

Supporting Caregivers


A Guide to Kinship & Special Needs
Enhanced Rates Programs



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A Word from Vaya	1
<i>Pathways to Permanency</i>	2
Resource Background	3
General Board Enhancements	4
Large Sibling Sets	5
Medically Fragile Youth	6
Traditionally Harder to Place Youth	9
Teens	10
Transportation	11
Stipends & Reimbursement	12
Respite	14
Special Programs & Partnerships	17
Kinship Families	19
Kinship Room & Board	20
Other Kinship Enhancement Programs	22

Table of Contents



A Word from Vaya Health



We are delighted to present the “Kinship & Special Needs Enhanced Rate Compendium,” a comprehensive resource guide that highlights our commitment to supporting caregivers of youth with special needs and kinship caregivers. At Vaya Health, we understand the critical role these caregivers play in the well-being of vulnerable populations. Through extensive surveys and in-depth interviews, we've collected valuable insights and information about the enhancements, programs, and concrete supports offered by counties across the region. This compendium serves as a testament to our dedication to improving the lives of caregivers and the individuals they care for. We hope this resource will inform and empower our community, providing a valuable reference for caregivers, service providers, and stakeholders alike.

“Pathways to Permanency” Project

The *Pathways to Permanency* project aims to coordinate efforts between Vaya, County DSS (Department of Social Services) offices, and mental health providers to ensure youth in foster care have access to high quality behavioral health services. To this end, multi-sector focus groups conducted at the onset of this project highlighted needs related to shared understanding, accessible quality behavioral health assessments and interventions, and safe and supportive homes. Workgroups of cross-system stakeholders were then developed to generate, plan, and implement solutions for each of the identified needs.

Resource Background



This compendium was designed to mitigate issues related to the insufficient rates received by caregivers of children placed in foster care. Especially caregivers who are caring for youth for whom it has been difficult to find stable and secure placements.

Through exploring specialized programs and rate enhancements offered in counties throughout Vaya's catchment, this guide serves to outline opportunities for county leadership to provide additional avenues of assistance to caregivers. In addition, this resource takes into consideration the variance from county to county as it relates to existing partnerships, available resources, county size, population, and make-up.

Counties who participated shared innovative programs, rate enhancements, local partnerships and projects, and funding streams they use to cover the additional supports they offer to families. While some practices and programs are supported by funding available through pilot programs with Vaya (through Foster Care Reinvestment funds) or other funding sources, many of the enhancements and supports discussed throughout this guide operate largely from existing partnerships and funding streams that are available in most counties within Vaya's catchment.

This compendium is meant to spread awareness of the innovative work that is being done to support caregivers of youth in custody who either have or are at risk of experiencing barriers in their permanency journey. Through sharing this resource, *Pathways to Permanency* hopes this guide will:

1. Give counties a resource to build upon the expertise and experiences of their peers.
2. Offer ideas or inspiration on new ways to use existing funding, lean on existing partnerships, or explore new ones.

General Board Enhancements

One way we found that many counties offered additional support to families was through offering general board rate increases. Many counties understand the importance of offering additional financial support to caregivers. However, managing the various rates for caregivers, dependent on the specialized needs of the youth in their home at the time, can be challenging. As a result, some counties we spoke to offer general rate enhancements to licensed foster families.

Ashe

This county increased the rate for all youth in custody based on age. This was assisted by increased rates from the state which were available after the county wrote a proposal to the state. The proposal this county submitted to the state was to increase the amount of reimbursement the county receives for children who do not qualify for other reimbursement funding (such as IV-E) to reduce the financial burden on the county.

Buncombe

This county also provides general board rate increases to [JC1] [JC2] [JC3] licensed foster families based on the age of the youth in care. If the only funding stream the child qualifies for is state dollars, then county dollars are used to cover the difference between the state board rate and the county's standard board rate. If the child qualifies for IV-E funding, then IV-E will reimburse the county for 75% of those additional funds for the enhanced board rate.

Wilkes

This county offers all foster families a standardized rate above the state board rates to assist caregivers in supporting the unique needs of youth in custody. In addition, this county offers a sign-on bonus to foster families. While the set enhancement is made possible solely through county dollars, the sign-on bonuses offered to foster families comes largely from a combination of adoption assistance and IV-E funding. The county expressed that the feasibility of offering these enhancements is in part possible because of the small size of the county and number of foster homes licensed through the agency. Using the combination of funding explained above, the county can reimburse 83.6% of the enhancements they offer caregivers. The remainder is covered through county funds.



