

HB 2624 -- KINSHIP INFANT CARE

SPONSOR: Price

This bill establishes within the Department of Social Services the "Kinship Infant Care Support Program" to provide financial support payments to eligible caregivers who care for infants so that the infant's parents can work, attend school, or participate in job training.

An eligible "caregiver" is defined as a Missouri resident who is at least 18 years of age and who is the biological grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, uncle, or sibling of the infant being cared for. In order for a caregiver to be eligible for financial support payments, a parent or parents of an infant must:

- (1) Engage in work, education, or job training for at least 20 hours per week; and
- (2) Have a household income at or below 250% of the Federal poverty level.

The Department will pay an eligible caregiver an hourly rate per infant; a caregiver of an infant with parents at or below 150% of the Federal poverty level will receive a higher rate compared to caregivers of infants with parents between 151% to 250% of the Federal poverty level. The hourly rate will be established by the Department.

Caregivers can be paid up to 60 hours per week, per infant; may not care for more than two infants at one time; and will not receive payments for hours already covered by other child care subsidies, foster care payments, or temporary assistance to needy families (TANF) child-only grants.

For purposes of eligibility, a caregiver must successfully complete a background check before receiving any financial support payments under the provisions of this bill, and is subject to a background check every five years.

Additionally, the caregiver must complete 12 hours of health and safety training followed by annual training, and attest that his or her home meets basic safety standards.

Caregivers receiving Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance can participate in the Program if the caregiver's disability does not prevent safe infant care; the

caregiver's total household income, including Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance, is within the applicable Federal program limit; and the caregiver meets all training and safety requirements.

The bill requires the Department to create accessible applications that are to be completed by the parent or parents, provide or contract for required training and background checks, and process financial support payments within 30 days of receiving complete monthly attendance records.

The bill establishes the "Kinship Infant Care Support Fund" and requires the Department to submit quarterly updates and an annual report to the General Assembly covering enrollment, spending, outcomes, and safety data; additionally, the Department must commission a comprehensive independent evaluation three years after implementation.