



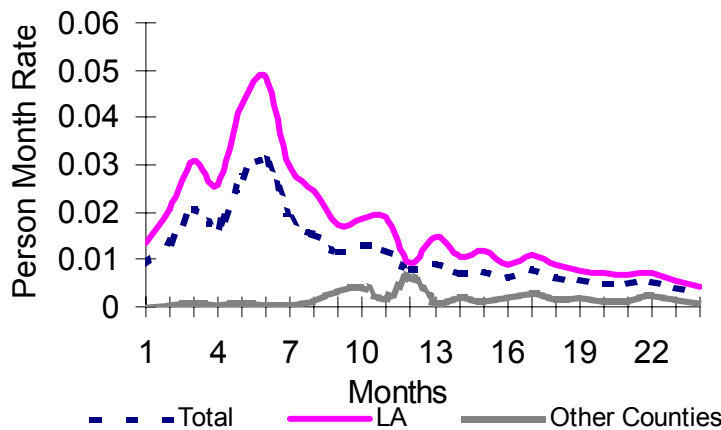
The Implementation of California’s Kin-GAP Program:
Trends and Recommendations

This series of brief publications offers selected information from a joint University of California, Berkeley-Columbia University study that sought to quantify and to understand the implementation of California’s Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP). Kin-GAP is available for relatives who take legal guardianship of a child in California’s foster care system and then exit the child welfare system while maintaining a subsidy equal to the basic foster care board rate.

Trend: In the initial months of program inception, Kin-GAP implementation proceeded relatively aggressively. After a few months, entries to the program diminished significantly. Since its debut in January, 2000, the implementation of Kin-GAP has gone from strong implementation to diminished implementation.

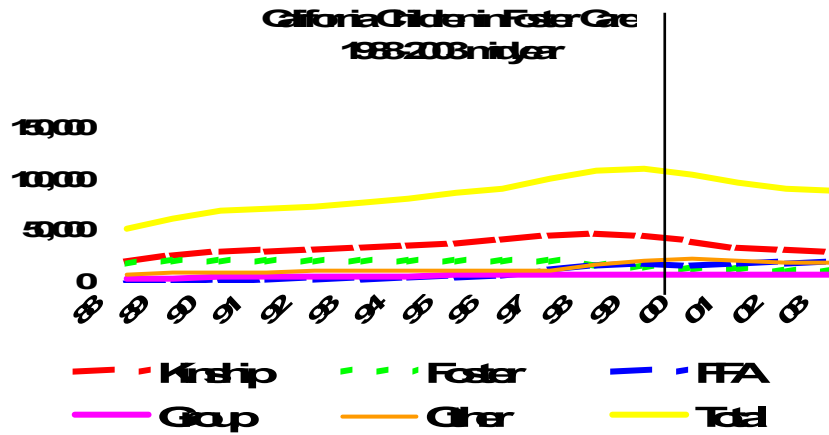
- 8,231 children exited the foster care system to Kin-GAP between January, 2000 and February, 2002. Exits to Kin-GAP occurred more quickly in the early stages of the intervention, peaking in June of 2000 and decreasing over the course of the study.

*Rate of Exit to Kin-GAP
 2000-2001*



- Los Angeles is by far the largest participant in the Kin-GAP initiative, accounting for about 80% of exits during this period – although Los Angeles only has about 40% of the total statewide kinship caseload. Thus, the exit rate was being driven almost entirely by L.A. County.
- There was a strong initial push to exit cases to Kin-GAP, potentially clearing out some of the backlog of long-term kinship care cases. However, exits to Kin-GAP then declined given the number of children that appear to be eligible for the program. In other words, there are still large numbers of children in the care of kin who meet or exceed the one-year eligibility criteria.

When examining California's total foster care caseload from 1988 to 2002, we see that exits from kinship care via subsidized guardianship may be at least partially responsible for the fairly large decreases in the number of children in care.



The vertical line marks the beginning of Kin-GAP

Many counties with eligible kin still aren't using Kin-GAP. Why not?

Although there are several reasons for under utilization, interviews with county administrators highlighted some specific short-falls inherent in Kin-GAP which may help explain why the program is not being employed as frequently as it could be. These factors are presented here in the form of **recommendations** for Kin-GAP program improvements:

- Modest financial increments can have powerful effects.
 - ◊ The loss of clothing allowances, for example, was named by several county workers and administrators as a reason families don't choose Kin-GAP (in doing so they would lose the clothing allowance for the child in their care). Therefore, Kin-GAP inadvertently supports permanency for more advantaged families, and has hidden disincentives for more disadvantaged families.
 - ◊ The unavailability of specialized care increments (SCI's) has also discouraged some kin from applying for Kin-GAP, county contacts reported. A modest, capped SCI could be developed for families previously receiving an SCI to determine whether or not this increase in rate draws more families into Kin-GAP.
- Some kin need ongoing supports and choose not to elect Kin-GAP because it will cut them off from social worker and resource supports. Expansion of the Kinship Support Services Program (KSSP) would allow kin families to access needed services outside of the costly child welfare system.

The rate of exit from the child welfare system to Kin-GAP is lower than expected, and there are still substantial numbers of children in kinship care who appear to meet the criteria for exit but are not participating in the program. Of those who exit to Kin-GAP, few return to care, and when they do, most come back as a result of child behavior problems or other service needs rather than a new incident of child maltreatment.

This study includes the following components: Examination of statewide data from the California Children's Services Archive from January 1, 2000 to February 8, 2002; an administrative case record review; CWS/CMS point-in-time caseload as of July 1, 2003; and follow-up interviews with selected county administrators. The 11 counties selected for this component represent large (more than 1,000 children in out-of-home care) counties that do and do not use Kin-GAP, as well as small (less than 1,000 children in out-of-home care) counties that do and do not use Kin-GAP. The counties represent all five regions of the state.

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