



Bulletin

NUMBER

#15-68-03

DATE

February 25, 2015

OF INTEREST TO

County Directors

Tribal Directors

Child Care Assistance
Program Administrative and
Client Access Contacts

Child Care Aware Agencies

ACTION/DUE DATE

Please read information
and prepare for
implementation

EXPIRATION DATE

February 25, 2017

Child Care Assistance Program Policies for Northstar Care for Children

TOPIC

Child Care Assistance Program policy related to Northstar
Care for Children.

PURPOSE

Provide information and instructions on policy.

CONTACT

Contact your Child Care Assistance Program technical
liaison or submit your question through PolicyQuest

SIGNED

JAMES C. KOPPEL
Assistant Commissioner

TERMINOLOGY NOTICE

The terminology used to describe people we serve has
changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human
Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

I. Northstar Care Background

Effective January 1, 2015, children entering foster care or experiencing a change in placement or legal status may be eligible for Northstar Care for Children (Northstar Care). The goal of Northstar Care is to improve permanency for children in Minnesota by:

- Reducing the number of children who leave foster care without a permanent family
- Reducing the benefit discrepancies between permanency options
- Reducing the length of stay for children in out-of-home care
- Increasing the percentage of children adopted within 24 months of entry into foster care.

The three components of Northstar Care are:

- Northstar Foster Care for children in family foster homes and youth in extended foster care – supervised independent living
- Northstar Kinship Assistance for eligible children who have a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative
- Northstar Adoption Assistance for eligible children who are adopted.

The existing pre-Northstar Care (or legacy) programs are retained for children already in them, but gradually phased out as children exit. Pre-Northstar programs include:

- Foster care with the Difficulty of Care assessment process
- Relative Custody Assistance (RCA), and
- Adoption Assistance.

II. Child Care Assistance Program Eligibility

To receive child care assistance, the applicant must be the parent, step-parent, legal guardian, legal guardian's spouse, eligible relative caregiver, or eligible relative caregiver's spouse, of the child. The relationship of the child to the applicant must be verified.

- **Legal guardian** means a person has been appointed or accepted as guardian by a court of jurisdiction or tribal law.
- **Eligible relative caregiver** means a person who is a caregiver of a child receiving a Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) grant or who is an MFIP participant and the caregiver of a child.

A. Northstar Foster Care

Foster parents

Foster parents cannot receive child care assistance for children in foster care. Foster parents can receive child care assistance for their own legal children if all other program requirements are met. Children in foster care are not included in the foster parents' household size.

B. Northstar Kinship Assistance

Relative Custodians

Kinship Assistance caregivers (relative custodians) can receive child care assistance for children in Kinship Assistance if they are the legal guardian or eligible relative caregiver of the child, and all other program requirements are met:

- **Legal guardian** means a person has been appointed or accepted as guardian by a court of jurisdiction or tribal law.
- **Eligible relative caregiver** means a person who is a caregiver of a child receiving a Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) grant or who is an MFIP participant and the caregiver of a child.

Kinship Assistance caregivers cannot receive child care assistance for children in Kinship Assistance if they are not the legal guardian or eligible relative caregiver.

Kinship Assistance caregivers can receive child care assistance for their own legal children if all other program requirements are met. Children in Kinship Assistance are included in the caregivers' household size.

C. Northstar Adoption Assistance

Adoptive Parents

Applicants with adopted children can receive child care assistance for their legal and adopted children, if all other program requirements are met. The adopted children are included in the applicants' household size.

III. Child Care Assistance Program Income

A. Northstar Care Payments

Northstar Care payments for Foster Care, Kinship Assistance and Adoption Assistance are excluded income for child care assistance. Northstar Care payments can be entered on the Unearned Income window in Minnesota Electronic Child Care System (MEC²) as "Other Excluded".

B. Pre-Northstar Payments

1. Unearned Income

The previously existing pre-Northstar Care (or legacy) programs are retained for children already in them, but gradually phased out as children exit. The following payments made under the pre-Northstar Care programs continue to be counted as unearned income for child care assistance:

- Relative Custody Assistance
- Legacy Adoption Assistance basic maintenance and supplemental needs payments

2. Excluded Income

The following payments made under pre-Northstar Care programs continue to be excluded from income for child care assistance:

- Legacy Foster Care payments
- Nonrecurring lump sum income that it is earmarked and used for the purpose for which it is intended (this includes some legacy Adoption Assistance payments).

IV. Northstar Care Child Care Allowance

A Northstar Care child care allowance may be available for families not receiving child care assistance. Families are encouraged to apply for the Child Care Assistance Program, if they are eligible, since it is likely to cover more of their child care costs.

County agencies must ensure that families receiving child care assistance do not receive a Northstar Care child care allowance. Prior to approving a Northstar Care child care allowance through the Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth (MAPCY), it is recommended that the county check to see if the family is receiving child care assistance.

Child care workers do not need to verify whether or not a family is receiving a Northstar Care child care allowance. However, if it is discovered that a family received a Northstar Care child care allowance while receiving child care assistance and the family continues receiving child care assistance, the county must ensure that the Northstar Care child care allowance through the Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth (MAPCY) ends.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-3809 (voice) or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.