

Commissioner Transitions

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General Northstar Care Commissioner Transition Information

Northstar Care for Children legislation and resulting program changes for child welfare became effective January 1, 2015.

Northstar Care slowly phases in as the previous programs phase out. Commissioner transitions are part of the phase-in process. Children who are already with one of the Pre-Northstar Care (or legacy) programs remain with them unless they experience a transition. There are a number of transitions that move foster children into Northstar Care. However, a child who has already become a permanent part of a new family can move into Northstar Care only through a commissioner transition.

Therefore, a commissioner transition is the only route for children to move from Relative Custody Assistance (RCA) or from Legacy Adoption Assistance (LAA) into Northstar Care. Unlike the other types of transitions, which result from developments within the case, a commissioner transition is always initiated by DHS.

Commissioner transitions can never move a young person from pre-Northstar foster care to Northstar Foster Care. If a status transition doesn't apply, then the young person remains in legacy foster care (or they age out, are reunified, etc.).

There are four pre-Northstar or legacy programs:

- Legacy Foster Care (LFC)
- Relative Custody Assistance (RCA)
- Legacy Adoption Assistance (LAA)
- Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD)

There are two main types of commissioner transition:

- Commissioner transition from Relative Custody Assistance (RCA) to Northstar Kinship Assistance
- Commissioner transition from Pre-Northstar Adoption Assistance to Northstar Adoption Assistance

There are also two more unusual types:

- Commissioner transition from Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD-K) to Northstar Kinship Assistance
- Commissioner transition from Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD-A) to Northstar Adoption Assistance

The Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project was open 2005-2010 and demonstrated many of the ideas built into Northstar Care.

Eligibility

Eligibility has already been established for commissioner transitions. The child has already been deemed eligible for one of the Pre-Northstar Care legacy permanency programs. At this point DHS does not anticipate any further eligibility test for commissioner transitions.

In other words, any child who moves from RCA, AA, or Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD) into Northstar Care through a commissioner transition is automatically qualified to be part of Northstar Kinship Assistance or Northstar Adoption Assistance, as appropriate.

Order of Commissioner Transitions

Commissioner Transition order will be decided according to the Commissioner's designated protocol, in this order:

1. **Commissioner transition from Relative Custody Assistance (RCA) to Northstar Kinship Assistance (NKA).** This process will include adjustment for relative custodians with multiple children. Siblings with the same relative custodian will be flagged and adjustments will be made to transition these children together.
2. Commissioner transition from Legacy Adoption Assistance to Northstar Adoption Assistance
3. Commissioner transition from Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD-K) to Northstar Kinship Assistance
4. Commissioner transition from Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD-A) to Northstar Adoption Assistance

In order to focus our efforts, children who turn 16 or older will not receive commissioner transitions. The commissioner transition is a lengthy process, and we want to focus on those who will be able to benefit from Northstar Care for a minimum of two years.

Focus on RCA to Northstar Kinship Assistance

For the first few years, commissioner transitions will focus on the first priority commissioner transitions from Relative Custody Assistance (RCA) to Northstar Kinship Assistance (NKA). Therefore, the rest of this job aid focuses on that type of commissioner transition.

Monthly Payment Amount for Commissioner Transition

A new benefit level and monthly payment amount will be in the worksheet that accompanies the DHS notification to the relative custodians. Most RCA to NKA transitions will receive the alternate rate (as against the full rate; see [Common Question #14](#)). The Northstar Kinship Assistance monthly payment amount will be at least 30% higher than the current total benefit amount, including RCA, MFIP, and SNAP. This will be based on payment calculations in the county's current RCA Worksheet for the child.

No MAPCY is required for children transitioning from RCA to NKA. Relative Custodians will be notified of this new benefit level in a letter from DHS approximately 3 months before the transition date; agencies will receive a copy of this letter.

Security Functions

The new Security Administration function for Commissioner Transitions is: Access Commissioner Transitions. This is necessary to add to the roles of staff working on Commissioner Transitions, including viewing the commissioner transition log, performing verifications, and printing the new Benefit Agreement.

