

Keys to a Successful Process to Support Kin through Flex Funds

1

Make Funds Easy to Request

- Develop a universal request form to support all kinship placement types
- Develop a one-page informational sheet providing key details of the process: how to complete the form, what you can and cannot request, and where to send the completed request
- Use only one portal for requests: create a single shared email address or on-line shared drive

2

Review and Approve Requests Quickly

- Be clear about the approval timelines for each level of funding requested
- Develop a review protocol that ensures requests do not get held up if someone is off for the day or unavailable
- Develop a protocol to get needed requested items into the hands of front line staff quickly and easily (drive up options to avoid staff from having to park and walk into the building is one example)

3

Customize Supports Needed by Child(ren) and Kin Family

- Develop a needs assessment form that potential kinship family members can complete along with staff during the 'Voice and Choice' discussion to allow them an opportunity to ask for help
- Ensure funds, including use of gift cards or vouchers, can be used at stores and businesses that are convenient to caregivers
- Make sure that you address barriers that are identified in the safety assessment of the home to ensure funds are available to ameliorate those concerns (smoke detectors, window screens, lead paint abatement, furniture needs, etc.)

4

Ensure Adequate Funds and Supports Until Formal Supports Are In Place

- Require that staff document the long term supports and services that will be provided and when those supports are projected to start. This will allow counties to know that there is a plan to sustain the placement beyond this initial support and that this initial support is sufficient



Helpful Hint:

When creating a universal request form, and approval process, use e-Signature and digital form creators to make the process easier and quicker.

For More Information on Free Software Options you can visit: <https://bit.ly/33fTBrV>

Flex Funds For Kin Should Be:



Easy to Request



Reviewed and
Approved Quickly



Customized to Meet
Immediate Needs



A Bridge Until Formal
Supports Are In Place

Examples from the Field

County LDSS's and community agencies are unique in how they budget and are able to access funds. Policies and procedures, auditing requirements, purchasing regulations and financial protocols can vary and it is critical that county leadership chooses a system that works for them. Here are a few examples that have been successful in other jurisdictions:

Kinship Specialist/ Triage Team Access to Petty Cash Account

Details: Start a petty cash account with a range of \$100-\$500 that can be accessed by a supervisor or other identified approver. Funds are requested and monies allocated to staff until funds are exhausted and receipts are turned in to replenish funds.

Strengths of this Model: Easy access and distribution of funding, funds are not limited to particular vendors.

Limitations of this Model: Limits on the amount requested to support kin families, tracking of funds (receipts, change, etc.) can be labor intensive, security (ensuring funds are secured to prevent theft)

Works Best For: Systems that have limited funds and need to focus on supports that on average are less than \$100 per request

County/Community Agency Partnership: Adding Flex Funds to Existing Contract

Details: Counties with existing contracts and relationships with community partners can add flex funds to the contract and work collaboratively with the agency on developing a process to request and get funds to kinship families in need.

Strengths of this Model: Community agencies can have quicker turnaround times for distribution of funding, requested funds can also support transition into referred programs and supports offered by the community agency, spending flexibility and potential reimbursement advantages of spent funds, often community agencies have other funded programs that may assist your kinship home

Limitations of this Model: Delays in contract approval, subject to annual contractual approval, some contracts require an administrative rate

Works Best For: Systems that have good working relationships with a community agency and have a wide range of requests in terms of need and range of cost. Also, county's that have limited financial human resources to process and track numerous request.

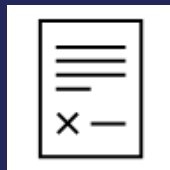
Specialized Finance Clerk Who Expedites Purchases and Vouchers

Details: Develop a specialized point of contact in the finance department to expedite checks, vouchers or make purchases on credit cards for kinship caregiver needs.

Strengths of this Model: Maintains county oversight and review of requests, ensures proper coding of expenses on cases, allows for effective tracking of expenses

Limitations of this Model: Limited hours and availability of finance staff to process requests (normal business hours only)

Works Best For: Systems that have well resourced financial departments and human resources to manage these increased requests with urgency



Helpful Hint:

Make sure that whatever process you adopt, you ensure maximize reimbursement opportunities by having expenses reviewed by your finance and eligibility staff.

About the Redlich Horwitz Foundation

The Redlich Horwitz Foundation believes that every child who enters foster care should be placed with a family, and that every family who opens its home to a foster child should be well-supported, well-resourced, knowledgeable about the challenges ahead, and prepared to provide the love and stability essential to healthy outcomes for children.

We work to increase and improve family-based care and to reduce time to permanency for all children in the foster care system in NY. We accelerate change by partnering with county and state leaders, nonprofits, foundations, and grassroots advocates for foster youth. We seek to improve practice and policy in support of reducing residential placements, including kin-first placement protocols, targeted recruitment and improved support of foster families, community-based services for children and families, and other strategies proven to expedite the path to permanency.

To that end, we support and work collaboratively with service providers, policy advocates, government agencies, and foster youth to implement thoughtful, data-driven policies and programs directed toward ensuring that every child exits the foster care system into a permanent, loving family and promoting more efficient and effective practices and policies across the systems that impact children and youth in foster care.

