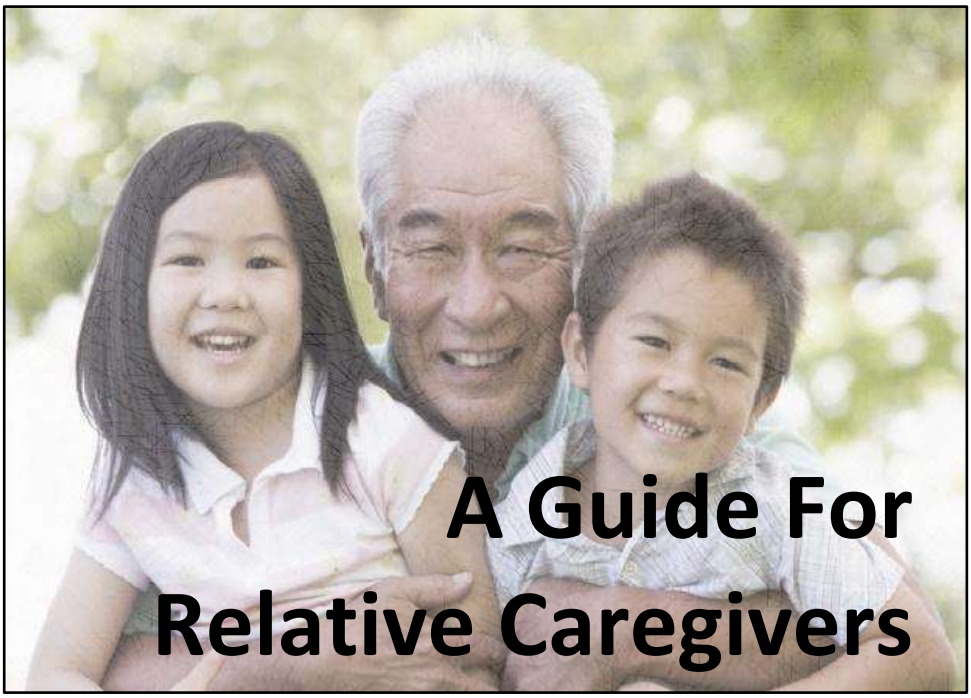

A Guide For Relative Caregivers

What type of caregiver is best for the child?

What court should you go through?

What does the law require of you and the child's parents?

What else do you need to know as a caregiver?

What resources and services are available?

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 3
Types of Relative Caregivers: An Overview
I. Becoming a Caregiver: A Court Guide..... 8
Informal Relative Caregivers
Foster Care Relative Caregivers
Legal Guardians- Juvenile and Probate and Family Court
Adoptive Parents
II. What's Expected of the Child's Parent(s)? 13
If you are an Informal Relative Caregiver
If you are a Foster Care Relative Caregiver
If you are a Legal Guardian through Probate and Family Court
If you are the Adoptive Parent
III. What Resources are Available? 16
Listed by Caregiver Type
IV. Things Every Caregiver Should Know..... 20
V. State-Wide Resource Guide..... 25
VI. Local Resource Guide..... 38
Glossary..... 62
Caregiver Affidavit.....65

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Introduction

There are thousands of children within the state of Massachusetts who do not live with their parents. Instead, they are usually cared for by family members who are referred to as relative or kinship caregivers.

If you are, or may become, a relative caregiver in Massachusetts, this guide will:

A) Help you decide what type of caregiver you will want to be for the child;
B) Describe the legal process for each type of caregiver;
C) Outline what resources are available for both you and the child.

You are a special type of caregiver. Under your care, children who cannot remain with their parents are given a sense of safety and stability. Research has shown that children do much better mentally, physically, and emotionally when living with a relative, rather than with an adult whom they do not know.

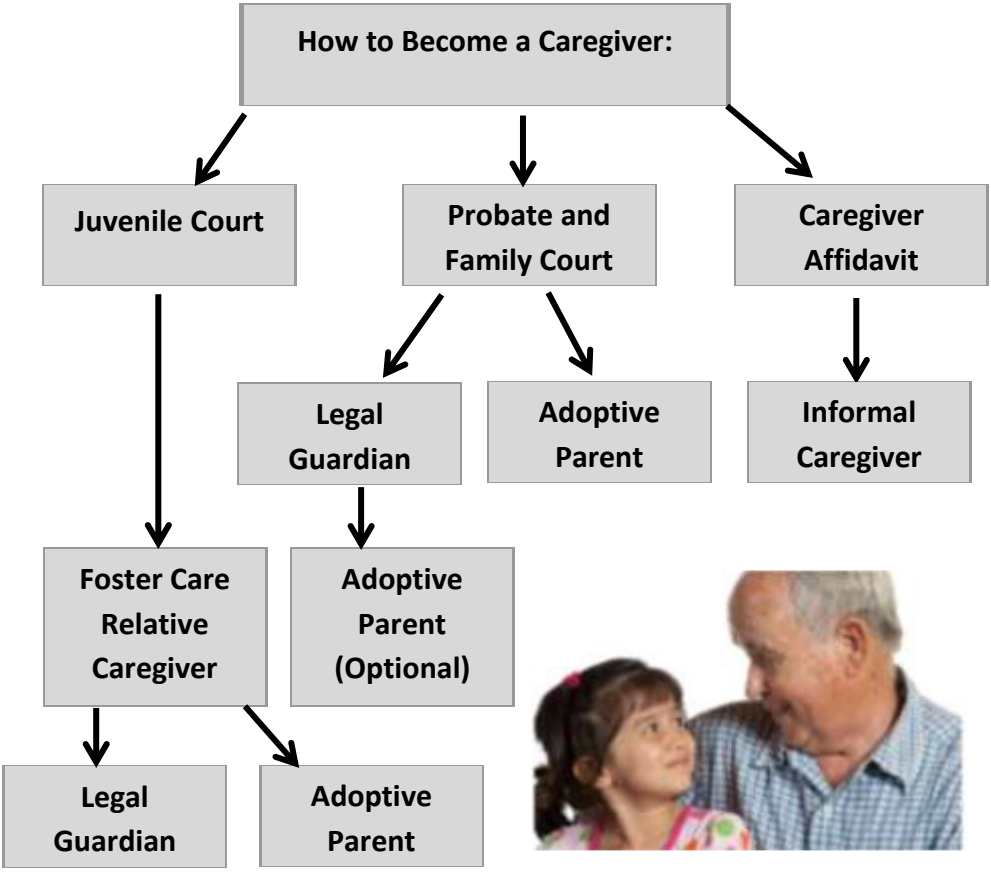
As you may know, caring for a child is not easy and can be extremely costly and tiring. However, most relative caregivers are unaware of the various resources that are available. Your access to specific resources depends on a few things:

- How you become a relative caregiver;
- What type of caregiver you are;
- What court system (**Juvenile** or **Probate and Family Court**) you work with.

Keep in mind: Relative caregivers do not have the same rights as the child's biological parent(s). This guide will explain why this is the case and outline your rights and responsibilities regarding the child.

This guide is not meant to be a “do-it-yourself” handbook or to provide legal advice. You will most likely require an attorney’s assistance at some point during your role as a relative caregiver. The information in this guide is based on federal law and the law of Massachusetts and the resources available to residents of Massachusetts.

This guide will refer to four different types of relative caregivers and help you decide which one you are. The next __ pages provide more information on the types of caregivers and the chart below shows how to become a caregiver.



Note: Many terms used in this document are defined in the glossary on page 62

1. Informal Relative Caregivers: These relatives care for the child based on an informal arrangement with the child's parent(s) and are *not* involved with either Probate and Family Court or Juvenile Court, *Department of Children and Families (DCF)*, or other authorities. The child's biological parent(s) still have custody, but the relative caregiver provides the everyday basic needs. See *Box A* for an example.

2. Foster Care Relative Caregivers: These are relatives who care for a child who has been removed from his or her parents' home and placed in the state's foster care system. Usually when the child is removed, DCF is given legal custody and can place the child with a relative who has been approved as a placement by DCF.

If the child and parent(s) cannot be reunited, the foster care relative caregiver can begin the process of obtaining legal guardianship through the Juvenile Court or move towards adoption. See *Box B* for an example.

