



FREE LEGAL HELP FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.

The **Dependency Project** at Legal Aid Service of Broward County provides free civil legal representation to children and youth in order to secure appropriate placement and services while in foster care and help them exit out of foster care and into a permanent living situation. When children are aging out of foster care, we strive to ensure that independent living support is in place.

Foster care is intended to be a short-term situation until a permanent placement is found. Our attorneys advocate for foster children to be:

- **reunified with the biological parents when appropriate**
- **placed in a permanent guardianship with relative or other adult**
- **adopted** – If the child's parents have had their parental rights terminated by the court, an adoption can be a forever family.

In Broward County, there are more than 100 children in foster care waiting for a chance to be part of a family and, ultimately, to be adopted.

Obstacles faced by children in foster care include:

- **60%** of those sexually abused and **42%** of those physically abused suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- **52%** are prescribed psychotropic drugs - **13 times** higher than children in the general population.
- **50% to 80%** have significant mental health problems; **63%** are likely to have at least one diagnosis of a mental health problem, compared to 46% of the general population.
- **30%** of Broward County youths who age out of foster care will experience homelessness.
- **50%** of those who age out of foster care drop out of school, are unemployed, have serious drug or alcohol problems or become pregnant.
- **65%** are arrested by age 25.
- **25%** never complete high school. Fewer than 3% go to college.
- Upon reaching adulthood, females who were in foster care are **four times** more likely than the general population to receive public assistance.

The Dependency Project is committed to helping children in foster care overcome these obstacles and find a loving, safe, stable and permanent placement.





FREE LEGAL HELP KINSHIP PROGRAMS.

The **Kinship Program** is a Children's Services Council supported program which provides legal services to relatives and non-relatives raising children in Broward County. We provide high-quality free legal consultations and representation to caregivers who are caring for children not involved in the dependency system when the biological parents are unable to do so.

Currently, the Kinship Program provides the following legal services to ensure that the children living in kinship families have access to an adult who can legally make decisions in matters such as physical and mental health-care, educational services, or custody:

- **Legal assessment and referrals to Education, Public Benefits, Immigration legal supports, and any other services that can support a stable placement**
- **Comprehensive legal representation in obtaining Temporary Custody for qualifying families**
- **Comprehensive legal representation in Adoption Proceedings**
- **Securing non-judicial custodial arrangements**

Utilizing our current service model, our client kinship families receive not only legal services, but also social services and case management, provided by our community partners. Our partners, Kids in Distress, Harmony Development Center, Memorial Healthcare Systems, and Mental Health America provide wrap-around services to the families, while we serve their legal needs.

Referrals for legal services are provided by our social services partners below.

If you are seeking Kinship Project services, please contact one of these providers to begin the intake process:

KIDS IN DISTRESS

www.kidinc.org
Kinship Program Supervisor
819 NE 26th Street
Wilton Manors, FL 33305
954.390.7654

MEMORIAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

www.mhs.net
Kinship Program Team Leader
7031 Taft Street
Hollywood FL, 33024
954.276.0839

MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF SOUTHEAST FLORIDA

www.mhasefl.org
Family and Parent Services Director
7145 West Oakland Park Blvd.
Lauderhill, FL 33313
954.746.2055 X 105

HARMONY DEVELOPMENT CENTER

www.harmonydevelopmentcenter.org
Program Director
12233 SW 55th Street
Cooper City, FL 33330
954.766.4483



FloridaLawHelp.org helps low and moderate income people find free legal aid programs in their community and provides information about their legal rights.

Language interpretation and accessible facilities provided.

Welcoming and affirming of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or age.

Legal Aid Service of Broward County is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

