**Letter for Relatives Attending**

**the Preliminary Placement Hearing**

Dear Relative,

Thank you for coming to this Juvenile Court Preliminary Placement Hearing**.** A report had been made to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) about the safety of the child. A preliminary investigation conducted by a DFCS case manager found the child’s safety and well-being may be at risk. The juvenile court judge approved for the child to be removed from their home and be placed in the emergency temporary custody of DFCS in a foster home. At the Preliminary Placement Hearing today, the judge will hear from DFCS and the child’s parents and decide whether or not the child can return to their home.

If the judge feels the child is unsafe in their home he will authorize DFCS to keep legal and physical custody of the child. DFCS will then decide whether to keep the child in a foster home or place the child in the home of a relative. Unless DFCS decides to place the child with a relative, the child will remain in foster care.

**If** **you are interested in taking care of the child in your home**, **please notify the DFCS case manager.** (You will need to get the phone number and email address of the DFCS case manager in order to stay in touch with them**.** Also record the name and phone number of the case manager’s supervisor as a backup. The Hall County DFCS direct office number is 770-532-5233.) You must be able to ensure the safety and well-being of the child and satisfactorily meet certain State requirements. **DFCS can place the child in your home once the** **minimum requirements** **are completed.** It is up to the DFCS case manager to decide if the child can be placed with you after the completion of the minimum requirements or the completion of the full Relative Care Assessment. Minimum requirements include the DFCS case manager making a visit to your home, gathering information about the household, a criminal record check, and a Child Protective Services history check.The time frame for placing a child with a relative is up to the DFCS office. **It can be made as soon as 24 to 48 hours, though more often, due to high DFCS staff case loads, the process takes much longer, even up to nine to twelve months.** DFCS will need to complete and approve the Relative Care Assessment before you receive the Enhanced Relative Rate Subsidy. The full Relative Care Assessment process has many parts to it, as you can see on page 3. In order to help your DFCS case manager get this Assessment completed faster, you can complete several of the steps yourself. Refer to the following pages and discuss this information with your DFCS case manager.

**If DFCS approves you for taking care of the child, you can receive an Enhanced Relative Rate Subsidy** **of around $366 per month (per child) to help with the expenses of child care**. The child will have Medicaid which will cover all medical expenses. The DFCS case manager will also explain other financial assistance programs you are eligible for, such as a clothing allowance and child care (CAPS).

 If DFCS decides not to place the child with you, you can ask the Juvenile Court judge to place the child with you. This is called a **“direct placement”.** If the judge does place the child with you against the recommendation of DFCS, **you will not be eligible for any state subsidies.**

If you have questions for the Juvenile Court call (770) 531-6927. The child will be assigned an attorney who will represent the child’s wishes and a CASA volunteer who will advocate for the child’s best interests. For CASA questions, call (770) 531-1964. If you have an emergency or need to talk with someone from DFCS after-hours or on holidays/weekends, you may call the 24-hour emergency number of 1-855-GACHILD or 1-855-422-4453.