Note: DCF always tries to place children with a relative or a close family friend (known as a *non-related extended family member*). If this is not possible, the child is temporarily placed with a licensed foster care parent.

Box A. Pamela has cared for her three grandchildren for the past five months. The children's mother, Jane, gave birth to her first child at age fifteen and now lives in another state with her boyfriend. Pamela has not taken any legal action to get custody of her grandchildren, so the court does not know the family's situation. Pamela is having a difficult time supporting her three grandchildren because she currently does not receive any benefits from the state of Massachusetts and will have difficulty enrolling the oldest child in school this year.

Box B. Susan is currently raising her sister's two young children who were found alone in their parents' apartment. Susan received a call one day when neighbors reported Mary to the Child-At-Risk Hotline. When a social worker from DCF arrived, the mother had returned but she was unstable and the worker noticed bruises on the children. They were immediately placed in state custody and temporarily placed under Susan's immediate care. Susan completed the state requirements through DCF and is now a licensed foster-care parent. She continues to care for her niece and nephew.

3. Legal Guardians*:* These caregivers work with the court system to get both *legal* AND *physical custody* of the child. Once this happens, the child's biological parent(s) cannot regain custody without an official court order. In the Juvenile Court, after the Department of Children and Families (DCF) files a *Care and Protection Petition* because of abuse or neglect, the court can decide to give custody directly to another person or to place the child in foster care through DCF. In Probate and Family Court, relatives can file a *Petition for Guardianship of a Minor*. The court could give legal custody to the petitioners without any help or support from DCF. See *Box C* for an example.

Box C. Beth and Tom, parents of Robert (age 4), were both called to serve in the Army at the same time. Tom's parents (the child's grandparents) filed a petition for guardianship with the Probate and Family Court, asking for legal custody of Robert. With legal guardianship, they now have the right to make decisions regarding the child, such as medical care and school enrollment. When the parents return from their service abroad they can ask the court to return custody to them.

4. Adoptive Parents*:* Relative caregivers who have officially adopted the child through court proceedings are referred to as adoptive parents. The biological parents either consent to the adoption or the court terminates their parental rights before the adoption is granted. See *Box D* for an example.

Box D. Claudia and Juan have been caring for their granddaughter, Isabella, since she was born. DCF placed Isabella in their care because her mother was addicted to drugs while pregnant and Isabella had been prenatally exposed. Isabella's biological father has never been identified and her mother was unable to complete parenting classes and drug rehabilitation ordered by the court. After caring for Isabella for two years as relative foster care parents, Claudia and Juan adopted Isabella.

Section 1 | Becoming a Caregiver: A Court Guide

Which path will work best for both you and the child? There are two courts that make custody decisions for caregivers: the **Juvenile Court** and the **Probate and Family Court.** This information is provided to help you understand the court systems and their relationship with the type of caregiver you are. While you may have related to some of the characters in the personal stories you have read, for example, it is very important to remember that every case is different. Relative caregiving can be a complicated, detailed process. If necessary, seek legal advice to get the information and answers specific to *your* case before making any legal decisions.

Informal Relative Caregivers

This type of caregiver does not go to court to get custody. Because the informal relative caregiver nurtures a child on a more casual level, he or she may face certain problems. Let's hear more of Pamela's situation. See *Box E.* As an informal caregiver whose grandchildren live with her, Pamela can sign a *caregiver affidavit* (page 65) that allows her to make important decisions on the children's behalf. While the affidavit does not give you custody of the child, it does allow you to enroll the child in school and authorize health care for the child. Since the parent(s) still has legal custody, decisions regarding the child should be made together—between you, the caregiver, and the

Box E. Pamela does not have any of her grandchildren's important documents, such as their birth certificates or social security cards. She is having trouble getting immunizations and enrolling the oldest in kindergarten. If she could locate Jane and get her to sign the caregiver affidavit, perhaps she could move ahead.

child's biological parent(s). For instance, you cannot add the child to your private health insurance or your apartment lease. The caregiver affidavit must be signed by both you and the child's parent(s) and notarized. It can be cancelled by the parent at any time.

Foster Care Relative Caregivers

These are relative caregivers of children who are currently in DCF custody. Foster care is generally a temporary solution to give parents the time they need to get help for things like drug rehabilitation or parenting classes before being reunified with their child. During this time period, the child and parent(s) are working toward reunification. If the parents fail to improve enough to provide a safe home for the children, the permanent plan may change to adoption or guardianship, preferably with the foster care relative caregiver.

This type of caregiver MUST be approved by the state of Massachusetts. To receive certain benefits and resources as a foster care relative caregiver, you must meet specific requirements and complete DCF licensing requirements. These include completing a foster parent training program, passing living and sleeping space requirements in your home, and passing background checks of those living in your home to make sure the home will be safe for the child. The child's DCF social worker will explain all of these details to you. See *Box F.*

Box F. In Susan's case, her niece and nephew were abused and neglected by their parents. The social worker decided they were not safe in their current home, so after Juvenile Court handed custody to DCF, the children were placed with their aunt. Most children in foster care are eventually reunited with their parents. But, in some cases, parents are never able to care for their children again and a relative can be given full parental rights through adoption.

As the relative foster parent, you will be invited to attend court hearings, but you will not have an attorney assigned to represent you. If you would like to participate in any of the Juvenile Court proceedings, you must obtain the court's permission.

Siblings: It is important to know that if the abused or neglected child has siblings who are also in danger, DCF will try to temporarily place the other children with you as well. If you are a Foster Care Relative Caregiver, you will receive additional funding for each sibling. If, however, the siblings cannot be placed together, DCF will arrange sibling visitation.

Legal Guardianship through Probate and Family Court

The most common reasons for filing for guardianship in Probate and Family Court involve unfit parenting due to drug use/addiction, mental instability, domestic violence, homelessness, abandonment, or incarceration. Other reasons may include the need for medical insurance for the child, or parental absence or death.

If the child is not involved with DCF and you want to become a legal guardian, you will have to *petition for guardianship (of a minor)* through the Probate and Family Court. If the parents do not consent and you need legal authority immediately, you can also file a petition for temporary guardianship. Once a hearing is scheduled, the child has the right to be represented by an attorney upon request. If the parents lose custody, they can still be ordered to pay child support. They also have the right to return to court and request that the court returns custody to them. Your guardianship ends when the child

turns 18, legally marries, or if and when the court removes guardianship from you. See *Box G.*

After you receive custody of the child through guardianship, you may decide to adopt. You will need to file legal documents showing that the parents continue to be unfit and ask the court to terminate their parental rights and allow you to adopt the child.

Box G. Grandmother Pamela cannot locate her daughter Jane in order to obtain her consent and signature for the caregiver affidavit. Pamela also fears that her daughter will return one day, wanting to take back her children. Legally, Jane has every right to do so. Pamela needs to obtain health care for them and enroll them in school. If she has legal custody of the children, she can add them to her health insurance. She decides to file a petition for guardianship for each of the children in Probate and Family Court.

Legal Guardianship through Juvenile Court

You can file a petition for guardianship through Juvenile Court if the child has an ongoing delinquency or a *Child in Need of Services (CHINS)* case. If the parent does not give consent, you will need to provide evidence that shows unfit parenting and that it would be in the child's best interest to be placed in your custody. Additionally, the child must also give consent to your petition for guardianship if 14 or older.

In **Care and Protection cases**, you can work with DCF to obtain legal guardianship of the child you have been caring for if reunification efforts with the parent fail and you do not wish to adopt the child.

Adoptive Parents

You can become an adoptive parent through either Juvenile Court *or* Probate and Family Court. You can adopt if the biological parents surrender their parental rights or the court terminates

their parental rights after hearing clear and convincing evidence that the parents are unfit and that it is in the best interest of the child to be adopted. See *Box H.* Remember: *Adoption is permanent* and you will become fully responsible for the child.

In addition to understanding which court system may be best to work with (Juvenile or Probate and Family Court), it is also important that you understand the different requirements of you and the resources available (to you) before you make the decision on the type of caregiver that is best for your particular situation.

