

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Voluntary Caregiver Manual



Voluntary Care



A voluntary caregiver is someone who agrees to take care of a child whose parents are involved with CPS

Voluntary Caregiver Manual

Thank you for opening your home to an abused or neglected child. It's a big decision, and Child Protective Services (CPS) hopes this booklet will help you care for the child.

Note: The "Important Terms" section near the back of this booklet explains important terms shown in bold.

Who is a voluntary caregiver?

Our families are a big part of our lives. For generations, grandparents and other family members have raised children when their parents could not care for them. Your desire to take a child into your home shows a lot of love and caring.

A voluntary caregiver is someone who agrees to take care of a child while the parents are involved in a CPS investigation or receiving Family Based Safety Services (FBSS). The parent or guardian places their child in your home and the child is not in CPS custody. This is called a Parental Child Safety Placement (PCSP).

A CPS caseworker will visit you either before or at the time the parent places their child in your home to make sure the child is safe. You will need to give CPS the following information:

- ◆ Your birth date.
- ◆ Your Social Security number.
- ◆ A picture ID (such as a Texas Driver's License).
- ◆ All names you have used before.

CPS must do background checks on everyone who lives in your home who is

14 years of age and older. CPS will decide if anything it finds might affect the child's safety. CPS must also visit your home to check for safety issues.

Do I have legal custody of the child?

No, you do not have legal custody of the child. CPS does not either. This is a temporary placement. That means you will want to ask the parents to help:

- ◆ Enroll the child in school and after-school activities.
- ◆ Approve medical treatment and to pay for it.

However, you may be able to use an "Authorization Agreement for Nonparent Relative" if you are the child's grandparent, sibling, aunt, or uncle.

What is an Authorization Agreement for a Nonparent Relative?

This is an agreement between the parent of the child and you when you are an adult who is caring for a grandchild, sibling, niece, or nephew. You can even use this agreement when CPS is not involved with the family. This agreement gives you the authority to do essential tasks while caring for a child, such as:

- ◆ Get medical treatment or insurance coverage.
- ◆ Enroll the child in school or daycare.
- ◆ Give permission for the child to play sports or be in academic clubs.
- ◆ Get the child a learner's permit, driver's license, or state identification card.

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CPS knows that families want their children to be safe

- ◆ Give permission for the child to get a job.
- ◆ Apply for and receive public benefits for the child.

This agreement does not give you legal “custody” of the child, and the child’s parent can cancel it at any time. This agreement does not prevent a parent from taking a child home. It simply makes it easier for a relative to get services and do other important tasks for the child. You will find a copy of this form at the back of this manual. You can also get this form (#2638) in the lobby of CPS offices or from the agency website at: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/site_map/forms.asp

Why is a Parental Child Safety Placement needed?

A Parental Child Safety Placement may be needed to keep a child safe while parents deal with whatever issues are putting the child at risk.

By law, CPS must investigate reports of child abuse or neglect by a parent or caregiver. We know all families have strengths. Families know their children best and want them to be safe. That’s why CPS wants the family’s help and may ask that you, the parent, and others to take part in a Family Team Meeting (FTM). Several things may happen at this meeting.

- ◆ Everyone is encouraged to talk openly about child safety issues.
- ◆ You, the parents, extended family members, and others will make a plan to keep the child safe while the parent works on making their home safe.

- ◆ The parent may choose to place their child with a family member or close friend.

Sometimes parents place their children with a relative or close friend before or after CPS gets involved with the family. If CPS is already investigating, you will get information about the child before you accept him or her into your home. This helps you decide if this would be a good decision for your family.

A Safety Plan might be put in place because of a Family Team Meeting or at other times during an investigation. A Safety Plan is a written agreement between CPS and the family. It outlines what needs to be done to make children safe right away. This might include parents placing children with a family member or good friend. If the family is working with Family Based Safety Services, these actions are usually in the Family Service Plan as well.

What should I expect while the child lives with me?

As a voluntary caregiver, you should follow the rules below.

- ◆ Provide a safe and loving home for the child.
- ◆ Sign and follow the Safety Plan.
- ◆ Care for the child as written in the Safety Plan or Family Service Plan.
 - ❖ If the parent agrees, you will get a copy of the Family Service Plan.
 - ❖ If the parent does not agree, the CPS caseworker will give you all the information about the services the child needs and how to get them.

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CPS and the family will work on the goals and changes that will keep the child safe

- ◆ Go to all meetings on case-planning and decisions about the child in your care.
- ◆ Talk to the CPS caseworker on a regular basis so you can help keep the child safe.
- ◆ Ask for information about the child from the caseworker that will help you care for the child.
- ◆ Let the CPS caseworker know if there are any problems or if you have any questions.