Additional Resources: Commissioner Transitions and Northstar Care for Children

- [Northstar Care for Children Practice Guide](#)
- [Minnesota Statutes Chapter 256N. Northstar Care for Children](#)
- [Northstar Care for Children webpage](#) on [County Link](#)
- [Bulletin #14-32-11: Northstar Care for Children Maintenance and Supplemental Difficulty of Care Payment Rates](#)
- Questions can be emailed to Northstar.Care@state.mn.us

Commissioner Transition Workflow for Agencies

Prepare for Commissioner Transitions

Agency designates a Commissioner Transition "point person". DHS notifies agency point person that agency children have been identified for pending Commissioner Transitions. *Children to transition will be added to the Transition Log about 5 months prior to their transition date. Children have a status of "Transition Identified", which indicates an estimated transition date has been determined and it's time for the agency to begin verification.*

1. Commissioner Transition Verification

Agency staff complete a Commissioner Transition Verification worksheet for all identified children on the Commissioner Transition log within 30 days.
The child status changes to "Transition Verified".
(This triggers DHS to send a notice to the relative custodian 3 months prior to the transition date.)

2. Commissioner Transition Letter from Agency

Agency Staff send a letter to the relative custodians about the child's transition from RCA to NKA benefit; a template letter is in SSIS called Commissioner Transitions Letter from County- Notification to Relative Custodian.

3. DHS Commissioner Transition Letter - 3 month notice

DHS sends letter to the relative custodians: DHS Commissioner Transition Letter -3 month.
DHS also sends a copy of this letter to the Agency staff identified in the Commissioner Transition Verifications.
This changes the status to "Transition Initiated" and the Transition date is now "fixed".

4. Completing the Benefit Agreement

After the agency receives the DHS Commissioner Transition letter, the agency completes and prints: A Commissioner Transition – Benefit Agreement Cover Letter, a Commissioner Transition Benefit Agreement – RCA to NKA, and a Substitute W-9 form. The relative reviews all three documents. The Benefit Agreement and the Substitute W-9 form should be completed and signed by the relative custodian(s). The agency signs and sends the Benefit Agreement to DHS and *may* also send in the Substitute W-9 form (or relative can send in the W-9).

5. Transition Complete

The Benefit Agreement and the W-9 are received and processed by DHS. The child status changes to Transition Complete.
The agency must end the RCA payment and MFIP (but continue MA) one day prior to the Transition date.
(Ending RCA and MFIP payments can be done only after staff complete the Commissioner Transition Verification.)

1. Commissioner Transition Verification

Completing a Commissioner Transition Verification is the first step for agency staff to complete in the process. This is completed from the Commissioner Transition Log. **This Verification must be completed within 30 days of the child being placed on the Commissioner Transition Log.** It is important for the Verification information to be accurate. This information autofills into the new Benefit Agreement and provides DHS with contact information for the Transition.

Searches/Logs – Commissioner Transition Log

The screenshot shows the 'Searches/Logs' application interface. The left sidebar contains a list of search and log options, with 'Commissioners Transition Log...' highlighted. The main window displays the 'Commissioners Transitions' table and a form for editing a transition.

Name	Name	Agency	Transition Status	Est Transition Date	Transition Date	Birth Date	Legacy P
Leroy, Jones	Leroy, Jones	Aitkin	Transition verified	5/1/2015		7/26/2014	RCA
Samantha, Fox	Samantha, Fox	Aitkin	Transition identified	5/1/2015		7/31/2007	RCA

The form below the table shows the details for the selected transition (Leroy, Jones):

Commissioners Transition **Income Offsets**

Name: Leroy, Jones Transition Status: Transition verified

Est. Transition Date: Transition Date: Legacy Program: RCA Legacy Finalized Date: Infant Payment Level: E Child Payment Level: E Teen Payment Level: E

Alternate Rate

Action ▼

There are two tabs under the child, **Commissioner Transition** and **Income Offsets**. The Commissioner Transition tab contains basic information about the child: **Name, Transition Status, Estimated Transition Date, Transition Date, Legacy Program, Legacy Finalized Date, Infant Payment Level, Child Payment level, Teen Payment level**, and a check box for the field **Alternate Rate**. For an explanation of the Alternate Rate, see [Common Question #14](#).

