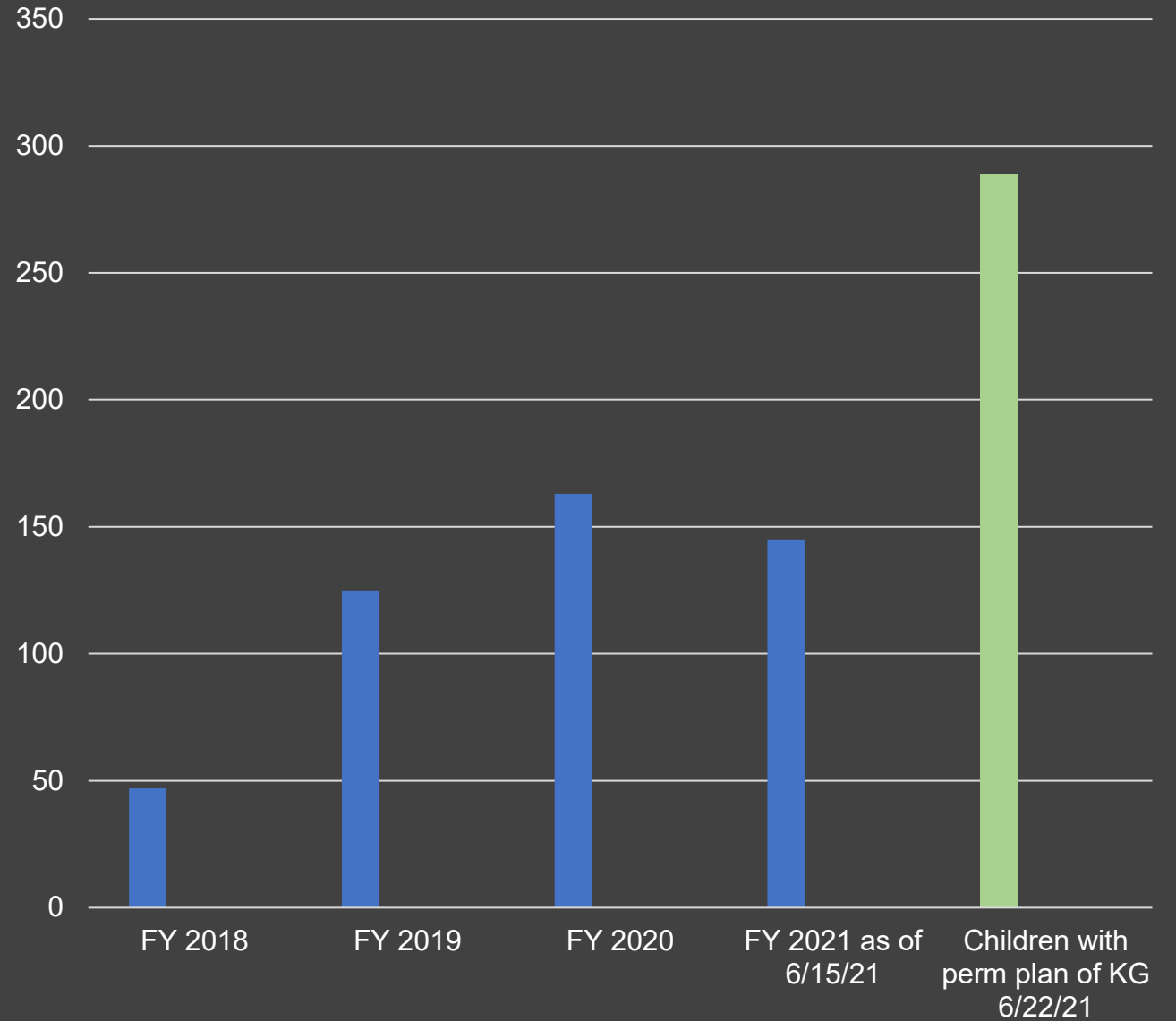


Kinship Guardianship in Alabama



Kinship Guardianship on the rise in Alabama



Overcoming Barriers

- Alabama looked at our numbers in 2018 and decided we could do better
- Siblings
 - We asked the Children's Bureau and it was approved that siblings of kinship guardianship assistance eligible children also receive kinship guardianship assistance
- Parental Consent
 - Alabama repealed the parental consent requirement
- Federal/state dollars
 - Alabama decided to use state funds to offer a kinship guardianship program for those children who are not IV-E eligible
 - Those children also receive state Medicaid

Partnerships

Alabama DHR formed a partnership with the courts

- Annual Child welfare/Judicial summit
- Train on Kinship Guardianship at the summit not just as a permanency plan but with the mindset of how can the court help accomplish that goal
- Monthly meetings/trainings in each county with Guardian Ad Litem to discuss and train on many subjects including Kinship Guardianship
- Many counties are part of our iCAN initiative in which county offices and county court administration meet monthly and work on projects to improve outcomes for children

Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

- The AFAPA recruits and trains many foster/adoptive parents
- We trained and then partnered with them to have a Kinship Guardianship expert on their board to promote Kinship Guardianship

Training

Alabama DHR has several annual trainings with workers and supervisors

Kinship Guardianship was presented at every conference last year

Toolbox for Caseworkers



Kinship Guardianship Desktop Tool

Kinship Guardianship Assistance

A supported permanency option available to children to exit DHR legal custody with fully approved relative foster parents.

