

Northstar Care for Children

Northstar Care Commissioner Transitions and Named Successors for Northstar Kinship Assistance

Northstar Care
for Children

SSIS Worker Mentors Meeting
February 18, 2015

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Northstar Care for Children



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Northstar Care Background

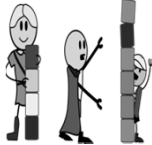
- Northstar Care for Children is designed to increase the likelihood that all children can acquire a permanent family.
- Northstar Care for Children became effective January 1, 2015.



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Before Northstar Care for Children


- Previously, when Minnesota foster parents wanted to become a child's permanent family through adoption or transfer of legal custody, the benefits decreased.
- Generally to **half or less than half** of the previous benefit.



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Unifies Benefits

- Northstar Care eliminates the benefit discrepancy for children and youth age 6 and older - same benefits for foster care, kinship and adoptions.
- It unifies benefits for children age 5 and younger as well, although the benefits are not uniform.



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Components of Northstar Care

Northstar Care has 3 components:

- Northstar Foster Care
- Northstar Kinship Assistance
- Northstar Adoption Assistance

Foster children who cannot be reunified may be eligible through court action:

- Transfer of permanent legal and physical custody for Northstar Kinship Assistance.
- Adoption for Northstar Adoption Assistance.




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Primary Benefits

Northstar Care has 3 main benefits:

- Monthly basic payment based on age of child.
- Monthly supplemental payment based on MAPCY level (Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth).
- Medical Assistance (MA).



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Named Successors in NKA




- Change in the Northstar Kinship Assistance Benefit Agreement.
- Required by the recent federal *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act*.

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Through the Benefit Agreement

Relative custodian(s) may name successors.




- It's an option – not required.
- Up to 5 may be named within the Benefit Agreement.
- They can be named later or changed through an amendment to the agreement.

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Some Can't Be a Successor

- The named successors **may not be:**
- Child's legal parent
- Child's biological parent
- Child's step parent
- Another adult living in the home of the legal parent, biological parent, or step parent.




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Eligibility Follows to Successor

- **If the relative custodian dies or becomes incapacitated:**
- Additional steps to confirm the named successor as the child's new relative custodian.
- Steps include a background study, new Benefit Agreement, and court action.
- The Northstar Kinship Assistance benefit could then follow the child to the successor.
- If applicable Title IV-E eligibility could also follow.


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Commissioner Transition Background and Plans



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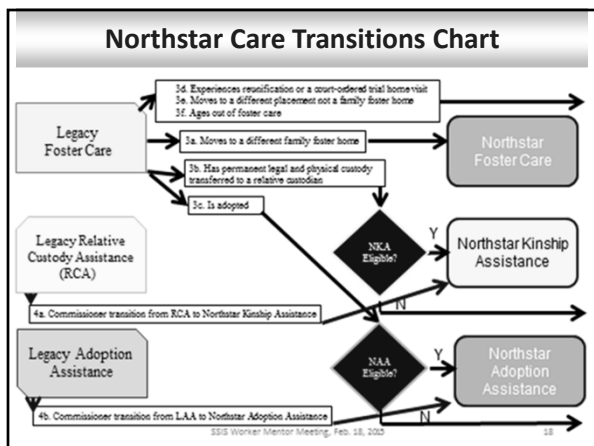
Why Commissioner Transitions

Commissioner Transitions are:

- part of Northstar Care for Children;
- good for children and their families;
- helpful for budget targets; and
- central to getting to an all Northstar Care for Children world.



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Two Main Types

- Commissioner transition from Relative Custody Assistance (RCA) to Northstar Kinship Assistance.
- Commissioner transition from Pre-Northstar Adoption Assistance to Northstar Adoption Assistance.



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Two Unusual Types

- Commissioner transition from Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD-K) to Northstar Kinship Assistance.
- Commissioner transition from Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project (MnPD-A) to Northstar Adoption Assistance.



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Order of Transitions

- We will start with commissioner transitions from Relative Custody Assistance (RCA) to Northstar Kinship Assistance.
- A combination from all agencies:
 - Highest assessments
 - Oldest kids up to age 16
 - Youngest kids.




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Sibling Groups


- Children with the same relative custodian will be flagged.
- When possible, adjustments will be made so siblings can transition together.