Large Sibling Sets

Another way we found that many counties offered additional support to families was through offering rate increases to families caring for large sibling sets. Generally, this is described by a family that has accepted placement of 3 or more youth from the same family or case.

Alamance

This county offers enhancements to caregivers who are providing placement for large sibling sets to try to maintain the placement long-term or while alternative placements or services are put in place. These enhancements are offered to licensed families (foster or kin). Decisions for these enhancements are made in-house on a case-by-case basis and are based on the individual needs and risks of the individual youths of the sibling set in care. While no formalized program has been outlined on how determinations including rates are made, most funds to support these case-specific instances are funded through a combination of IV-E, county, and LME/MCO foster care reinvestment funds .

Buncombe

This county offers enhancements to caregivers who are providing placement for large sibling sets to maintain the connection between siblings. If a foster parent has a sibling set of 3 or more youth (youth must be a part of the same case) they offer 20% more on the board rate the caregivers receive for each of the siblings.

In addition to the increased funding offered, families who qualify for this enhancement also get extra support from the licensing worker who works in tandem with the child's social worker. Families are required to meet with licensing staff monthly, as opposed to the state mandated quarterly meetings, with the licensing worker. Foster parents are also required to participate in Managing Difficult Behavior, Child and Family Teen Guide to Foster Parents, and Shared Parenting trainings that are offered by the state.

Medically Fragile Youth

Many counties realize the added commitment that is required of caregivers who are caring for youth who are considered medically fragile. Youth who meet this requirement generally require caregivers to receive additional training and may often require caregivers to take more time away from work to meet their needs.

Buncombe

This county offers rate enhancements to caregivers providing placement for medically fragile youth through the High Intensity Placement Program (HIPP). The county conducts their own assessment to determine if youth qualify as medically fragile. Through this program, caregivers of children with significant needs or who require the caregiver to obtain additional training to meet a child's needs will receive rate enhancements. The program includes four levels of rate enhancements. The highest rates are for children with severe medical or behavioral needs. To qualify for the program, the licensing social worker and placement social worker complete an internal referral form, which is then reviewed and approved by supervisors. The family is re-evaluated every 90 days, and funding can be adjusted based on changing needs. For example, a substance-affected infant's needs may decrease after the youth is stabilized.

Families qualifying for this enhancement receive extra support from the licensing team, including monthly meetings instead of quarterly. Foster parents also undergo specific training. The enhancement is funded by the county for state-funded cases and a combination of county (25%) and IV-E (75%) funds for IV-E eligible cases.

Chatham

This county provides enhanced rates to families who have youth considered to be medically fragile on a case-by-case basis. Once foster parents express a need, the social worker shares the information internally so the agency can begin processing the request. This enhancement is made possible through county or sub-capitation funds from the LME/MCO.

Medically Fragile Youth

Many counties realize the added commitment that is required of caregivers who are caring for youth who are considered medically fragile. Youth who meet this requirement generally require caregivers to receive additional training and may often require caregivers to take more time away from work to meet their needs.

Henderson

This county does a Differential Care Assessment (see next page) in the first 30 days of custody. If youth concerns arise, a 4-tier system is used to determine the level of need. Tiers are delineated based on points. Caregivers then receive enhanced rates based on the needs of the child. Caregivers of children with higher needs receive higher rates. Once children and their caregivers qualify, they are reassessed every 6 months. Families in this program also receive additional support from the Family Support Social Worker. This worker conducts home visits, arranges training, participates in CFTs, assists with visitation, and works with the Foster Care Social Worker to assist them and the family.

Rowan

On a case-by-case basis this county engages caregivers of youth who are medically fragile to their Teen Incentive Agreement model (described in the Teens & Adolescents section). The enhanced rate is meant to cover the costs of any additional needs associated with the child's care. In these cases, a placement agreement is sent to the caregiver that outlines the additional needs of the youth. This must be signed and agreed upon based on the individual needs of the child for the family to receive the enhancement. This is funded through a combination of county, state, and IV-E funding.

Henderson County Differential Care Agreement

FOSTER CARE SUBSIDY IN-HOME WORKSHEET

Childs Name: _____

Social Worker: _____

Childs Age: _____

Date: _____

Instructions: Indicate with a check all factors that pertain to this child. Use information from case record, school personnel and other parties involved.

