



Time for Reform

SUPPORT RELATIVES IN PROVIDING
FOSTER CARE AND PERMANENT
FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN



KIDS ARE WAITING
Fix Foster Care Now



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"You 'age out' of a system, but you don't age out of a family."

DONNA BUTTS,
Executive Director of
Generations United

More than 500,000 children in the United States are currently in foster care waiting for safe, permanent families. Approximately one-quarter of these children—more than 124,000—live with relatives,ⁱ which research has shown to be a safe, stable alternative to non-relative foster care. Many children in relative foster care will safely return home after their parents address the problems which triggered involvement in the system. Of those who cannot return to their parents, some may be adopted by the relatives who fostered them. However, for nearly 20,000 of the children in relative foster care, a court has determined that neither reunification nor adoption is a viable option.ⁱⁱ Federal policy currently forces their relative caregivers to make a difficult choice: continue to receive room and board as a foster family under state supervision and authority, or become permanent guardians to their kin and potentially lose their financial assistance.

Although federal law authorizes that children may leave foster care through reunification, adoption or legal guardianship, federal financial assistance is dedicated only to support foster and adoptive families, not legal guardians. With federally-supported guardianship, thousands of foster children could leave care to lead normal lives with their relatives without the involvement of government agencies. A growing body of research shows that foster children fare well with relatives:

Children in relative foster care tend to be just as safe as or safer than children placed with non-relative foster families. Data indicate that foster children living with relatives experience abuse or neglect at lower rates than children with unrelated foster families.

Relative foster placements tend to be more stable than placements with unrelated foster families. Children placed with relatives generally have fewer moves while in foster care.

Siblings are less likely to be separated when placed in relative foster care. Siblings are more likely to remain together while in foster care when placed with relatives than children placed with non-relatives.

Children in relative foster care maintain community connections. Children placed with relatives are more likely to remain within their own neighborhoods and continue in their original schools than children who are placed with unrelated foster families.

Relatives are frequently willing to adopt or become permanent guardians when reunification is not possible. Experience across the country has demonstrated that many relatives are, in fact, willing to adopt or become permanent guardians to their kin when not forced to give up critical financial assistance in order to do so.

The growing research demonstrates that relatives are a valuable resource for providing temporary foster care and as permanent families when reunification is not possible. Federal financing policy should support what is best for children, by providing services to prevent children from being placed in foster care, and creating incentives to help children leave foster care permanently and safely through reunification, adoption, or guardianship with relatives. Federal support for guardians would make a difference for children and families and save money. Subsidized guardianship is a win-win alternative to foster care for children and families when reunification or adoption is not possible.

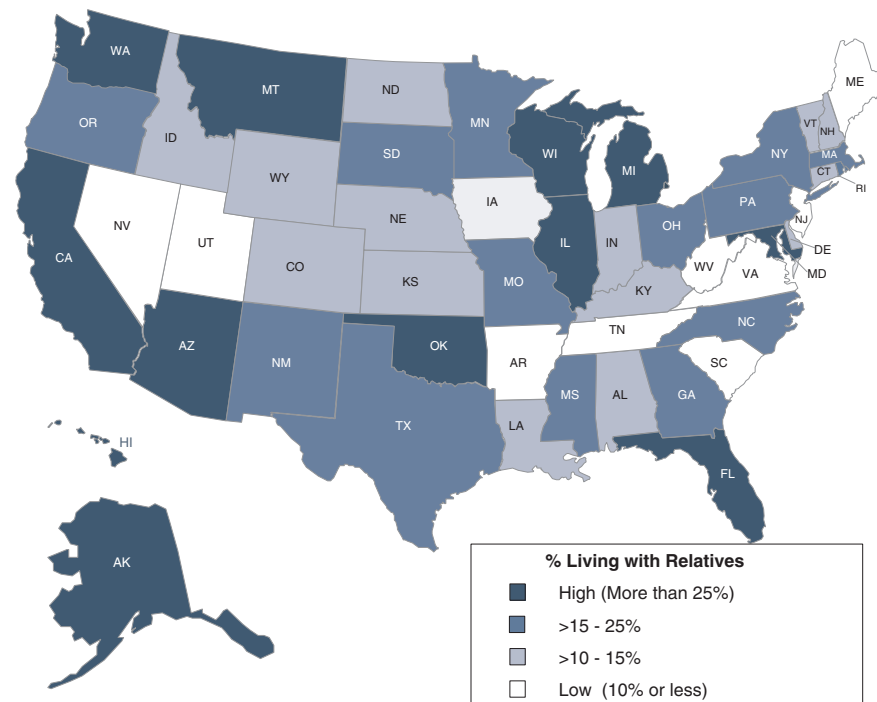
INTRODUCTION

“When we were all together, we had this chain that we were never going to break. My oldest brother was looking after my oldest sister, my oldest sister was looking after me, and I was looking after my youngest sister. After my brother and sister left, it was just me from there on out. I was alone looking after my sister.”

