

# State Kinship Care Policies for Children that Come to the Attention of Child Welfare Agencies

## *Findings from the 2007 Casey Kinship Foster Care Policy Survey*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper reports the findings from a 2007 survey of state kinship foster care policies. The survey is a follow-up to surveys conducted by the Urban Institute in 1997, 1999, and 2001. The data from the survey show that states continue to see kin as a valuable resource and encourage the use of kinship care as both a temporary placement and a permanency option for children. Key findings from the survey include:

- **About half of the states reported that their child welfare agencies would not have ongoing involvement with children who are living with kin in private arrangements even if these arrangements were the result of abuse or neglect by the birth parent and the kinship caregivers sought assistance from the agency.** As a result, there are limited resources available through child welfare agencies for those who do not formally become involved with the child welfare system.
- **Most states encourage and/or require caseworkers to seek out kin who can care for children to avoid placement in foster care.** There has been a significant shift in the number of states that acknowledge the practice of diverting cases from state custody in which a child has been removed from their home because of substantiated abuse and/or neglect.
- **Most states typically will not open a child welfare case when kin are available for placement, and instead divert children from foster care. Agencies generally do not provide reunification services in these instances.** However, most states reported that if a voluntary case is opened when children are diverted from foster care, reunification services are provided to the child's birth parent if this is consistent with the permanency goal.
- **In just under two-thirds of the states, kin are permitted to care for children in state custody without meeting all of the same licensing standards that non-kin foster parents must meet.** Twenty-two states require kin caring for children in state custody to be licensed just as non-kin foster parents, but allow, on an individualized basis, a waiver or modification of one or more standards that non-kin foster parents are required to meet. Twenty-three states allow kinship caregivers caring for children in state custody to be assessed using a separate approval process.
- **In 21 states, kin do not have to go through the full licensure process to have the option to receive a monthly foster care payment.** On the other hand, 22 states allow kin to care for children in state custody while receiving a lesser payment than the monthly foster care payment.
- **Most states give kin caring for children in state custody the option of pursuing guardianship; however the amount of ongoing financial assistance and support services available are often not comparable to those provided for kin who pursue adoption.** Over half of the states that allow guardianships do not use the same assessment standards when assessing kinship caregivers for guardianship and adoption. About one-third of the states do not have ongoing financial assistance for guardianships. An additional 10 states have ongoing financial assistance for guardianships, but the amount is less than the amount of ongoing financial assistance available for kin who pursue adoption. Over half of the states that allow kinship caregivers to pursue guardianship do not offer the same amount of post-permanency services that is offered for kinship caregivers who pursue adoption.
- **About one-fourth of the states would not give preference to noncustodial parents over other kin when considering them as placement options for their children who are involved in the child welfare system.**

## SECTION I: KINSHIP CARE OVERVIEW

### IA. Background

Kinship care refers to all living arrangements in which children are cared for by relatives and neither of the children's parents live in the home.<sup>1</sup> Often, this definition also includes those who are not related by blood, marriage, or adoption, but have an established relationship ("kinship") with the child. Most kinship care arrangements are private, meaning that the child began living with the relative<sup>2</sup> because of a private agreement between the relative and the birth parent and the child welfare agency had no involvement with this decision. There are times when a family becomes involved with a child welfare agency, but instead of taking custody of a child at risk of continued abuse or neglect, the agency suggests that the child be moved to live with kin. These types of arrangements are often called "voluntary" kinship care. Finally, kinship foster care refers to those arrangements that occur when child welfare agencies take custody of a child after an investigation of abuse and/or neglect, and places the child with a kinship caregiver who is an approved placement based on the assessment standards developed by the agency.

The vast majority of kinship care arrangements are private. According to Census data, approximately 2.5 million children lived not in foster care but in households with neither parent present (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The U.S. Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services collects data from states on kinship foster care and the most recent estimate is that about 125,000 children live in kinship foster care arrangements (US DHHS, 2008). Very little data exist on "voluntary" kinship care arrangements. According to the 2002 National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), 542,000 children were placed in the care of relatives after social services involvement; of these, courts were involved in making relatives responsible for the care of 405,000 children (Ehrle, Geen, & Main, 2003).

Before the 1980s, child welfare agencies rarely placed children in state custody with kinship caregivers. As the use of kinship foster care grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s,<sup>3</sup> states generally applied the policies and regulations designed for non-kin foster parents to kinship foster parents. However, during the past decade, states have increasingly sought to develop strategies and tools to make better use of these placements.

In the past, federal legislation and policy have not been explicit in their mention of kinship caregivers and the unique treatment of kin in the foster care system, and were even less clear with respect to treatment of kin who are caring for children in need of protection who are not in state custody. Only recently has legislation begun to address explicitly the specific issues and circumstances of kin who are caring for children who interact with the child welfare system. First, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (P.L.104-193) specifically directed that preference for placement of a child in foster care should be considered for a relative over a non-relative "when determining a placement for a

<sup>1</sup> This definition of kinship care is used for the purposes of this report. It should be noted that other organizations may define kinship care differently.

<sup>2</sup> The words "relatives" and "kin" are used interchangeably in this report and refer to relatives related by blood, marriage, or adoption and possibly those not related but who have an established relationship with the child, depending on each individual state's definition.

<sup>3</sup> For a full discussion on how kinship care changed during this time frame, please see, Geen, R. (Ed.). (2003). *Kinship care: Making the most of a valuable resource*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.

child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant state child protection standards.” Secondly, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 (P.L. 105-89) allowed for differential treatment of kinship foster care providers in terms of the type of placements they could be considered for compared to non-kin providers. ASFA also addressed kinship caregivers as viable permanency options by indicating that a “fit and willing relative” could provide a “planned permanent living arrangement”. In addition, the ASFA final rule of 2000 (45 CFR § 1355-1357) clarified that relatives who were caring for Title IV-E eligible children were required to meet the same licensing standards as non-kin foster parents in order for the states to receive federal reimbursement for these placements. However, the final rule did permit states to waive licensing standards for kinship caregivers that were for non-safety issues, on a case-by-case basis. Finally, the final rule prohibits states from seeking federal reimbursement for payments made to provisionally licensed kin, though states are permitted to claim Title IV-E reimbursement for a period, not to exceed 60 days, between satisfaction of the approval or licensing requirements and the actual issuance of a full license or approval.<sup>4</sup>

The federal legislation previously mentioned helped to bring more attention to the importance of kin caregivers and their unique needs and circumstances when caring for children in the foster care system. However, the legislation mostly fo-

cused on kin who are caring for children in state custody. The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act passed by Congress in 2008 (P.L. 110-351) directly addresses the need for financial assistance for kinship caregivers who wish to pursue guardianship. It also addresses support services for kinship caregivers caring for children in and out of state custody. Specifically, the bill allows states to seek reimbursement for providing ongoing financial assistance for kin who have assumed guardianship of a child from the foster care system.<sup>5</sup> The bill also guarantees funds for states to administer matching grants to create kinship navigator programs,<sup>6</sup> to fund family finding services, to provide residential family-based treatment services,<sup>7</sup> and to fund family group decision making services. These support services will be created to provide better access to services needed by kin, to foster better communication among public and private agencies that kin may be involved with, and provide for more outreach to kin. Child welfare agencies must also, within 30 days of the child’s removal, notify adult relatives that a related child has been removed from his or her parental home. The bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to report to Congress on the states’ use of unlicensed kinship caregiver placements as well as their use of waivers of non-safety licensing standards to determine the impact on children’s safety, permanency, and well-being. Also, the bill extends the use of IV-E training dollars to train additional groups who receive or provide

<sup>4</sup> Also, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 prohibited states from claiming administrative expenses from Title IV-E for “candidates” for foster care.