FACTORS APPLY TO PAST 6 MONTH ASSESSMENT PERIOD

* **Note-** Must have therapeutic or physician intervention or diagnosis

	Physical Check ALL that apply	Behavioral/Emotional Check ALL that apply	NOTES/ COMMENTS
LOW	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs some help w/ age-appropriate self-help skills (age > 5 or mental health age of 5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Verbal aggression (i.e.: threats within past year)-not routine sibling rivalry	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Requires non-smoking environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Bedwetting > 5 years and more than 2x's a week	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Receiving at least 2 rehab services monthly (speech, OT, PT)- does not include mental health counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical aggression, child < 8 yrs old, with current episode (not routine sibling rivalry).	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Minor psychiatric (i.e.: ADHD, depression, adjustment disorder); 2 or less counseling sessions monthly	
MODERATE	<input type="checkbox"/> Blindness/deafness	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual acting out/public disrobing-receiving therapeutic treatment for behavior (* See Note)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Developmentally delayed (not M.R.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Property damage, unusually destructive (damage > \$300)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical syndrome Diagnosis (Downs, fetal alcohol, Shaken baby, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Soiling/Fecal Smearing -Mental Health Diagnosis (> 3 years old - diagnosis Encopresis) (* See Note)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic medical conditions w/ periodic crisis events (i.e.: respiratory crisis, epilepsy, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Stealing-property theft	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Brain damage (not M.R.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Undisciplined youth (truancy, runaway)-JV court involvement	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mild to Moderate mental retardation	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncontrolled hyperactivity/ impulsive behavior-noted behavior in multiple setting (home, school, daycare, etc.)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Drug exposed infant < 2 yrs of age w/ residual effects exhibited	<input type="checkbox"/> Animalistic Behaviors (Has to be pattern) (*See note)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple DSS placement disruptions (3 or more) within past year (not incl. respite care) but including agency custodial recidivism.	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Cruelty (*See Note)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Little (or no) age-appropriate self-help skills (needs help in 3 or more areas: feeding, bathing, toileting, dressing, mobility) > 5 yrs of age	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol Use > 10 yrs of age	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Encopresis (mental health diagnosis)- > 3 yrs and must occur at least once a month for 3 months (must be current condition) (* See Note)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical aggression > 8 yrs of age (resulting in school suspension and/or noted injuries to others)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Respite Needs- medical training, specialized mental health training)	<input type="checkbox"/> Two or more psychiatric hospitalizations w/in 2 years	
		<input type="checkbox"/> 2 or more in school suspensions; expulsion in current school year	
	<input type="checkbox"/> School drop-out needing alternative arrangements by caregiver		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate psychiatric (i.e., controlled mood disorder) requiring therapy in excess of 2 times per month)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple on-going prescription medications		

- ONLY HIGHEST RISK FACTORS SHOULD COUNT -

	Physical Factors	Behavioral/Emotional	Notes/Comments
HIGH/SEVERE	<input type="checkbox"/> Requires intensive medical treatment and consultation 2-3 times per week	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire starter (within past 2 years)-episodes of multiple and purposeful fire setting) (*See Note)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Specialized education program required (BEH/BED self contained classrooms)	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol Use (< 10 yrs. of age)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Tube feeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal charges/convictions w/in past 2 years	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Special equipment required for feeding, breathing, toileting, mobility. (excluding nebulizers)	<input type="checkbox"/> Active chemical dependency	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple ongoing psychotropic prescription medications	<input type="checkbox"/> Self mutilation; severe eating disorders; head banging w/in past year (mental health diagnosis required) (*See Note)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> In-home nursing care ordered by physician	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual offender w/ in past 2 years	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Periodic hospitalization (2 or more times in past year)	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe psychiatric (i.e.: uncontrolled mood disorder) unstable even with medications	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Seizures-uncontrolled	<input type="checkbox"/> Selling drugs-court involved	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Incontinent (incapable of controlling excretory functions-physicians statement required)	<input type="checkbox"/> History of assaultive behavior w/in past year (resulting in criminal charges or injury).	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-ambulatory > 5 yrs	<input type="checkbox"/> Severely withdrawn (affecting daily living activities)-not able to attend school, participate in activities, etc.) (*See Note)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Requires at-home parent or single-child household	<input type="checkbox"/> History of suicidal attempts within the past 6 months-no active plan	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Profound mental retardation		

* Note- Must have therapeutic or physician intervention or diagnosis

SIGNATURES:

X _____
Social Worker Date

X _____
Foster Parent/Caregiver Date

Historically Challenging to Place Youth

Several counties realize that youth with higher behavioral health needs have been historically more difficult to locate and maintain placements for. Youth in this category may be more likely to require their caregivers to take off work to provide care or attend therapy and other appointments.