If reunification efforts with the child's parents have failed and the child is involved with DCF, you can work with DCF to adopt. If you were receiving a monthly foster care stipend and you adopt, you may continue to receive financial assistance at least until the child is 18. If you decide to adopt a child who is not in foster care, through Probate and Family Court, you will need to hire an attorney for the termination of parental rights and the adoption. If you do not adopt through foster care, you will be fully responsible for supporting the child. It is important to talk with your social worker or lawyer before filing any documents to make sure that you and the child will qualify for any assistance you may need.

Box H. In the case of Claudia and Juan and their adopted granddaughter, Isabella, a series of court proceedings have taken place and the rights and responsibilities of Isabella's biological parents have been terminated. Claudia and Juan are now legally considered Isabella's parents. Claudia and Jean were the licensed foster parents of Isabella before they adopted her so they will be able to continue to receive a monthly stipend called "Adoption Assistance."

Section 2|What's Expected of a Child's Parents?

Depending on the type of caregiver you are, you may have a number of questions about the relationship between you, the child, and the child's biological parent(s). Here is some information about what you can expect from the *child's parent(s):*

If you are an **Informal Relative Caregiver:**

Child Support: The parent(s) is still expected to pay child support. If you are not receiving child support and get welfare for the child, contact the Department of Revenue to pursue legal action for child support from the parents. If you are afraid the parent(s) may remove the child from your care if the court orders him or her to pay child support, you may want to consider obtaining legal guardianship through Probate and Family Court first. In that case, the court can give *you* custody *before* you begin the process of obtaining child support from the parent(s).

Parental Visitation: This is determined by you and the parent. Since the parents still have legal custody, they have the right to see their child whenever they desire. If you believe that visits between the parents and child are unsafe, you must first get custody of the child through court to control visitation.

Reunification: Since you are an informal caregiver and do not have any legal power over the parents, nor custody of the child, the parents can remove the child from your care at any point in time.

If you are a **Foster Care Relative Caregiver:**

Child Support: You will receive monthly support payments from DCF, as well as other services, depending on the age of the child. The monthly stipend from DCF will continue if you are given guardianship after foster care or if you adopt.

Parental Visitation: Visitation is determined by DCF and Juvenile Court and is recommended, unless there is evidence that visitations would harm the child. If you are awarded guardianship after foster care and the parents request visits with their child (only if it is safe), the court may order you to set up and supervise visitation with the parents.

Reunification: Aside from the most serious cases, the goal in foster care is for *parent reunification* within 1 year, if (and only if) it is safe for the child. DCF and Juvenile Court determine whether the parent has taken all of the necessary steps, within the timeframes set by the court, required to provide good care for the child.

If you are a **Legal Guardian through Probate and Family Court** without involvement with DCF first**:**

Child Support: In some cases, the parents will pay child support without being forced. But, most of the time, the parent either refuses or is unable to pay. If you became a guardian for the child through Probate and Family Court and receive welfare, the Department of Revenue can bring an action against the parents who earn income and force them to pay child support.

Parental Visitation: Depending on court orders, parents may have visitation rights. If the court has not made specific visitation guidelines, you, as the guardian, can determine whether or not the parents can visit the child.

Reunification: Parents have the right to ask the court for custody if they believe they can care for the child. If the Probate and Family Court determines that the parents are no longer unfit, and it is in the best interest of the child, your guardianship will be terminated and the child will be reunified with his or her parents.

If you are the **Adoptive Parent:**

Child Support: The biological parents do not have any rights or responsibilities. You now have full responsibility as a parent of the child. If you adopt the child after foster care, you *may* be able to receive monthly payments from DCF (at least until the child turns 18).

Parental Visitation: Any visits are up to you, the parents and the child, unless you have signed an agreement known as an *Open Adoption Agreement*.

Reunification: The child *cannot* be legally reunited with his or her parents, as they have given up all legal rights and responsibilities to the child.

Section 3 | What Resources are Available to Each Caregiver?

Being a relative caregiver is a huge responsibility. Resources are available in the community to help you. The chart below gives an idea of what is available depending on what type of caregiver you are. Still, it is important to consult with your social worker or lawyer for the resources that are specific to your case.

Benefits	Informal Relative Caregivers	Foster Care Caregivers	Legal Guardians *(through Probate and Family Court ONLY)*	Adoptive Parents
State Involvement	N/A	An assigned social worker will visit your home every month.	You must file a yearly report in court about the child's care.	N/A
Licensing	N/A	Full Licensure must be completed within 40 working days.	N/A	N/A

Benefits	Informal Relative Caregivers	Foster Care Caregivers	Legal Guardians *(through Probate and Family Court ONLY)*	Adoptive Parents
Financial Support	Able to receive welfare cash assistance "*child-only grant*" for related children in your care regardless of your own personal income. Eligibility is based on the child's income and/or informal support from parents	Eligible for foster care, guardianship, or adoption assistance, a monthly stipend, clothing grants, and holiday payments. Amount varies by need and child's age.	May receive cash assistance "*child-only grant*" for children, regardless of your income. Can receive child support from the parent(s), if able to pay.	**Probate and Family Court:** N/A, unless child was in foster care (DCF custody) **Juvenile Court**: You may be eligible for the resources listed under *Foster Care Relative Caregivers* (at least until the child is 18).

Benefits	Informal Relative Caregivers	Foster Care Caregivers	Legal Guardians *(through Probate and Family Court ONLY)*	Adoptive Parents
Special Needs: Financial Support	N/A	Extra financial support may be provided until the child turns 22.	N/A, unless child is severely disabled and qualifies for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	**Probate and Family Court**: N/A unless child was in foster care or qualifies for SSI **Juvenile Court**: Child may be eligible for extra financial support through age 21.

Benefits	Informal Relative Caregivers	Foster Care Caregivers	Legal Guardians *(through Probate and Family Court ONLY)*	Adoptive Parents
Medical Insurance Coverage	May apply for MassHealth if child qualifies. Cannot include child on caregiver's private health insurance.	Each child in your care will receive Medicaid benefits (through MassHealth). These covers medical, dental, and psychiatric care.	Can apply for the Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP), MassHealth, or include child on your private health insurance plan.	**Probate and Family Court**: If income eligible, can apply for MassHealth or CMSP. Can include child on private health insurance. **Juvenile Court**: Eligible for Medicaid or MassHealth.

Section 4 |Things Every Caregiver Should Know

This section provides an overview of things you may need to know.

For more information:
www.mass-doc.com
617-249-0323

Birth Certificates: A copy of the child's birth certificate is crucial in most legal procedures and is required, for example, to get a driver's license. You can request a copy online or through the Massachusetts Document Retrieval. Note: If the child was not born in the state of Massachusetts, you will need to contact authorities in the particular state of birth.

Healthcare: In Massachusetts, everyone is required to have health care. There are several, affordable options available to families, however. Masshealth provides healthcare to many residents through Medicaid and the Commonwealth Care Health Insurance Program (C-CHIP). Children currently living in foster care or who go from foster care to guardianship or adoption are on MassHealth. If you have private insurance, you may place the child on your family policy if you are the legal guardian. See Section 5 for more information on specific healthcare options.

Housing: The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has several options available to families who are seeking affordable housing. Visit the DHCD website or contact the department directly for more information. Other good resources include the Massachusetts Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) (Boston Housing Authority) and/or the Massachusetts Housing Consumer Education Centers.

For more information:
www.mass.gov/dhcd
617-573-1100
www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha
617-988-4000
www.masshousinginfo.org/agencies
617-367-0646

Child Care Services: There are several programs that include childcare and preschool vouchers for families who may or may not be eligible for TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children) or welfare, teen parent childcare, and Early Intervention and Head Start programs, as well as children whose parents are supervised by DCF or who are in foster care. See Section 5 for more information on specific childcare services.

Car seats: Massachusetts law requires that children under the age of 8 or less than 4 feet, 9 inches tall must be secured in a car seat or booster seat. Seats must be approved by federal law and installed correctly. Low-cost car or booster seats are available for some low-income caregivers.

For more information:
http://www.cityofboston.gov/EMS/community/carseat.asp
617-343-6891
www.mass.gov/childsafetyseats

Youth Employment: The Department of Labor and Workforce Development allows teenagers (age 14-17) to work with a permit, but there are limits on how many hours the youth can work during certain times of the year and the type of job.