LAMARR STAPLETON,
about his experience with
foster care, New York

Grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives provide an important safety net for children whose parents are unavailable or unable to safely care for them. For many years, child welfare agencies largely overlooked relatives as resources for the foster care of children who had been abused or neglected. In the 1980s, however, as the need for foster care outstripped the supply of traditional foster families, child welfare agencies began to turn to relatives to fill the gap.² Currently, more than 124,000 foster children, or one-quarter of all children in foster care in the United States, are placed with relative foster parents,³ though states vary widely in the extent to which they look to relatives for foster placements. Figure 1 shows the percent of children in foster care in each state that live with relatives (Appendix A provides state-by-state data on the percentage of children in foster care living with relatives.)

FIGURE 1. Percentage of Children in Foster Care Living with Relatives
(THREE YEAR AVERAGE, AFCARS DATA 2001-2003)



Initially, relative foster care was seen primarily as an emergency response to provide care for children entering foster care.⁴ Over time, however, practitioners began to observe, and research confirmed, that many children placed with relatives fared better than children placed with non-related foster families. In many states, a preference for placement with relatives has been codified in law and practice.⁵

Research and experience have shown that children who must enter foster care generally benefit from placement with relatives. Placements with relatives can be as safe and can be more stable than those with unrelated foster parents. When children are placed with relatives, it is more likely that they will be spared the trauma of separation from their siblings and placement far from familiar surroundings. Children placed with relatives often are able to return safely to their parents with the support of their relatives. When asked, relative foster parents are more willing than previously thought to accept permanent legal responsibility for the children in their care, through adoption or legal guardianship, when reunification with birth parents is not possible.

Despite the documented positive outcomes for children in the care of relatives, some practitioners and policy makers remain skeptical about the benefits of relative foster care. They express concerns that children may not be safe with relatives; some may believe that relatives should care for children in their families without government assistance; and some may worry that children in the care of relatives are not as likely to have the benefit of legally permanent families.

This report presents the latest findings on the impact of relative care for children in foster care, describes the role of relatives as permanent families for the children in their care, and offers cost-effective ways to support relatives as caregivers through federal policy.

IMPACT OF RELATIVE FOSTER CARE: What is Known from the Research

"It worked out because it was my grandma, and I knew I loved her and I felt safe with her. There's love there."⁸

JANAY, former foster youth,
California

SAFETY: Children in relative foster care tend to be just as safe as, or safer than, children placed with unrelated foster families.

Most children who enter foster care have experienced abuse or neglect. Safety in foster care is essential. The belief that child abuse and neglect runs in family—as often expressed as “the apple does not fall far from the tree”—has prompted worries that relatives may not adequately protect children in foster care from repeat harm. Research from across the country is beginning to shed new light on the safety of children in relative foster care, with a growing body of evidence that shows that children placed with relatives are just as safe, or safer, when compared with children placed with unrelated foster families.⁶

A federally funded national study of rates of re-abuse of children who came to the attention of child protective authorities in 1999 found that children who entered foster care and were placed with relatives experienced re-abuse at a rate no greater than that for children who were placed with unrelated foster parents.⁷ Other studies show that children placed with relatives are safer. A study from Illinois compared rates of abuse of children in foster care in the homes of relatives and children placed with unrelated foster parents. The data show much lower rates of abuse in relative homes than in the homes of unrelated foster parents. Between 1995 and 2005, rates of abuse for all children in foster care in the state fell as a result of improved child welfare screening of families for safety risks. Although there is room for further improvement in ensuring the safety of children in foster care, the Illinois data demonstrate that with appropriate safety screening, the homes of relatives are just as safe as or safer than the homes of unrelated foster families.

STABILITY: Relative foster placements tend to be more stable than placements with unrelated foster families.

It is widely recognized that moving children from one home to another is detrimental to their physical, emotional and developmental well-being. For children in foster care, stability is usually measured by whether and how often children experience changes in foster care placement over the course of a year. National data show that children placed with relatives are less likely to have a change in placement. According to the latest national data (2002), 82% of children in foster care who were placed with relatives were with the same caregivers one year later, compared to 65% of children placed with non-relatives. The differences in stability rates for