Expenses

Voluntary caregivers agree to meet all the child's needs and expenses. You can ask the parent for money, clothes, and other items for the child. There are also other ways to get financial help. You will find more information near the back of this booklet in the "Federal Government Assistance" and "Finding Help in Texas" sections.

What could happen in a CPS investigation?

A CPS investigation is usually finished and closed in 60 days but it can take longer. CPS may close the case because it decides the child is safe and the likelihood of abuse or neglect in the near future has been reduced. CPS may offer FBSS services to the family if it believes the child is still at risk of abuse or neglect at the end of the investigation. This means CPS will continue working with the family. A judge may decide to order a family to accept these services if they are unwilling to use them. In some cases you may be asked to speak in court and go

take part in meetings for case planning. Your caseworker will make a Family Service Plan with input from the family if the family is getting family-based safety services. The plan will outline:

- ◆ The situations that would make the child unsafe.
- ◆ The services CPS provides.
- ◆ The tasks, goals, and changes for the family as well as when they must be done.

CPS and the family will work on the goals and changes that will keep the child safe. You may need to:

- ◆ Give the child a ride to appointments.
- ◆ Let people come to your home to provide services to the child.
- ◆ Sit in on visits with the parent and the child (if you agree).

FBSS cases are open for a limited time, usually 6 to 9 months. The caseworker monitors the parents' progress and the safety and well-being of the child during that time. There are several options if the parents don't make the changes they need to make.

- ◆ The child can stay with you if you agree.
- ◆ If both parties agree, you may ask a judge to give you legal custody.
- ◆ The parent may sign the Authorization Agreement for Non-Parent Relative Form to give you permission to continue to care for the child.
- ◆ If the child is unsafe or if you cannot or do not want to keep the child, a judge may decide to give CPS legal custody.

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You can show the parents how to relate to the child in positive ways

What about my relationship with the parents?

Your relationship with the parents may change when you care for their child. You should talk with the caseworker and the parent about these changes and remind parents that they are still the mother and father of the child. It is okay to ask parents to pay for the child's daycare, clothing, diapers, food, etc. Parents may also help with the child's daily activities if the Safety Plan or Family Service Plan allows it. Remember you must follow the rules of the Safety Plan.

Feel free to talk with the caseworker about any concerns. It is also important to talk to the parents about the child's daily routine, favorite books, toys, food, and anything else that may help you keep to the child's routine and make the child feel as normal as possible. Children feel more secure when there is healthy communication among the adults who care for them.

When do I need to talk to the CPS caseworker?

These are some examples of when you need to talk to your CPS caseworker, but there may be other times as well.

- ◆ Any emergencies involving the child.
- ◆ Any changes that may affect your ability to care for the child.
- ◆ If anyone moves into or out of your home.
- ◆ If you need a friend or other relative to help care for the child.

- ◆ If you are thinking about changing the child's school.
- ◆ If you are thinking about changing daycare.
- ◆ Before making any placement changes.

Call the police and your caseworker if you feel you or the child is in danger from the parents. If it is after normal business hours, call the CPS Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or the police at 911.

What should I do for the child's parents?

It is really important that you tell the parents you believe the situation can improve. This helps parents keep hope alive and stay motivated. Although it does not always work out, CPS wants children to return home if it is safe. Here are some ways you can help.

- ◆ Show parents how to relate to the child in positive ways, including how to listen and talk to their child.
- ◆ Help parents get community resources.
- ◆ Help parents understand the importance of visiting their child.
- ◆ Help the parents understand better ways to discipline their child.
- ◆ Praise the parents for positive, effective interactions with the child.

What must I do for the child?

- ◆ Take good care of the child and keep him or her safe (See the 'Keeping Children Safe Wherever You Go!' tip page in this manual).

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Home visits are required to check the child's safety and health

- ◆ Meet the child's daily needs.
- ◆ Take the child to appointments or make other arrangements.
- ◆ Make sure the child gets medical and dental care, including therapy and preventive care.
- ◆ Enroll the child in school or make sure the child's original school knows the child is staying with you. Work with the school to make sure the child is doing well.
- ◆ Give children positive feedback and listen to what they think is important.
- ◆ Encourage the child to express his or her emotions.
- ◆ Use positive discipline with the child (talk with the caseworker about ways to discipline).
- ◆ Try not to say bad things about the parents to the child.
- ◆ The worker will look at the conditions in your home.
- ◆ The worker will ask to see where the child sleeps.
- ◆ The worker may talk to the child alone, depending on the child's age.
- ◆ If CPS remains involved after the investigation, a FBSS caseworker will see the child once a month or more depending on what is happening with the family.
- ◆ The caseworker may need to visually examine the child.

