare or preschool. This approval does not depend on whether the kinship caregiver requires preschool or daycare because of the caregiver's work commitments.

Cultural Costs

Cultural costs are not considered to be a part of recreation or vacation/camp costs. These costs are to be paid separately. However all costs must be discussed with the caseworker and have prior approval by the caseworker's supervisor and/or manager depending on the level of the cost. Receipts must be provided.

Typical cultural costs are, but not limited to:

- Regalia making, materials and instruction
- Dance or drum groups
- Trips to child's home community for visits or events



Driver Training

Driver training costs may be reimbursed with prior approval by the caseworker's supervisor.

Christmas Gifts/ Birthday Gifts

Caregivers should purchase Christmas gifts for their child from the basic maintenance, unless the child was placed after October 31. If the child was placed after October 31, the caregiver is entitled to be reimbursed with a receipt with prior approval from the caseworker (unless a gift was forwarded by the previous caregiver).

If a child is placed in a placement less than two months prior to the child's birthday, the caregiver, with prior approval of the caseworker, is to be reimbursed for the gift.

Special Costs

If a child needs an exceptional expenditure, the caregiver must request **prior approval** from the caseworker and/or the caseworker's supervisor.

Funeral Arrangements

In the tragic event of death of a child in care when caregivers are involved in making funeral arrangements for a child, they will receive the skill fee up to and including the day of the funeral for a maximum of five days.

Emergency Situations

With the caseworker's approval, compensation for the care of foster children, other in-home or placement supports will be provided to a caregiver if they must be away from home or unable to provide care in emergency situations due to personal illness, sickness or death within the immediate family.

Ex-gratia Payments

In exceptional circumstances, an ex-gratia payment may be considered where there is no legal obligation.

Medical Costs

Medical, dental, and optical services are covered primarily through the child's Personal Healthcare Number (PHN). For a First Nation child, the Treaty Number and/or Treatment Services Card (TCS) will cover these services. If the child does not have either a PHN or a Treatment Services Card you must contact the child's caseworker to determine who is responsible for covering the costs of the medical related services and how they will be paid on behalf of the child.

It is important that you obtain this information and obtain prior approval from the child's caseworker before making any appointments or purchasing any services or supplies for your foster child.

Payment for All Medical/Dental/Optical Services Received by a Registered Indian Child



Example of registration card

When obtaining services for a registered or Treaty/First Nations' child, give the service provider the child's registration number and advise the service provider to bill Health Canada.

If there are problems with payment, let the child's caseworker know of the issues.

For FN infants under a year, they will frequently be covered under their mother's registration number, but unless registered will then be covered under the TSC after their first birthday.

Note: Not all Indigenous children are First Nations, so not all Indigenous children will have registration numbers. These cards are issued by INAC, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (Cards continue to state Indian and Northern Affairs Canada at this time).

Medications/supplies

Caregivers should purchase any needed non-prescription drugs using a portion of the child's basic maintenance (e.g. cough syrup, Tylenol etc.).

Caregivers must obtain approval from the child's caseworker for any medical supplies or services not covered by Alberta Health Care, Alberta Aides to Daily Living (AADL) or the child's Treatment Services Card (TSC).

Caregivers should purchase any required prescription drugs and medical supplies or services using the child's TSC. If a prescription drug is not covered under the TSC, caregivers must obtain **prior approval** from the child's caseworker and are, also, asked to request the pharmacy to invoice the CFS or DFNA directly whenever possible. When direct billing is not possible, caregivers may submit a maintenance claim for the cost with receipts.

Ambulance Services

Ambulances should not be used for medical transportation and should only be used for emergency transportation. If a caregiver feels that an ambulance is required for medical transport, caseworker authorization is required.

If a child requires an ambulance in an emergency, instruct the ambulance service provider to invoice the caseworker directly and provide the service provider with:

- The child's full name and file (TSC) number,
- The child's caseworker's name, and
- The office's mailing address.



Hospital

Provide the hospital with the child's Personal Healthcare Number (PHN) to cover any hospitalization costs.

NOTE: You may sign the admission forms for a child's required admittance to hospital, however, you may not always authorize any consent for tests or treatment unless such treatment is life threatening to the child on the direct advice of a doctor. All surgery must have written approval by the child's caseworker or guardian.