<sup>5</sup> To qualify, the child must have been in the home for six months prior to the guardianship and must be eligible for federal Title IV-E reimbursement.

<sup>6</sup> Kinship navigator programs are programs established by a state that link kinship caregivers to benefits and services that they are in need of by providing information, referral, and follow-up services. The programs also promote partnerships between public and private agencies “to increase their knowledge of the needs of kinship care families to promote better services for those families”. (P.L. 110-351)

<sup>7</sup> The residential family-based treatment services should “enable parents and their children to live in a safe environment for a period of not less than 6 months and provide, on-site or by referral, substance abuse treatment services, children’s early intervention services, family counseling, medical, and mental health services, nursery and pre-school, and other services that are designed to provide comprehensive treatment that supports the family.” (P.L. 110-351)

child welfare services, and this includes “relative guardians”. This legislation is the first of its kind in that it addresses the needs of all types of kin caregivers, especially those in private kin arrangements, instead of solely focusing on kinship foster care. This new bill sets the stage for states to begin rethinking their approaches to kinship care.

This report summarizes the findings from a 2007 survey of states’ kinship care policies. All 50 states and the District of Columbia (counted as a state in the analyses in this report) responded to the survey. The survey updates and expands on kinship care policy information collected by the Urban Institute in 1997, 1999, and 2001. With limited federal guidance, states’ kinship care policies have varied considerably and continue to evolve. We conducted this survey to assess recent changes in how states approach kinship care for children that come to the attention of child welfare agencies. Moreover, the survey was intended to inform federal policy decisions concerning kinship care, as there has been considerable congressional interest in ensuring that children in kinship care are adequately supported. To view the Casey Kinship Foster Care Policy Survey in its entirety, please see the separate attachment to this report.

## **IB. Definition of Kin**

### ***Most States Define “Kin” Broadly***

States can define kin in many ways, but two basic categories exist: the first is states that have a strict definition of kinship care to only include blood relatives or those related by marriage or adoption, and the other is states that define kin more broadly to include persons who are not related to the child but have an established relation-

ship with the child, including godparents, close friends, neighbors, and others. The survey found that the majority of the states define kin broadly to include persons who are not related to the child but have an established relationship with the child.<sup>8</sup> Though relatives are consistently given preference over other kin in determining who will care for a

child in need of protection, more states are allowing the same privileges for other kin as they do for relatives with respect to licensing for foster care placements, emergency placements, and private kin arrangements. The definition of kin determined by the child welfare agency is important not because one approach is better than the other, but because this definition determines the type of supports and services that will be available to children who are in the care of different types of kin. Thirty states now have a broad definition of kinship care, which has increased from 22 states, which was reported in the 2001 survey. As a result, 18 states, instead of 24 states reported in 2001, are using a narrow definition of kin, defining kin as only those who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Three states have no set child welfare agency policy on the definition of kin in their state, down from 5 states in 2001.

### ***Definition of Kin***

#### **BROAD:**

*This definition includes persons who are not related to the child but have an established relationship with the child, including godparents, close friends, neighbors, and others.*

#### **NARROW:**

*A stricter definition of kinship care to only include blood relatives or those related by marriage or adoption.*

<sup>8</sup> In this round of the survey, states were specifically asked if the treatment of relatives and other kin were the same or different. A broad definition of kin is defined as relatives and other kin having the same treatment in all engagement with the child welfare agency, with the exception of preference for placement. Definitions are based on the child welfare agency’s policy definition, not based on those defined in state statute or another agency whose primary responsibility is an area other than child welfare or child abuse and neglect.

## IC. Identification and Preference Given to Kin

### *States Seek to Identify and Give Preference to Kin*

State child welfare agencies continue to place priority on the identification of kin and give preference to kin for placement and permanency options for children in need of protection. States also have reported a wide variety of different strategies to assist caseworkers in conducting a diligent search for kin.

The survey asked states if caseworkers were instructed to seek out kin at two different time points—as a *placement option* after it has been determined that the child cannot remain safely at home, and as a *permanency option* once it has been determined that the child cannot return home. All states reported that kin are sought out as placement options, and only one state reported that kin are not sought out as a permanency option for a child after he or she is unable to return home.<sup>9</sup> All but one state reported that kin are given preference over others as a placement option, assuming that they meet the necessary state requirements.<sup>10</sup>

With increased emphasis on the inclusion of kin in the case planning process and on finding kin to serve as emotional and permanency connections for children involved with the child welfare system, states have invested in a variety of strategies to search for kinship connections that a child may

have. The most commonly reported resource for finding kinship connections, which was reported by 28 states, was the use of local, state, or federal information management systems to search for records of persons who may have had a connection with the child.<sup>11</sup> The states gave several examples of these databases, including State Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS), child support databases, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) agency records. Also, the courts in different jurisdictions may order that birth parents identify other kin at the initial hearing following the child's removal from their homes. Almost half of the states (23) reported using the Internet as a search tool, and 13 states have units designated for searches for kin or workers designated to conduct these searches as support to caseworkers. Three states specifically mentioned Family Finding<sup>12</sup> activities, an emerging diligent search model which teaches caseworkers to intensively search for past or present connections for the child.

<sup>9</sup> This state noted that relatives would not be sought out for permanency options because caseworkers should have already done an exhaustive search for relatives at this point.

<sup>10</sup> One state reported that relatives may be given preference for placement, depending on the time the relative comes forward. One state reported that relatives do not receive preferential treatment, only consideration.

<sup>11</sup> This question in the survey was open-ended and each state may not have presented an exhaustive list of all diligent search resources available to caseworkers. Therefore, the omission of a particular strategy by a state does not mean this strategy is not available to caseworkers. See more information about this in the Limitations section which is found in the Appendix of this report.