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Benefit Amount After Transition

- A new level and monthly payment amount will be determined by DHS.
- A MAPCY is not needed to make this determination.
- Based on the current county RCA Worksheet for the child.
- For RCA to NKA, the total benefit amount will increase by 30% or more.



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Commissioner Transitions in the Future


In the future we plan to transition:

- Legacy Adoption Assistance to Northstar Adoption Assistance
- Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project - Kinship to Northstar Kinship Assistance
- Minnesota Permanency Demonstration Project - Adoption Assistance to Northstar Adoption Assistance.




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Agency Role in RCA to NKA




- DHS always initiates each commissioner transition.
- DHS has to finish each commissioner transition.
- In between, the county involved has to do **five tasks...**

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- 5 County Tasks in RCA to NKA**
1. Verifications in SSIS.
 2. Send county notification to relative custodian(s).
 3. Receive and file the DHS notices to the relative custodians.
 4. As of the transition date, stop RCA, stop MFIP, but continue MA.
 5. Answer questions and complete the new Benefit Agreement and the W-9 form with the relative custodian(s). Send to state.
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Tribal Role in RCA to NKA




- Only counties have RCA cases.
- But Leech Lake and White Earth are legally responsible for the Initiative kids.
- They would be fully Leech Lake and White Earth's kids on NKA.
- At the request of Leech Lake and White Earth, we are waiting to do any commissioner transitions on their kids until at least 2016.

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Commissioner Transition Point Person

- We are asking each county to designate a Commissioner Transition Point Person.
- This is the person that DHS will notify and work with to ensure that commissioner transitions go smoothly and promptly.
- Needs to be able to coordinate activities **across** the agency.



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Steps for Each Commissioner Transition

The following slides outline the steps to complete a Commissioner Transition.



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Step 1 - DHS Notification to County

- DHS notifies the designated point person and the director by email of the kids who will transition.
- DHS will soon confirm those identified to be notified.



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Step 2 - County Staff Monitors Commissioners Transitions Log

- Agency staff monitors Commissioner Transition Log regularly: Children to transition will be added to the Transition Log 5 months prior to the transition date.
- Children have a status of "Transition Identified" estimated transition date.



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Step 3 - Select Commissioner Transitions Log and Completes Verification

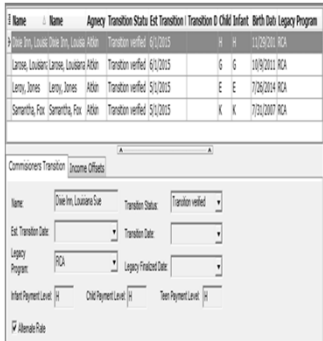


- Agency completes verification in the Commissioner Transition Log.
- Verification must be completed **within 30 days of the child being placed.**

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Commissioner Transition Tab and Income Offsets Tab

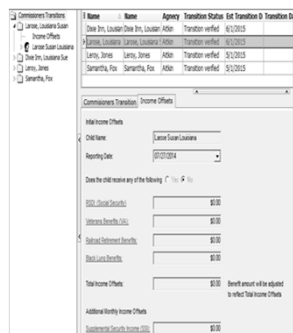


- There are two tabs under the child, **Commissioner Transition** and **Income Offsets.**

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Income Offsets Tab



- The **Income Offsets** tab documents if the child is receiving federal benefits that would “offset” the benefit amount after the transition is complete.
- Agency staff does not have to take any action on this tab.

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Income Offsets (Reductions)

If certain types of income are received for a child, the monthly payment will be offset (reduced) by that amount.

Child income offsets for NKA and NAA:

- Retirement Survivor's Disability Insurance (RSDI)
- Veteran's benefits
- Railroad retirement benefits, or
- Black Lung benefits



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Step 4 - Select New Commissioner Transition and Complete All Items



- Select the child in the Treeview and expand their Person node.
- Select the Permanency folder.
- Access the Action menu and select **New Commissioner Transition**
- Complete all items in the Verification screen

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Step 5 - DHS Receives Notification – Transition Date is Fixed

After the commissioner transition verification is completed by the agency:

- DHS is notified by SSIS
- DHS sends out its notice (Step 7)
- The **transition date is fixed.**

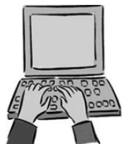


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Step 6 - County Completes Letter to Custodian

- Agency staff completes the Commissioner Transition Letter from County – Notification to Relative Custodian. This informs the custodian about Commissioner Transitions and tells them they will receive a letter from DHS.
- This letter can be accessed from the Commissioner Transition Log; it is a person document.



