



The Implementation of California’s Kin-GAP Program: *Is Your County Using Kin-GAP? Why or Why Not?*

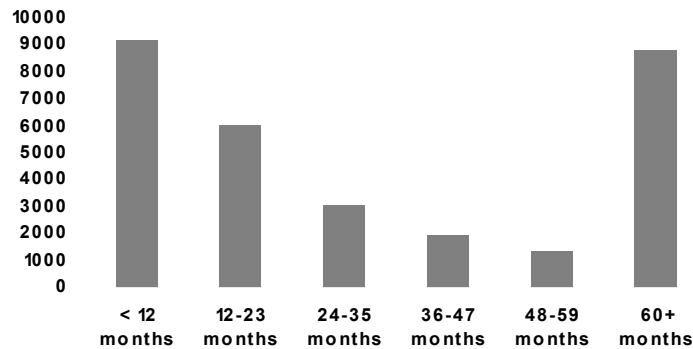
This series of brief publications offers selected information from a joint University of California, Berkeley-Columbia University study that sought to quantify and to understand the implementation of California’s Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP). Kin-GAP is available for relatives 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.

*“Kin GAP gives kids a sense of belonging, of family.
It’s completely different in the relationship and commitment.”
(A senior social worker in a county using Kin-GAP)*

*“A family who’s raising children can have their own rules and family structure; it’s a benefit for them to not have a worker. For children I think Kin-GAP is excellent; there’s no worker coming to the house, to school; there may be less of a stigma for the child. I think it’s excellent for the county too; workers can zero in on fewer cases and on the families with greater needs.”
(A child welfare manager in a county using Kin-GAP)*

Although the initial exit rate to Kin-GAP was high, we estimate that there are still a large number of children in California who are eligible for, and could benefit from, Kin-GAP. On July 1, 2003, there were almost 16,000 children statewide who resided in long-term kinship care for two or more years. Of these, many are likely eligible for Kin-GAP.

**Length of Stay in Current Kin Placement:
July 1, 2003**



Why are such large numbers of eligible kin not using Kin-GAP?

- In counties where the Kin-GAP take-up rate was strong, administrators and workers had this to say about the program:
 - Policy
 - ◊ The policy was well-developed and left few questions unanswered.
 - ◊ The program was easy to administer.
 - ◊ Policy guidelines were simple.
 - Administration
 - ◊ Managers recognized the potential for cost savings and caseload reductions.
 - ◊ Administrators developed outreach to local kinship support networks to help promote the program.
 - Child Welfare Workers
 - ◊ The staff practice of distributing a letter and brochure about Kin-GAP to all eligible kin, then meeting with kin individually to discuss the program and its implications, worked well.
 - ◊ Ambitious workers were the forerunners, and then told their peers about the program.
 - ◊ Workers connected kin to local Kinship Support Services Programs to ensure continued services for them.
 - ◊ A focus on permanency in general meant greater attention to adoption for young children and Kin-GAP for older youth (although Kin-GAP certainly seems to be used for younger children as well as older ones).
 - Kin Caregivers
 - ◊ Kin caregivers seem to realize a greater sense of control over and empowerment around their families' lives and decisions.
 - ◊ They get to "feel like they're the person raising the child."
 - ◊ They are "treated like parents at the child's school and doctor's office."
- Lessons learned from counties that have utilized Kin-GAP suggest that expanded training for staff and outreach to kin are principal components of program success.

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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