

MINNESOTA FAMILY SUPPORT & RECOVERY COUNCIL

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# Overview of Northstar Kinship Assistance

Kathleen Hiniker, MSW, LICSW  
 Jody McElroy  
 Heidi Ombisa Skallet, MSW, LISW

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## Agenda



- Provide basic overview of Northstar Care for Children
- Highlight benefits available under Northstar Kinship Assistance
- Review eligibility criteria for Northstar Kinship Assistance
- Discuss payment structure and modification
- Clarify parent and relative custodian roles
- Ask (and hopefully answer!) questions throughout

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# Northstar Care for Children Overview

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## Overview

- Effective Jan. 1, 2015
- "Benefit equalizer"
- New Title IV-E financial program for custody transfers
- New universal assessment tool (\*MAPCY\*)



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## Overview

- Three components
  - Northstar Foster Care
    - Family foster homes
    - Extended foster care-supervised independent living
  - Northstar Adoption Assistance
    - Adoption
    - Customary adoption
  - Northstar Kinship Assistance
    - Transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (TPLPC)



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## Northstar Funding Streams

- Northstar benefits can be:
  - Title IV-E (federal, state, local shares)
  - Non-Title IV-E (state and local shares only)
- Agencies must determine Title IV-E eligibility before considering non-Title IV-E



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**Northstar Benefits**

- Basic payment
  - Determined by age of child
  - Provides for child's food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision
- Supplemental Payment
  - Determined by MAPCY
  - Provides for extra care and attention needed to meet child's needs
- Alternate ("preschool") and full rate
- Monthly payment considered income and resources attributable to the child
  - Exempt from garnishment

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**Northstar Benefits**

- Medical Assistance (MA)
- Reimbursement of nonrecurring expenses associated with finalizing a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative (TPLPC)

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**Benefit Agreement**

- Legal contract between caregiver/DHS
- Terms, benefits/services to be provided, provisions for modification
- Templated information, but dynamic
- **Must be signed before TPLPC finalization**

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**Appeals**

- Caregivers can appeal:
  - MAPCY benefit amount
  - Eligibility denial
  - Payment/agreement modification or termination
  - When extenuating circumstances exist that resulted in finalization prior to fully executed benefit agreement



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**MAPCY & Rate Setting**

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**Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth (MAPCY)**

- Effective Jan. 1, 2015
- Determines supplemental monthly payments for foster care, adoption assistance, and kinship assistance within Northstar
- Collaborative process



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## MAPCY Overview

- Assesses child's well-being
- Acknowledges child's needs
- Considers developmental tasks
- Recognizes child's improvements
- Supports extra care and attention to sustain improvements



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## Monthly Payment

- Follow eligible child from foster care to permanency
- Payment based solely on MAPCY + Basic Per Diem
  - Cannot override benefit level



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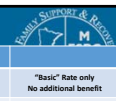
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## Rates

- Basic Rates
  - 0-5: \$650
  - 6-12: \$770
  - 13-21: \$910
- Supplemental MAPCY Benefit Levels
  - Approval at local agency
- Extraordinary Levels
  - Extraordinary Level increase can add up to five additional levels from the standard benefit level

Levels	
B	"Basic" Rate only No additional benefit
C	\$102
D	\$204
E	\$306
F	\$408
G	\$510
H	\$612
I	\$714
J	\$816
K	\$918
L	\$1020
M	\$1122
N	\$1224
O	\$1326
P	\$1428
Q	\$1530



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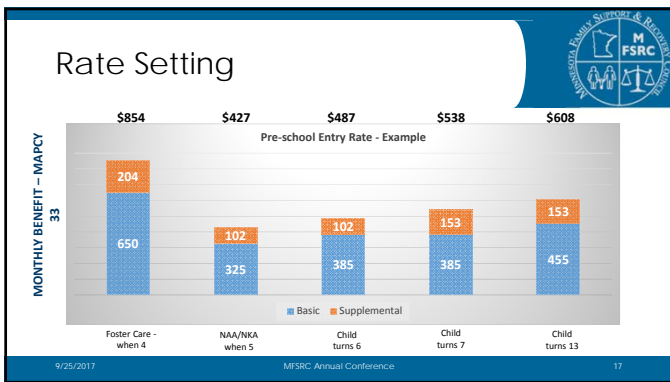
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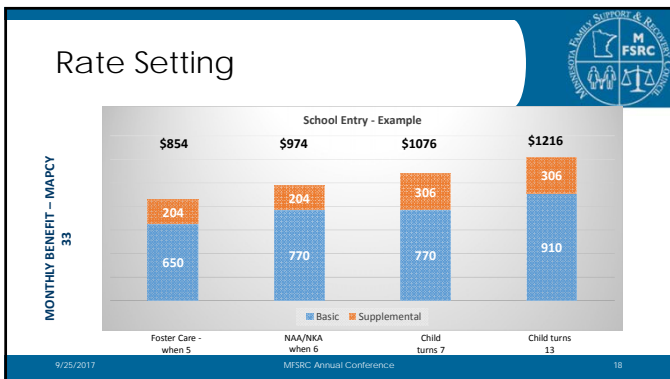
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## Payment Modification



- Payments may be modified when:
  - Income offsets increase, decrease, are added, are removed
  - Caregivers request reassessments
  - Child turns age 6 and age 13 (automatic modification)
  - Child turns age 7 and age 13 (child care)