When does the child visit his or her parents?

CPS usually encourages parents and children to continue to see each other when they are not living together. Depending on the case, you may be asked to sit in on these visits in your home. These visits may upset the child but this is normal and it is important to keep the child and parent in contact. In some cases, the investigator or FBSS caseworker may sit in on the visits or arrange for visits outside of your home.

Supervised visits include watching how the parent interacts with the child during a visit. You may be asked to watch for the things listed below.

- ◆ How the parent handles the child's behavior.
- ◆ The parent-child relationship, including attachment and communication skills.
- ◆ How the parent cares for the child.
- ◆ How the child reacts to the parent.

What if the child has special needs?

Talk to your caseworker. Your caseworker can work with you and the parents to come up with a plan to meet these needs.

Will the CPS caseworker visit my home?

Yes. From time to time, the CPS caseworker will make home visits to check on the child's safety and health. These visits may be announced or unannounced. Home visits also give you a chance to get answers to your questions. This is what you may expect during the visits.

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You are expected to share what you see with the caseworker. You may do this in writing or by talking to the caseworker.

Can I discipline the child?

The Safety Plan may say what types of discipline you may use. CPS discourages physical discipline. The child must be able to learn from discipline and it must be helpful, fair, and consistent. It must make sense and be due to a specific action. You are expected to talk to the child in a way that the child understands. Below are some ways to do this.

- ◆ Tell the child what he or she did wrong.
- ◆ Tell the child why you are disciplining him or her.
- ◆ Make sure the child knows how long the discipline will last.
- ◆ If the child can do something to end the discipline period, make sure the child knows about it.
- ◆ Discuss what you think is good behavior.

Before you decide how to discipline the child, make sure you consider the child's actions, age, earlier experiences, and reaction to discipline.

The time-out method should be supervised by an adult and last only one minute for every year of the child's age. For example, if the child is 3 years old, the time-out should last only 3 minutes. If you have questions about discipline, talk with your caseworker.

Allowable Forms of Discipline

Discipline must suit the child's age, circumstances, and developmental needs. No discipline should cause any kind of bruising or injuries. It is important to:

- ◆ Set routines for the child.
- ◆ Set reasonable limits that the child understands.
- ◆ Act the way you want the child to act.
- ◆ Offer choices to the child.
- ◆ Explain the discipline to the child.
- ◆ Repeat instructions to the child.
- ◆ Use time outs.
- ◆ Make sure the consequences make sense or are natural to the child.
- ◆ Reinforce the behavior you want from the child.

What kind of help is available?

You may be able to get financial assistance and other help to care for the child. See the "Federal Government Assistance" and "Finding Help in Texas" section at the end of this booklet. For most government aid, you will need:

- ◆ A Texas driver's license or other picture ID.
- ◆ A Social Security number for each adult and child (or proof that you have applied for a number).
- ◆ A document that provides proof of your relationship to the child.
- ◆ Proof of income.

As a relative or close family friend caring for a child, you may be able to get help and financial aids to help care for the child

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Voluntary Caregivers can apply for benefits for the child

- ◆ Proof of assets.
- ◆ Proof of rent and utilities costs.

If you are related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption, you may receive a “child-only” grant and Medicaid through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) manages this program. If you qualify and are a grandparent, great-grandparent, or great-great grandparent, you may be able to get an additional onetime payment of \$1,000. HHSC has a new booklet about the benefits for grandparents raising their grandchildren. The booklet is available at HHSC offices across the state. Call 211 to find the TANF office nearest you or you can download it at http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/032608_Grandparents_Brochure.pdf.

Here are a few organizations that provide information to grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

- ◆ AARP (1-800-424-3410 or www.aarp.org/grandparents)
- ◆ Generations United (www.gu.org)

Will CPS pay for child care?

CPS may be able to help pay for child care, so talk to your caseworker. Remember that CPS cannot pay for any child care that happens before CPS approves those services. CPS will give you the exact date for when child care services that it will pay for may begin.