For more information:
www.mass.gov/lwd
617-626-6800

Driver's license: Teenagers 16 or older can apply for a learner's permit. At 16 ½ years old *with* 6 months experience with a permit, a teenager can apply for a Junior Operator driver's license. In order to obtain this license, the teenager needs to fulfill the requirements of driver's education and supervised driving time. He or she has certain driving restrictions until age 18.

Emancipation: *Emancipation* is a process that ends parental rights and responsibilities to control a minor's finances. In Massachusetts, this process does not have any formal court procedures. The *age of majority* or automatic emancipation is 18 years old. Emancipation cannot take place if the child runs away from home before age 18.

School: If you are a temporary caregiver (either an informal or foster care relative caregiver), it may be best for the child to remain in his or her home school district. If the child is waiting for foster care placement elsewhere or is staying with you for the time being, transportation to and from the home school may be provided. If, however, the child is staying with you on a more permanent basis, you may want to register him or her in the school district nearest to your home. Contact the child's school district to speak with the designated *Homeless Education Liaison* for more information.

Special Education: Every child has a right to a free and public education. Your child may have specialized educational needs or disabilities, so it is important to work closely with teachers and schools to develop an appropriate plan. Special education is focused on active relationship between the parent(s) and/or

guardian/caretaker, student, and teacher(s) to evaluate the child's needs for the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Disability Types in Massachusetts: A child has a disability under Massachusetts education law if he or she is evaluated to have one of the following conditions: Autism, a developmental delay, an intellectual, sensory, neurological, emotional, physical, health, or communication impairment, or a specific learning disability.

For more information:
www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep

Developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child: If you and/or the child's teacher believe that the child would benefit from special education, you can submit a written request for an initial evaluation to see if he or she is eligible. The evaluation will look at all areas related to the child's potential needs using a variety of assessment techniques. You and the child will then work with the school's teachers and professionals to develop an IEP that will be used to determine educational services and placement decisions that are best suited for the child's needs.

For more information:
www.mass.gov/dph/imm
617-983-6800

Immunizations: Children need to receive certain vaccines in order to attend public school. For information on what they *must* receive, see the chart below. For information on the Public Health Immunization Program, visit the Division of Immunization's website or call directly. You should also speak with the child's primary physician about any required and/or recommended immunizations.

	Child Care/Preschool	Kindergarten	Grades 1-6	Grades 7-12
Hepatitis B	3 doses, or proof of immunity	3 doses, or proof of immunity	3 doses, or proof of immunity	3 doses, or proof of immunity
DTaP/DTP/Td	At least 4 doses of DTaP/DTP	5 doses (unless 4th dose given after 4th birthday)	At least 4 doses of DTaP/DTP, or at least 3 doses of Td	At least 4 doses of DTaP/DTP, or at least 3 doses of Td + booster
Polio	At least 3 doses	4 doses	At least 3 doses	At least 3 doses
Hib	1-4 doses depending on vaccine & age	N/A	N/A	N/A
MMR	1 dose	2 measles, 1 mumps, 1 rubella	2 measles, 1 mumps, 1 rubella	2 measles, 1 mumps, 1 rubella
Varicella	1 dose, or history of chickenpox	1 dose, or history of chickenpox	1 dose, or history of chickenpox	1 dose, or history of chickenpox
Meningococcal	N/A	N/A	1 dose (if in residential school)	1 dose (if in residential school)

Section 5 | State-Wide Resource Guide

Below is a list of organizations and services available to Massachusetts caregivers based on either their or the child's current condition. Qualification and eligibility for services depends on your family's specific needs.

Note: The resources listed in section 5 are national or state-wide programs which may have chapters or offices located in your county or neighborhood. It may be more beneficial to contact your local office rather than the national office. See section 6 (p.38) for a county-specific resource directory.

If you are Low-Income

(Note: The meaning of "low income" may vary for each service or program.)

Education

Head Start / Early Head Start: Early childhood education program for pregnant women and children from birth to age 5 who are low-income or in foster care.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/head-start.html
www.massheadstart.org
617-479-1856 or
1-866-763-6481

Supplemental Educational Services: This program provides tutoring in Math, Reading, and Language Arts for children who receive free or reduced-priced lunch in a Title I school.

For more information:
www.doe.mass.edu/ses/
781-338-6328

Child Care

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA): Provides child care services for former or current TAFDC members. The child must be under 13 to qualify for these services, unless he/she has special needs. Children who are in foster care, under court supervision, or receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) also qualify. Eligible families may be placed on a waiting list.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/DTA-Child-Care.html
www.mass.gov/dta
617-348-8500 or
1-800-249-2007

Income-Eligible Child Care: This service provides subsidized child care for families who do not qualify for TAFDC. The caregiver must be working, in school, disabled, or in a job-training program to receive child care services. The child must be under 14 years old, unless he/she has special needs.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/income-eligible-child-care.html
www.mass.gov/eec
617-988-6600

Coordinated Family & Community Engagement Programs: Helps you find local quality licensed child care, information on child care financial assistance, family activities, support programs and additional resources in your area.

For more information:
www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/find-early-education-and-care-programs
617-988-6600

Financial Assistance

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) or Welfare: A cash-assistance

For more information:
www.massresources.org/tafdc.html
www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dta/cash-assistance.html
617-348-8500 or
1-800-249-2007

program that includes a clothing allowance for dependent children. Depending on the type of caregiver you are, welfare benefits may be given based solely on the child's eligibility, not on the caregiver's income.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/unemployment.html
www.mass.gov/dua
617-626-5400

Unemployment Insurance: A temporary program that provides assistance to workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own. A weekly payment is based on a percentage of your income while you were employed, as well as the number of dependents in your care.

Housing & Energy

For more information:
www.massresources.org/section8.html
www.mass.gov/dhcd
617-573-1150

Section 8 Housing: A federal housing assistance program that helps families, the elderly, and disabled residents by offering rent or mortgage vouchers or project-based subsidies. The voucher is used to directly pay the landlord; the tenant (you) must pay the difference between the rent charged and the amount given (discounted) by the program.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/public-housing.html
www.mass.gov/eohed
617-573-1100

Public Housing: Units that are built for low and moderate-income families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and certain veterans. Income guidelines will differ depending on whether it is state or federal housing.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/liheap.html
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap
1-800-632-8175

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): Usually called fuel assistance, this service helps both tenants and homeowners pay their heating bills. The amount of fuel assistance

you will get depends on your income, your housing status, and your heating costs. You may be able to receive fuel assistance even if you rent.

For more information: www.magoodneighbor.org

Good Neighbor Energy Fund: Helps Massachusetts residents pay for winter heating fuel and other energy bills. If you are temporarily unable to pay your energy bills and do not qualify for government energy assistance programs, you may be eligible to receive this service.

For more information about MassHealth in general: www.massresources.org/masshealth.html www.mass.gov/masshealth

Health Care

MassHealth: Will cover medical, dental, and mental health care for those who qualify. Eligibility is based on family size and income. If you are 65 or older or need long-term-care services, eligibility is based on income and assets. Immigration status does not affect your eligibility for MassHealth, but may affect the type of benefits that are available. MassHealth also provides services for children and youth with mental, emotional or substance abuse issues

For more information about MassHealth Behavioral Services: www.massresources.org/masshealth-behavioral.html www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/commissions-and-initiatives/cbhi/ 1-800-495-0086 (TTY: 617-790-4130)

For more information about The Mobile Crisis Intervention (Boston): www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/masshealth/cbhi/ps-mobile-crisis-intervention.pdf 1-800-981-4357

Commonwealth Care: Helps Massachusetts adult residents find health insurance coverage and avoid tax penalties. It is low or no-cost health insurance for those who qualify. The state pays a portion of your healthcare premiums depending on your income. Children get MassHealth.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/commonwealth-care.html
www.mahealthconnector.org
1-877-623-6765
(TTY: 1-877-623-7773)

Food and Nutrition

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or *food stamps*: Provides coupons or an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card that can be used at participating grocery and convenient stores. The monthly stipend for food is based on family income and expenses of the household.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/snap.html
www.mass.gov/snap
1-866-950-3663

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): Provides monthly checks for healthy food. You will also receive health and immunization screenings, referrals, free, healthy food and nutrition counseling. You are eligible for this program if you receive SNAP, TAFDC, or MassHealth. Foster children under 5 years automatically meet the requirements.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/wic.html
www.fns.usda.gov/wic
1-800-942-1007

School Meals/Summer Program: Breakfast, lunch, and after-school snacks are offered to children. The Summer Food Program provides meals and snacks for children and teens in various program

For more information:
www.massresources.org/school-meals.html
www.doe.mass.edu/cnp/nprograms/
www.meals4kids.org/sfsp

locations. You are eligible if you receive TAFDC or SNAP or are in foster care.