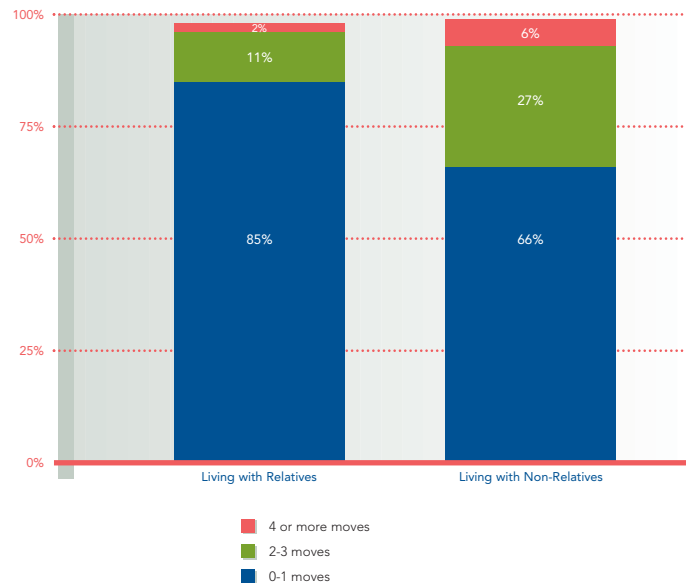
"I realized this is the first year my grandchild has started and finished the year at the same school...and she's in the sixth grade."

Grandmother who began caring for her grandchild ²²

children placed with relative foster parents and those placed with non-relative foster parents is even greater in some states. Appendix B provides state-by-state data, comparing "same placement" status one year later for children placed with relatives and children placed with non-relatives. "According to the latest national data (2002), 82% of children in foster care who were placed with relatives were with the same caregivers one year later, compared to only 65% of children placed with non-relatives."

Analyses of administrative data and surveys of children and families also support the findings of greater stability of foster care with relatives. One analysis showed that half of the children placed with relatives never changed homes during their stay in foster care whereas 80% of children placed with non-relatives had one or more placement moves while in foster care.¹⁰ These findings are corroborated in Illinois where 85% of children placed with relatives have zero or one move within their first full year of care, compared to 66% of children placed with non-relatives (See Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. Number of Moves Illinois Foster Children Made in Their First Full Year of Care (2004) Living with Relatives Compared to Living with Non-Relatives



SOURCE: CHILDREN AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

SIBLING CONNECTIONS: Children in relative foster care are more likely to maintain sibling connections.

Placements with relatives, also known as grandfamilies, including grandparents, aunts, and uncles, help to reduce the trauma and separation that accompany children's removals from their parents by preserving children's important connections to their siblings. Research shows that sibling relationships play a major role in how children develop and learn to interact with other people¹¹ and that sibling bonds, just like parent-child bonds, influence children's developing sense of attachment.¹²

"I never questioned the permanency or unconditional nature of my relationship with my sister. I knew that my sister would be in my life forever, unlike so many other people who certainly left their mark, but were now gone. Lissa was my family. My sister and I each believed in the other's potential to be amazing and so we were able to encourage the other's hopes and dreams. My relationship with my sister is irreplaceable."

Youth emancipated from foster care¹³

Children placed with relatives are more likely than children in non-relative homes to be placed with their siblings, the significance of which cannot be overestimated.¹⁴ Research in three sites—California, New York City, and Illinois—confirms this:

- In California, 40% of children placed with relatives are not living with all of their siblings in care while 64% of those in non-relative homes are not living with all of their siblings.¹⁵
- Research from New York City shows that siblings in foster care, when placed with relatives, are more likely to be placed together.¹⁶
- In Illinois, 44% of foster children living with relatives are not placed with all of their siblings in foster care, compared to 59% of children in non-relative homes who are not living with all of their siblings in foster care.¹⁷

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: Children in relative foster care are more likely to maintain community connections.

Research in California, New York City and Illinois also has found that children placed in relative foster homes are more likely than their counterparts in non-relative care to be placed within their neighborhoods and remain in their schools of origin.

- In California, 62% of children placed with relatives live within five miles of their home of origin, compared to 36% of children living with non-relatives.¹⁸
- In New York City, 25% of children are placed within their own neighborhoods when they are placed with relatives, compared to 18% when children are placed with non-relatives.¹⁹
- In Illinois, 40% of children are placed within five miles of their home when placed with relatives; only 21% of children are placed close to home when with non-relatives.²⁰

Community connections also include school ties. Research shows that a smaller percentage of children in relative foster care report having changed schools (63%) than do children in non-relative foster care (80%).²¹ Because schools are typically community-based, relative foster care promotes the maintenance of children's ties to a network of friends, teachers, coaches and other potentially significant supports.

PERMANENCE WITH Relatives

"A child placed with kin is much more likely to achieve permanency than if not placed with kin. Furthermore, where differences are seen in the literature, they tend to demonstrate better outcomes among children in kinship care. Although this cannot solve all of the problems facing foster children, giving them a head start toward better outcomes if they reside in the homes of extended family is perhaps the best we can ask of ourselves."