Alamance

This county offers enhancements to caregivers to maintain the placement while alternative placements are found or additional services can be put in place. These enhancements are offered to licensed families. Decisions for these enhancements are based on the individual needs and risks of the youth in care. Funds to support these are typically funded through a combination of IV-E, county, and LME/MCO foster care reinvestment funds .

Buncombe

Once the need for an enhanced rate is identified or expressed by a foster family, this county uses an internal referral form (completed by the social worker and licensing worker) to make the request for entry into the High Intensity Placement Program (HIPP) which is detailed in the *Medically Fragile Youth* section of this guide.

Franklin

While not a standard practice, this county offers caregivers of youth who have experienced challenges with placement additional funds above the board rate by using a combination of both county and IV-E funding.

Henderson

This county uses a Differential Care Assessment to determine needs and rate enhancements for caregivers of youth with historically challenging behaviors. Please refer to the Medically Fragile Youth section of this guide for more details.

Macon

This county does not have a fixed enhanced rate program for youth in this category but does offer enhancements on a case-by-case basis. This involves a predetermined amount over the state board rate. Enhancements are typically reserved for situations where the county has struggled to find placement. Families may receive the enhancement for the entire stay length (short or long-term). Funding is dependent on the funding streams the child qualifies for although it is primarily county dollars.



Teens

Another way we found that one county offered additional support to families was through offering rate increases to families caring for teens/adolescents.

Rowan

This county has a program called the Teen Incentive Agreement (TIA), for licensed foster families caring for teens (ages 13+). The TIA is aimed at offsetting the additional costs of caring for and providing a normal environment for a teen. Any caregiver with a teen placed in their home, regardless of additional needs, can participate in the TIA program. It offers a standard rate enhancement to foster parents and requires caregiver's participation in various activities and therapies. With the increased rates, foster parents are expected to cover associated costs and transportation.

Funding for the TIA model comes from a combination of county, state, and IV-E funding. IV-E eligible cases can be reimbursed up to approximately 81-83% of the enhancement, with the remainder covered by county funds. For youth not IV-E eligible, but eligible for state funds, the state reimburses 50% of the standard board rate, with the county covering the rest. Children ineligible for state or IV-E funds, such as undocumented immigrants, have the rates fully funded by the county.

Transportation

Another way we found that many counties offered support to families was through reimbursement to caregivers who provide transportation to youth in custody.

Buncombe

On a case-by-case basis, this county will pay mileage to caregivers by providing gas cards to foster parents at the state mileage rate for taking youth to appointments or participate in visitation that requires long distance travel. This county relies on a combination of ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) funds, specific IV-E travel funds (that are reimbursed if they are IV-E eligible), and county dollars to fund the gas cards.

Franklin

This county provides reimbursement to caregivers (kinship or foster) for visitation transportation at the IRS mileage rate. To fund this, Franklin uses a mixture of reunification funds and county dollars. However, this is dependent on the availability of reunification funds at the time.

Granville

This county reimburses caregivers (kinship or foster) for mileage to essential appointments and any travel to meant to maintain school placements or vital connections for youth. They also reimburse foster parents who volunteer to provide transportation for youth not placed in their homes. This is done using a county-set mileage reimbursement rate and an hourly rate. This strategy has been successful in reducing staff workload and stress. Funding for Medicaid-covered transportation comes from Medicaid vouchers, while 100% county funds cover non-reimbursable travel.

Henderson

In this county, caregivers can receive reimbursement for travel at the IRS rate for the following travel: out of district school/daycare, extra-curricular activities, birthparent/caregiver visits, doctors' appointment, and BH/MH appointments. If the youth is IV-E eligible, the county gets IV-E reimbursement. Otherwise, county dollars are used.