If the Child Has a Disability

Education

*Early Intervention: S*ervices for children birth to age 3 who are at-risk for, or have, a developmental delay.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/early-intervention.html
www.massfamilyties.org
1-800-905-8437

Special Education Services: Provides special education services for children with learning and other types of disabilities. This is for children over age 3. Contact the child's school in writing to request an evaluation for the child.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/special-education.html
www.doe.mass.edu/sped
www.fcsn.oeg/parentguide/pguide1.html
781-338-3375

Section 504 Services: Children who do not qualify for Special Education Services may qualify for Section 504. To receive services, a student must have a mental or physical impairment that substantially impairs a major life activity, and requires special accommodations.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/special-education-504.html
www.doe.mass.edu/sped/links/sec504.html

Child Care

See the "Child Care" section for low-income caregivers (page 26).

Financial Assistance

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Designed to help elderly, blind, and disabled people who have little or no income. A monthly stipend is provided to those who qualify. The child's financial eligibility is determined based on the parent or guardian's income and resources.

For more information:
http://www.massresources.org/ssi.html
www.socialsecurity.gov/ssi/index/htm
1-800-772-1213
(TTY: 1-800-325-0778)

Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children: Provides cash and medical assistance to elders, the disabled, children, and certain other individuals who have very little income and resources and are not receiving TAFDC, SSI, or other similar benefits

For more information:
www.massresources.org/eaedc.html
www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/financial/emergency-aid-to-the-elderly-disabled-and-children.html
1-800-249-2007

Housing and Energy

See the "Housing & Energy" section for low-income caregivers (page 27).

Health Care

If you are on SSI, you are automatically eligible for MassHealth. See the "Health Care" section for low-income caregivers (page 28).

Food and Nutrition

See the "Food & Nutrition" section for low-income caregivers (page 29).

<u>If you are an Elderly Caregiver</u>

Department of Elderly Affairs: provides services locally via Aging Services Access Points (ASAP), Councils on Aging (COA) and senior centers in communities across the Commonwealth

For more information:
www.mass.gov/elders
1-800-243-4636

Financial Assistance

See the "Financial Assistance" section for children who have a disability (page 26).

Housing Assistance

See the "Housing & Energy" section for low-income caregivers for additional resources (page 27).

Health Care

Medicare: a national health insurance program for people who are 65 or older, certain people under 65 with disabilities, and people with permanent kidney failure. Medicare is basic protection, and does not cover all medical expenses or most long-term care.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/medicare.html
www.medicare.gov
1-800-633-4227

Support for Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: a state government commission that fosters unity among grandparents and grandchildren, communities and organizations while serving as a liaison between government and private interest groups with the unique interest and concern to grandparents raising grandchildren.

For more information:
www.massgrg.com
508-771-4336

For more information:
www.grandsplace.org

GransPlace: Grandparents as Parents: website with information, articles, and forums for grandparents parenting children.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: another website with information, articles, and forums for grandparents raising their grandchildren.

For more information:
www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com
617-541-3561 or
617-983-5874

<u>If the Child is in Foster Care</u>

Education

Adoptive/Foster Youth Tuition Waiver Program: Provides free undergraduate tuition and fees (at the in-state rate) to students who age-out of foster care, are adopted from foster care, or are in legalized guardianship placements through foster care. The youth must be a full-time student and a resident of Massachusetts who is enrolled at a

For more information:
www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/family-services/youth-services/adolescent/education.html
617-748-2233 or
617-748-2234

Massachusetts state or community college or university. Youth may use the waiver until age 25, and must file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Foster Child Grant Program: Provides grant money for youth attending public and private post-secondary school (full-time) in a degree-granting program. Eligible youth were in the custody of DCF until age 18, and were either unable to return home or were not adopted. The maximum award per academic year is $6,000 for eligible students enrolled in public institutions or private non-profit or private for profit institutions. Youth must file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

For more information:
www.osfa.mass.edu
617-748-2309

Also, see the "Education" section for low-income caregivers for additional resources (page 25).

Food and Nutrition

See the "Food & Nutrition" section for low-income caregivers (page 29).

<u>If the Child's Parent(s) is/are Disabled or Deceased</u>

Financial Assistance

Social Security Benefits and Disability Insurance (SSDI): Provides a monthly cash benefit to disabled workers and/or family members of disabled or deceased workers. The child must have a parent that is deceased or disabled with a work history. The monthly payment is based on the amount of time worked and money earned by the parent.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/ssdi.html
www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/basic-needs/financial/ssi-ssdi/
1-800-772-1213

Veteran's Benefits: Massachusetts provides financial benefits for dependents of an indigent or deceased veteran.

For more information:
www.mass.gov/veterans/benefits-and-services/family-benefits/state-benefits-for-dependents-of-a-veteran.html
http://www.massresources.org/veterans-services.html
1-888-844-2838

Health Care:

You may qualify for *MassHealth*. See the "Health Care" section for low-income caregivers (page 28).

Resources for All Families

Education

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): This form is used to determine the amount of money a family is expected to contribute to the price of attending a postsecondary institution. The results of the FAFSA are used in determining student grants, work study, and loan amounts.

For more information:
www.fafsa.ed.gov
1-800-433-3243
or 319-337-5665
(TTY: 1-800-730-8913)

Health Care:

Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP): Funded by MassHealth for children under the age of 19 at any income level, who do not qualify for any other MassHealth coverage types (except MassHealth Limited) and do not have physician and hospital health-care coverage. The amounts you pay for coverage depend upon your total family size and income. Some costs may be completely covered.

For more information:
www.massresources.org/cmsp.html
www.cmspkids.com
1-800-909-2677

Food and Nutrition:

Project Bread: Callers are referred to food sources within their communities and given information about food stamps and other nutrition programs

For more information:
www.projectbread.org
617-723-5000 or
1-800-645-8333

Legal Services

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts: Maintains a statewide phone helpline through which it receives calls from parents, youth, attorneys, and helping professionals seeking assistance and guidance on legal matters that impact children. Information and referrals are provided through the helpline.

For more information:
www.clcm.org
1-888-543-5298

Miscellaneous

Child-at-Risk Hotline: to report abuse or neglect, call 1-800-792-5200

For more information:
www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/family-services/child-abuse-neglect

The Salvation Army: Provides social services to those in need. The Army provides a variety of local programs, including family counseling, day-care centers, and youth activities.

For more information:
www.use.salvationarmy.org
617-542-5420 or
339-502-5900

Mass-2-1-1: A telephone number that connects callers to information about critical health and human services available in their community. It serves as a resource for finding government benefits and services, nonprofit organizations, support groups, volunteer opportunities, donation programs, and other local resources.