<sup>12</sup> Family Finding is an intensive relative search model with the ultimate goals of achieving permanency and supporting enduring family connections for children in foster care. Through the Family Finding program, child welfare caseworkers are trained to use various search tools including genealogical archives and commercial Internet-based services to find family members of children placed in out-of-home care. For more information, visit <http://www.senecacenter.org/familyfinding>

## SECTION II: KINSHIP CARE FOR CHILDREN NOT IN STATE CUSTODY

### IIA. Private Kinship Care Arrangements

#### *Child Welfare Agencies Typically Do Not Get Involved in Private Kinship Care Arrangements*

In some instances, kin who have had no prior involvement with the child welfare agency may approach the agency because they need assistance in caring for a child that they began caring for through a private kinship arrangement.<sup>13</sup> About half of the states noted that this type of request for assistance would not reach the point of intake (i.e., it would be screened out by hotline staff), and the most assistance given would be information and referral by a child protection hotline worker. The remaining half of the states would initiate a case with the kinship caregiver but the type of ongoing involvement that the agency has with the kinship caregiver varies. An assessment<sup>14</sup> of the kinship caregiver's home may be done if the agency pursued ongoing child welfare involvement by opening a case but, if not, more than likely the kinship caregiver's home would not be assessed.

#### *States With No Ongoing Child Welfare Agency Involvement*

In the survey, states were asked to report on their responses to kinship caregivers who in the past

began caring for a child due to past abuse and/or neglect (including parental abandonment) and who approached the child welfare agency for assistance in continuing to care for that child. Half of the states (25) reported that they would have very little interaction with these types of kinship caregivers and would decline ongoing child welfare agency involvement with these cases. Typically when a kinship caregiver approaches the agency in these twenty-five states and there is no alleged abuse and/or neglect occurring in the home where the child currently lives, the agency determines that they have no authority to move the child or interfere with the private arrangement.<sup>15</sup> In 19 of the 25 states that would not open any type of case, the agencies would not conduct an assessment of the kinship caregiver,<sup>16</sup> and the six that would conduct assessments would conduct them depending on the services requested by the kinship caregiver and the needs of the child. Most kin in this situation would be referred to receive TANF, Medicaid, and other community services, if available. These states stressed that these types of calls would not pass the point of intake and would be screened out by hotline staff. The kinship caregiver would more than likely be referred to community organizations for services or support. Figure 1 shows the typical responses of states whose policies do not dictate ongoing child welfare involvement when responding to kinship caregivers who are caring for children in private kinship arrangements.

<sup>13</sup> The question in the survey presumed that the kinship caregiver began caring for the child due to alleged abuse and/or neglect done by the child's birth parent, which happened in the past.

<sup>14</sup> The options for type of assessments conducted that were listed in the survey include a local, state, or federal criminal background check, a state child abuse and neglect registry check, check of another states' child abuse and neglect registry, home study (which may include an interview with the family and assessment of the physical environment of the home), or verification of caregiver's income. Survey respondents had the option to list additional assessments that could be conducted. Additional assessments that were mentioned included a service assessment or a risk assessment of the kinship caregiver's home.

<sup>15</sup> While about half of the states would decline ongoing child welfare agency involvement when approached by kin in non-abuse/neglect circumstances (described in the scenario in the text), we did not determine if the agency would also decline ongoing child welfare agency involvement if approached by birth parents instead of kin in nonabuse/neglect situations.

<sup>16</sup> Three states noted that assessments would be conducted if there are safety concerns in the home.

## Figure 1. Typical State Responses to Private Kin Arrangements Without Ongoing Child Welfare Agency Involvement (25 states)

A grandmother calls the child abuse hotline in her state because her daughter abandoned her child in the previous year and she needs help in receiving services for her grandchild (e.g., enrolling in school, accessing medical services, etc.).



19 states

Basic information and referral to community organizations over the phone

No further involvement with child welfare agency



6 states

Services or risk assessment of the home may be done by the agency but the determination to conduct an assessment is based on needs of the caregiver and/or the child

Referral to services based on assessment conducted on the home

No further involvement with child welfare agency

### *States With Ongoing Child Welfare Agency Involvement*

In the remaining 26 states, if a kinship caregiver approaches the child welfare agency (typically through the child abuse hotline) because they need assistance in caring for a related child and there are no current issues of abuse and/or neglect in the home, the agency might pursue ongoing child welfare involvement with the caregiver. However, the level of involvement that the agency may have varies in these states. The survey specifically asked if the child welfare agency would open a Child Protective Services (CPS)

case. Opening a CPS case implies that the child in the home is in need of protection and that an ongoing case should be opened to focus on the issues that caused the abuse and or/neglect of the child by the birth parent and to focus on the issues that warrant the child's need for protection. Thirteen states reported that they would consider opening a CPS case,<sup>17</sup> while 13 other states reported that they would not open a CPS case, but would rather open another type of case, such as a case management or services case.

Of the states that would consider opening a CPS

<sup>17</sup> One of these states does not have a set policy on this scenario, but noted that in most cases, a referral for investigation would be accepted and a CPS case would be opened.

case, the determination to open this type of case depends on certain circumstances, such as how long ago the alleged abuse and/or neglect occurred, the age of the child, or if the past abuse and/or neglect alleged is serious.<sup>18</sup> In most cases, the CPS case is opened on the birth parent and the kinship caregiver is involved in the case because they have physical custody of the child. All but one of the states that would open a CPS case require that a state child abuse and neglect registry check is conducted on the kinship caregiver. All of the states require some kind of face-to-face contact with the caregiver to assess the ability of the caregiver to care for the child, and to assess the physical home environment.

Thirteen states reported that they would not open a CPS case; instead they would open a case to assess for services only, or open another type of case, such as a case management case. These states reported that opening a CPS case was not necessary if the kinship caregiver is simply asking for assistance in caring for the child and is not being investigated for abusing or neglecting the child. A services or case management case is opened to offer services in the home, which are usually on a short-term basis, in order to respond to a family's immediate crisis. Eight of these states reported that no assessments would be conducted when a case other than a CPS case is opened, and that assessments are only done if there is some kind of indication that there are safety concerns in the home.<sup>19</sup> The remaining five states reported that assessments are conducted based on the services requested by the kinship caregiver and the needs of the child. Figure 2 shows the typical responses of states whose policies allow ongoing child welfare involvement

when responding to kinship caregivers who are caring for children in private kinship arrangements.

#### *Community Resources for Private Kinship Arrangements*

A few states also mentioned community-based programs that are tailored for kinship caregivers in their states. More than likely, when the child welfare agency is not providing direct services, these organizations can serve as resources for kin, particularly those in private kin arrangements. These organizations tend to provide voluntary services to kin when child welfare agencies do not have the capacity to provide voluntary services to all families that come to the attention of the agency. Some specific programs that were reported in the survey include Tennessee's Relative Caregiver Program, New Jersey's Kinship Navigator Program, Maine's Kids-Kin project, Hawaii's Natutu caregiver association, California's Kinship Support Services Program, Illinois' Extended Family Support program, Delaware's Kinship Navigator program, and Arizona's Kinship Care centers.<sup>20</sup> A few states reported other community-based services that may be available to kin, including emergency funds, energy and weatherization assistance, kin navigation services, and employment services.