DR. DAVID RUBIN,
Assistant Professor,
Department of Pediatrics,
Children's Hospital of
Philadelphia

Relatives' Long-Term Commitment to Children. A long-standing myth within the child welfare community is that relatives are not interested in providing legal permanence for the children in their care. In particular, child welfare agencies have traditionally assumed that relative caregivers are not interested in adoption, believing that family ties already exist and that termination of parental rights and adoption would cause strife among family members.

Surveys conducted with relatives caring for children in foster care in Illinois, however, paint a different picture of relatives' willingness to commit to the children in their care over the long term. Research, sponsored by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, found that the large majority of relatives (80% of 613 completed surveys) viewed the children in their care as "already home" and made clear their commitment to raising the children to adulthood.²³ Their views on adoption were not in line with child welfare caseworkers' assumptions. When caseworkers discussed adoption with these caregivers, it became obvious that many families were interested in adopting. The perception that relative foster care was a barrier to adoption appears to have been largely a self-fulfilling prophecy: caseworkers acted on the belief that relatives were not willing to adopt, and hence, seldom asked these families about adoption. Although many families were open to considering adoption, one-third of the relatives who wanted to provide long-term care did not see adoption as a viable option and wanted an alternative permanency option that would not necessitate the termination of parental rights.²⁴

Other research has shown that for many relatives who plan to raise their children to adulthood, alternatives to adoption are important. In focus groups conducted by the California Children's Lobby, many relatives stated that adoption was undesirable because of dynamics within their families. They, however, expressed frustration at the ongoing involvement of the child welfare system in their lives which they often experienced as an unnecessary intrusion. These caregivers expressed the need to find a way to enable their children to exit the foster care system and remain permanently in their care with the financial and medical benefits that foster care provided and which their children would continue to need.²⁵

Expanding Permanency Options: Subsidized Guardianship. Over the past decade, there has been a growing recognition of the need to expand permanency options for children placed with relatives when reunification or adoption is not a viable option for the child or family. Specifically, the focus has been on developing a permanency option that transfers legal responsibility for the child to the relative and that provides relatives with the level of resources that is currently provided to adoptive families of children in foster care.

Recognizing that children benefit from the safe and stable placements they have with relatives, thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have developed subsidized legal guardianship as a permanency option that relatives may consider. Subsidized guardianship offers what many relative caregivers are seeking: the transfer of guardianship does not require the termination of parental rights, but it gives relatives the rights of care, custody and supervision of the child. Subsidized guardianship programs acknowledge what the adoption assistance program has shown: some families need support raising children who have been abused and neglected. These programs also recognize that relatives often face financial challenges when children are added to their families. Research shows that relative caregivers, who often are older, are more likely retired and living on fixed incomes.

"Subsidized guardianship [had it been available] may have kept me with my extended birth family, saved the state money, and kept my mom's parental rights from being needlessly, hurtfully terminated against our wills."

JACKIE HAMMERS-CROWELL,
former foster youth, Iowa²⁹

The development of subsidized guardianship, as well as culturally sensitive casework practice that promotes permanency planning with relatives, has changed relative care from a barrier to permanence to a positive asset for the timely achievement of permanence. With the introduction of subsidized guardianship and a better understanding of the desires and needs of relative caregivers, many children who otherwise would have remained in foster care in the care of relatives have left care to live permanently with their relatives. Prior to the introduction of subsidized guardianship in Illinois, for example, children in foster care who were placed with relatives were less likely than children in non-relative placements to exit foster care to permanent families. Similar results have been reported in other states. Across the board, states that offer subsidized guardianship as a permanency option have been successful in moving children placed with relatives out of the foster care system to live permanently with their relatives.

Subsidized guardianship programs have been developed and funded in different ways. Twelve states have implemented or will implement federally supported subsidized guardianship programs through child welfare waivers supported under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. These programs provide foster caregivers with federally reimbursable subsidies similar to the subsidies for children adopted from foster care. Other subsidized guardianship programs are funded by state dollars or through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or through Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds.

"When children go to guardianship, someone is making a commitment to them, indicating to a judge that they want them. . . . This is something children can hang their hat on: 'Somebody really wants me.'"

NICK PAPPAS, Children's
Services Supervisor,
Hancock County, Maine

Subsidized guardianship has had a particularly powerful impact in providing permanence for African-American children in foster care. Kinship care has been a tradition among African-American families for generations. African-American children, who are disproportionately represented in foster care, are more likely than other children to be cared for by relatives when they are in foster care. In Illinois, with the introduction of subsidized guardianship, increasing numbers of African-American children in the care of their relatives have exited foster care. By introducing permanency options that build upon the strengths and traditions of black families, not only have exits from foster care increased, but the amount of time African-American children spent in foster care decreased.