The **Income Offsets** tab documents if the child is receiving federal benefits that would “offset” the benefit amount after the transition is complete. These four income offsets are: RSDI (Social Security), Veterans Benefits (VA), Railroad Survivors Benefits, and Black Lung Benefits. The additional fields on this tab are: Child Name, Reporting Date, Does the child receive any of the following, Total Income Offsets, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). *Agency staff does not have to take any action on this tab.*

Commissioner Transitions tab

Name	Name	Agency	Transition Status
Dixie Inn, Louisiana Sue	Dixie Inn, Louisiana Sue	Aitkin	Transition initiated
Larose, Louisiana Susan	Larose, Louisiana Susan	Aitkin	Transition initiated
Leroy, Jones	Leroy, Jones	Aitkin	Transition initiated
Lillie, Louisiana Wendy	Lillie, Louisiana Wendy	Aitkin	Transition identified
Lydia, Louisiana Amy	Lydia, Louisiana Amy	Aitkin	Transition identified
Samantha, Fox	Samantha, Fox	Aitkin	Transition initiated
Terance, Teak Laurence	Terance, Teak Laurence	Aitkin	Transition identified
Thomas, Fox Mark	Thomas, Fox Mark	Aitkin	Transition verified

Commisioners Transition Income Offsets

Name: Transition Status:

Est. Transition Date: Transition Date:

Legacy Program: Legacy Finalized Date:

Infant Payment Level: Child Payment Level: Teen Payment Level:

Alternate Rate

Income Offsets tab

ini	Name	Name	Agne	Transition St	Est Transiti	Transition	Ch	In	Birth Date
▼	Leroy, Jones	Leroy, Jones	Aitkin	Transition verif	5/1/2015		E	E	7/26/2014
	Samantha, F	Samantha, F	Aitkin	Transition iden	5/1/2015		K	K	7/31/2007

Commissioners Transition Income Offsets

Initial Income Offsets

Child Name:

Reporting Date:

Does the child receive any of the following Yes No

[RSDI: \(Social Security\)](#)

[Veterans Benefits \(VA\):](#)

[Railroad Retirement Benefits:](#)

[Black Lung Benefits:](#)

Total Income Offsets: Benefit amount will be adjusted to reflect Total Income Offsets

Additional Monthly Income Offsets

[Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\):](#)

To Complete Commissioner Transition Verification in SSIS:

1. Select **Searches and Logs**
2. Select **Commission Transition Log**
3. Select the child in the Treeview and expand that child's Person node.
4. Select the Permanency folder.
5. Access the Action menu and select **New Commissioner Transition**
6. Complete all items in the Verification screen: **Select a relationship for Relative Custodians**, **Verified** date, and **Verified by** fields.

Hint: Agency staff must verify with the relative custodian that the address in SSIS is correct, and if an update is needed, staff must update the address in SSIS to ensure all notices and payments will reach the relative custodian.

Commissioner Transition Verification

Type	Name	Start Date	End Date
Continuous Placement	Cont plcmt - 03/01/2011	3/1/2011	
Placement/Location/Absence	Placement - Legacy - 03/01/2011	3/1/2011	
Commissioner Transition	Commissioner Transition		

Form Fields:

- Create Date: 01/30/2015
- Transition Status: **Transition Verified**
- Business Organization: Victoria Falls
- Primary Mailing Address: Zambia Zimbabwe
- Financially Responsible Agency: Aitkin
- Legally Responsible Agency: Aitkin
- Relationships:
 - Select a relationship for Relative Custodians: Aunt/uncle
 - Verified date: 01/30/2015
 - Verified by: Banahah, Hannah

7. The Transition Status field changed to *Transition Verified*.

2. Commissioner Transitions- Notification to Relative Custodian

The next step for agency staff is to complete a **Commissioner Transition - Notification to Relative Custodian** for the Relative Custodians about the Commissioner Transition. This letter can be accessed from the Commissioner Transition Log; it is a person document.