## **II.B. Use of Kinship Care Placements as a Diversion From Foster Care**

### ***Most States Rely on Kin to Divert Children from Foster Care***

There has been a significant shift in the number of states that allow caseworkers to seek out kinship

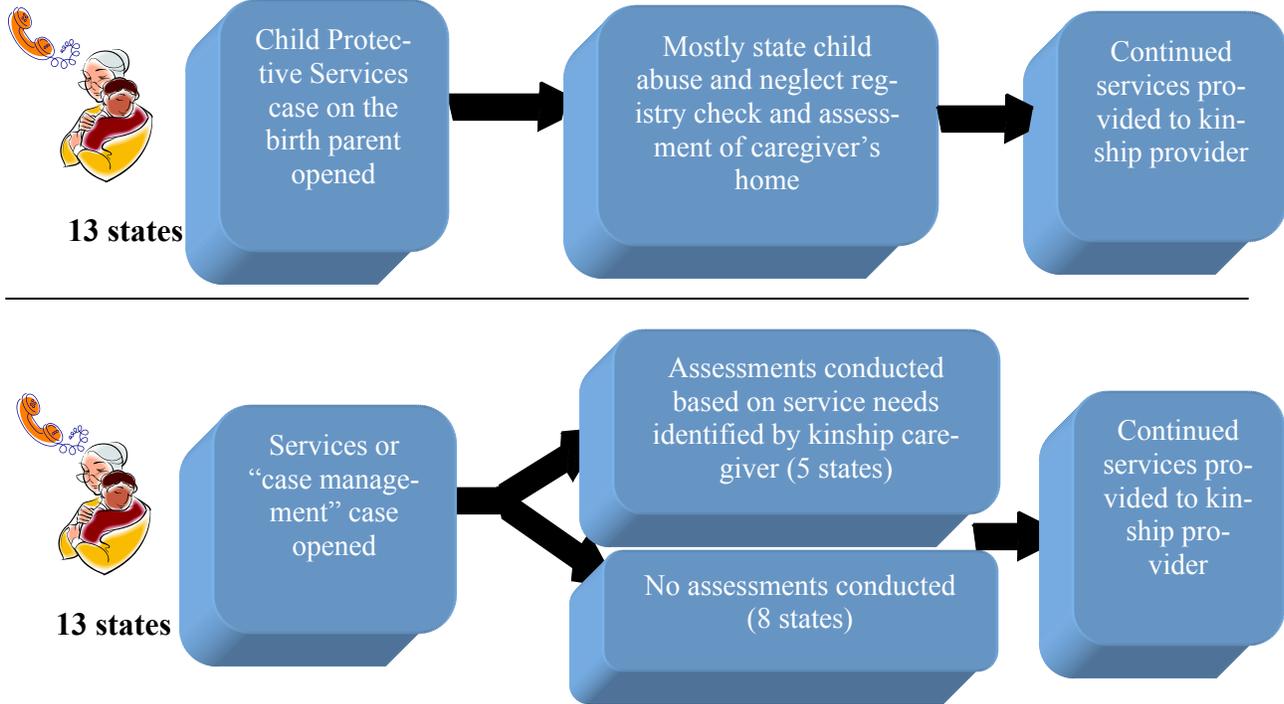
<sup>18</sup> Included in these 13 states is Rhode Island, which allows relatives to be licensed and receive foster care payments without the child being in custody.

<sup>19</sup> The following examples may qualify as safety concerns in the home: 1) After engaging the family the child welfare agency has an indication that the relative may not be an appropriate caregiver for the child, or 2) There are physical or environmental issues that the relative needs assistance with resolving in order to adequately care for the child. Also, further assessments may be done if the relative decides to pursue permanent custody or decides to become a foster care provider.

<sup>20</sup> These programs may be housed in the child welfare agency or may be provided by a private agency in the community.

**Figure 2. Typical State Responses to Private Kin Arrangements With Ongoing Child Welfare Agency Involvement (26 states)**

A grandmother calls the child abuse hotline in her state because her daughter abandoned her child in the previous year and she needs help in receiving services for her grandchild (e.g., enrolling in school, accessing medical services, etc.).



caregivers in order to divert children from state custody who are removed from their homes because of substantiated abuse and/or neglect. Previously, states may have allowed children to be placed with a kinship caregiver after an investigation only in cases of low risk in the birth parent's home. Now there is a sense that most states wish to avoid placement in foster care, and will place the child with kin, even with higher levels of risk in the birth parent's home. When a child is placed with a kinship caregiver to avoid state custody, the kinship caregiver is typically not eligible for services or supports (including financial assis-

tance) that are associated with foster care.

The states are in agreement that while kinship caregivers may be identified as safe placements to avoid bringing the child into state custody, these caregivers still require some kind of assessment to determine if the placement is suitable. Once an assessment is done of the kinship caregiver, most states discontinue ongoing supervision with the caregiver and leave the caregiver as the physical custodian of the child. A smaller number of states still maintain ongoing supervision by leaving a case open. If there is an ongoing case

opened, reunification services to the child's birth parent are almost always provided.<sup>21</sup> When a child is placed with a kinship caregiver to divert them from state custody, it is often up to the kinship caregiver to pursue legal custody of the child, as most states would only provide information and referral about obtaining custody. States vary on their decision to adjudicate<sup>22</sup> the child when diverting a child from foster care, but most states are in agreement that adjudication is not automatically done simply because there is a finding of abuse and/or neglect. Figure 3 displays the general pattern that states follow when using kinship caregivers as placement for children who have been abused and/or neglected in order to divert them from state custody.

Thirty-nine states<sup>23</sup> allow caseworkers to seek out kinship caregivers after an investigation has determined that a child cannot return home to avoid having to take the child into state custody, and the majority of those states (29) require caseworkers to seek out kinship caregivers to avoid taking the child into state custody.<sup>24</sup> Twelve states do not allow this practice and require that children enter custody once they are removed from their homes. Though state agencies are involved with the kinship caregiver because they are allowing the placement to occur to avoid foster care, few states report that they assist the caregiver with obtaining legal custody, and the amount of assistance with legal custody varies. The assistance with legal custody could range from payment of attorney's fees, filing court orders on behalf of the kinship caregiver, or the use of the state attorney general as representation for the kinship caregivers when filing for legal custody. Fifteen states would provide information and/or referral, often only if the

caregiver requests information, and 12 states would not provide any assistance at all.

*Assessment.* Only one out of the thirty-nine states that allow children to be placed with kin to divert from foster care reported that assessments of the caregiver are not conducted. In this state, the agency steps out of the case and only provides referrals to community resources. Thirty-three of the 39 states that allow children to be placed with kin to divert children from foster care require kin to be assessed with either a local or state criminal background check, and the same number of states require a check of the states' child abuse and neglect registry. The states also mentioned other types of checks, which include domestic violence checks or substance abuse screens. Twenty-two of the 39 states that allow children to be placed with kin to divert from state custody, reported that they assess the quality of the home and relationship with the kinship caregiver by completing some form of a strength and needs assessment, or an assessment of the caregiver's ability to care for the child.<sup>25</sup> Four states reported that an assessment may be done in this situation, but it depends on the circumstances of the cases, including if the kin caregiver chooses to take legal custody, or depending on the perceived risk in the caregiver's home.