Relative placement has long been important in Native American communities as well. Traditionally and from a cultural perspective, extended family, clans, and bands were vital to ensuring the safety and well-being of children within the family, community, and tribe. Historically, tribes have been subjected to the wholesale removal of their children by both public and private child placement agencies. These placements, many times unwarranted, sought to place children outside their communities and extended families. To reduce the high number of children being removed from their families, the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed in 1978 and included placement preferences to ensure that a child's relationships to family, extended family, tribe, and the community are preserved. Subsidized guardianship is wholly consistent with Native American cultures and traditions and with the placement preferences of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN in Permanent Relative Care

“When DCFS came and put us in the home with my aunt, things changed completely. My sisters and I felt like we were home because we were in an environment of love and care from a relative. An aunt is just like a mother because you are her sister’s children so it is like she feels that it is her job or responsibility to care for you and love you just like your own mother would.”

ROBERT JOHNSON,
former youth in foster care,
Illinois, whose aunt became his
subsidized guardian

Research has shown the children who leave foster care to the permanent care of their relatives—through adoption or guardianship—are likely to have the benefit of stable, safe, and healthy families.

- In Oregon, only 3 percent of children re-entered foster care during their first year post-guardianship.³³
- Children in adoption and guardianship arrangements in Illinois are significantly less likely than children who remain in foster care to have subsequent indicated reports of abuse and neglect.³⁴
- Of the nearly 8,000 children in subsidized guardianship homes in Illinois, 92% are in stable arrangements. Of the 37,000 children ever adopted in Illinois, 95% are stable. “Stable” is defined as the child not re-entering foster care and subsidy payments not ending prior to the child’s 18th birthday.³⁵

Children and relatives often describe the intangible benefits of permanence in grandfamilies—when achieved through adoption or guardianship. Youth speak of their sense of belonging when they live with an aunt or grandparents. Relatives discuss their sense of commitment to their children and to their children’s biological parents. Youth often mention that their relationship with their brothers and sisters, which they are able to sustain when they live with relatives, are the strongest and most stable aspect of their lives.

Because relatives are more likely to take in larger sibling groups than non-relative caregivers, siblings placed in relative care are more likely to achieve permanency together. When permanency is not achieved for all siblings together, relatives are more likely to maintain siblings’ relationships with one another. In a recent survey of Illinois caregivers of children who have subsidized guardianships or had been adopted, caregivers reported that, of the children with biological siblings, about half (47%) had contact with their biological siblings. Children with relatives were more likely to visit with their siblings (62%) than children living with non-relatives (30%).³⁶

RELATIVES: A Way Out of Foster Care and Back to Family

“If subsidized guardianship is not made a part of federal law as are subsidies for adoptions, we run the risk of losing one of the most significant advancements in child welfare practice in decades.”

ERWIN MCEWEN,
Acting Director Illinois
Department of Children
and Family Services

Relative foster care has proven to be a valuable and worthy placement option for large numbers of children in foster care, and federal policy must continue to encourage the placement with relatives when it makes sense to do so. Subsidized guardianship has proven to be an important permanency option for many children in foster care who cannot return to their parents or for whom adoption is not an option. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) successfully promoted more permanence for children by creating incentives for adoptions. By providing relative guardians with subsidies equivalent to adoption subsidies, federal policy would better support the use of relatives as a way for children to leave foster care for a permanent family when reunification is not possible.

Nearly 20,000 children currently living in foster care could exit care today, if their caregivers could become legal guardians and receive the financial support that is available to adoptive families.³⁷ The court has determined that reunification and adoption are not viable options for these children. Despite clear research documenting that subsidized guardianship is a safe and stable

"Grandparents and other relatives raising children often encounter a variety of unnecessary barriers, including difficulties enrolling children in school, authorizing medical treatment, maintaining their public housing leases, obtaining affordable legal services, and accessing a variety of Federal benefits and services. The Kinship Caregiver Support Act attempts to address the full range of difficulties facing kinship caregivers, by allowing relatives to become formal guardians while receiving some financial assistance."

SENATOR HILLARY CLINTON,
upon introduction of *The Kinship Caregiver Support Act*, February 16, 2007

option for children, federal support for this permanency option is limited. The authority to provide federal funds to support subsidized guardianship programs under Title IV-E waivers—one of the principal sources of federal funding for these programs—has expired. Subsidized guardianship programs under these waivers are available only in a limited number of participating states, and these states' programs will end when the five-year waivers come to a close.³⁸ Although other subsidized guardianships programs are funded through different mechanisms, these programs are vulnerable to state budget shortfalls and shifting budget priorities.