To Send the Commissioner Transition - Notification to Relative Custodian:

1. From the Commissioners Transitions Log, select the Child and expand that child's Person node.
2. Select the Person Document folder, access the action menu and select **Commissioner Transition - Notification to Relative Custodian**.
3. Complete the document **Setup** tab.
4. Select the **Document** tab; review.
5. **Print**.
6. **Save**.

Commissioner Transition - Notification to Relative Custodian > Document tab

Type	Description	Date	Setup Complete
Document	Commissioner Transition - Notification to Relative Custodian	2/11/2015 9:48:01 AM	Yes

RTF Document Properties

02/11/2015

Gina Placed

78940 HAMPTON BLVD
SOME CITY, MN 55301

Dear Gina Placed and |

You will receive a notice from the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This notice informs you that Larose Susan Louisiana will receive a commissioner transition from the current Relative Custody Assistance (RCA) program to Northstar Kinship Assistance, part of Northstar Care for Children.

Please look for that notice and take action.

Minnesota is phasing out RCA and replacing it with Northstar Kinship Assistance. Northstar Kinship Assistance is an improvement over RCA. You must take action when you receive notice. If you do not act, benefits for your child will end.

Northstar Kinship Assistance has these advantages:

- The monthly net payment for your child will be higher.
- The monthly payment will increase each year to reflect cost of living.
- Payments are not reduced for child support and most other child income offsets, although a few remain.
- No annual RCA affidavit.
- No annual application for MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program, the cash payment) and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, food support), since

3. DHS Commissioner Transition Letter -3 month

When the Commissioner Transition Verification is completed by the Agency, SSIS notifies DHS. Approximately 90 days prior to the transition date, DHS will send a notice to the relative custodian(s). This letter contains information about the Commissioner Transition for the relative custodian. DHS also sends a copy of this letter to the Agency staff identified in the Commissioner Transition Verifications. The agency should save a copy. The Child status changes to *Transition Initiated*. At this point the transition date becomes “fixed”.

4. Completing the Benefit Agreement

Once the Agency receives the *DHS Commissioner Transition Letter -3 Month* letter, the agency can move forward with completing the Benefit Agreement process. Also, as of the transition date, the agency should now end RCA payments and MFIP, but continue MA (MA is unaffected by the transition).

DHS recommends that the Agency contact the relative custodian(s) and offer to meet with them. In this meeting the agency worker should provide information about Commissioner Transitions. Meeting with the relative is recommended so that their questions can be answered and the agency can ensure that the documents required are completed. Alternatively, the agency can offer to complete the process with the relative custodian(s) through the mail.

Additionally, the agency should provide the following documentation to the relative custodian(s).

- Commissioner Transition – Agreement Cover Letter
- Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement
- [Substitute Form W-9](#)

The recommended “best practice” is for the relative custodian(s) to sign the new benefit agreement, complete the Substitute W-9 form, and return both to the agency contact. This makes sure the documents reach the appropriate state offices timely, thereby ensuring that the child’s benefit will continue after the Commissioner Transition date as a Northstar Kinship Assistance (NKA) payment.

Next, the agency must send the benefit agreement to:

Minnesota Department of Human Services
Child Safety and Permanency Division
Permanency Support Unit
PO Box 64944
St. Paul, MN 55164-0944

The Agency may also send the [Substitute Form W-9](#) to Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB); *OR the relative custodian may independently submit this* to:

Minnesota Management & Budget
400 Centennial Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Substitute W-9 form

http://mn.gov/mmb/images/w-9-form-swift.pdf



400 Centennial Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155
Fax: (651) 797-1306
Vendor: mmbefax@state.mn.us

SUBSTITUTE FORM W-9

Name and Address _____ DATE: _____
 _____ VENDOR NUMBER: _____

SUBJECT: Request for Taxpayer Information. (Failure to furnish a taxpayer identification number makes you subject to a penalty of \$50.)

The purpose of this form is to obtain or confirm your correct taxpayer name and identification number. Federal and state tax regulations require that we have this information from recipients of certain payments in order to report such payments to the Internal Revenue Service on the Form 1099 Return.

Please complete items 1, 2, and 3 below. If you have any questions, phone (651) 201-8201 for assistance. Send, fax or e-mail the completed form to the address in the upper right corner.