For more information:
www.mass211.org
211 or 1-877-211-6277
(TTY: 508-370-4890)

Section 6 | Resource Guide for Western MA: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden

Berkshire County

Towns in Berkshire County: Adams, Alford, Becket, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Egremont, Florida, Great Barrington, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Lee, Lenox, Monterey, Mount Washington, New Ashford, New Marlborough, North Adams, Otis, Peru, Pittsfield, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Tyringham, Washington, West Stockbridge, Williamtown, Windsor

State Government Berkshire Offices

Department Office	Address	Contact Information
Department of Early Education and Care	95 Liberty St. Springfield, MA	413-788-8401
Department of Transitional Assistance	37 Main St. North Adams, MA	413-663-1100
	75 South Church St. Pittsfield, MA	413-236-2000
	To find your nearest DTA office, visit: http://webapps.ehs.state.ma.us/DTAOffices	www.mass.gov/dta

Housing Authority	To find your nearest housing authority, visit: www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/contacts/local-housing-authority-listing.html	www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed

Resources for Education and Child Care

Organization/ Agency	**Address**	**Contact Information**
Boys and Girls Club	16 Melville St. Pittsfield, MA	www.boysandgirlsclubofpittsfield.org 413-448-8258
Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc.	210 State St. North Adams, MA	www.ccberkshire.org 413-663-6593
Childcare Centers	For a list of childcare providers in Berkshire County, visit: http://childcarecenter.us/county/berkshire_ma	www.childcarecenter.us
Head Start	1 Meadow Lane Pittsfield, MA	www.berkhs.org 413-499-0137
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org/listings/education www.parentingdirectory.org/listings.child-care

Preschool Enrichment Team	174 Brush Hill Ave West Springfield, MA	www.preschoolenrichmentteam.org 413-736-3900

Resources for Financial Assistance

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Berkshire County Regional Employment Board	66 Allen St. Pittsfield, MA	www.berkshirereb.org 413-442-7177 x152
One Stop Career Center	160 North St. Pittsfield, MA	www.berkshireworks.org 413-499-2220

Resources for Health Care

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Berkshire Medical Center	725 North St. Pittsfield, MA	www.berkshirehealthsystems.org/body_bmc.cfm?id=43 413-447-2000
Community Health Programs Health Center		www.communityhealthprograms.org
	444 Stockbridge Rd. Great Barrington, MA	413-528-8580
	510 North St. Pittsfield, MA	413-447-2351
Ecu-Health Care	71 Hospital Ave North Adams, MA	http://ecuhealth.boxcarexpress.com 413-663-8711
Northern Berkshire Healthcare	71 Hospital Ave North Adams, MA	www.nbhealth.org 413-664-5000

Volunteers in Medicine Clinic of the Berkshires	777 Main St. Great Barrington, MA	www.vimberkshires.org 413-528-4014

Resources for Food and Nutrition

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Berkshire Food Project	134 Main St. North Adams, MA	www.berkfoodproj.org 413-664-7378
The Food Bank of Western MA	97 North Hatfield Rd. Hatfield, MA	www.foodbankwma.org 413-247-9738
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	165 Tor Court Pittsfield, MA	413-445-9429
	444 Stockbridge Rd. Great Barrington, MA	413-528-0457

Resources for Elder Caregivers

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Elder Services of Berkshire County	66 Wendell Ave Pittsfield, MA	www.esbci.org 413-499-0524
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren	Ralph Froio Senior Center 330 North St. Pittsfield, MA	http://providers.800ageinfo.com/AGModules/ProviderSearchLucene/ProviderDetailsLucene.aspx?OrgID=439204&mid=3013&tabid=0&letter=G&state= 413-499-9346

	Spitzer Center 116 Ashland St. North Adams, MA	413-662-3125

Resources for Disability Assistance

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Berkshire Family and Individual Resources	771 South Church St. North Adams, MA	www.bfair.org 413-664-9382
Family TIES (Together in Enhancing Support)	388 Columbus Ave Ext. Pittsfield, MA	www.pediatricdevelopmentcenter.org 413-499-4537
	26 Union St., Suite 1 North Adams, MA	www.ucpberkshire.org 413-664-9345
	444 Stockbridge Rd. Great Barrington, MA	www.communityhealthprograms.org/pg_firstep.php 413-644-0104

Resources for Counseling and Family Support

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Berkshire County Kids' Place	63 Wendell Avenue Pittsfield, MA	www.kidsplaceonline.org 413-499-2800
Brien Center for Mental Health	359 Fenn St. Pittsfield, MA	www.briencenter.org 413-499-0412
Clinical and Support Options	53 Eagle St. Pittsfield, MA	www.csoinc.org 413-236-5656
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org/listings/counseling-support

Resources for Legal Services

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Community Legal Aid	152 North St. Pittsfield, MA	www.communitylegal.org 413-499-1950
Berkshire County Bar Association	55 Pittsfield Rd. Lenox, MA	www.berkshirebar.com 413-637-8880

Miscellaneous Resources

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Berkshire Rides	6 West Main St. North Adams, MA	www.berkshirerides.org 413-664-0300
Northern Berkshire Community Coalition	61 Main St. North Adams, MA	www.nbccoalition.org 413-663-7588
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org

Courthouses

Courthouse	Address	Contact Information
All Massachusetts Courts	For more information about the MA Courts, visit: www.mass.gov/courts	
Berkshire Juvenile Court	190 North St. Pittsfield, MA	413-443-8533
	21 Holden St. North Adams, MA	413-664-8700
Berkshire Probate and Family Court	44 Bank Row Pittsfield, MA	413-442-6941

Hampden County

Towns in Hampden County: Agawam, Blandford, Brimfield, Chester, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Granville, Hampden, Holland, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Monson, Montgomery, Palmer, Russell, Southwick, Springfield, Tolland, Wales, West Springfield, Westfield, Wilbraham

State Government Hampden Offices

Department Office	Address	Contact Information
Department of Early Education and Care	95 Liberty St. Springfield, MA	413-788-8401
Department of Transitional Assistance	72-100 Front St. Holyoke, MA	413-552-5400
	95 Liberty St. Springfield, MA	413-858-1000
	310 State St. Springfield, MA	413-858-1300
	To find your nearest DTA office, visit: http://webapps.ehs.state.ma.us/DTAOffices	www.mass.gov/dta
Housing Authority	To find your nearest housing authority, visit: www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/contacts/local-housing-authority-listing.html	www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed

Resources for Education and Child Care

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Boys and Girls Clubs	100 Acorn St. Springfield, MA	www.springfieldgirlsclub.org 413-739-4743
	580 Meadow St. Chicopee, MA	www.bgcchicopee.org 413-592-6707
	70 Nickie Cosmos Way Holyoke, MA	www.hbgc.org 413-534-7366
	28 West Silver St. Westfield, MA	www.bgcwestfield.org 413-562-2301
	91 Claudias Way Ludlow, MA	www.ludlowbgc.org 413-583-2072
	481 Carew St. Springfield, MA	www.sbgc.org 413-732-7201
	615 Main St. West Springfield, MA	www.wsbgclub.com 413-736-1831
Childcare Centers	For a list of childcare providers in Hampden County, visit: http://childcarecenter.us/county/hampden_ma	www.childcarecenter.us
Head Start and Early Head Start	30 Madison Ave Springfield, MA	www.hcsheadstart.org 413-788-6522

New Beginnings Childcare Center	721 State St. Springfield, MA	www.springfieldpartnersinc.com/ourprograms/NewBeginnings 413-263-6500 ext. 6520
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org/listings/education www.parentingdirectory.org/listings.child-care

Resources for Financial Assistance

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
One Stop Career Center	850 High St. Holyoke, MA	www.careerpointma.org 413-532-4900
	1 Federal St. Springfield, MA	www.getajob.cc 413-858-2800

Resources for Health Care

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Baystate Brightwood Health Center	380 Plainfield St. Springfield, MA	www.baystatehealth.com 413-794-4458
Caring Health Center		www.caringhealth.org
	1040 Main St. Springfield, MA	413-739-1100

	532 Sumner Ave Springfield, MA	413-739-1100
Holyoke Health Center	203 Exchange St. Chicopee, MA	www.hhcinc.org 413-420-2200
New Hope Community Health Clinic	915 Plumtree Rd. Springfield, MA	www.eccspringfield.org/newhope.html 413-782-5219
Pioneer Valley Free Health Services	281 Maple St. East Longmeadow, MA	www.elumc.org/outreach.htm 413-525-3866
Springfield Department of Health and Human Services	93 State St. Springfield, MA	http://www3.springfield-ma.gov/hhs/ 413-787-6744
Wing Memorial Hospital and Medical Centers		www.umassmemorial.org/wing-memorial-hospital
	2 Main St. Monson, MA	413-267-9101
	34 Hubbard St. Ludlow, MA	413-589-0583

Resources for Food and Nutrition

Organization/ Agency	**Address**	**Contact Information**
The Food Bank of Western MA	97 North Hatfield Rd. Hatfield, MA	www.foodbankwma.org 413-247-9738
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	300 High St. Holyoke, MA	413-534-2460
	1985 Main St. Springfield, MA	413-737-8868
	1139 Main St. Springfield, MA	413-693-1029

The Hampden County Emergency Food Network	For a list of programs that provide free meals or groceries, visit: www.foodbankwma.org/wp-content/uploads/Emergency-Food-Network-flyer-Hampden-County-.pdf	