*Ongoing Supervision.* States are mixed about whether ongoing supervision is automatically required when kin are used to divert children from foster care, or whether a case should only be opened if there is a cause for concern. There is a sense that if the kinship caregiver's home is presumed to be safe based on assessments conducted by the agency, then there is no need to interfere

<sup>21</sup> If reunification is the permanency goal for the case.

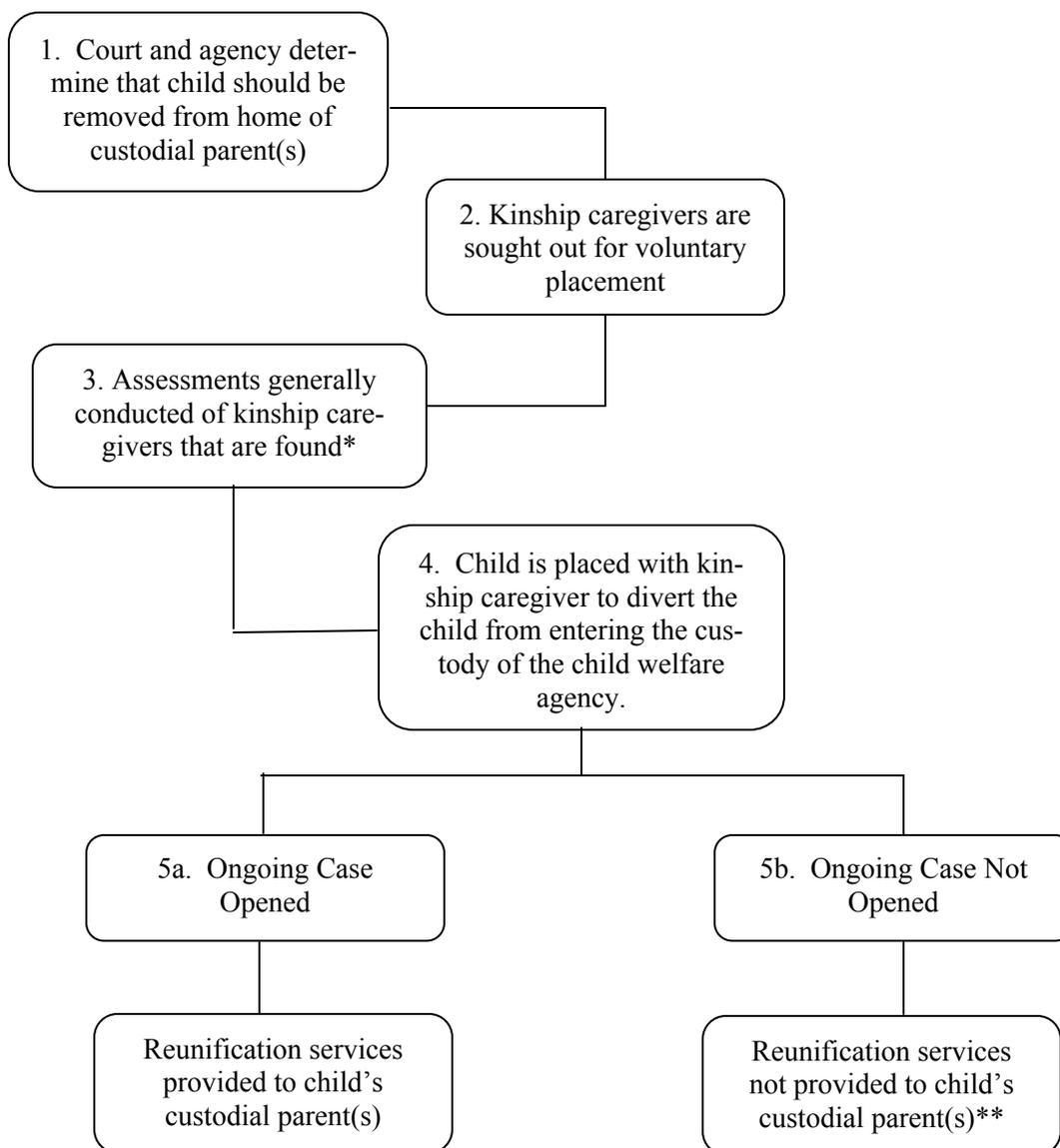
<sup>22</sup> Adjudication is the court's affirmation of the findings of the investigation conducted by the child welfare agency and places the findings on record in case another situation causes the child to come into state custody.

<sup>23</sup> One state does not have a set policy on this practice but noted that it may potentially be done.

<sup>24</sup> This assumes that the kinship caregiver's home is a safe and acceptable placement for the child, based on the agency's standards.

<sup>25</sup> This is typically done by completing a home study.

**Figure 3. The General Pattern that States Follow When Using Kinship Caregivers to Divert Children Who Have Been Abused and/or Neglected from State Custody**



\*One state reported that no assessments are conducted of kinship caregivers when they are used as a resource to divert children from state custody. The assessments conducted can range from criminal background checks, checks of state child abuse and neglect registry, service assessments, strength and needs assessments, and assessment of the caregiver's ability to care for the child.

\*\*There a few instances where states will open an ongoing case and not provide reunification services to the child's custodial parent and every state may not follow this course of action in every situation. Therefore, this figure is meant to show the general pattern that states follow when using kinship caregivers to divert children from state custody who have been abused and/or neglected.

with the caregiver, and minimal oversight is done by the agency after this placement is made. If an ongoing case is opened with the child welfare agency, the kinship caregiver is generally considered as an extension of the family, and used as a temporary resource until the birth parent is able to stabilize his or her home and able to care for the child again.<sup>26</sup> If an ongoing case is not opened, the agency will consider the kinship caregiver as the physical custodian of the child and not provide any ongoing supervision.

In the majority of the states, if the agency considers the placement to be safe, they see no need to continue to monitor the case. However, there are still some states (14) that would open an ongoing case automatically to provide ongoing supervision. Nine states reported that an ongoing case would not be opened, and 16 states would only open an ongoing case depending on varying circumstances that would necessitate an open case such as court-ordered supervision, if there was perceived risk in the home, or if there were identified service needs in the home.<sup>27</sup> Most states reported that if an ongoing case is opened, reunification services are provided to the child's birth parent if this is in agreement with the permanency goal. On the other hand, most states also reported that if an ongoing case is not opened, then reunification services are not provided.