1. Check your tax filing status below and enter your social security number or federal employer identification number. If you have been issued a separate Minnesota tax identification number, write it in the space provided. If you have recently applied for a taxpayer number, write "Applied For" in the space for the number.

<p>(Check One)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual: Use SSN</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietorship: Use SSN or FEIN</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Corporation: Use FEIN</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> S Corporation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Legal Partnership: Use FEIN</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tax Exempt Organization: Use FEIN and list the section number of the IRS code under which you are claiming exemption: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please explain on reverse side and include a tax number.</p>	<p>____ _ -- ____ -- ____</p> <p>SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)</p> <p>____ _ -- ____</p> <p>FEDERAL EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION (FEIN)</p> <p>____ _ -- ____</p> <p>MINNESOTA TAX ID. NUMBER (IF APPLICABLE)</p>
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2. Print the full name belonging to the social security number or employer identification number written above.

3. Certification. Under penalty of perjury, I certify the number shown on this form is my correct taxpayer identification number.

Signature _____ Phone No.: _____ Date _____

PRIVACY ACT NOTICE - Internal Revenue code Section 6109 requires you to furnish your correct taxpayer identification number to payers who must file information returns with IRS. IRS uses the numbers for identification purposes and to help verify the accuracy of your tax return. Payers must generally withhold 28% of taxable interest and certain other payments to a payee who does not furnish a TIN to a payer.

FOR MMB USE ONLY	TYPE	IND	TIN	USED

To Complete a Commissioner Transition - Agreement Cover Letter:

1. From the Person Documents folder, access the action menu and select **New Document**.
2. From the Template Search, select **New Commissioner Transition - Agreement Cover Letter**.
3. Complete the **Set-up** tab
4. Select the **Document** tab. **Click** the blue **E** button to edit or print the letter.

Commissioner Transition - Agreement Cover Letter > Document tab

Type	Description	Date	Setup Complete
Document	Commissioner Transition - Benefit Agreement Cover letter	2/11/2015 9:55:48 AM	Yes

Setup **RTF Document** Properties

E

02/11/2015

Gina Placed

78940 HAMPTON BLVD
SOME CITY, MN 55301

RE: Northstar Kinship Assistance
Child: Larose Susan Louisiana Date of Birth: 10/09/2011

Enclosed is an original copy of your Northstar Kinship Assistance Benefit Agreement. Please review the agreement carefully to ensure that you understand its terms and conditions.

As you know, Minnesota is phasing out RCA and replacing it with Northstar Kinship Assistance, an improvement over RCA.

Northstar Kinship Assistance Benefit Agreement
In order for payments to begin you must:

- Sign and date the Benefit Agreement.
- Return the Benefit Agreement to me.
- If you do not sign and return this agreement, your child's benefits will end.

Northstar Kinship Assistance Payments
After your Benefit Agreement is received and signed by the commissioner, your benefit

To complete a new Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement:

1. From the Person Documents folder, access the action menu and select **New Document**
2. From the Template Search, select **Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement**.
3. Information from the verifications autofills into the new benefit agreement.
4. Complete all fields on the Setup tab. Select the **Document** tab.
5. Review the RTF Document tab; **Click** the blue **E** button to edit or print the letter.

Hint: Successor Identified is a new section in the new RCA to NKA Benefit Agreement, which was not previously included in the Benefit Agreements. This is required by the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act. Relative custodian(s) may name successor; while it is

now an option is it not required that they do so. More information is available in [SSIS Update #413](#).

Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement > Setup tab

The screenshot shows the 'Setup' tab of the 'Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement' document. The document title is 'Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement' and the timestamp is '1/29/2015 10:00:58 AM'. The 'Setup' tab is highlighted in red. Below the tabs, there is a message: '6 required fields needed to complete.' The form fields are as follows:

- Document template:** Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement
- Description:** Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement
- Status:** Draft
- Finalized date:** (empty)
- Document:** Northstar Kinship RCA CT Benefit Agreement
- Elements:**
 - Creation Date:** (empty)
- Agency:**
 - Agency:** Test County Family Services
 - Agency name:** Test County Family Services
 - Is agency county or region:** Yes
- Participant:**
 - Participant:** Velma X Vaughn
 - Name:** Velma X Vaughn
 - First name Last name:** Velma Vaughn
 - Date of birth:** September 01, 2012
 - 18th birthday:** September 01, 2030
- Commissioner transition:**
 - Commissioner transition:** (empty)
 - Relative custodian 1:** (empty)
 - Relative custodian 2:** (empty)
 - Legally responsible agency:** (empty)
 - Financially responsible agency:** (empty)
 - Mailing address:** (empty)

At the bottom of the form, there is an 'Action' dropdown menu.

