

Sample Notice Letter



(Date)

Dear (Relative),

I am contacting you because you have been identified as a relative of (child's name) who was born on (DOB) and is now in the custody of (insert agency). I am a (insert title) for the (insert agency).

We recognize that relatives play an important role in the lives of children, especially those who must be temporarily cared for by someone other than their parents. Children do better when they are placed with or able to stay connected in other ways to people who know and care about them. Children who are able to stay connected to their extended family and culture experience more stability and less trauma than those who are not connected.

We are contacting you to see if you are interested in being considered as a temporary home for or otherwise staying in contact with (child's first name) while s/he is in our custody. In the next few days, I or someone from my agency will call you to review your options for helping to care for (child's first name). For example, you may want to offer a temporary home for (child's first name) so s/he does not need to be in foster care or to apply to be a foster parent for (child's first name). Should permanent care later be necessary for (child's first name), there may be various opportunities for guardianship or adoption. More information about your options is attached.¹

If you are not able to provide a temporary home for (child's first name), there are other ways for you to stay involved in (his/her) life and offer important family connections. You might visit regularly, arrange regular weekend or holiday visits at your home, or offer to transport (child's first name) to and from school, doctor's visits or other activities.²

Keeping (child's first name) connected to family [and their tribe] is important. Please get in contact with us so you don't lose the opportunity to connect with (child's first name) now or in the future. We will call you in the next few days to explore your options, but feel free to contact me sooner at _____. I also ask that you share with me names and contact information of other relatives you think may be interested in connecting with (child's first name).³ Thank you.

Sincerely,

¹ To comply with federal law, notice **must**: 1) explain the options the relative has under federal, state, and local law to participate in the care and placement of the child, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice; 2) describe the requirements to become a foster family home and the additional services and supports available in such a home; and 3) describe how the relative guardian may enter into a guardianship assistance agreement with the agency if the state has taken the option to operate a Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP). It is suggested that you provide all of this information in an attachment. Wisconsin, for example, has provided much of this information in Q&A format as an attachment to its notice letter. Kansas attaches a brochure of the supports available in the community.

² Some states have designed response forms that go into detail about what activities relatives may participate in and allow them to check the boxes of activities that they would be interested/willing to participate in for the child.

³ Some states provide a form for the relative to fill out that specifies the name and contact information for other relatives who might be able to provide care for the child.

For further information on the Identification and Notice to Relatives, please contact Beth Davis-Pratt from the Children's Defense Fund at edavis-pratt@childrensdefense.org