

## Kinship Specialist Questions and Responses

**PROPOSALS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN April 24, 2026, BY 5:00 PM CDT**

RFP #19748

BUYER: Department of Social Services

POC: Kirsten Blachford

[Kirsten.Blachford@state.sd.us](mailto:Kirsten.Blachford@state.sd.us)

Q1: From page 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph: “Children with a plan of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) who remain in custody until adulthood will require an ongoing kinship search to identify long-term support and connections.”

How many children with a plan of AAPLA are there in care each year?

On average, how long does a child with a plan of APPLA remain in care and is in need of ongoing kinship searches?

A1: How many children with a plan of AAPLA are there in care each year?

Children with a plan of APPLA are ages 16-18.

	<b>12 Month Average SFY25</b>
<b>Number of children in care with goal of APPLA as of the end of each month</b>	<b>34</b>

On average, how long does a child with a plan of APPLA remain in care and is in need of ongoing kinship searches?

We do not currently have data readily available to determine how many children with a permanency plan of APPLA would require ongoing kinship searches. However, all children with a plan of APPLA who are not placed with kin, or who do not have kin identified as a lifelong connection, would require an ongoing kinship search.

	<b>SFY 2023</b>	<b>SFY 2024</b>	<b>SFY 2025</b>	<b>3 Year Average</b>
<b>Number of Children Discharged with Goal of APPLA</b>	12	13	12	<b>12</b>
<b>Average Months in Care for children with goal of APPLA who discharged from care</b>	47.7	79.3	57.7	<b>61.6</b>

Q2: Section 3.2.2.8: How often does the state anticipate Kinship Locator staff to participate in case planning meetings and court hearings per each case?

A2: This would be an optional service, based on the location and availability of the kinship specialist. This might be appropriate when the kinship specialist has been unable to make contact with the parents or other family members by other methods, like phone or letter.

Q3: Section 3.2.4.5: Regarding the immediate notification of Family Services Specialist, how does this notification interact with the referral for the home study process?

A3: Section 3.2.4.5 requires that the Provider send a letter to a potential placement resource within five (5) business days of the resource expressing interest in placement. The Home Study Referral is expected to be completed within fourteen (14) days of the provider's expressed interest. During this same fourteen (14) day timeframe, the Specialist is responsible for notifying and collaborating with the FSS to ensure the referral is accurate and meets policy requirements.

Q4: Section 3.2.4.5: What is the definition of immediate for this notification, e.g. 24 hours?

A4: In section 3.2.4.6, attempts should be made to notify the FSS regarding a potential placement on the same business day or next business day and continue until the Referral for Licensed Kinship Home Study is completed. The Family Services Specialist is responsible for assessing the family as a potential expedited kinship placement.

Q5: Section 3.3.1.5: What does the initiation of ICPC processes entail? What ICPC paperwork and/or processes would the offeror be expected to complete?

A5: The Kinship Specialist is responsible for sending the five (5) day letter to the family and completing the Interest in Potential Placement form. The Kinship Specialist would then provide the form and notify the Family Services Specialist (FSS). The Family Services Specialist is responsible for completing the ICPC packet and submitting the request for a home study.

Q6: 3.3.1.1 & 3.3.1.2 – Regarding completing an initial assessment: Is there an identified assessment model CPS uses that would be used by the offeror?

A6: CPS policy would be utilized regarding the initial assessment for a Licensed Kinship Home Study.

Child Protection Services (CPS) must complete an initial evaluation of a kinship family or life-long connection for the child(ren) before requesting a Licensed Kinship Home Study.

1. A discussion must take place between the kinship family and the designated Kinship Specialist or Family Services Specialist regarding the family's physical, emotional, and cognitive ability to care for the child(ren). This conversation must also cover the current household members and the family's financial capability to provide care. The following questions must be discussed and documented in the FACIS Relative Search Screen.

a. Have you or any members of your household ever been convicted of a crime involving harm to children, a crime of violence, a sex crime, a felony conviction for spousal abuse, or a drug-related crime, or have had a felony conviction in the past 5 years?

b. Have you, or any member of your household, struggled with misuse or addiction of alcohol or drug(s)?

c. Do you, or any member of your household have a mental health or medical diagnosis or have a history of mental health or significant medical needs?

d. Have you or any member of your household, ever been assessed in connection with an allegation of child abuse or neglect?