5. Transition Complete- Northstar Care Benefit begins

Agency staff signs document and provides to relative(s) for them to sign. This should be sent to DHS; a copy should be sent to tribe as applicable. Additionally a copy should be provided to the MA office in child's county of residence. Once the Benefit Agreement is received and the W-9 is

processed by the State, payments may begin. The child's Transition Status changed to *Transition Complete*. The agency must ensure that as of the transition date, RCA and MFIP are ended, but MA continues (MA is unaffected by the transition).

Common Questions

1. What if the agency does not complete the required verifications?

The completion of Commissioner Transition is required by state law. Ultimately, if this is not completed, the child cannot transition from RCA into NKA.

2. How long does the agency have to complete Verification?

Agency staff should complete a Commissioners Transition Verification within 30 days of the child being on the Commissioner Transitions Log. Once the Verification is complete, the transition will move forward and RCA and MFIP payment should end one day prior to the Transition date. If the new Benefit Agreement is received and processed at DHS, the NKA benefits will start the day after RCA benefits end, on the Transition date.

3. If the relative custodians do not return the signed *RCA to NKA benefit agreement* to DHS after the 3 month transition notification letter will DHS take any action to help the child receive the NKA benefit?

To encourage relative custodians to complete the Benefit Agreement, DHS will send letters 2 months prior and 1 month prior to the Transition date to all relative custodians of children with a *Transition Initiated* status form where no Benefit Agreement has been received.

4. What does the relative custodian need to do to receive the child's new Northstar Kinship Assistance benefit?

Relative custodians who sign their new Benefit Agreement and submit their W-9 form promptly should see no interruption in their child's benefits. The previous RCA benefits will end the day before the transition date and the new Northstar Kinship Assistance benefits will start effective the transition date.

However, if the relative custodians do not sign their new Benefit Agreement and submit their completed W-9 form in time to get to the state 45 days ahead of the transition date, then their child's benefits will be interrupted. When everything is in order, payments will go retroactive to the transition date.

5. If the Transition date passes and DHS has not received a Benefit Agreement, is there any way for the child to receive the NKA benefit?

Yes. Again, DHS will notify the relative custodians who have been "verified" by the agency but for whom no Benefit Agreement has been received by DHS by the Transition Date that their RCA benefits have stopped as of that date. The notice will also provide information for the relative custodians to sign a Benefit Agreement during a grace period of 3 months after the Transition Date. Similar letters will be sent one month after and two months after the transition date. Three months *after* the Transition Date, DHS will send a 7th and final letter to the relative custodians stating that they are no longer eligible to transition from RCA to NKA benefit; this will include appeal information.

6. Can relative custodians who have not yet been identified “volunteer” for a commissioner transition?

No. DHS will be following the priorities identified by the state-county-tribal workgroup.

7. Can relative custodians “opt-out” of the transition from RCA benefit to NKA benefits on behalf of the child?

No.

8. Does the agency need to do a MAPCY assessment for a commissioner transition?

No. Since DHS determines the new monthly payment amount in reference to the current RCA benefit, no MAPCY is required for children transitioning from RCA to NKA. However, relative custodians may request a MAPCY reassessment if a year or more has passed since the transition date. Because there is a 30% increase already built into the commissioner transition, it may be more difficult to get a higher amount through the MAPCY reassessment process.

9. For the children transitioning from RCA to NKA, will the NKA benefit be eligible for Title IV-E reimbursements?

Not likely. DHS is exploring potential options with the federal government.