Jackson

If a child has been placed in another school district than their home school, the county will provide gas cards to caregivers to transport children. This county believes helping youth maintain connections is well worth the use of county dollars.

Stipends & Reimbursements

Another way we found that many counties offered additional support to families when rate enhancements were not an option was through offering stipends or reimbursements for routine and necessary supplies for the children placed in their home such as clothes, school supplies, medical needs, and other necessities.

Buncombe

This county provides a clothing stipend twice a year to caregivers using county funds. This is available to all caregivers regardless of if the caregiver is a licensed foster parent or kinship provider. However, if the child receives an SSI payment that is above the boards rate the family will not qualify for this stipend.

Chatham

This county pays foster parents a set “coming into care” stipend to both foster and kinship parents at the time of placement. In addition, this county provides caregivers with funding for summer camps, extracurricular activities, events, etc. The county will also cover the costs of childcare or after school programs for families that qualify for a voucher if care cannot be located. In these instances, the county will attempt to assist caregivers in locating other childcare. These are all funded by a combination of county and foster care reinvestment funds from the LME/MCO.

Granville

This county will reimburse or pay for half of a birth parents methadone or suboxone clinic costs if they are receiving drug treatment. This is funded by county dollars.



Stipends & Reimbursements

Another way we found that many counties offered additional support to families when rate enhancements were not an option was through offering stipends or reimbursements for routine and necessary supplies for the children placed in their home such as clothes, school supplies, medical needs, and other necessities.

Henderson

This county has partnerships with local businesses (TJ Max, Belk, & GB shoes) where the county collaborates with them to provide clothes, shoes, and other family necessities to caregivers. When children initially come into care, caregivers receive a set amount as a clothing payment. If the youth are IV-E eligible, then IV-E reimburses it. If they are not, then clothing is paid for by the partnerships that have been established with local businesses.

Jackson

This county does a clothing allowance for all youth in custody twice a year. This county also buys school supplies each year for all kids in care. These supports are funded using county dollars and the county's Christmas Fund which is largely made up of donations from community members. Other needs can be addressed for youth through this fund as well (extracurricular activities, camps, personal needs, etc.).

Rowan

In this county, apart from trial home placements, all caregivers of youth in custody receive a clothing stipend three times per year with the possibility for more upon request. This is funded using county dollars.



Respite

In addition to providing enhanced rates, some counties have also found ways to help increase the natural supports of foster families by encouraging families within their programs to build relationships and rely on one another through incentivizing them to provide respite services.

Chatham

This county pays regular family foster parents to provide respite. Caregivers providing respite services receive a pro-rated board rate based on how long the youth will be staying in the home. This is in addition to the board rate they receive for the children placed in the home full-time.

Clay

In this county, in instances when childcare centers are closed (like during COVID), the agency will pay a grandparent, foster parent, or trained foster care alumna to provide temporary daytime respite. This is funded by Hearts for Kids which is a 501(c)3 that is run by the DSS but has their own Board of Directors.

Granville

This county pays foster parents a per night enhancement to provide crisis respite for youth who are in foster care. For caregivers providing only overnight or daytime respite, they will receive half of the crisis respite rate enhancement. This means the child is either in the home during the day or night, but not both. This is most often utilized in cases of suspension or to prevent overnight stays in the office. For crisis, overnight, and daytime respite enhancements the county uses 100% county dollars.

Special Programs & Partnership

Several counties have found ways to engage community stakeholders to provide youth and caregivers with additional support through unique partnerships. In this section we will explore the programs and partnerships counties have established to wrap youth and caregivers with needed resources that support normalcy.

Buncombe

This county contracts with a local community provider to provide a visitation coach program meant to improve the quality and effectiveness of visitation. In addition, this county has partnered with HARK (formerly the county's GAL association) to offer youth resources that are outside of their basic needs such as otherwise unattainable opportunities (field trips, school travel, etc.). These funds are available for any youth in a court sanctioned placement that does not receive SSI.

Chatham

The county has a pilot to increase the frequency of family time by reimbursing caregivers for transportation to additional visitation outside of what is court ordered. Additionally, they have an in-house clinical program that provides trauma treatment to youth in custody. These are all funded through a combination of county and foster care reinvestment funds .

Clay

If a case is tied in any way to opioids, the caregiver can receive a gift card to assist the caregiver in meeting any of the opioid-related needs of the youth. This funding is available through a county opioid grant and is limited, short-term funding.