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## Reassessments



- For a child in foster care:
  - Must be completed within 30 days of:
    - Placement change
    - Six months since initial assessment
    - Annually after the 6-month assessment
    - The request of the financially or legally responsible agency
- In all situations:
  - Must be completed within 30 days of:
    - The request of the commissioner
    - The written request of the caregiver (if less than 6 months, must provide written documentation of significant changes)

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## Post-Permanency Reassessments



- Reassessments may not be requested or conducted:
  - Between time benefit agreement becomes fully executed and the TPLPC is finalized
  - If less than 6 months have passed between previous assessment or reassessment

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# Income Offsets

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# Income Offsets

- Four main income offsets:
  - Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI)
  - Veterans benefits
  - Railroad retirement benefits
  - Black Lung benefits
- Other income received on behalf of the child may be considered an offset

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# Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- Not an income offset for Northstar benefits
- Northstar Kinship Assistance is an income offset to SSI and must be reported to the Social Security Administration

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## Child Support Payments

- For foster care: If a child receives child support, child support payments may be redirected to the agency
- For kinship assistance: NOT considered income attributable to the child
  - No impact on the monthly Northstar benefit (different from RCA)
  - Payment to relative custodian
  - Court may address child support/reserve for future

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## MFIP and Child Care Assistance Eligibility

- Child receiving Northstar benefits is excluded from the MFIP assistance unit
- Northstar benefits are not considered as income for child care assistance or any other financial benefit

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## Northstar Kinship Assistance Eligibility Criteria

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### Title IV-E Eligibility



- Child is US citizen/qualified alien
- Child is under 18 years of age
- Prospective relative custodian(s) and all required household members have approved Adam Walsh-compliant background studies
- Benefit agreement in place prior to TPLPC finalization

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### Title IV-E Eligibility



- Voluntary Placement Agreement or court order for removal
- Child lived with licensed prospective relative custodian for 6 consecutive months (exemption available)
- Agency has determined that:
  - Reunification and adoption are not appropriate permanency options for the child
  - The child has a strong attachment to the prospective relative custodian, and the prospective relative custodian is committed to caring permanently for the child
- Agency has consulted with the child, if age 14+, about permanency

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### Title IV-E Eligibility



- Siblings of a Title IV-E-eligible child do not need to meet the Title IV-E eligibility criteria from the previous slide, as long as the children are placed with the same relative custodian and the agency agrees it is in the children's best interests.

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# Establishing Benefits

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## Agencies Involved



- Financially responsible agency
  - Completes forms in SSIS
- Legally responsible agency
  - Provides information and documentation as needed
- Minnesota Department of Human Services
  - Reviews and confirms forms

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## Final Court Order



- Child support may be addressed
- Final court order needed to begin Northstar benefits
  - Agency, court administration, or relative custodian sends it in
- DHS reviews final court order
  - May be a delay of 1-2 months in first payment
  - Payments issued once/month, effective judge's signature date on final order

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## Medical Assistance (Medicaid)

- For Title IV-E Northstar Kinship Assistance:
  - County worker notifies county financial worker to close MA-FC in responsible county
  - DHS sends notice to open MA-KA in child's county of residence
- For Non-Title IV-E Northstar Kinship Assistance
  - Children are not categorically eligible
  - County worker notifies county financial worker to close MA-FC in responsible county
  - DHS sends notice to child's county of residence that there may be a kinship family applying for benefits

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## Extensions to Benefit Agreements

- Up to age 21
- Based on age of child at TPLPC finalization

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## Caregiver Roles and Responsibilities

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**The Parent**

- Has legal parent-child relationship with child
- Retains parental rights
  - Visitation
  - Access to information
  - Notice of accidents/serious illness
- Can be required to pay child support
- Can request modification of TPLPC court order

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**The Relative Custodian**

- Primary rights – can impose limits on parent’s rights
- Responsible for child’s protection, education, care, supervision, decision-making
- Authority to make all major decisions, such as school and medical treatment

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**First Contact**

- For prospective relative custodians
  - Contact your county/tribal worker with questions about the process prior to TPLPC finalization
  - Contact your DHS worker after finalization with questions about payments, reassessment requests, and reimbursements. **Email is strongly preferred/encouraged due to high caseload size**
- For kinship workers
  - Contact your agency's program consultant at DHS with questions



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**Second Contact**

- Heidi Ombisa Skallet, Agency Policy Specialist: 651-431-5889, [heidi.ombisa.skallet@state.mn.us](mailto:heidi.ombisa.skallet@state.mn.us)
  - Policy questions related to adoption, children under guardianship, TPLPC, Northstar Adoption Assistance, Northstar Kinship Assistance, RCA, and Family Reunification Act
- Kathleen Hiniker, Supervisor: 651-431-5890, [kathleen.a.hiniker@state.mn.us](mailto:kathleen.a.hiniker@state.mn.us)
- Mical Peterson, Supervisor: 651-431-4728, [mical.peterson@state.mn.us](mailto:mical.peterson@state.mn.us)
  - If you don't know your adoption/kinship assistance worker at DHS, contact Mical with questions about payments, post-permanency reassessments, reimbursements for non-recurring adoption/TPLPC expenses, and appeals
- Jody McElroy, Agency Policy Specialist: 651-431-4730, [jody.mcelroy@state.mn.us](mailto:jody.mcelroy@state.mn.us)
  - MAPCY, extraordinary levels, quality assurance



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**Thank you!**



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