

## **Choosing a Caregiver**

### **1. Choose the person you want to take care of your children if you are detained. This person must be:**

- A person you trust.
- A person who is willing and able to take care of your children as long as necessary.
- A person who has never had their own children taken away by CPS.
- A person who has not been convicted of any crimes against children. (Physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, any other violence against children.)
- A person who doesn't live with someone else who has been convicted of crimes against children or had their children taken away by CPS.
- In addition to those, it is also best to choose a person who doesn't have a criminal background at all, someone who is not also at risk of being deported, and someone who is not on probation or parole. You do not want the children to wind up in foster care because their caregiver also gets detained. But certain criminal convictions (especially if they are from more than 5 years ago) or being on probation or at risk of deportation are things that can be worked around if you need to.

### **2. The caregiver can be a relative, but they don't have to be.**

- Often, children are most comfortable with a biological family member that they know and love. However, if you do not have family in the area, or your family members won't pass a background check or aren't able to care for your children, you can choose a trusted friend. They must be safe.
- A non-relative caregiver will not qualify for Kinship payments (money the government pays to family members who take care of their loved ones), so make sure they have the money necessary to care for your children without help.

### **3. If you have several children, you can choose more than one caregiver.**

- Ideally, if you need to split your children up between different caregivers, you will want to make sure the people who are caring for your children know how to reach each other and are willing to work together. The

children will need to be able to see each other if they are living in different households.

**4. *Have a conversation with the person or people you want to take care of your children to make sure they are willing and able to take your children if something happens to you.***

- Important questions to ask them include:
  - If I am arrested or deported, will you drop everything you're doing to come pick my children up right away that same day?
  - Do you have enough room for my children to live with you? (See *the full guide for more information about "enough room."*)
  - If CPS contacts you about my children, will you meet with them to let them see your home and run background checks on you and the other people who live in your home?
  - Will you be able to afford to take care of my children if I am not here to help you financially? (More on this later in the guide also.)
- If choosing more than one caregiver, ask: Will you be willing to work with the other caregiver to make sure my children see each other, and help each other out as necessary?

**5. *Once you have confirmed that the caregiver is willing and able to take care of your children, identify a backup caregiver.***

- This person should have all the same kinds of qualities as the main caregiver (see *the list under #1*), but they would only take over if the first caregiver becomes unwilling or unable to keep your children.
- The process of deportation can take a very long time, and it is important to have a backup plan in case your first caregiver becomes unavailable. This is *especially* important if the first caregiver is also at risk of deportation or is on probation or parole and could get taken into custody suddenly.
- Make sure you also talk to the person you've identified as the backup caregiver to be sure they're willing to step in if your children need them.