Federal Government Assistance

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

This tax credit is extra income for working people with children. It is available to grandparents and other family members only if they work and have at least one “qualifying child” living with them. To qualify, the caregiver and child must live in the same home for more than six months of the year and their home must be in the United States. This tax credit can help because you may be eligible for a tax refund even if you owe no income taxes. You can find more information on the IRS website (www.irs.gov) You can also get help with IRS letters or fix tax account issues by phone, toll free at 1-800-829-1040 (TDD 1-800-829-4059) between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Food Stamps (also known as Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, SNAP)

Food stamps help low-income families buy healthy food from local food stores. This help is for qualifying families, elderly people, and single adults. For more information, call 211 or visit the Your Texas Benefits website at <http://yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov/programs/snap/>

Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration provides social security cards and supplemental security income (SSI) and family and survivors benefits.

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Call 211 for information about health and human services in your area

- ◆ You can get Social Security Cards by applying for either a new or replacement card.
- ◆ You do not have to be the child's legal guardian to get a Social Security card for the child.
- ◆ U.S. citizens need a copy of the child's birth certificate or passport.

Call toll free 24-hours a day at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). Social Security representatives are able to speak with you between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Survivors Benefits, and Family Benefits

These programs give aid to those who have worked long enough and are elderly or disabled and to grandparents and other relatives raising children who are disabled (SSI), or whose parents are disabled, retired, or deceased.

To qualify for these benefits, children, parents, and caregivers must meet the criteria of each program. If you are a relative who is caring for children who get these benefits, you will need to apply in order to be the one who receives the benefits.

More information on these programs is available at www.ssa.gov/pgm/getservices-apply.htm. You can also contact the Social Security Administration for more information.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

TANF provides monthly financial aid to families who qualify. This program also helps children who have not had parental

support or care. Children who are eligible for TANF are also eligible for Medicaid. <http://www.tanf.us/texas.html>

Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)

WIC can help grandparents and other relatives buy healthy food for the children in their care. WIC also offers nutritional screening for low-income pregnant women, women with babies 11 months or younger, and children younger than age 5. This program is managed by the Texas Department of State Health Services. For information on how to apply for WIC call 1-800-942-3678 or visit your local WIC office. Office locations and more information about this program can be found at www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/default.shtm

Finding Help in Texas

2-1-1

Calling 211 is a free, easy way to get information about services in your area. Dialing 211 will not work if you are calling from outside Texas. You must dial the service provider directly in that case. You can also search the 211 Texas Database online at www.211texas.org

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a program where members share their experiences, strengths, and hopes to help other defeat and recover from alcoholism. You only have to want to stop drinking to join AA. Members go by their first names and confidentiality is highly guarded. There are no dues or fees for membership. The main goal is to stay sober and help other alcoholics get sober. www.aa.org

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If CPS staff doesn't respond to your case complaint call DFPS Office of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-720-7777

Al-Anon and Alateen

These are support groups for people who have been affected by someone else's drinking. They may be parents, children, spouses, partners, brothers, sisters, other family members, friends, employers, employees, or coworkers of alcoholics. For meeting information you can call 1-888-4AL-ANON (1-888-425-2666). www.al-anon.alateen.org/

Case Information or Complaints

You can contact the DFPS Office of Consumer Affairs if you have a complaint about how your CPS case is handled. It is a neutral office that will take an unbiased look into your case to make sure DFPS policy and procedure were followed and make recommendations. You can reach them by calling 1-800-720-7777, by e-mail (oca@dfps.state.tx.us) or on the web at [https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact Us/Inquiries and Complaints](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/ContactUs/InquiriesandComplaints)

You can call the Health and Human Services (HHSC) Ombudsman office at 877-787-8999 if you have problems or complaints about a state agency health and human service or program.

Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting

The public can report abuse or neglect by calling the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or online at www.txabusehotline.org

Always call 911 in an emergency. An emergency is a situation where a child seems to be unsafe or in danger of abuse or neglect that could cause death or serious harm.

Child Care

Find child care in your area by visiting www.TxChildCareSearch.org. Learn about the need to use regulated child care at www.DontBeInTheDark.org

Child Care Assistance

The Child Care Assistance program of the Texas Workforce Commission helps eligible parents pay for child care. The requirements for this aid vary in different regions of the state. More information about the program can be found at www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/ccinfo.html. To find out if you can get subsidized child care, contact your Workforce Solutions office. This number can be found by calling 211 or at www.twc.state.tx.us/dirs/wdas/directory-offices-services.html

Child Support Payments

Even though you may be caring for a child in your home, the parents may be financially responsible. The Texas Office of Attorney General enforces child support orders in Texas. For non-custodial parent information, visit childsupport.oag.state.tx.us/wps/portal/csi/Faqs

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI)

ECI services are for families with children up to three years of age who are delayed in their development. These delays may affect a child's ability to walk, talk, crawl, understand, see, or hear. For more information or to refer a child, call 1-800-628-5115 (TDD/TTY 1-866-581-9328) or visit www.dars.state.tx.us. CPS may automatically refer the children to ECI if needed.

