

Raising Your Kin

What's Happening

No matter why or how they came to live with you, your relative's children will benefit from being in your home. When children cannot be with their parents, living with a family member may provide:

- Fewer moves from place to place
- The comfort of a familiar language, culture, and family history
- A chance to stay with siblings
- More contact with their parents, depending on the situation

What You Might Be Seeing

Despite these benefits, the children will face some unique challenges.

- They may feel insecure and unsure that you will take care of them.
- They may act out or challenge you.
- They will miss their parents.
- They may be anxious or depressed.
- They may seem young or act too old for their ages.

What You Can Do

It will take time for your relative's children to feel safe and secure in their new home with you. You can encourage these good feelings in a number of ways:

- Set up a daily routine of mealtimes, bedtime, and other activities.
- Help the children feel "at home" by creating a space just for them.
- Talk to the children, and listen when they talk to you.
- Set up a few rules and explain your expectations. Then, enforce the rules consistently.



- Reward positive behavior. When children make mistakes, focus on teaching rather than punishing.
- Be as involved with their school as you can, and encourage your children to participate in school activities.

This is a big job, and you may need help from your community. Here are some suggestions:

- Help with housing or other bills, clothing, or school supplies may be available in your community to help you meet the children's needs.
- Join or start a support group in your neighborhood. Often there are local kinship caregivers support groups.
- Ask for help and referrals from a church leader, the counselor at the children's school, or a social services agency.
- If necessary, get professional help to address any special needs your relative's children may have, such as medical care, mental health care, or special education. Use respite care if it is available.

Remember: Parenting a relative's child brings special challenges and special joys. Do not hesitate to ask for help or seek services in your community for yourself and your children.

For more information on support for kin raising children, visit Information Gateway's Supporting Kinship Families at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/kinship/support/>.