It allows children to obtain a permanent relationship with their relative as their guardian and continue to receive Medicaid and monthly financial assistance up to the foster care rate until age 18 and in some cases until age 21.



If immediate assistance is needed, please dial (334) 242-9500

Eligibility Requirements

- » Child must be removed from parents as a result of a voluntary placement agreement or judicial determination.
- » Adoption and reunification with parents are not appropriate options for child.
- » Child must be in legal custody of DHR.
- » Relative (within 4th degree to child) is or becomes fully approved foster parent.
- » Child is eligible for foster care payments while living with fully approved relative for at least six consecutive months prior to guardianship court order. An entire month counts if the child met foster care maintenance payment eligibility for at least one day in the month.
- » Child demonstrates a strong attachment to prospective kinship guardian.
- » Prospective kinship guardian has strong commitment to caring for child permanently.
- » If child is age 14 or older, he/she must be consulted. If child is age 18 or older, he/she must consent.
- » Written parental consent is not required (since 2018).
- » Does not require termination of parental rights (TPR), although legal orphans can receive kinship guardianship assistance if other eligibility criteria are met.

Siblings of Eligible Child Can Also Receive Assistance

- » Siblings qualify for kinship guardianship assistance without meeting the eligibility requirements if a sibling in the same relative home is eligible.
- » Siblings do not have to be placed in the relative home at the same time to qualify.
- » Siblings include:
 - Full or half biological or adopted brother or sister.
 - Child who would be considered a sibling if it were not for a disruption in parental rights, such as TPR or the death of a parent.



Eligibility Requirements Must be Documented

- » Document eligibility requirements in child's ISP (Individualized Service Plan), as spelled out in DHR Permanency and Concurrent Planning Policy.
- » Include:
 - How the child meets eligibility requirements for kinship guardianship assistance.
 - Steps DHR has taken to determine reunification and adoption are not appropriate.
 - Efforts DHR has made to discuss adoption with child's relative caregiver or document reasons adoption is not an option.
 - Efforts DHR has made to discuss kinship guardianship with child's parents or document the reason efforts were not made.
 - Reason kinship guardianship is in child's best interest.

Assistance Agreement Must be in Place Before Final Court Order

- » Kinship guardianship agreement must be in place before juvenile court awards guardianship.
- » Form DHR-FCS-2210 kinship guardianship agreement includes all necessary elements.
- » Agreement must name successor guardian(s) in event of guardian's death or incapacitation.
- » More than one successor can be named in agreement.
- » Priority or first named successor guardian must have preliminary home study and criminal history and child abuse and neglect registry checks before being named in guardianship agreement.

Successor Guardians Continue to Receive Kinship Guardianship Assistance

- » Successor guardian does not have to be child's relative or approved foster parent.
- » Child may be placed directly into successor guardian's home after guardian's death or disability.
- » Child's eligibility for monthly assistance continues.
- » Before successor guardian may receive guardianship assistance for child:
 - Household members age 14 and older must complete background checks.
 - Each county determines if subsequent checks should be completed on successor guardian.
 - Must complete final home evaluation.
 - Must enter into guardianship assistance agreement with successor guardian.

Nonrecurring Expenses Available to Kinship Guardians & Successor Guardians

- » Up to \$2,000 in nonrecurring expenses available for kinship guardians and successor guardians.
- » Expenses include, but are not limited to, attorney fees and court filing fees, as well as transportation costs to/from court, DHR, and attorney offices.
- » Kinship guardians or successor guardians must either directly submit request for reimbursement, along with receipts, to county DHR or allow their attorney to directly bill county DHR.

Kinship Guardian Obtains Almost All Rights & Responsibilities Over Child

- » Once awarded by juvenile court, kinship guardian has all rights and responsibilities over the child except right to change child's name and right to consent to child's adoption.
- » Kinship guardian has right and responsibility whether to allow birth parent visits and to supervise them. However, court may order birth parent visits and guardian must follow court order.

When Kinship Guardianship is Appropriate

- » If child has strong bond with parent(s) and does not want to cut parental rights and responsibilities permanently.
- » Parent(s) has physical, cognitive, or emotional disabilities and cannot safely care for child but remains in child's life and is important to him/her.
- » Family believes permanently altering their legal ties is not in child's best interest.
- » Cultural norms make TPR inappropriate.

