



CENTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

CHILD WELFARE PERMANENCY REFORMS

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The Implementation of California's Kin-GAP Program: *Benefits to Children*

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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.

Large numbers of California's children are already placed with kin. On January 1, 2000, California's foster care population represented about 20% of the nation's foster care caseload – and by far the single largest placement type (almost 45 percent) was kinship foster care.

How can children in kin care benefit from entering the Kin-GAP Program?

- Kin-GAP offers safety and permanence for children.
- Of the 8,231 children who exited to Kin-GAP in 2000-2001, there were 173 subsequent maltreatment reports, most of which did not result in child placement.
- Of those 8,231 children who exited to Kin-GAP in 2000-2001, there were 85 reentries to the foster care system. In other words, just over one percent of those who exited reentered care, compared to larger reentry rates for those who reunify with birth parents. This finding echoes the findings of other researchers who have examined kinship guardianship in other states.
- Maltreatment by a caregiver accounted for 34% of reentries to the child welfare system from Kin-GAP; of these, only 13 children were removed for more than 30 days.
- An administrative case record review was conducted on the 85 cases that reentered care. The results:
 - ◇ In addition to the maltreatment reentries discussed above, child behavior problems also accounted for several reentries to the system. Among the reentries, caregivers relinquished guardianships of children about one-fourth of the time and virtually all of these resulted in removal for at least 30 days.
 - ◇ Caregiver health was sometimes an issue. In fact, caregiver death resulted in the reentry of 7 children to care.
 - ◇ Family Reunification (FR) was a positive reason for reentering care, though only three FR reentries occurred in this timeframe.
 - ◇ Reentry to care because of a specialized need (e.g., behavioral, medical, educational) also occurred in some cases.
- *Kin-GAP provides relative caregivers who are unable or unwilling to adopt a child in foster care with another option for exiting the child welfare system while allowing continuing access to needed funding for the child.*

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.

For more information about Kin-GAP, please contact:

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