Remember to always contact the child's caseworker or after-hours caseworker if your foster child is hospitalized. The after-hours number should be provided to you by your foster care worker or caseworker.

Prosthesis

Caregivers must obtain prior approval from the child's caseworker for any prosthetic equipment or appliance required for the child.

Optical



Caregivers should pay for eye exams using the child's PHN and pay for eyeglasses using the child's Treatment Services Card (TSC). There is a maximum amount for eyeglasses, please consult with your child's caseworker. The TSC covers the cost of one pair of eyeglasses per calendar year. Please ensure the service provider is made aware the eyeglasses are to be paid using the child's TSC.

If in the event that a child may for any reason need more than one pair of eyeglasses in a calendar year, or requires eyeglasses that are not covered by a TSC, or has no TSC, the related cost must be approved by the child's caseworker and arrangements for payment should be made through the child's caseworker prior to any purchase. In this case, caregivers should not pay for eyeglasses and then request to be reimbursed. The optometrist or optical

dispensary must submit the bill to the child's caseworker who, in turn, forwards the bill with authorization to Alberta Blue Cross for payment.

Dental

The Treatment Services Card (TSC) covers the cost of dental care for the child. Caregivers may wish to check with the dental office to ensure that services are covered prior to the appointment. If services are not covered, prior approval must be obtained from the child's caseworker. If the child has no TSC, contact the child's caseworker to inform them of the pending appointment.

The Personal Healthcare Number (PHN) covers the cost of any required dental surgery resulting from injuries or disease.

Orthodontics

If the dentist recommends orthodontic work, the dentist refers the child to an orthodontist. The orthodontist diagnoses the condition and sends an estimate of the services needed to the Orthodontist Screening Committee. If the committee agrees with the orthodontist's recommendation, the committee establishes the fee to be paid through the Alberta Dental Association. If a child has no TSC, the CFS or DFNA will not cover any orthodontic work.

Babysitting and Respite

Babysitting

Babysitting is defined as the duration of care of a child for up to 12 hours that does not involve overnight care.

Caregivers can use their own discretion when hiring a babysitter, but must consider the following:

- Maturity, skill level and experience of the babysitter,
- Number, configuration and specific needs of the children in the home, and
- Ability to be reached by the babysitter in the event of an emergency.



If the babysitting need was related to mandatory caregiver training or other business related specifically to caregiving, the foster parent will be reimbursed per the Caregiver Rate Schedule [FC1263]. In other words, if the caregiver was attending a Service Team Meeting, specialist appointment on behalf of a child etc., the

caregiver could receive **prior approval** to claim for babysitting.

If the babysitting need was for another reason, the caregiver is to compensate their babysitter. Rates are negotiated and agreed upon by the caregiver and the babysitter.

Respite

Respite is intended to provide caregivers with a break from the complex behavioural, medical or physical needs of a child in their care as addressed in the Foster Care Support Plan [FC3605] or Kinship Care Support Plan [FC3899] and/or to assist in meeting the child's needs.

Occasionally, agency foster caregivers may operate under a different compensation schedule. Please consult your agency regarding specifics in your situation.

Note: See the chart on page 7 for definitions and requirements.

Training

Training is considered to be a support to caregivers. Babysitting costs, mileage and occasionally meals may be covered during required courses. See the Caregiver Rate Schedule [FC1263] for current rates.

While kinship caregivers are not required to attend the same courses as foster caregivers, they are compensated at the same rate.



Only courses sanctioned or facilitated by Children's Services provide compensation for travel, babysitting or meals. Talk to the foster care support worker or kinship care support worker to get prior approval.

Kinship Support Plans – Ongoing

As Kinship families do not receive a skill fee, all ongoing supports must be provided through a **mandatory** support plan. The basic maintenance rate only compensates the caregiver for the day-to-day costs of caring for the child.

Additional supports may include but are *not* limited to:

- Child care
- youth work
- one-to-one aides
- in-home support
- training
- cultural advisor/support
- a homemaker
- exceptional recreation
- counselling/assessment
- transportation (drivers)
- formula
- diapers
- respite

Informal supports such as the family's existing support systems and formal supports (e.g. monthly face-to-face contact, increased contact with the home, how and when contact will occur, and child-specific training, etc.) should be identified in the support plan.