Franklin

This county partners with Walmart for the Angel Tree for Christmas gifts for youth in foster care as well as gift cards for caregivers during the Christmas season in addition to periodic appreciation gift cards to caregivers of youth in custody. This is funded completely by county dollars.

Jackson

Using a Christmas fund (made up of community donations), this county provides all resource families with an appreciation gift card for Christmas. Using county dollars, this county also hosts a summer pool party and picnic for all foster and kinship families each year.

Special Programs & Partnership

Several counties have found ways to engage community stakeholders to provide youth and caregivers with additional support through unique partnership. In this section we will explore the programs and partnerships counties have established to wrap youth and caregivers with needed resources that support normalcy.

Macon

This county collaborates with Kaley's Closets for backpacks and clothing for foster youth and has partnerships with local churches that provide food boxes. These partnerships focus on prioritizing families with large sibling sets and kinship placements. Additionally, the county offers daycare assistance if subsidies are not accepted in addition to offering support for summer camps for youth in custody, covering a variable portion of the costs. Assistance levels vary based on costs and the number of children in the home in need of assistance. Funding for these stipends is largely county dollars.

Rowan

This county has a longstanding partnership with One Church One Child (OCOC). This is a program RCDSS runs with 70+ churches that contribute funding and goods (essential household items, grocery gift cards). To receive support through OCOC, social workers send referrals to the program detailing a family's needs. This is managed in compliance with the case laws designated for County DSS offices on how to accept donations and other business practices.

Wilkes

This county collaborates with the local Foster Parent Association to supply closets offering clothes, toys, and other necessities. They also partner with a local consortium of five churches, known as My Church, that provides food for children and staff during overnight office stays.

Additionally, the county is constructing a home-like suite in an older county building for youth and staff who stay overnight at the office. This is being funded by county dollars. My Church will contribute the food, linens, furnishings, provide general maintenance, and stuffed animals for any child staying overnight.

Lastly, once a year, the county does a trip to Tweetsie or the Lazy 5 Ranch for foster families using adoption incentive funds.



Kinship Families

There is a large and growing body of research assessing the outcomes of youth in kinship care in comparison to the general foster care population. Research indicates that compared to children in non-relative care, children in kinship homes fare better, as measured by several child well-being factors. Children in the care of relatives experience increased stability, with fewer placement changes, better mental and behavioral health outcomes, and less school changes. In addition, children themselves generally express more positive feelings about their placement arrangements and caregivers when placed with kin and are less likely to run away. Despite research indicating better outcomes in several domains for youth in kinship care, kinship families experience several barriers related to lack of additional support and resources. While many families desire to care for relative children, financial hardships pose real barriers to adding children to their households. To encourage kinship care and the positive outcomes associated with it, some counties have found ways to begin addressing the unmet financial needs of kin/relative caregivers.

Kinship Room & Board

In this section, we will explore the innovative ways counties have been able to provide unlicensed kin with full or partial board payments, per diems, and stipends to ensure families have the means to acquire the necessary tools to successfully raise the children in their care.

Alamance

In this county, for unlicensed kinship caregivers that do not fall within the 5 degrees of kinship, and therefore do not qualify for a Work First check, the county will still pay them the Work First rate. However, while they are available, the county is using foster care reinvestment funds from Vaya to provide these supports since kinship placements tend to promote reunification and decrease placement disruptions which helps the county support the permanency and reunification goals of state policy.

Buncombe

This county started a pilot program where kinship caregivers are eligible for half of the state board rate for 90 days once they complete MAPP training. At the end of that period, if the family is not yet licensed, the county will make a redetermination to decide on payment extensions. Redeterminations are dependent on whether the family is diligently trying to get their license. They also assist families mitigate barriers to licensure. This includes providing smoke alarms, paying for physicals, fire inspections, and other concrete supports needed to get the family closer to licensure. As a part of the licensure period, the county may offer other financial support for childcare needs (including emergency sitters and childcare vouchers).

Chatham

This county pays kinship caregivers half the state board rate while they are in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent. During this process kinship caregivers are provided with a foster care licensing worker as well. To remain eligible for funds the caregiver must be “actively working towards” becoming licensed. This is generally around 6 months; most families can either complete their licensure in that timeframe or make good progress. The county helps pay for child-related expenses that might arise (clothing, medical needs, after school programs, extra curricula, etc.) using county funds. The licensing worker that is assigned to them is also helpful. In addition, the county will sometimes help families pay for barriers to the licensure process (installing ramps, smoke detectors, etc.). This support is made possible using county and foster care reinvestment funds .