An important additional benefit of subsidized guardianship is that it saves money. When children are in foster care with their relatives, the government pays the costs of the child's care (often called "room and board") and incurs administrative costs: case management services provided by caseworkers, court costs for judicial reviews, and other expenses involved in ensuring that the child's needs are met. In subsidized guardianship arrangements, the government makes a payment to the child's guardian to assist with the child's care, but the administrative costs are dramatically lower. In the most successful guardianship programs, the subsidies are equal to the room and board paid while the child was in foster care and is equal to adoption subsidies. Even in these situations, savings are realized because administrative costs are greatly reduced.

It is important that federal legislation support relatives as valuable resources for children in foster care. In February 2007, Senators Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) introduced *The Kinship Caregiver Support Act*. This Act would provide all states with the option to provide guardianship assistance to relatives through Title IV-E, without requiring a waiver.

The Guardianship Assistance Promotion and Kinship Support Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Danny Davis (D-IL) in 2006 and is expected to be reintroduced early in the current Congressional session. It would provide financial assistance and human services to relatives and foster parents who become the legal guardians of children who otherwise would remain in federally paid foster care.

CONCLUSION

"Why would we want to do anything to discourage a family member from taking a child who has been abused or neglected by his birth parent?"

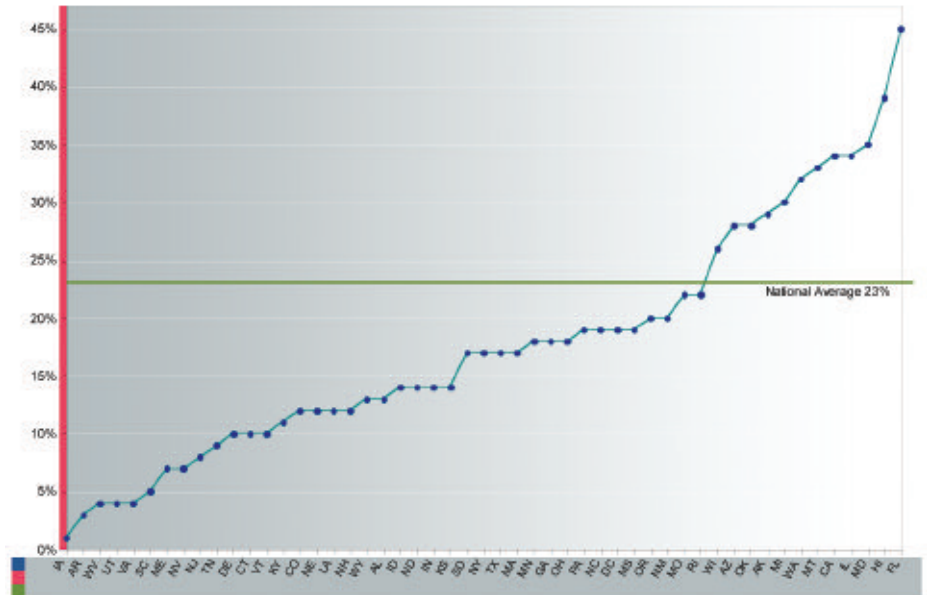
REP. HEATHER WILSON
(R-NM), U.S. House of Representatives

Relatives play critical roles in ensuring the safety and wellbeing for some children in foster care. Relative foster parents provide children with safe and stable care and help keep children connected with their siblings and communities. In many cases, relatives help support the safe reunification of children and their parents. Relatives also provide many children with legal permanence through subsidized guardianships when reunification and adoption are not possible. Research has documented the positive outcomes for children, families and child welfare systems when subsidized guardianship is available to families. By including subsidized guardianships in federal law and providing subsidies equivalent to those now provided to adoptive families, federal foster care policy will provide a more complete response to the permanency needs of children in relative foster care.

APPENDIX A

PERCENT OF FOSTER CHILDREN LIVING WITH RELATIVES (THREE-YEAR AVERAGE, AFCARS DATA)
(2001–2003)

STATE	Percent
Alabama	13 %
Alaska	29 %
Arizona	28 %
Arkansas	3 %
California	34 %
Colorado	12 %
Connecticut	10 %
Delaware	10 %
District of Columbia	19 %
Florida	45 %
Georgia	18 %
Hawaii	39 %
Idaho	14 %
Illinois	34 %
Indiana	14 %
Iowa	1 %
Kansas	14 %
Kentucky	11 %
Louisiana	12 %
Maine	7 %
Maryland	35 %
Massachusetts	17 %
Michigan	30 %
Minnesota	18 %
Mississippi	19 %
Missouri	22 %
Montana	33 %
Nebraska	12 %
Nevada	7 %
New Hampshire	12 %
New Jersey	8 %
New Mexico	20 %
New York	17 %
North Carolina	19 %
North Dakota	14 %
Ohio	18 %
Oklahoma	28 %
Oregon	20 %
Pennsylvania	19 %
Rhode Island	22 %
South Carolina	5 %
South Dakota	17 %
Tennessee	9 %
Texas	17 %
Utah	4 %
Vermont	10 %
Virginia	4 %
Washington	32 %
West Virginia	4 %
Wisconsin	26 %
Wyoming	13 %
National	23 %