10. Does the Agency have to do any calculations for the new benefit rate for RCA to NKA Commissioner Transitions?

No. All calculations are completed by DHS (see Monthly Payment Amount for Commissioner Transition on page 3 for more information).

11. What if a Relative Custodian(s) has several kids, will they all be transitioned at the time?

Yes and No. DHS will look at and attempt to transition siblings who are with the same relative custodian. However, children age 16 and older will not be transitioning from RCA to NKA benefits. Children under age 16 will be transitioned at the same time when possible.

12. We see a section in the Benefit Agreement regarding “Successors”. What do we have to do about this?

This revised section M. Assignment and Successors is required by a recent federal law. It will appear now in **all** Northstar Kinship Assistance Benefit Agreements, not just those for commissioner transitions. It gives relative custodians the **option** to name up to five successors, in the same way that parents might use a will to name successor guardians for their children.

This is an option and is not required. Whether or not they exercise the option in the original Benefit Agreement, relative custodians may add or change named successors at a later date through an amendment to the Benefit Agreement. If successors are named, the successor may not be the child’s legal parent, biological parent, step-parent, or another adult living in the house of the legal parent, biological parent, or step-parent.

If the relative custodian dies or becomes incapacitated, there are additional steps to confirm the named successor as the child’s new relative custodian. These additional steps include a background study, renegotiation of the agreement, and court action, The Northstar Kinship

Assistance benefit could then follow the child to the successor relative custodian and, if applicable, Title IV-E eligibility could also follow.

13. What is the Income Offsets tab?

Income offsets don't apply very often, but sometimes need to be included in the payment calculations. Relative Custody Assistance considers many income offsets, but Northstar Kinship Assistance and Northstar Adoption Assistance consider only four. If income from those four sources is received on behalf of the child, then the monthly total payment will be offset (reduced) by that amount. The four kinds of income which count toward an Income Offset are financial benefits through:

- Retirement Survivor's Disability Insurance (RSDI),
- Veteran's Benefits,
- Railroad Retirement Benefits, or
- Black Lung Benefits.

If the child were in foster care, these and other sources of income would automatically be redirected to the agency issuing the foster care payments. In Northstar Kinship, these sources of income are paid instead to the relative custodian(s).

All applicable income offsets are included on the county's current RCA Worksheet. These are figures included here. In most instances, a smaller amount of income offsets will apply to Northstar Kinship Assistance than applied to RCA. No annual affidavit needs to be completed, but the relative custodians must report to DHS when the amount changes. If the relative custodians state that the income offsets are incorrect, they should sign the Benefit Agreement and then have that be their first report to DHS.

14. What is the "Alternate Rate" as opposed to the "Full Rate"?

The alternate rate is the equivalent of the Pre-School Entry Rate.

As specified in state law, most commissioner transitions will receive the alternate rate. This means that the monthly basic payment and the monthly supplemental payment are half what they would be in foster care. For instance, one supplemental level is currently worth \$50/month as against \$100/month for the full rate.

In calculating the amount for Northstar Kinship Assistance for a commissioner transition, DHS uses these alternate rates to build a replacement monthly payment that is at least 30% higher than the combined monthly amount under RCA from all sources: RCA, MFIP, and SNAP. Because this 30% increase has already been included, it may be more difficult to get a higher amount through the MAPCY reassessment process.

15. How does DHS calculate the new benefit amount?

DHS starts with the payment calculations in the county's current RCA Worksheet for the child. DHS constructs a monthly comparison amount by adding up the current amounts received on behalf of the child, including the RCA payment, MFIP cash amount, and all other income offsets, plus estimated SNAP. This monthly comparison amount is then increased by 30 percent. Then DHS determines what combination of Northstar Care basic and supplemental level would be at least that much. As specified in statute, most commissioner transitions use the alternate rate in these calculations.

These calculations are shown in the worksheet that accompanies the DHS notice to the relative custodians, including the monthly comparison amount.

16. How can I get other questions answered?

For policy questions, contact Northstar.care@state.mn.us or 651-431-4485

For technical SSIS questions, contact your agency mentor/coordinator or contact the SSIS Help Desk at dhs.ssishelp@state.mn.us or 651-431-4801.