Head Start Program

Head Start is a child development program for children from low-income families. Children ages three to five years can attend. Early Head Start provides learning and development services for

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Need a lawyer? Call 1-800-252-9690 or the Legal Hotline for Texans at 1-800-622-2520

families with children younger than age three. Call toll-free 1-866-763-6481 or see the website at www.txhsa.org

Legal Services

A court may get involved if the child's parents do not follow their Family Service Plan or new safety issues come to light. The court may give CPS or someone else legal custody.

If at any time you want to ask the court for custody of a child, you have the right to talk to your own lawyer. DFPS cannot offer private legal advice and this manual does not do that. You must get an attorney of your own to get legal advice about seeking legal rights to or legal custody of a child. If you cannot afford a private attorney, there are resources and legal aid organizations that you can contact. You can call the State Bar of Texas Legal Referral line at 1-800-252-9690 or see www.texasbar.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Can_t_Afford_a_Lawyer

The State Bar does not provide legal aid or promise that it will be available to you. If you are 60 years or older or a Medicare recipient, you may qualify for free advice from the Texas Legal Services Center at 1-800-622-2520. <http://www.tlsc.org>

Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA)

The Texas Department of State Health Services provides community mental health services for adults and children. You can find services in your area by calling the number for your local mental health authority. You can get this number by calling 211, or at www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhservices-search/

Texas Education Agency (TEA)

TEA oversees Texas public school districts. They also provide information about special education and other federal programs to help students with special needs. www.tea.state.tx.us

Your Texas Benefits

Your Texas Benefits lets you see if you are eligible for programs provided by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and other state agencies. www.yourtexasbenefits.com

Important Terms

Child Protective Services (CPS)

The list below shows some of the things that CPS does.

- ◆ Investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children.
- ◆ Provides services to children and families in their own homes.
- ◆ Places children in foster care when necessary to keep the child safe.
- ◆ Places children in adoptive homes when a court takes away the rights of the parents.
- ◆ Provides services to help foster kids when they become adults.

Court-Ordered Participation

A court can order a parent or parents to participate in services if they appear unwilling to cooperate with the services CPS is recommending. This is done so children can remain safe in their own homes or with voluntary caregivers.

Department of Family and Protective Services (Department or DFPS)

This is the parent agency of CPS. The list below shows some of the things the Department does.

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A Family Plan of Service is an agreement between CPS and the parents

- ◆ Protects children and the elderly.
- ◆ Protects adults with disabilities who live at home.
- ◆ Protects adults with disabilities who are in state care.
- ◆ License group day-care homes, day-care centers, and registered family homes.

Family Based Safety Services (FBSS)

CPS services that help families strengthen their ability to protect the children and reduce threats to the child safety.

Family Group Conference (FGC)

A meeting that CPS, the child's family, the child, extended family, and close friends attend. This meeting may happen during an FBSS case. Participants make a plan for the safety and well-being of the child. The meeting includes private "family time" and coming up with tasks to support the family and keep the child safe. Family Team Meetings are one type of Family Group Conference.

Family Service Plan

A written agreement between CPS and parents to address safety concerns for the child. The goal is to keep the child safe and, if possible, safely return the child home. The plan also includes the services CPS will provide and tasks for the family to complete.

Family Team Meeting (FTM)

This is a meeting of CPS, family, relatives, friends and other professional during a CPS case. Participants make a plan to keep the children safe and well cared for. These meetings help the family quickly organize and respond to concerns about a child's safety.

FBSS Caseworker

The caseworker who helps the parents, child, and caregivers meet the goals in the Family Service Plan.

Home Assessment

This is a report on the safety and condition of the home of any person being asked to care for a child in a CPS case.

Home Visit

From time to time, a CPS worker will visit the home where the child is living. These visits are to check on how the child and family are doing with the tasks given to them. The caseworker also may check the home for safety hazards. These visits may be announced or unannounced.

Parental Child Safety Placement (PCSP)

This is when a parent picks another home for the child to live in when CPS finds safety issues in an investigation or FBSS case. The child may stay in this other home while the parents get services and deal with issues that put the child at risk. This type of placement helps avoid legally removing children from their parents, reduce disruption for the family, and ensure the safety of the child.