Resources for Elder Caregivers

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Chicopee Senior Center	7 Valley View Court	www.chicopeema.gov/page.php?id=170 413-534-3698
Department of Elder Affairs	1600 East Columbus Ave, Springfield, MA	www3.springfield-ma.gov/elderaffairs 413-750-2654
Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc	66 Industry Ave Springfield, MA	www.gsssi.org 413-781-8800
WestMass ElderCare, Inc.	4 Valley Mill Rd Holyoke, MA	www.wmeldercare.org 413-538-9020

Resources for Disability Assistance

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Family TIES (Together in Enhancing Support)	342 Birnie Ave Springfield, MA	www.chd.org/index.php/early-intervention.html 413-739-3954
	110 Maple St. Springfield, MA	http://bhninc.org/content/early-intervention-program 413-732-7419
	230 Maple St. Holyoke, MA	www.mspcc.org/page.aspx?pid=453 413-734-4978
	1506 A Allen St. Springfield, MA	www.thomchild.org/earlyintervention.htm 413-783-5500
	209 Root Rd. Westfield, MA	www.thomchild.org/earlyintervention.htm 413-568-3942

Resources for Counseling and Family Support

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Carson Center		www.carsoncenter.org
	120 Maple St., Suite 219 Springfield, MA	413-737-3730
	20 Broad St. Westfield, MA	413-572-4132

Center for Human Development: Family Support and Stabilization	246 Park St. West Springfield, MA	www.chd.org/index.php/family-support-and-stabilization.html 413-781-6556
Clinical and Support Options	130 Maple St., Suite 325 Springfield, MA	www.csoinc.org 413-737-9544
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org/listings/counseling-support

Resources for Legal Services

Organization/ Agency	**Address**	**Contact**
Baystate Family Advocacy Center	50 Maple St. Springfield, MA	www.baystatehealth.org/fac 413-794-9816
Community Legal Aid	1 Monarch Pl. Springfield, MA	www.communitylegal.org 413-781-7814
Court Appointed Special Advocates	246 Park St. West Springfield, MA	www.chd.org/casa 413-781-2272
Hampden County Bar Association	50 State St. Springfield, MA	www.hcbar.org 413-732-4648

Miscellaneous Resources

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Big Brothers, Big Sisters	101 State St. Springfield, MA	www.bigbrothers-sisters.org 413-781-4730
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org

Courthouses

Courthouse	Address	Contact Information
All Massachusetts Courts	For more information about the MA Courts, visit: www.mass.gov/courts	
Hampden Juvenile Court	80 State St. Springfield, MA	413-748-7714
	121 Elm St. Holyoke, MA	413-533-1482
	235 Sykes St. Palmer, MA	413-283-8916
Hampden Probate and Family Court	50 State St. Springfield, MA	413-748-7758

Hampshire and Franklin Counties

Towns in Hampshire County: Amherst, Belchertown, Chesterfield, Cummington, Easthampton, Enfield, Goshen, Granby, Greenwich, Hadley, Hatfield, Huntington Middlefield, Northampton, Pelham, Plainfield, Prescott, South Hadley, Southampton, Ware, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

Towns in Franklin County: Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield , Erving, Gill, Greenfield, Hawley, Heath, Leverett, Leyden, Monroe, Montague , New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Rowe, Shelburne, Shutesbury, Sunderland, Warwick, Wendell, Whately

State Government Franklin and Hampshire Offices

Department Office	**Address**	**Contact Information**
Department of Early Care and Education	95 Liberty St. Springfield, MA	413-788-8401
Department of Transitional Assistance	143 Muson St. Greenfield, MA	413-772-3400
	To find your nearest DTA office, visit: http://webapps.ehs.state.ma.us/DTAOffices	www.mass.gov/dta

Housing Authority	To find your nearest housing authority, visit: www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/contacts/local-housing-authority-listing.html	www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed

Resources for Education and Child Care

Organization/ Agency	**Address**	**Contact Information**
Childcare Centers	For a list of childcare providers in Franklin County, visit: http://childcarecenter.us/county/franklin_ma	www.childcarecenter.us
Child Care Outlook	90 Federal St. Greenfield, MA	www.communityaction.us/child-care-outlook-help-finding-and-paying-for-child-care.html Franklin: 413-772-2177 Hampshire: 413-387-1210

Head Start and Early Head Start	393 Main St. Greenfield, MA	www.communityaction.us/parent-child-development-center-child-care-headstart-birth-3.html 413-774-2318 Ext. 117
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org/listings/education www.parentingdirectory.org/listings.child-care
Preschool Enrichment Team, Inc.	174 Brush Hill Ave West Springfield, MA	http://preschoolenrichmentteam.org 413-736-3900

Resources for Financial Assistance

Organization/ Agency	**Address**	**Contact Information**
One Stop Career Center		www.fhcc-onestop.com
	One Arch Pl. Greenfield, MA	413-774-4361
	178 Industrial Dr. Northampton, MA	413-586-6506
	131 West Main St. Orange, MA	978-544-3506

Resources for Health Care

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Community Health Center of Franklin County		www.chcfc.org
	489 Bernardston Rd., Suite 108 Greenfield, MA	Medical: 413-325-8500
	338 Montague City Rd. Turners Falls, MA	Dental: 413-772-2615
	450 W. River St. Orange, MA	Medical: 978-544-7800 Dental: 978-544-1576
Gateway Family Center	9 Russell Rd., Route 20 Huntington, MA	www.hchcweb.org/Community_Programs.html 413-667-2203
Huntington Health Center	73 Russell Rd. Huntington, MA	www.hchcweb.org 413-667-3009
Salem Family Health Center	47 Congress St. Salem, MA	www.nschi.org 978-744-8388
Worthington Health Center	58 Old North Rd. Worthington, MA	www.hchcweb.org 413-238-5511

Resources for Food and Nutrition

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Hampshire Food Pantries	For a list of food pantries in Hampshire County, visit: www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/cgi-bin/id/countyfb.cgi?county=Hampshire-County&state=MA	
Franklin Food Pantries	For a list of food pantries in Franklin County, visit: www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/cgi-bin/id/cityfoodbanks.cgi?city=Franklin&state=MA	
The Food Bank of Western MA	97 North Hatfield Rd. Hatfield, MA	www.foodbankwma.org 413-247-9738

Resources for Elder Caregivers

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Franklin County Home Care Corporation	330 Montague City Rd. Turners Falls, MA	www.fchcc.org 413-773-5555
Highland Valley Elder Services	320 Riverside Dr. Florence, MA	www.highlandvalley.org 413-586-2000

Resources for Disability Assistance

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Community Resources for People with Autism	116 Pleasant St. Easthampton, MA	www.communityresourcesforautism.org 413-529-2428
Family TIES (Together in Enhancing Support)	30 Old Lyman Rd. South Hadley, MA	www.criterionchild.com/index.php/programs/early-intervention 413-533-7140 x212
	1111 Elm St. West Springfield, MA	www.mayinstitute.org/location.html?id=887&state=MA 413-734-0300
	230 Maple St. Holyoke, MA	www.mspcc.org/page.aspx?pid=453 413-532-9446
	375 Fortune Blvd. Milford, MA	www.criterionchild.com/index.php/programs/early-intervention 508-478-7752
	100C State St. South Deerfield, MA	www.servicenet.org/content/reach 413-397-8986
The United Arc	111 Summer St. Greenfield, MA	www.unitedarc.org 413-774-5558

Resources for Counseling and Family Support

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Carson Center	96 South St. Ware, MA	www.carsoncenter.org 413-967-6241
Cutchins Programs for Children and Families	17 Brewster Court Northampton, MA	www.cutchins.org 413-587-3265
Clinical and Support Options		www.csoinc.org
	10 Main St. Florence, MA	413-582-0471
	17 New South St., Suite 116 Northampton, MA	413-582-0472
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org/listings/counseling-support

Resources for Legal Services

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Community Legal		www.communitylegal.org
	20 Hampton Ave Northampton, MA	413-584-4034
	55 Federal St. Greenfield, MA	413-774-3747
Franklin Bar Association	20 Federal St. Greenfield, MA	www.franklincountybar.org 413-773-9839
Hampshire Bar Association	15 Gothic St. Northampton, MA	www.hampshirebar.org 413-586-8729
Northwestern District Attorney's Children's Advocacy Center	1 Court Sq. Northampton, MA	www.northwesterndistrictattorney.org/childrens-advocacy-center 413-586-9225