*Adjudication.* Adjudication occurs when courts establish sufficient grounds to declare a child as abused or neglected. This is done as an affirmation of the findings of the investigation by the child welfare agency and places the findings on

record in case another situation causes the child to come into state custody. Adjudication does not necessarily mean that the child is removed from the home or that there are court ordered services or supervision. A court may find that abuse or neglect occurred, but not order services or supervision of the home. On the other hand, the child may have agency involvement and a case open even though adjudication has not occurred. Ten states reported that the child would be adjudicated when he or she is placed with a kinship caregiver to avoid foster care.<sup>28</sup> Twenty-one states reported that adjudication is determined by the circumstances involved in the case, which may include the progress of the case, the permanency plan, the cooperation of the birth parent, the severity of the maltreatment, risk in the home, and how the adjudication may impact circumstances in the future if the child needs to enter state custody. Eight states reported that the child would not be adjudicated when he or she is placed with a kinship caregiver in order to avoid custody.<sup>29</sup>

*Services.* In situations where children are placed with kin to avoid state custody, most agencies provide basic services to kin. The basic services that are generally provided include referrals to available community-based services for the kinship caregiver; direct services typically are not provided by the child welfare agency unless there are safety or risk concerns in the home. If services are provided directly by the agency, they are often provided on a short-term basis. The most commonly reported services provided were information and referral, financial assistance from TANF child-only grants, and Medicaid.<sup>30</sup> Twenty-eight

<sup>26</sup> Some states reported that even though a case may be opened, the sole purpose is to give the kinship caregiver access to certain services and to ensure that all service needs are provided. Once this is done, the agency will step out of the case, and not provide reunification services to the child's birth parent. Therefore, the scenario described in this report is only the *general* pattern that states follow when serving kinship caregivers who are used as a diversion from foster care and does not represent every state's response in every situation.

<sup>27</sup> Only one state noted that a case would be opened depending on the severity of the maltreatment of the offending parent.

<sup>28</sup> One state reported that the agency would not open a case or provide reunification services yet they would still adjudicate the child.

<sup>29</sup> Two states noted that they would not adjudicate even though there may be an open case and reunification services provided.

<sup>30</sup> Two states mentioned that Medicaid services are not referred to the kinship caregiver.

states mentioned that mental health services are available and 26 states mentioned the availability of support groups for kinship caregivers.<sup>31</sup> There were a number of other community-based services mentioned that appear to be safety nets for kinship caregivers not involved with the child welfare agency on an ongoing basis. These services included financial assistance from community action agencies; start-up costs for material items such as furniture, clothing, and school supplies; food assistance; case management services; and assistance from relative caregiver associations.<sup>32</sup>

## SECTION III: KINSHIP CARE FOR CHILDREN IN STATE CUSTODY

### III.A. Pre-Approval Placements

#### *Most States Allow Kinship Caregivers to be Pre-Approved Before Full Approval to Care for a Related Child in State Custody*

In response to a need for immediate placement to prevent further disruption after children have been removed from their parental homes and have entered state custody, many states have developed a pre-approval placement process for kin to allow children to be placed into their homes almost immediately after they are removed. This process may also be referred to as “provisional licensing” or “provisional approval”.<sup>33</sup> In most instances, children are placed with kin after the child wel-

fare agency has done minimal safety checks, and the continuation of the placement is contingent on the completion of the licensure or approval process. Thirty-six states allow all potential foster parents (kin or non-kin) to complete a pre-approval placement process before they are fully licensed to care for children in state custody. This is a small decrease from 42 states in 2001. Eighteen of the 36 states only allow relatives<sup>34</sup> to go through a pre-approval placement process before they are fully licensed.

*Timeframe.* The timeframe that kin have to complete the full licensure process after a child has been placed in their home typically varies between 30 and 180 days. One state requires completion of licensure within 30 days, seven within 60 days, ten within 90 days, five within 120 days, and eight within 180 days. Four states do not have a set timeframe in policy, and the caseworker is instructed to work with the family so that full licensure can be met. In most instances, if full licensure is not met within the designated timeframe in state policy, caseworkers are instructed to remove the child from the home. However, before doing this, many states report that they are willing to work with the kinship caregiver to ensure that the placement is not disrupted. If the caregiver is still unable to meet the licensing standards after the agency’s assistance, the child would have to be removed. In other instances, if the state allows a separate approval process option for kin and if the kinship caregiver is receiving foster care reimbursement during the pre-placement process, these payments would cease and the caregiver would have to apply for a TANF child-only grant after the timeframe lapses.

<sup>31</sup> Support groups for relatives may not be available in all areas of the state.

<sup>32</sup> One state mentioned financial assistance which is available for kin who do not qualify for TANF.

<sup>33</sup> Some states are clear that they do not issue provisional licenses, nor do they refer to this practice as provisional licensing, but they may place children with kin before full licensure.

<sup>34</sup> Six of these states specifically noted that relatives and kin (those not related by blood, marriage, or adoption, but have an established relationship with the child) can be provisionally licensed while non-kin are not allowed.

*Requirements.* The most commonly reported standard that is not required to be met during the pre-approval placement process is the training standard. Thirty states reported that training is not required within the approved time frame, while twenty-three states reported that a federal background check does not have to be completed before the child's placement in the kinship caregiver's home. Twenty-one states do not require a full home study to be done, but an abbreviated study may be done at the initial placement. Fourteen states do not require a check of other states' child abuse and neglect registries, 13 do not require a verification of income, nine do not require space requirements to be met, five do not require the state background check, three do not require the local background check, and two do not require their own state's child abuse and neglect registry to be checked before the child is placed in the home. Other standards are not required at the time of the child's placement in four states, such as providing education and medical records, and fingerprinting.<sup>35</sup>

### **III.B. Foster Care Licensing Options for Kinship Caregivers**

#### *States Offer Kin Flexibility in Meeting Licensing Standards When Caring for Children in State Custody*

In two-thirds of the states, kin do not have to meet all of the same licensing standards as non-kin foster parents in order to care for a child in state custody. The licensing options for kin directly impact the type of financial assistance and support services that are available to them. If kin are not licensed, they are not eligible to receive federally-