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Step 7 - DHS Sends Notice to Caregiver

- About 90 days prior to the transition date, DHS will send a notice to the relative custodian(s).
- This letter will contain information about the commissioner transition for the relative custodian.



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Step 8 - DHS Copies County on Notice Sent

- DHS will send a copy of the letter to the to the agency worker listed in the commissioner transition verification letter.



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Step 9 - County Ends RCA Payments

- The county should end Relative Custody Assistance (RCA), MFIP, and SNAP one day prior to the transition date (but continue MA).
- Ending RCA payments can be done only after staff complete the Commissioner Transition Verification.



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Step 10 - County Contact Custodian

- DHS recommends that the Agency contact the relative custodian(s) and offer to meet with them to provide information on Commissioner Transitions.
- Meeting in person is recommended so questions get answered, documents get completed and mailed to DHS.



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Step 11 - County Provides 3 Documents

The agency provides the following documentation to the relative(s):

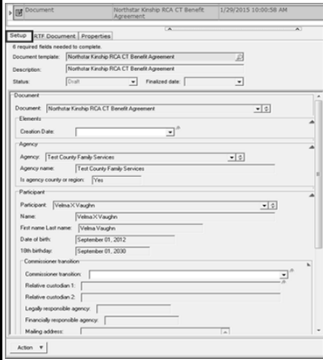
- Commissioner Transition – Benefit Agreement Cover Letter
- Commissioner Transition Benefit Agreement – RCA to NKA
- Substitute Form W-9



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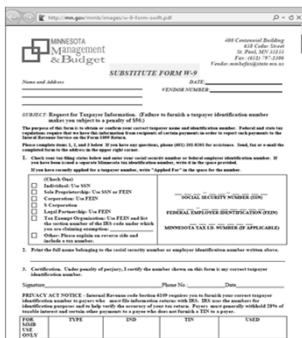
County Completes Benefit Agreement



- From the Person Documents folder, select **Create New CT Benefit Agreement**.
- *Information from the verifications auto-fills into the new benefit agreement.*
- Complete fields on the **Set up** tab.
- Select and review the **RTF Document** tab and **Save**.
- Select Action menu and **Print**.

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County Provides W-9 to Custodian




- A new **Substitute Form W-9** must be completed and mailed to **DHS**.

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Step 12 - Mail Documents

- After the Benefit Agreement and the Substitute Form W-9 are signed, agency staff send both documents to DHS.
- Or the relative custodians may mail the W-9 Form themselves, if they prefer.
- A copy of the Benefit Agreement should be sent to tribes as needed.
- A copy of the Benefit Agreement should be given to the office that processes medical assistance in the child's county of residence.



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Step 13 - Transition Complete

Once the Benefit Agreement and Substitute Form W-9 are received and processed by the state, the child's Transition Status changes to **Transition complete.**



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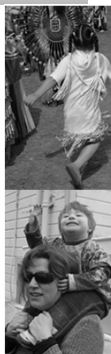


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Commissioner Transitions are Great!

- Transitions are central to phasing in Northstar Care.
- They help get us from an "all legacy world" to an "all Northstar Care for Children world."
- Commissioner Transitions also help us meet budget targets and are good for children.
- Aren't they wonderful?



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Commissioner Transitions are Slow!



- We hope to accomplish about 70 commissioner transitions every month.
- At that pace, it will still take years to move all the kids from the legacy permanency programs.
- But it would take even longer without them.
- Hooray for commissioner transitions!

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Additional Resources

- [Northstar Care for Children Practice Guide](#)
- [Minnesota Statutes Chapter 256N. Northstar Care for Children](#)
- [Northstar Care for Children webpage on County Link](#)
- [Bulletin #14-32-11: Northstar Care for Children Maintenance and Supplemental Difficulty of Care Payment Rates](#)

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Where to Send Questions

- If you aren't able to get your questions answered now, please send them in.



- Send questions to:
northstar.benefits@state.mn.us

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The End



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