SOURCE: CHILDREN AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

APPENDIX B

A MEASURE OF STABILITY: PERCENT OF FOSTER CHILDREN IN CARE FOR A FULL YEAR AND LIVING IN THE SAME HOME (2002–2003)

STATE	Relatives	Non-Relatives	Percent Difference
Alabama	86%	71%	16%
Alaska	64%	54%	10%
Arizona	82%	63%	19%
Arkansas	88%	52%	37%
California	85%	65%	21%
Colorado	83%	62%	21%
Connecticut	84%	70%	14%
Delaware	82%	74%	8%
District of Columbia	68%	61%	7%
Florida	83%	55%	28%
Georgia	95%	86%	9%
Hawaii	72%	62%	10%
Idaho	85%	58%	27%
Illinois	78%	71%	8%
Iowa	47%	51%	-4%
Kansas	74%	53%	21%
Kentucky	98%	88%	9%
Louisiana	74%	68%	7%
Maine	69%	54%	15%
Maryland	77%	72%	4%
Massachusetts	83%	62%	21%
Michigan	71%	60%	11%
Minnesota	89%	76%	13%
Mississippi	88%	79%	10%
Missouri	77%	62%	15%
Montana	85%	73%	13%
Nebraska	54%	45%	9%
New Hampshire	92%	79%	13%
New Jersey	89%	69%	21%
New Mexico	80%	68%	12%
New York	87%	73%	14%
North Carolina	68%	52%	15%
North Dakota	75%	66%	9%
Ohio	71%	58%	13%
Oklahoma	84%	60%	23%
Rhode Island	79%	59%	20%
South Carolina	87%	80%	6%
South Dakota	68%	66%	2%
Tennessee	74%	43%	31%
Texas	74%	48%	26%
Utah	71%	59%	12%
Vermont	78%	48%	30%
Virginia	78%	71%	7%
Washington	85%	64%	21%
West Virginia	64%	52%	12%
Wyoming	99%	92%	7%
National	82%	65%	17%

Bolded states represent those with the largest positive difference between stability with relatives vs. stability with non-relatives. For this measure of stability, we took 2002 AFCARS data for children living either with relative foster care, or in foster care with non relatives. We matched these records to the 2003 AFCARS files and looked at the percent of children in care for the full year who were in the same home one year later. States with less than 100 children were excluded from this analysis, this includes: Indiana, Nevada, Oregon, Wisconsin and Puerto Rico.

SOURCE: CHILDREN AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTER
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

ENDNOTES

¹Generations United, All Children Deserve a Permanent Home: Subsidized Guardianships as a Common Sense Solution for Children in Long-Term Relative Foster Care, 2006. Available on-line at: http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/All_Children_Deserve_A_Permanent_Home.pdf (accessed March 2, 2007).

² 20,000 represents the number of children who have been in foster care for 17 out of the last 22 months and have been in their current relative care placement for 12 months and no longer have a goal of reunification or adoption. Testa, M., Salyers, N., Shaver, M., & Miller, J. (2004). Family ties: Supporting permanence for children in safe and stable foster care with relatives and other caregivers. Available on-line at: http://www.fosteringresults.org/results/reports/pewreports_10-13-04_alreadyhome.pdf (accessed February 27, 2007).

³ Generations United, All Children Deserve a Permanent Home: Subsidized Guardianships as a Common Sense Solution for Children in Long-Term Relative Foster Care, 2006. Available on-line at: http://ipath.gu.org/documents/A0/All_Children_Deserve_A_Permanent_Home.pdf (accessed March 2, 2007).

⁴ Between 1985 and 1990, according to Spar (1993) the number of children in foster care increased by 47%, while the number of available foster families decreased by 27% (Report to Congress on Kinship Care, USDHHS, ACF, Children's Bureau). States such as Illinois, New York, and Florida all saw major increases in their kinship care population. In Illinois, there was an unprecedented growth in kinship care from 3,690 children in 1985 to 27,071 children in 1995.

⁵ US Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). The AFCARS Report: Preliminary estimates as of September 2006. Available on-line at: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/stats/_research/afcars/tar/report13.htm (accessed February 22, 2007).

⁶ The terms "relative foster care" and "kinship foster care" are used to describe foster care placements with grandparents and other relatives. This report uses the term "relative foster care."

⁷ The federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, provides that "in order for a State to be eligible for payments under this part [Title IV-E], it shall have a plan approved by the Secretary which . . . provides that the State shall consider giving preference to an adult relative over a non-related caregiver when determining the placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant State child protection standards." 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(19).