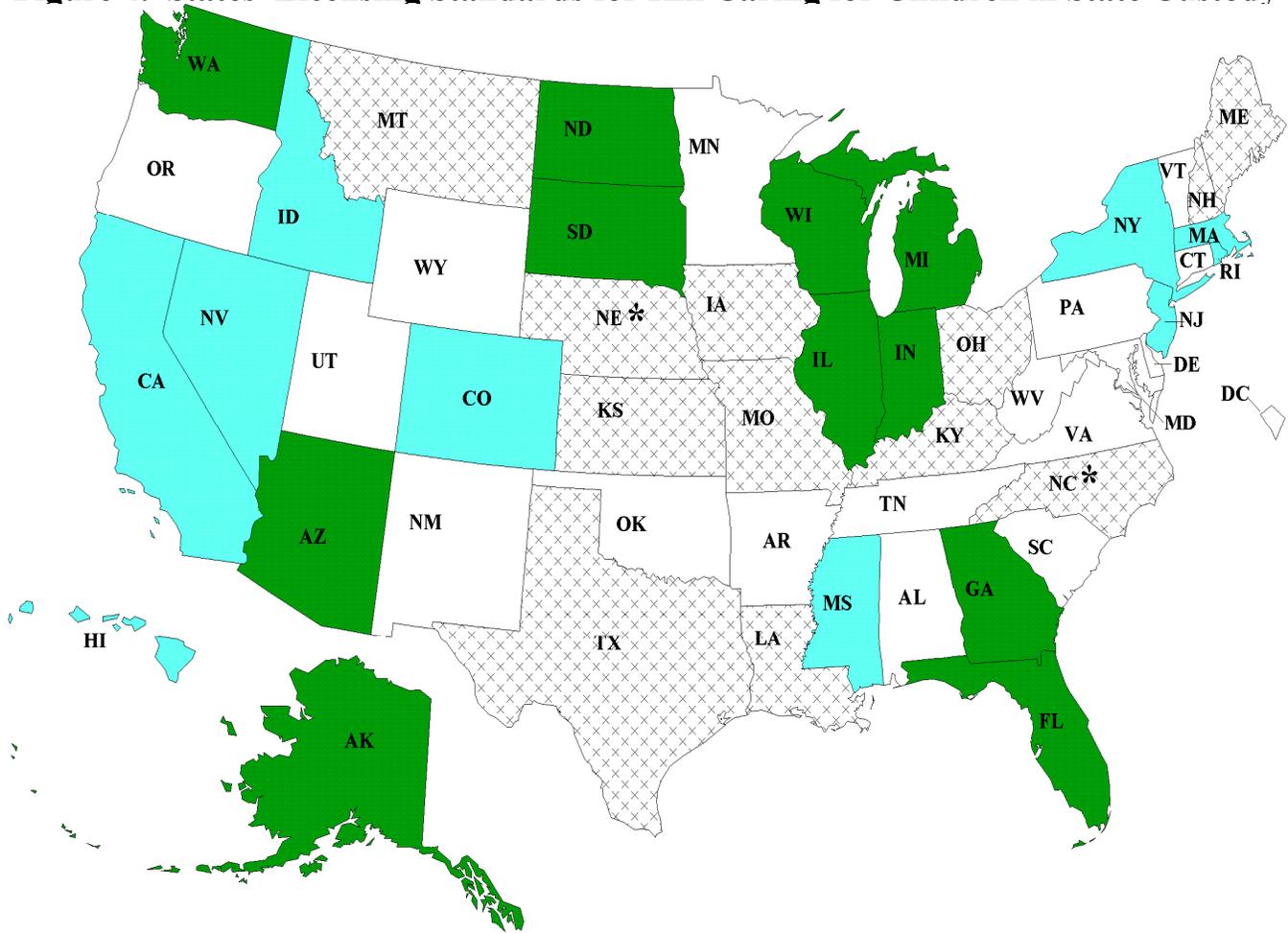
funded foster care payments, and the state can decide whether or not to provide financial assistance from another source of funds. Typically, states allow kin to apply for TANF child-only grants when they are not licensed, which is usually a lesser amount.<sup>36</sup> In order to understand the different options available for kin who are caring for children in state custody, we devised three categories by which kin may be assessed. States were asked to report on cases where, following an investigation, children are removed from their homes and placed with a kinship caregiver. The assessment options presented to states were the following (see Figure 4 for a national view of these options):

1. Full Licensure: Kinship care providers are assessed based on the same standards as non-kin foster parents and are required to meet all of the same standards. No standards are modified or waived for kin that cannot be modified or waived for non-kin foster parents.
2. Waived or Modified Standard: Kinship care providers are assessed based on the same standards as non-kin, but the child welfare agency may waive or modify one or more standards, on an individualized basis, for kin that would not be done for non-kin foster parents.
3. Separate Approval Process: Kinship care providers are assessed based on different standards than those for non-kin. The assessment standards for such kin, while different, may be more, less, or equally stringent as those used to assess non-kin foster parents.

<sup>35</sup> The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-248) now requires that all states check their own child abuse and neglect registry and conduct fingerprint-based checks of national crime information databases on any prospective foster or adoptive parent and other adults living in the home before the parent can be approved as a placement for a child, regardless of whether foster care or adoption assistance payments are to be made.

<sup>36</sup> For more information about payment for kinship foster caregivers, please see the "Payment for Kin Caring for a Child in State Custody" section.

**Figure 4. States' Licensing Standards for Kin Caring for Children in State Custody**



All kinship foster parents must be fully licensed (n=18).
  Kinship foster parents can be licensed with a waiver or modification of one or more standards (n=10).
  Kinship foster parents can be assessed with a separate approval process (n=11).
  Kinship foster parents can be assessed using a separate approval process OR licensed with a waiver or modification of one or more standards (n=12).

\* = States that allow kin to receive the foster care payment with a separate approval process

*Full Licensure*

Eighteen states require that kin meet the same standards as non-kin foster parents when caring for related children in state custody.<sup>37</sup> In these states, kin cannot have any standards waived or modified on an individualized basis that would not be waived or modified for non-kin foster parents, and there is no option to complete a separate approval process. This number has grown steadily

over the past years, and it has increased from 15 states in 2001.

*Waived or Modified Standard*

Twenty-two states require kin caring for children in state custody to be licensed just as non-kin foster parents, but allow, on an individualized basis, waiver or modification of one or more standards

<sup>37</sup> All states allow kin to become licensed foster parents if they choose to, but this category refers to those states that only allow one option for caring for a child in state/county custody—this means that kin have to meet all the same standards as non-kin foster parents.

that non-kin foster parents are required to meet. This has remained consistent with previous reports, as 23 states reported in 2001 that they offer this licensing option for kin foster parents. Of the 22 states that offer a waiver or modification of licensing standards, 10 states offer it as the only other option; a separate approval process is not available in these states.

The most commonly waived standard for kin is space requirements in the home. Of the 22 states that allow a waived or modified standard for kin, 13 allow the space requirement to be modified or waived. Space requirements may refer to space between beds, number of beds or square footage per child, or square footage required for the home. Five states waive or modify training requirements. For example, one state may waive all or part of the foster parent training, and another state waives training if kin caregivers are not caring for unrelated children in their homes. Six states waive or modify requirements for the age of kin caregivers.<sup>38,39</sup> Four states waive or modify income standards and six states reported that other non-safety standards could be waived or modified. Two states did not specifically report the standards that could be waived, and reported that these determinations are made on an individualized basis.

#### *Separate Approval Process*

Twenty-three states<sup>40</sup> allow kin caring for children in state custody to be assessed using a separate approval process. These foster care placements are typically referred to as “unlicensed placements” because they do not have to meet the standards that non-kin foster parents have to meet. While the standards for this process may

be different, they can be less or more rigid than those used to assess kin and non-kin who are fully licensed. Certain standards that may be different from the foster parent licensure process may include a different type of home study, focused specifically on the child and the caregiver; a less extensive home study process; or exclusion of the requirement for fingerprinting. The number of states that offer a separate approval process has increased slightly from 20 which was reported in 2001. Of the 23 states that offer a separate approval process, 11 offer it as the only other option; kinship caregivers cannot be licensed with a waiver or modification of licensing standards in these states.

Twelve states offer kin all options, whether it is full licensure, waiver or modification of one or more standards, or a separate approval process.