2. The kinship family must understand that medical issues, criminal history, behavioral history involving substance abuse or mental health, or child abuse or neglect history does not automatically disqualify the kinship family to apply for care. The kinship family must

understand that these incidents are discussed and assessed in relation to the family's ability to provide safe and adequate care to the child(ren). If a family reports a substantiated history of abuse or neglect that occurred more than five years ago, they are provided information, by email or in person, on how to have their name removed.

3. If the permanent plan for the child is reunification, discussion must occur with the kinship family to assess the ability for the child to complete family time, and how the kinship family will continue to establish, support, or maintain the relationship between the child(ren) and parent or legal guardian.

4. The kinship family's ability to care for all children in a sibling group must be discussed, if applicable. If they are unwilling to care for all siblings, discussions must address how the children can maintain a strong connection with each other.

5. The kinship family's readiness to complete the licensed kinship home study must be discussed if the kin is interested in placement.

6. If a kinship family is unable or unwilling to serve as a placement for a child during the initial diligent search due to life circumstances, they must be provided with the current caseworker's contact information. Additionally, the family must be informed that the caseworker will continue to follow-up with the family to inquire on changes that may later allow the family to reconsider placement.

7. A summary of the efforts to evaluate the kinship family is documented in the FACIS Relative Search Screen by the designated Kinship Specialist or Family Services Specialist by the 9th of the following month.

8. If the initial assessment uncovers potential safety threats in the home that are non-negotiable for both licensing/approval of kinship foster care and approval of unlicensed kinship care, they must consult with the FSS & Supervisor regarding the request to not refer the kinship family for a home study.

9. A kinship family is not eligible to be referred for Licensed Kinship Home Study or to be approved for unlicensed kinship care if they meet one of these non-negotiables:

a. The kinship applicant discloses, or the department finds, criminal background or history of behavior that indicates an active threat of harm to children or significant diminished protective capacities.

b. The kinship applicant discloses, or the department finds, significant child protection involvement (initial family assessment, protective capacity assessment, out-of-home placement, or court action) that indicates an active threat of harm in the kinship home.

Q7: Section 3.4.2: Is monthly contact expected for families referred for a Licensed Kinship Home Study or for all families that express an interest in placement of kin?

A7: Monthly contact is expected with families who express interest in placement prior to the referral being sent to the Home Study Consultant. This requirement would primarily apply to families who self-report barriers to initiating the process or disclose criminal history or prior abuse and neglect concerns that require additional follow-up before a referral for a licensed kinship home study can be made. Once the home study referral is submitted, responsibility for ongoing monthly contact transitions to the Home Study Consultant and FSS.

Q8: Section 3.4.2: At what point in the process does the Kinship Specialist stop working with the Kinship family?

A8: Once the home study referral is submitted, responsibility for ongoing monthly contact transitions to the Home Study Consultant and the Family Services Specialist (FSS). The

Kinship Specialist may also discontinue involvement with a kinship family if the family indicates they are not related to the child, ruled out for placement, or no longer wish to be contacted regarding placement of the child. Families ruled out for placement may still be contacted ongoing to provide other kinship information. Additionally, the Kinship Specialist will request to be unassigned from the case once the child is placed in a stable kinship placement.

Q9: Section 3.4.2.4 states that “Kinship search efforts shall continue on an ongoing basis basis, occurring at least every 90 days...”

How long are cases expected to remain open before they can be closed?

Is the 90 days from referral or from when case is closed?

A9: The Kinship Specialist will request to be unassigned from the case once the child is placed in a stable kinship placement. The 90 days start after completion of the initial relative search and is ongoing every 90 days, until a decision regarding permanency is made. Families that were listed as unable to locate or continue to evaluate would be recontacted.

Q10: Section 3.4.2.4: In what ways does the offeror work with CPS before referrals for a Licensing Kinship Home Study are made?

A10: The Kinship Specialist will obtain any additional information as needed from the FSS and complete the Referral for a Licensed Kinship Home Study, submitting it directly to the Home Study Consultant. If additional information is required to complete the referral, the Kinship Specialist will collaborate with the FSS to address and resolve any barriers or determine next steps.