


Policy Number:	SSA/CW #25-13
Policy Title:	Referral Bonus for Resource Parent Recruitment
Release Date:	November 24, 2025
Effective Date:	December 1, 2025
Approved By:	Dr. Alger M. Studstill, Jr.  Executive Director Social Services Administration
Revision Date(s):	N/A
Supersedes:	SSA 08-13 Foster Parent Cash Award Incentive
Originating Office:	Out-of-Home Care
Summary of Change:	This policy updates the process for issuing referral bonuses and allows kinship caregivers who make a referral of a non-kin resource parent to receive a referral bonus.
Required Actions:	The LDSS must follow this policy when issuing referral bonuses to resource parents and kinship caregivers who recruit new resource families.
Key Words:	Referral Bonus, Recruitment, Resource Parent, Kinship Caregiver
Related Federal Law	N/A
Related State Laws	N/A
COMAR	None
State Plan Implications?	No

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This policy outlines the criteria for providing a referral bonus to licensed resource parents and kinship caregivers. The referral bonus is designed to engage current resource parents and kinship caregivers to refer families from their own existing networks (e.g., family, friends, colleagues, etc.) to become new non-kin resource families. This policy supports the continued growth of Maryland's network of public resource families for children in out-of-home care.

RELATED LAWS AND REGULATIONS

There are no applicable laws or regulations regarding the referral bonus.

DEFINITIONS

Kinship Caregiver - An individual who is at least 18 years old and with whom a child-in-care may be placed for temporary or long-term care; and

1. Is related to a child-in-care through blood or marriage, adoption, tribal law or custom, or cultural custom or practice; and
2. If not related to a child-in-care as in (1) of this subsection, has a strong familial or other significant bond to such child, or is a person identified by the child's parent.

LDSS - A local department of social services in a county, Baltimore City, or the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.

Out-of-home Care - An out-of-home placement and the monitoring of and services provided to a child in aftercare following a child's out-of-home placement.

Resource Parent - An individual whom a LDSS licenses to provide 24-hour care for a child-in-care in the resource home.

PROCEDURES AND TIMEFRAMES

1. Eligibility

- 1.1 In order to qualify for the referral bonus the referring resource or kinship caregiver must complete the [referral form](#) and submit it to the LDSS that maintains the referral source's license. The referring resource or kinship caregiver does not need to live in the same jurisdiction to be eligible for the referral bonus.
- 1.2 The LDSS will evaluate referrals resulting from LDSS-sponsored recruitment events on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility for the referral bonus.
- 1.3 To be eligible for the referral bonus, the proposed resource family must not have held an active LDSS resource home license within

the past three years.

2. Referral Bonus Amount and Funding Code

- 2.1 Licensed resource parents and kinship caregivers may receive a \$500.00 referral bonus for referring others to become licensed resource parents. The referral bonus consists of one \$500.00 award per referral. The referral bonus must not be disbursed until the new resource parent has met all licensing requirements outlined in COMAR 07.02.25 and their resource parent license has been issued. If the referring family has closed their home since the time they made the referral they are still eligible to receive the referral bonus. The local department that maintains the license of the referral source is responsible for providing the referral bonus.
- 2.2 A licensed resource home or kinship resource home is not eligible to receive more than four referral bonuses per fiscal year unless the LDSS budget has funding to permit additional referral bonuses. SSA will notify the LDSS if there is additional statewide funding available.
- 2.3 The funding code for referral bonuses is 0304.85 and the PCA code is GC860. These codes are associated with Recruitment and Retention Funds and are allocated annually to the LDSS.

3. Local Department Responsibilities

Each local department is required to:

- 3.1 Promote the referral bonus to current public resource parents, kinship caregivers, local resource parent associations and the community.
- 3.2 When multiple jurisdictions are involved, the LDSSs must maintain communication to ensure the referral source's LDSS is aware of licensure completion.

DOCUMENTATION

In order for a referring resource parent or kinship caregiver to be eligible to receive the referral bonus they must complete and sign a [referral form](#) prior to the prospective resource family initiating the home study process and signing the resource parent application.

The LDSS must maintain an accurate and up-to-date record of:

1. Each referral source;
2. The date of the referral, including the fiscal year in which the referral is made;
3. The jurisdiction in which potential resource parent resides;
4. The date the potential resource parent is licensed;
5. The date the referral bonus payment is processed.

Additionally, The LDSS must report on the use of referral bonuses when they complete their quarterly Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) Program reporting regarding the use of Recruitment and Retention Funds.

FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS

[Referral Form](#)