⁸ Testa, M., Bruhn, C. & Helton, J. Comparative safety, stability, and continuity of children's placements in formal and informal substitute care. A paper presented at the NSCAW Data Users' Workshop, January 25-26, 2007, Washington, DC.

⁹ Testa, Bruhn, & Helton, op cit.

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¹¹ For this measure, we took 2002 AFCARS data for children placed either with relative foster parents or in foster care with non-relatives. We matched these records to the 2003 AFCARS files and for children in both data sets, we looked at the percent of children that were in the same home one year later. States with less than 100 children were excluded from this analysis, which include Indiana, Nevada, Oregon, Wisconsin, and Puerto Rico. Analysis by the Children and Family Research Center (2007) using AFCARS files from 2002 and 2003.

¹² Testa, Bruhn and Helton, op. cit.

¹³ Begun, A.L.(1995). Sibling relationships and foster care placements for young children. *Early Child Development & Care*, 106-237-250.

¹⁴ Hegar, R. (1988). Sibling relationships and separations: Implications for child placement. *Social Service Review*, 62, 446-467.

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¹⁶ Herrick, M.A., and Piccus, W. (2005). Sibling Connections: The importance of nurturing sibling bonds in the foster care system. *Children and Youth Service Review*, 27, 845-861.

¹⁷ Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Shaw, T., Dawson, W., Piccus, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Smith, J., Dunn, A., Frerer, K., Putnam Hornstein, E., & Ataie, Y. (2006). *Child Welfare Services Reports for California*. Retrieved [January 23, 2007], from University of California at Berkeley Center for Social Services Research website. URL: <<http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>>

¹⁸ Wolczyn, F. & Zimmerman, E. 2005. Sibling placements in longitudinal perspective. *Children and Youth Service Review*, Vol.27, pp. 741-763.

¹⁹ Rolock, N. & Testa, M. (2006). Conditions of children in or at risk of foster care in Illinois. Urbana, IL, Children and Family Research Center.

²⁰ Needell, Webster, Armijo, Lee, Cuccaro-Alamin, Shaw, Dawson, Piccus, Magruder, Exel, Smith, Dunn, Frerer, Putnam Hornstein, & Ataie, (2006), op. cit.

²¹ New York City, Administration for Children's Services, retrieved [February 20, 2007] http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/statistics/top12_ind2.shtml

²² Rolock & Testa, (2006), op. cit.

²³ National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) CPS Sample Component Waive 1 Data Analysis Report, April 2005. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ACF, 2005).

²⁴ Provided by Generations United.

²⁵ Testa, M. and Shook, K., Relative caregiver social assessments, final report to the Department of Children and Family Services, December 1994.

²⁶ Testa, M., Shook, K., Cohen, L. et al. Permanency planning options for children in formal kinship care. *Child Welfare* (September-October 1996) 75(5) 451-70.

²⁷ Kin-GAP Subcommittee, Assessing the Needs of Our Kin-GAP Children and Families, approved by Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families, March 2005.

²⁸ Ehrle, J. & Geen, R. (2002). Children cared for by relatives: What services do they need? Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

²⁹ Testa, M. (2005). The changing significance of race and kinship for achieving permanence for foster children. In D. Derezotes, J. Poertner, & M. Testa (eds.), *Race matters in child welfare: The Overrepresentation of African Americans in the system* (pp.231-241). Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

³⁰ Offering subsidized guardianship in Illinois boosted permanency rates by 6% In Oregon, 133 children exited the system to guardianship between July 1999 and December of 2001; seventy percent of who were with relative caregivers. James Bell Associates. (2004). Summary of the Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstrations. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services. California's Kin-Gap program opened the door for 10,945 children in foster care with relatives to achieve permanency through guardianship between January 2000 and March 2005(Assessing the Needs of Our Kin-Gap Children and Families, 2005).

³¹ Reprinted with permission from materials published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children.

³² Hill, R.B. (2006)., Synthesis of Research on Disproportionality in Child Welfare: An Update. Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in the Child Welfare System.

³³ Rolock & Testa, (2006), op. cit.

³⁴ Adoptive and Foster families of Maine Inc., Family Ties Newsletter Vol. 8, No. 7, July 2000.

³⁵ James Bell Associates. (2006). Summary of the Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstrations. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services.

³⁶ Rolock & Testa, (2006), op. cit.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ 20,000 represents the number of children who have been in foster care for 17 out of the last 22 months and have been in their current relative care placement for 12 months and no longer have a goal of reunification or adoption. Testa, M., Salyers, N., Shaver, M., & Miller, J. (2004). *Family ties: Supporting permanence for children in safe and stable foster care with relatives and other caregivers*. Available on-line at: http://www.fosteringresults.org/results/reports/pewreports_10-13-04_alreadyhome.pdf (accessed February 27, 2007).

⁴⁰ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services may extend existing waivers. New waivers, however, may not be granted.

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