Miscellaneous Resources

Organization/ Agency	Address	Contact Information
Big Brothers, Big Sisters	16 Court Sq. Greenfield, MA	www.bbbs-fc.org 413-772-0915
	70 Boltwood Walk Amherst, MA	www.chd.org/index.php/big-brothers-big-sisters-of-hampshire-county.html 413-259-3345

Franklin County Family Network	393 Main St. Greenfield, MA	www.communityaction.us/franklin-county-family-network.html *413-475-1555*
Parenting Resource Directory		www.parentingdirectory.org

Courthouses

Courthouse	**Address**	**Contact Information**
All Massachusetts Courts	For more information about the MA Courts, visit: www.mass.gov/courts	
Franklin Probate and Family Court	425 Main St. Greenfield, MA	413-774-7011
Franklin and Hampshire Juvenile Court	116 Russell St. Hadley, MA	413-584-7686
	106 Main St. Greenfield, MA	413-775-0014
Hampshire Probate and Family Court	33 King St. Northampton, MA	413-586-8500

Glossary

Adoption: A legal process where birth parents' rights are terminated by the court and given to another person who becomes the legal parent of the child. This is permanent.

Care and Protection Case: When a child is removed from the parent or guardian's home for abuse or neglect in an emergency, DCF must file a **Care and Protection petition** alleging abuse or neglect and the court must schedule a hearing within 72 hours. Once a petition is filed, a series of court hearings are held to determine if the child is at risk or whether the child can safely be reunited with the parent or guardian.

Caregiver Affidavit: If you are an informal caregiver, you can use the caregiver affidavit to enroll the child in school and obtain medical care for the child. The affidavit must be signed by both the relative caregiver AND the parent(s). Legal custody is still in the hands of the parents, however, and they can cancel the affidavit at any time.

Children Requiring Assistance (CRA): A court case in which the Juvenile Court tries to help parents, guardians and/or school officials deal with troubled youth. The person filing the CRA petition must show the judge that the child repeatedly runs away from the home of a parent, legal guardian or custodian; repeatedly disobeys lawful and reasonable commands of a parent, legal guardian, or custodian, thereby interfering with the parent's, legal guardian's, or custodian's ability to adequately care for and protect said child; habitually misses school; and/or repeatedly fails to obey school regulations.

Department of Children & Families (DCF): A Massachusetts state agency that oversees children who have been reported for or removed from their home for being abused or neglected. DCF works with the Juvenile Court system and rarely may appear in Probate and Family Court. DCF has a hotline for reporting abuse

and/or neglect, known as the Child-At-Risk hotline: 1-800-792-5200. It is available 24/7.

Foster Care: Foster care is generally a temporary solution to give parents the time they need to get help for things like drug rehabilitation or parenting classes in order to become a better parent. During this time period, the child and parents are working toward reunification. If the parents fail to provide a safe home for the children, the permanent plan may change to adoption or guardianship, preferably with the foster care relative caregiver.

Foster Care Relative Caregiver: This is the type of caregiver who provides care for a related child who is in DCF custody.

Informal Relative Caregiver: A relative who cares for the child based on an informal agreement between the caregiver and the child's biological parent(s), outside of any court system. The parent(s) still have *legal custody,* but the caregiver provides the day-to-day care and basic needs.

Juvenile Court: Deals with delinquency, Child Requiring Assistance (CRA), care and protection petitions and guardianship and adoption for children in custody of DCF.

Legal Custody: To be legally responsible for a child's care and have the right to make decisions regarding the child's life.

Legal Guardian: Selected and chosen by the court, this type of caregiver has both legal AND physical custody of the child until the child is 18. The parent(s) are still required to pay child support. The parents cannot assume custody without a court order.

> *Juvenile Court:* You can file the petition for guardianship through Juvenile Court if the child has an ongoing delinquency OR a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) case. An attorney can be appointed to the child upon request.
>
> *Probate and Family Court:* If you want to become the child's legal guardian, the child's parents must sign a notarized consent form OR, if the parents refuse to give

consent, you are required to inform parents of the assigned court date after you file the petition for guardianship. If the parents appear on the set date and still disagrees, you must prove in court that the parents are unfit and that guardianship with you is in the best interest of the child. The child or you may request that the court appoint an attorney to represent the child.

Petition for Guardianship of a Minor: In Probate and Family Court, relative caregivers can file a petition to get custody for the child. However, the caregiver will not receive any assistance or support from DCF. A lawyer for the day may be available at court to help complete the forms. The forms can be found at http://bcpfc.com/Pamphlets/petgminstructions.pdf or at the Probate and Family Court clerk's desk.

Physical Custody: To have primary responsibility for the day-to-day care of a minor child.

Probate and Family court: Deals with guardianship of minors, divorce, paternity, adoption probate and estates, conservatorship, and domestic violence issues.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR): If you wish to adopt the child, the biological parents must agree to give up all rights or the court can terminate parental rights based on clear and convincing evidence.

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This booklet would not have been possible without federal grant funding from the Administration of Children and Families, Court Improvement Program.
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CAREGIVER AUTHORIZATION AFFIDAVIT

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 201F

1. AUTHORIZING PARTY (Parent/Guardian)

I, _____, residing at _____

am: *(circle one)* the parent legal guardian legal custodian of the minor child(ren) listed below.

I do hereby authorize _____, residing at _____ to exercise concurrently the rights and responsibilities, except those prohibited below, that I possess relative to the education and health care of the minor children whose names and dates of birth are:

_____ _____ _____

name date of birth name date of birth

_____ _____

name date of birth name date of birth

The caregiver may NOT do the following: (If there are any specific acts you do not want the caregiver to perform, please state those acts here.)

_____

_____

The following statements are true: (*Please read*)

- There are no court orders in effect that would prohibit me from exercising or conferring the rights and responsibilities that I wish to confer upon the caregiver. *(If you are the legal guardian or custodian, attach the court order appointing you.)*
- I am not using this affidavit to circumvent any state or federal law, for the purposes of attendance at a particular school, or to re-confer rights to a caregiver from whom those rights have been removed by a court of law.
- I confer these rights and responsibilities freely and knowingly in order to provide for the child(ren) and not as a result of pressure, threats or payments by any person or agency.
- I understand that, if the affidavit is amended or revoked, I must provide the amended affidavit or revocation to all parties to whom I have provided this affidavit.

This document shall remain in effect until _____*(not more than two years from today)* or until I notify the caregiver in writing that I have amended or revoked it.

I hereby affirm that the above statements are true, under pains and penalties of perjury.

Signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Telephone number: _____

2. WITNESSES TO AUTHORIZING PARTY SIGNATURE

(To be signed by persons over the age of 18 who are not the designated caregiver.)

_____	_____
Witness #1 Signature	Witness #2 Signature
_____	_____
Printed Name, Address and Telephone	Printed Name, Address and Telephone
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. NOTARIZATION OF AUTHORIZING PARTY'S SIGNATURE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

_____, ss

On this date, _____, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared _____, proved to me through satisfactory evidence of identification, which was _____, to be the person whose name is signed on the preceding document, and swore under the pains and penalties of perjury that the foregoing statements are true.

Signature and seal of notary: _____

Printed name of notary: _____

My commission expires: _____

4. CAREGIVER ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I, _____, am at least 18 years of age and the above child(ren) currently reside with me at _____.

I am the children's *(state your relationship to the child)* _____.

I understand that I may, without obtaining further consent from a parent, legal custodian or legal guardian of the child(ren), exercise concurrent rights and responsibilities relative to the education and health care of the child(ren), except those rights and responsibilities prohibited above. However, I may not knowingly make a decision that conflicts with the decision of the child(ren)'s parent, legal guardian or legal custodian.

I understand that, if the affidavit is amended or revoked, I must provide the amended affidavit or revocation to all parties to whom I have provided this affidavit prior to further exercising any rights or responsibilities under the affidavit.

I hereby affirm that the above statements are true, under pains and penalties of perjury.

Signature of caregiver: _____

Printed name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Date: _____