When Kinship Guardianship is Not Appropriate

- » If promoted to family without balanced education about adoption and reunification as permanency options.
- » To avoid protracted or complex TPR trial.
- » To simply close the case.

Spread the Word!

Families can learn about kinship guardianship in Alabama by visiting navigator.alabama.gov or by calling (844) 4ALA-KIN.

New Mexico Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) & Kinship Unit

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NICOLAS NJUA, KINSHIP AND ADOPTIONS SUPERVISOR

ESTHER ORTEGA, KINSHIP SPECIALIST

APRIL KATERI CHAVEZ, KINSHIP SPECIALIST



Our Strategies:



Law & Policy

- CYFD established ICWA and Kinship Unit to keep New Mexico families together
- Flexibility in updating Licensing Standards, Policy and Procedures to be more kin-friendly.
 - Established provisional approval and licensing of kin who are not US citizens.
 - Now include the sibling of a child who meets the criteria for guardianship.
 - Remove age limits for child to be eligible for GAP
 - Offers state funding for families who are not Title IV-E eligible
- CYFD established close statewide partnerships
 - Court systems/ attorneys
 - UNM School of Law
 - Stakeholders including resource parents, case workers, tribes, etc., which have resulted in many more people understanding this permanency option

Inter-departmental

- Enforce procedure to require relative placement as FIRST placement. Non-relative placements are now the exception. Use “Been Verified” and Seneca for all children in care for kinship searches
 - Seeking contacts for family finding agencies
- Require genograms to be completed for all investigations and uploaded in the case record
- Conduct bi-weekly state-wide Targeted Staffing for children in a relative placements
- Develop kinship training, committees and workgroups for all CYFD staff
- Created a chart comparing adoption and guardianship in NM which raised awareness among stakeholders and explains the differences between the two options.

Community

- Work with tribal communities and rural areas to develop tools for kinship care
 - Rio Arriba County Pilot Program
- Train community providers in completing the Initial Relative Assessment (IRA) to increase cultural reflectiveness of resource families.
- Contract with statewide legal agencies and relative success centers to provide services to kinship caregivers
 - Southwest Guidance Center-Kinship Navigator
 - Pegasus Legal Services for Children, NM Legal Aid, Dinébe'iiná Náhiłna be Agha'diit'ahii (DNA) Legal Services
- Create an engagement plan for families that cannot commit to being a resource family but CAN commit to being a support for the child in foster care, the resource family or biological family
 - Visit Host Program

MISSOURI GAP/KINSHIP GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE AND STRATEGIES

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PROGRAM SPECIALIST

MISSOURI CHILDREN'S DIVISION

DEFINITION CHANGES

- In August 2017, Missouri included kinship providers to the definition of “relative.” A kinship provider includes a person who is not related to the child, but has a close relationship with the child or the child’s family.
- By including kinship providers in the definition of relative, this allowed the kinship provider to be eligible for a guardianship subsidy.

RELATIVE CAN BE...

- Grandparent (great)
- Aunt (great)
- Uncle (great)
- Cousin (1st, 2nd, 3rd)
- Adult sibling (18 years or older, sharing one or both parents through blood, marriage, or adoption)
- Neighbor
- Teacher
- Coach
- Family friend
- Member of their church
- Person family most often turns to in time of crisis
- Person the child has a close relationship with

STRATEGIES

- Priority to place children with relatives unless contrary to the welfare of child
 - First placement, best placement with individuals known to the child
 - Grandparent notification within 3 hours of child entering care
 - Ongoing searches for relatives (to include kinship providers)
 - ✓ **30 Days to Family** (*focuses on family search, engagement, and placement efforts for youth*)
 - ✓ **Extreme Recruitment** (*12-20 week intensive intervention to identify relatives and kin with staff and a private investigator mining the records of the children to identify and then locate relatives and kin to be explored for potential placement*)

ASSISTANCE

SUPPORT, SUPPORT, SUPPORT

- **Subsidized guardianship services** up to age 18 for those who qualify: *Monthly Maintenance – MO HealthNet– Child care– Legal Fees for the guardianship– Respite– Residential– Intensive In Home Services– Integrative Expenses– Special Education Services Costs*
- **Family Resource Centers:** *MO guardianship parents have the benefit of having Family Resource Center services before, during, and after the guardianship is granted, offering support groups, respite care, case based intervention, school advocacy, crisis intervention, and training.*
- **MO Kinship Navigator Program:** *This program connects informal and formal relative caregivers in identifying, locating, and accessing programs and services to meet the physical and emotional needs of the children they are raising as well as any needs of the relative/kinship caregiver.*
- **Faith Based Partnerships:** *MO has an extensive Faith Based Initiative throughout the state to collaborate on services and support to all children and families in need.*