Safety Plan

A Safety Plan is a written agreement between CPS and the family. The plan spells out what needs to be done to make sure the child is safe right away. The caseworker can change the active safety plan, if needed.

Voluntary Caregiver

A person who agrees to take care of a child whose parents are involved in a CPS investigation or FBSS case.

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Important Information About Children in Your Care



Child's Birth Name _____

Social Security #	Date of Birth
Allergies	Medication
Biological Mother Address/Phone #	Biological Father Address/Phone #
Caseworker Address/Phone #	Supervisor Phone #
School/Daycare Phone #	Doctor's Name Phone #

Child's Birth Name _____

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Biological Mother Address/Phone #	Biological Father Address/Phone #
Caseworker Address/Phone #	Supervisor Phone #
School/Daycare Phone #	Doctor's Name Phone #

Keeping Children Safe Wherever You Go!

Kids like to explore. It's part of growing up. It can be risky sometimes, but there are things you can do to help keep kids safe.

Safe Sleep

The ABC's of Infant sleep:

A – Sleep alone

B – On their back, with no blankets or bedding

C – In a crib and cool

S – In a smoke free room

Do:

- Do not put babies to sleep alone on their backs in a crib or on another firm surface with a tight-fitting bottom sheet. If the baby leaves a dent in the bed, it's too soft.
- Do keep babies away from second hand smoke.
- Dress the baby lightly and control the room temperature.
- Do breast feed and use pacifiers. Both may lower risk of sudden death.

Don't:

- Don't put a baby to sleep with blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, or bumper pads.
- Don't cover a baby's face or let a baby cover its face with anything.
- Don't let a baby sleep with older kids.
- Don't sleep with a baby, especially if you have been using alcohol, drugs, or medicines that make you sleepy. Don't sleep with a baby when you are very tired.
- Don't put a baby to sleep on chairs, sofas, futons, beanbags, or cushions.
- Don't put babies to sleep on soft beds such as pillow-tops, waterbeds, or memory foam. If the baby leaves a dent in the bed, it's too soft.
- Don't expose babies to smoke.



Car Safety

- Always use car and booster seats. The law says you must put kids, under the age of two, in a car seat that faces backward and is installed in the back seat of the car. Older kids must be in booster seats or car seats until they are 8 years old or reach 4-foot, 9-inches tall.
- Talk to your kids about the dangers of playing around cars and watch them closely when they're around cars.
- Check to make sure that there are no children nearby before you get into a car to drive.
- Never leave a child alone in a car, no matter how short the stop or the weather, even if the windows are cracked.
- Use reminders that your child is in the back seat. Leave something you need in the backseat like your purse or phone or leave a stuffed animal or toy in the front seat.

Water Safety

- **Watch kids around water at all times.** Don't read or talk on the phone or anything that takes your attention off the child.
- Make sure you know who is supposed to watch the child around water.
- **Never leave a baby alone in a bath for any reason.** Get what you need before you start. Take the baby with you if you leave.
- Never leave small children alone near water. This includes pools, lakes, bathtubs, or even toilets.
- Make sure toddlers can't get out of the house and get into pools, hot tubs, or any body of water.

*For additional tips, resources, and support: HelpandHope.org and [Facebook.com/4MyKid](https://www.facebook.com/4MyKid)
Texas Abuse Hotline: [1-800-252-5400](tel:1-800-252-5400) or TxAbuseHotline.org*



Keeping Children Safe Wherever You Go!

Gun Safety

Here are ways to keep a child from getting a loaded gun:

- Keep your gun unloaded when you are not using it.
- Don't store bullets and guns in the same place.
- Use cable locks or trigger locks.
- Use locks with no keys – like combination, magnetic, or electronic locks.
- Store guns in a lock box, vault, or safe.

Teach your child what to do if he or she sees a gun:

1. Stop & don't touch
2. Leave the area
3. Tell an adult

Poison Prevention

- Keep all medicine out of the reach and sight of children.
- Use the dosing device that comes with the medicine. The right dose is important, especially for young children. Teaspoons or tablespoons used for cooking do not measure the same amount as the dosing device.
- Store household products, cleaners, and chemicals out of sight and reach of children. Don't store them under the kitchen sink and in the bathroom. Remember that kids may get into other places like a purse or side table.
- Keep cleaning products in their original containers. Don't put a product that may be poison in something other than its original container.

TV & Furniture Tip Overs

- Secure TVs and furniture so they can't tip over.
- Mount flat TVs to the wall so they can't be pulled down. Follow the maker's instructions to make sure you have a secure fit.
- If you have an old box TV, put it on furniture that is low, stable, and designed for the size and weight of the TV.
- Use brackets, braces, or wall straps to secure furniture to the wall.