Kinship Room & Board

In this section, we will explore the innovative ways counties have been able to provide unlicensed kin with full or partial board payments, per diems, and stipends to ensure families have the means to acquire the necessary tools to successfully raise the children in their care.

Clay

This county offers a small per diem to kinship caregivers regardless of licensure. Caregivers receive a set amount for the first child placed in the home and an additional fifth of the rate per month for each additional child placed in the home. Caregivers are eligible to receive these monies if the child is in their home or until permanency occurs. The funds used to support this per diem are 100% county funds.

Franklin

To encourage caregivers to complete the licensing process, this county pays kinship caregivers half the state board rate once they complete MAPP training. This is covered using 100% county funds.

Granville

This county pays kinship caregivers half the state board rate while they are in the process of becoming licensed. There is no time limit for how long kin can receive this payment. Caregivers remain eligible as long as their kinship youth remains in the home and in the legal custody of the county. Given that the county pays half the state board rate for any child placed with a DSS foster family, officials were agreeable to providing the same amount to kinship families. This is covered 100% by county funds.

Jackson

To encourage caregivers to complete the licensing process, this county pays kinship caregivers the full state board rate while they are in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent. Given that, from the county's perspective, families who are interested in completing the licensure process should be able to become licensed within 4-6 months, that is the extent of these payments. The board rate offered to kinship caregivers prior to licensure is covered 100% by county funds.

Macon

Using county funds, this county pays kinship caregivers half the state board rate while they are in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent.



Other Kinship Enhancement Programs

While many counties understand the importance of providing financial supports to kinship caregivers, many counties have found unique ways to offer kinship families enhancements, vouchers, or allowances that support the concrete needs of the family as well as allowing for more normalcy for youth in kinship placements.

Ashe

On a case-by-case basis the county will help kinship families with computers, clothes, etc. using county funds. A local non-profit agency also significantly contributes to these efforts through supplying gift cards to Walmart for any family needs.

Buncombe

Kinship caregivers in this county also qualify for the same rate enhancement program (HIPP) as foster families in the county once they are licensed. For more details about this county's HIPP program, please refer to this county's *Medically Fragile Youth* section of this guide.

Chatham

This county does not offer a formal enhancement program for kinship. However, enhanced rates are offered on a case-by-case basis. In those instances, kinship may be eligible for certain rate enhancements depending on the needs of the child. When offered, county and foster care reinvestment funds are used to support enhancements.

Clay

In this county, if a case is tied in any way to opioids, the caregiver can receive a gift card to assist them in meeting any of the opioid-related needs of the youth. This funding is available through an opioid grant the county received and is limited, short-term funding.

Franklin

This county offers kinship caregivers reimbursement for mileage to get to and from visitation. The reimbursement offered to families is the IRS mileage rate. Both reunification and county funds are used to support this.

Other Kinship Enhancement Programs

While many counties understand the importance of providing financial supports to kinship caregivers, many counties have found unique ways to offer kinship families enhancements, vouchers, or allowances that support the concrete needs of the family as well as allowing for more normalcy for youth in kinship placements.

Granville

On a case-by-case basis, this county covers initial day care costs until the childcare voucher goes into effect. They will also cover the cost of extracurricular activities. These are both funded through 100% county dollars. In addition, if licensed kin volunteer to provide respite and/or transportation for youth not in their care they can receive additional payments. This is made possible through a combination of county funds and Medicaid transportation vouchers.

Henderson

This county reimburses kinship caregivers for approved Medicaid transportation. In addition, this county provides kinship families with quarterly clothing vouchers as well as coverage for registration fees for a youth's enrollment in extracurricular activities. This is made possible using county dollars and Medicaid transportation vouchers.

Rowan

This county has a 501(c)3 that is run by the DSS but has its own board of directors called Hearts for Kids and Seniors. Funds from this nonprofit can generally be used for anything minor (clothes, fire alarms, etc.) that might help a child stay in the home regardless of caregiver type (kinship or foster).

Wilkes

If a child placed in a kinship placement receives SSI/SSDI the agency can help the kinship caregiver get a "fare shares" support for that youth.