



Department of Job & Family Services

## Kinship Permanency Incentive – Relatives Caring for Children

Many grandparents and other relatives in Portage County have started a new phase of their lives by taking on the challenges and rewards of raising children of family members who cannot care for them. Now, a new program to provide financial support for children being cared for in the legal and physical custody of grandparents, relatives or other family friends, called “Kinship Permanency Incentive” has been launched by the Department of Job and Family Services.

The Portage County Department of Job and Family Services Children Services Agency is taking applications for the new program which applies to those residents of Portage County who received legal custody or guardianship of a child since July of 2005.

“The Kinship Permanency Incentive Program (KPI) is designed to promote a permanent commitment by a kinship caregiver through becoming guardians and custodians over minor children who would otherwise be unsafe or at risk of harm if they remained in their own homes”, according to Penny Ray, Manger of the Portage Children Services Agency.

“Kinship Caregivers” are defined in Ohio law as a relative or non-relative adult who has a long-standing relationship or bond with the child and or family. The child must have been declared abused, neglected, dependent or unruly by the Juvenile Court which also must have awarded custody to the caregiver applying for the program.

“This also helps families who are stretched to take in kids”, Ms. Ray, said. Financial payments to families that assume judicially awarded custody of children in their care may total \$3500. An initial amount of \$1,000 per child is granted upon an approved application, and then \$500 payments per child are provided every six months for 36 months if the child remains in their legal custody and other eligibility requirements continue to be met. The payments do not prevent the families from receiving Child Only TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) benefits also.

Applications for the KPI program are taken by JFS Fiscal Specialist Reva Weekley who determines whether the caregiver qualifies for the program. She may be contacted at 330-297-3707. She then refers the family for a Home Study site and safety audit, which is conducted by Children Services staff. A state required fingerprint check is also done. The family income must be at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, for example \$3,334 a month for a family of four or below. Ohio Works First payments are not counted in the income amount.

Financing for KPI is provided from the state’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds.