Help with Caring for Your Child

We all need help taking care of kids while we are working or just need to make a quick trip to run to the store. Before you ask someone to care for your child, think about these things:

- **Do they really want to do it?** Boyfriends, girlfriends, family members or others often feel like they can't say no. So, it's important to have an honest talk first. If they don't feel comfortable caring for your child, it's far safer to ask someone else.
- **Are they good with kids?** Can they meet my child's needs? It is important to think about whether they have the knowledge, ability, patience, and experience to care for children.
- **Can they handle the job?** Are they physically able to care for your child? Does their schedule let them meet your child's needs or is it during a time when they may need to sleep or do something else? Are they flexible if you need them to watch your child longer than expected?
- **Do they know how to handle a crying child?**
 - ❖ A healthy baby cries a lot in the first 12 weeks of life. Babies tend to cry more and more between the 2 and 6 weeks of life. That can put a lot of strain on parents and anyone watching the baby.
 - ❖ Sometimes even adults need a timeout. Be sure to ask for help if you are getting stressed out or it's getting to be too much!
 - ❖ NEVER SHAKE A BABY! Shaking a baby can cause brain damage and even death.

For additional tips, resources, and support:

HelpandHope.org

Facebook.com/4MyKid

Texas Abuse Hotline

1-800-252-5400 or

TxAbuseHotline.org





AUTHORIZATION AGREEMENT FOR NONPARENT RELATIVE OR VOLUNTARY CAREGIVER

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This authorization agreement is made in conformance with Chapter 34 of the Texas Family Code concerning the following Child:

Child's Full Name:

Date of Birth:

Parent completing this form:

Full Name:

Physical Address:

Telephone Number:

Other contact information:

Child's other parent:

Full Name:

Physical Address:

Telephone Number:

Other contact information:

Parent voluntarily authorizes the following relative or Parental Child Safety Placement voluntary caregiver to make certain decisions regarding the child, as listed on the next page of this authorization agreement.

Name:

Relationship to Child (check one):

Child's Grandparent Child's Adult Sibling Child's Aunt or Uncle

Parental Child Safety Placement Voluntary Caregiver in accordance with Child Protective Services

Physical Address:

Telephone Number:

Other contact information:

PARENT AND RELATIVE OR VOLUNTARY CAREGIVER UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE
REQUIRED BY LAW TO IMMEDIATELY PROVIDE EACH OTHER WITH INFORMATION
REGARDING ANY CHANGE IN THE OTHER PARTY'S ADDRESS OR CONTACT
INFORMATION.



AUTHORIZATION AGREEMENT FOR NONPARENT RELATIVE OR VOLUNTARY CAREGIVER

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Parent authorizes the above named relative or voluntary caregiver to perform the following acts in regard to the child and the relative or voluntary caregiver assumes the responsibility of performing these functions:

- (1) To authorize medical, dental, psychological, surgical treatment, and immunization of the child, including executing any consents or authorizations for the release of information as required by law relating to the treatment or immunization;
- (2) To obtain and maintain health insurance coverage for the child and automobile insurance coverage for the child, if appropriate;
- (3) To enroll the child in a day-care program or public or private preschool, primary or secondary school;
- (4) To authorize the child to participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, civic, social, or recreational activities, including athletic activities;
- (5) To authorize the child to obtain a learner's permit, driver's license, or state-issued identification card;
- (6) To authorize employment of the child; and
- (7) To apply for and receive public benefits on behalf of the child.
- (8) This authorization agreement does not confer on the relative or voluntary caregiver of the child the right to authorize the performance of an abortion on the child or the administration of emergency contraception to the child

To the best of the parent's and the relative's or voluntary caregiver's knowledge (check if applicable):

This child is not the subject of a current (pre-existing) valid authorization agreement, and no parent, guardian, custodian, licensed child-placing agency or other agency makes any claim to actual physical possession or care, custody or control of the child that is inconsistent with this authorization agreement.

To the best of the parent's and the relative's or voluntary caregiver's knowledge (choose one from below):

THERE IS NO COURT INVOLVEMENT WITH THIS CHILD

All of the following statements must apply:

- There is no court order or pending suit affecting the parent-child relationship concerning the child.
- There is no pending litigation in any court concerning custody, possession, or placement of the child or access to or visitation with the child.
- The court does not have continuing jurisdiction concerning the child.

