

NWF Health Network

Policy & Procedure

Series:	1600: Foster & Kinship Care		
Policy Name:	Guardianship Assistance Program		
Policy Number:	1615		
Origination Date:	02/20/2020	Revised:	Board Meeting of 04/23/2026
Regulation:	39.6225, F.S., 39.01, F.S., 409.175, F.S., CFOP 170-13, CFOP 175-15, 65C-44 Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) SB 664		

Policy

It is the policy of NWF Health Network (NWFHN), to meet the individual needs of children in out-of-home care and to ensure that children eligible for the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) receive all benefits offered by the program in accordance to SB 664.

Procedure

A. Processing GAP eligibility requirements.

1. NWFHN's GAP Specialist will complete presumptive eligibility for all children with a primary goal or concurrent goal of Permanent Guardianship
 - a. The GAP Specialist will utilize FSFN reports to identify children presumptively eligible for GAP benefits.
 - b. The GAP Specialist will monitor the child's eligibility status and complete the GAP eligibility module in FSFN.
 - c. The assigned GAP Specialist will e-mail the assigned Dependency Case Manager (DCM) the required Guardianship Assistance Program language for a Permanent Guardianship case plan. The GAP Specialist will review the case plan prior to submission to Children's Legal Services (CLS). CLS will be included on all communication regarding case plan language.
 - d. The GAP Specialist will stay in contact with the DCM and Level I licensure supervisor or appropriate licensing department to determine when the caregiver of the child has received foster care board payments for six consecutive months. The GAP Specialist will communicate with the DCM, DCM Supervisor, appropriate licensing team, and CLS regarding when the child will be eligible for GAP.
 - e. GAP Eligibility will be updated when the caregiver has been eligible to receive board payments for six consecutive months if needed.
 - f. The child welfare professional shall have ongoing communication with caregivers regarding services and benefits available to children and families with the goal of permanent guardianship.
2. The GAP Specialist will ensure the Permanent Guardian names a Successor Guardian and all required screenings are completed.
 - a. The GAP Specialist will contact the licensed provider to identify a Successor Guardian.

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- b. The GAP Specialist will contact the successor guardian either in person or by phone to discuss the role of the successor guardian and document the conversation in FSFN.
- c. The GAP Specialist will work with the Kinship Program Administrative Assistant to complete the required background screenings for the named successor guardian. The GAP Specialist will review the background screening results and assess the appropriateness of the named Successor Guardian. The background screening results will be uploaded in the provider file cabinet in FSFN.
- 3. The GAP Specialist will ensure all eligibility requirements are met when a case closes in Permanent Guardianship and the child is eligible for GAP payments.
 - a. GAP Specialist will complete the Application for the GAP as well as the Guardianship Assistance Agreement (GAA) with the licensed provider.
 - b. GAP Specialist will work with the licensed provider to negotiate GAP payments.
 - c. The permanent guardian will be provided with form CF-FSP-5220, Tuition and Fee Exemption and notified of how to request a copy of the form.
 - d. Upon the request of the DCM or CLS, the GAP Specialist will complete form CF-FSP 5456, Permanent Guardianship Staffing Checklist and submit to DCM, DCMS, and CLS.
 - e. Upon receipt of the court order discharging the child to Permanent Guardianship, the GAP Specialist will submit the proper documentation to the Vouchering Specialist to discharge the child's removal episode and enter the service for payment in FSFN.
 - f. The GAP Specialist will submit the case to their supervisor to review eligibility in FSFN prior to finalizing.
 - g. GAP Specialist will enter a change row in the child's Medicaid record to update the payee information.
 - h. The case will be assigned to the GAP Specialist to maintain on-going eligibility.
- 4. The GAP Specialist will negotiate the GAP payment with the child's licensed caregiver.
 - a. GAP payments begin at \$333 per month and are to be negotiated based on the current and future needs of the child. When the provider requests the foster care board rate, the request will be made in writing. The written request will be attached to the signed GAA and uploaded in FSFN.
 - b. When the licensed caregiver requests a payment exceeding the foster care board rate, the GAP Specialist will work with the assigned DCM to schedule a staffing to determine if the child would meet the requirements for a higher level of care.
 - c. The caregiver's written request as well as form CF-FSP 5440 "Guardianship Assistance Payment Approval" will be submitted to the DCF designee for review.
 - d. The DCF designee will review the request and approve or deny the request.
- 5. The GAP Specialist will ensure annual redeterminations for GAP are completed and entered into FSFN.
 - a. Staff will send renewal documents to the permanent guardian at least sixty days prior to renewal date.
 - b. If the permanent guardian does not submit required documentation, an additional notification will be made prior to thirty days from renewal date.

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- c. Once renewal documentation is received the GAP Specialist will complete the redetermination in FSFN and forward the documentation to the proper Rev Max staff to complete the TANF if applicable.
- d. If the permanent guardian requests assistance or to change the successor guardian at the time of redetermination the GAP Specialist will follow up with the permanent guardian. The GAP Specialist will complete all required steps to update the successor guardian or assist the permanent guardian with needs.
- e. If the permanent guardian does not submit renewal paperwork the GAP payment will be held until the permanent guardian submits required renewal paperwork. The held payments will then be provided to the permanent guardian.

B. Extended Guardianship Assistance Program (EGAP)

- 1. Extended Guardianship Assistance is available to children who are discharged to Permanent Guardianship at fourteen years of age or older, prior to age eighteen.
 - a. The permanent guardian of any child that meets requirements will be offered the opportunity to participate in EGAP at the time they sign the GAA.
 - b. Participation in EGAP is only available if elected in the initial GAA.
 - c. If EGAP is elected, the GAP Specialist will provide notice to the Permanent Guardian of the requirement to sign a new EGAA prior to the child turning eighteen years of age.
 - d. The GAP Specialist will assist the caregiver in signing a new GAA and will obtain documentation of the young adult's qualifying activity.
 - e. The GAP Specialist will complete the EGAA, program eligibility, and document qualifying activity in appropriate module in FSFN.
 - f. The young adult's qualifying activity will be re-determined every six months. The GAP Specialist will send notification of the need to provide documentation of qualifying activity sixty days prior to renewal date.
 - g. An additional notification will be sent prior to 30 days of renewal if no response is received.
 - h. EGAP is available up to the adult's 21st birthday. Upon the young adult reaching twenty one years of age, the GAP Specialist will end the EGAP service in FSFN and take all necessary steps to close the case shell.

C. Denial of benefits

- 1. If benefits are denied, the GAP Specialist will:
 - a. Document the discussion with the caregiver regarding the denial of benefits.
 - b. Provide proper notification to the DCF point of contact.
- 2. The caregiver will have the right to appeal the denial in accordance with the rules and procedures of the state's fair hearing appeal process.