

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 14: Guardianship and Adoption Section 01: Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP)	
	Effective Date: January 1, 2026	Version: 7

POLICY OVERVIEW

This policy does not apply to temporary guardianship. Relatives are ineligible for foster care payments or Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) payments if temporary guardianship is granted.

The Indiana Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) helps eligible children by giving support to their guardians. This support can come from federal Title IV-E funds or state funds. GAP is to help children find a safe and permanent home who may otherwise have to wait longer.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will provide GAP to eligible relatives of a eligible child when:

1. Guardianship is in the child's best interest, and
2. Reunification and adoption are not possible.

GAP Eligibility

All GAP applications must be sent to the DCS Central Eligibility Unit (CEU) at Centralized.eligibility@dcs.in.gov. To qualify for Title IV-E GAP the child must also be eligible for Title IV-E maintenance payments.

The **Guardianship Assistance Agreement** must be signed by all required parties **before** the court order for legal guardianship is entered.

Children who are wards of DCS or Juvenile Delinquency/Juvenile Status (JD/JS) case may be eligible if they meet the following:

1. The child is 13 years of age or older and has been consulted regarding the permanency option of legal guardianship.

Exception: A child under 13 years of age may be eligible for GAP if:

- The child is a sibling:
 - Who is placed in the same home as an eligible child; and
 - DCS and the guardian agree on the appropriateness of the guardianship arrangement for the child; or
- 2. The child has a medical condition or disability (physical, mental, or emotional) confirmed by a licensed doctor or psychiatrist and the condition or disability is approved through the Severe Impairment Determination process (see Resources).

DCS will contact the prospective guardian or their attorney and provide the Guardianship

Assistance agreement. If the offer is accepted signatures will be obtained.

GAP payments *shall* be suspended or ended if the guardian is no longer legally or financially supporting the child. This will take effect based on the date support ends

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 29-3-1-7.5: "Incapacitated person"](#)
- [IC 29-3-2-1: Application of article; jurisdiction of courts](#)
- [IC 29-3-8-9\(f\): Guardian obligation to support child who is GAP beneficiary](#)
- [IC 31-30-1-1: Exclusive original jurisdiction](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-17.8: "Child services"](#)
- [IC 31-9-2-107\(c\): "Relative"](#)
- [42 USC. 673\(d\): Kinship guardianship assistance payments for children](#)
- [465 IAC 4-2: Title IV-E Guardianship Assistance Program and State Guardianship Assistance Program](#)