THIS CHILD HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A COURT ACTION

The court with continuing jurisdiction concerning the child has given written approval for the execution of the authorization agreement accompanied by the following information:

- The county in which the court is located;
- The number of the court; and
- The cause number in which the order was issued or the litigation is pending.

Please staple a copy of the court's order to this agreement.



AUTHORIZATION AGREEMENT FOR NONPARENT RELATIVE OR VOLUNTARY CAREGIVER

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WARNINGS AND DISCLOSURES

This authorization agreement is an important legal document. The parent and the relative or voluntary caregiver must read all of the warnings and disclosures before signing this authorization agreement.

The parent and relative are not required to consult an attorney but are advised to do so.

A parent's rights as a parent may be adversely affected by placing or leaving the parent's child with another person.

This authorization agreement does not confer on the relative or voluntary caregiver the rights of a managing or possessory conservator or legal guardian.

A parent who is a party to this authorization agreement may terminate the authorization agreement and resume custody, possession, care, and control of the child on demand and at any time the parent may request the return of the child.

Failure by the relative or voluntary caregiver to return the child to the parent immediately on request may have criminal and civil consequences.

Under other applicable law, the relative or voluntary caregiver may be liable for certain expenses relating to the child in the relative's or voluntary caregiver's care, but the parent still retains the parental obligation to support the child.

In certain circumstances, this authorization agreement may not be entered into without written permission of the court. Examples of when court permission must be granted include when a court has entered a previous order granting custody or establishing a child support obligation.

This authorization agreement may be terminated by certain court orders affecting the child.

This authorization agreement does not supersede, invalidate, or terminate any prior authorization agreement regarding the child.

This authorization agreement is void if a prior authorization agreement regarding the child is in effect and has not expired or been terminated.

MAILING REQUIREMENTS:

When both parents do not sign the parent authorization agreement, a copy of the agreement **MUST** be mailed to the non-signing parent, unless that parent is deceased or has had his or her parental rights terminated. This authorization agreement is **void** unless:

1. The parties mail a copy of this agreement to a non-signing parent **not later than the 10th day** after the date the authorization agreement is signed, **by certified or international registered mail**, as applicable, **return receipt requested**.
2. If the parties do not receive a response from the non-signing parent before the 20th day after the date the copy of the agreement is mailed, the parties must mail a second copy of the agreement **by first class mail or international first class mail**, as applicable, to the parent **not later than the 45th day** after the date the authorization agreement is signed.

EXCEPTION TO MAILING REQUIREMENTS:

If a parent who did not sign the authorization agreement **does not have court-ordered possession of or access to the child who is the subject of the agreement**, the parent who is a party to the agreement does not have to mail a copy of the agreement to the non-signing parent if either of the following circumstances applies:

1. A protective order has been issued against the non-signing parent as provided under Chapter 85 of the Texas Family Code or under a similar law of another state for committing an act of family violence (as defined by Section 71.004 of the Texas Family Code) against the parent



AUTHORIZATION AGREEMENT FOR NONPARENT RELATIVE OR VOLUNTARY CAREGIVER

- who signed the agreement or any child of the parent who signed the agreement; or
2. The non-signing parent has been convicted of any of the following criminal offenses against the parent who signed the agreement or any child of the parent who signed the agreement:
 - o any offense under Title 5 of the Texas Penal Code (including murder, homicide, kidnapping, assault and sexual assault); or
 - o any other criminal offense in Texas or any other state if the offense involves a violent act or prohibited sexual conduct.

This authorization agreement (select one of the following two):

- Expires on this date: _____ OR
 Is valid until revoked in writing by either party

In addition, check here if you want the agreement to continue in effect after your death or during any period of incapacity.

Execution of a subsequent authorization agreement does not by itself supersede, invalidate, or terminate a prior authorization agreement.

By signing below, parent and the relative or voluntary caregiver acknowledge that they have each read this authorization agreement carefully, are entering into the authorization agreement voluntarily, and have read and understand all of the Warnings and Disclosures included in this authorization agreement.

<p>_____ PARENT Printed name:</p> <p>SUBSCRIBED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BEFORE ME on this ____ day of _____, 20____.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ Notary Public in and for the State of TEXAS</p>
<p>_____ PARENT** Printed name:</p> <p>SUBSCRIBED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BEFORE ME on this ____ day of _____, 20____.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ Notary Public in and for the State of TEXAS</p>
<p>_____ RELATIVE OR VOLUNTARY CAREGIVER Printed name:</p> <p>SUBSCRIBED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BEFORE ME on this ____ day of _____, 20____.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ Notary Public in and for the State of TEXAS</p>





Voluntary Caregiver Manual

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