### **IIIc. Payment for Kin Caring for a Child in State Custody**

#### *Payment for Kin Caring for a Child in State Custody Linked to Licensure*

In 21 states, kin do not have to go through the full licensure process to have the option to receive a monthly foster care payment. On the other hand, 22 states allow kin to care for children in state custody, but do not provide monthly foster care payments to all kin who are caring for children in state custody. Table 1 shows the number of states that offer foster care or another type of payment for the different licensing options for kin caring for children in state custody.

<sup>38</sup> This includes Missouri, which has a state statute that specifies that no kinship caregiver can be denied due to their age. For the purposes of this report, this state statute qualifies as a waiver for kinship caregivers.

<sup>39</sup> One state reported that standard for passing criminal history checks could be waived if “criminal history is revealed and explained” (survey response).

<sup>40</sup> Indiana, which is included in this analysis, requires all relatives to apply for initial licensure and complete initial background checks, but the process does not have to be completed. Also, if they are denied licensure, they can be considered for approval as an unlicensed placement.

Kinship caregivers are eligible to receive financial assistance from a variety of sources, such as state or federally funded foster care payments, TANF child-only grants, Social Security benefits, or other locally or state-funded payments. If kin are not licensed, they are not eligible to receive federally-funded foster care payments, and the state can decide whether or not to provide financial assistance from another source of funds. Typically, states allow kin to apply for TANF child-only grants when they are not licensed.

*Full Licensure.* All states allow kin who are fully licensed to receive foster care payments, with the exception of California, which denies foster care payments to kin who care for non-IV-E eligible children, regardless of their licensure status.<sup>41</sup> In California, kin caring for non Title IV-E eligible children can receive monthly TANF child-only

grants. Four states reported that kin who are licensed have the choice of either receiving the monthly foster care payment or another payment. These payments may be the TANF child-only grants or another state or locally funded payment.

*Waived or Modified Standard.* Most states that allow kin to be licensed with a waiver or modification allow kin to receive the monthly foster care payment. Only one state, California, does not allow kin to receive a monthly foster care payment if they are licensed with a waiver or modification of one or more standards and are caring for a child who is not IV-E eligible. The number of states that do not allow kin to receive the foster care payment with a waiver or modification decreased from four states in 2001.

*Separate Approval Process.* Most states that al-

**Table 1. Availability of Monthly Foster Care Payments for Kinship Caregivers Caring for Children in State Custody**

Type of Payment Received	Number of States
<i>Payment When Fully Licensed</i>	
Monthly foster care payment available	50 states
Monthly foster care payment NOT available, monthly TANF child-only grant potentially available	1 state, if non IV-E
<i>Payment When Licensed with a Modification or Waiver, n=22</i>	
Monthly foster care payment available	21 states
Monthly foster care payment NOT available, monthly TANF child-only grant potentially available	1 state, if non IV-E
<i>Payment When Approved Through a Separate Approval Process, n=23</i>	
Monthly foster care payment available	2 states
Monthly foster care payment NOT available, monthly TANF child-only grant potentially available*	21 states
<i>Provisional Licensure, n=36</i>	
Monthly foster care payment available	24 states
Monthly foster care payment NOT available, monthly TANF child-only grant potentially available**	12 states

\*Four states have another payment available other than the monthly TANF payment.

\*\*Two states have another payment available other than the monthly TANF payment.

<sup>41</sup> As of January 2008, Oregon, which previously also denied foster care payments to kin caring for non IV-E eligible children, allows all kin whether they are caring for a Title IV-E child or not, to receive foster care payments.

low kin to be assessed with a separate approval process do not allow kin to receive monthly foster care payments. Only two of the 23 states allow kin to receive the monthly foster care payment when they are approved through a separate process. Seventeen states refer kin to receive TANF child-only grants. Four states allow another payment which is state or locally funded. These other payments are typically less than the foster care payment, but more than the TANF child-only grants.

*Pre-approval placements.* Twenty-four of the 36 states that allow children to be placed with a kinship caregiver before that caregiver has met all of the licensing standards to become a foster parent allow kin to receive the foster care payment. Ten states require kin to apply for a TANF child-only grant during the pre-approval process, and two states allow for a payment other than the foster care payment.

### **III.D. Support Services for Kin Caring for Children in Agency Custody**

#### ***Most States Have Training, Support Services, and Supervision for all Kinship Caregivers Caring for Children in State Custody that are Comparable to Those that Non-Kin Foster Parents Receive***

*Training.* The states were asked if kin who become fully licensed are required to attend the same training as non-kin foster parents. Twelve states reported that the training available for kin is different than the training available for non-kin foster parents. Some training sessions cover the same material that is available in non-kin foster parent training sessions, but only have partici-

pants who are kinship caregivers. In other cases, the core number of hours is the same for kinship caregivers, but the training curriculum is tailored to issues that kin face. Examples of topics that are discussed in kin-focused trainings include how to address visitation with birth parents, navigating relative alliances, and navigating the child welfare system. In other states, the core number of hours may be different and sections of the training may not be required.<sup>42</sup>

When kin are licensed with a waiver or modification, they are still held to the same training requirements as if they are fully licensed. When kinship caregivers are approved with a separate approval process, 20 of the 23 states do not require the caregivers to attend any training sessions, but they are eligible to do so.<sup>43</sup>

*Services and Supervision.* Once a child is in the custody of the state, the services<sup>44</sup> and supervision typically provided for non-kin and kin foster parents are nearly the same, with few exceptions. Three states reported that there are services for non-kin that kin are not eligible to receive. For example, in Oregon, kin cannot receive personal care reimbursement-Medicaid services. Also, in Iowa, if kin are not licensed, they will not receive services associated with the foster care payment, such as child care, clothing allowances, and respite.

Two states reported that there are services for kin that non-kin are not eligible to receive. California has the Kinship Support Services program<sup>45</sup> which has support groups, respite, information and referral, advocacy, transportation, and recreation for kin who are caring for children in foster care. The Vermont Kin program also provides

<sup>42</sup> Two states reported that the trainings available for kinship caregiver depends on the county.

<sup>43</sup> Two states reported that there are no trainings available for kin who are assessed using a separate approval process, and one state did not respond to this question.

<sup>44</sup> This reference to services excludes payment, which is discussed in the “Payment for Kin Caring for a Child in State Custody Linked to Licensing” section.

<sup>45</sup> At the time of data collection, the Kinship Support Services Program existed in 19 counties in the state of California.

support services and resources to kin.

When caring for a child in state custody, 49 states reported that kin and non-kin receive the same amount of supervision from the child welfare agency. Illinois reported that unlicensed kin receive more supervision than licensed kin, and New Hampshire reported that unlicensed kin receive less supervision than licensed kin.

### III. Guardianship Options for Kinship Caregivers

#### *Most States Permit Guardianship as a Permanency Option, but Offer Less Support than if Kin Adopted*

Most states give kin caring for children in state custody the option of pursuing guardianship;<sup>46</sup> however, the amount of ongoing financial assistance and support services available are often not comparable to those provided for kin who pursue adoption. States offer guardianship as a permanency option for children who cannot be reunified with their parents when identified permanent caregivers are not interested in pursuing adoption. Forty-nine states allow kin to pursue guardianship for children who are in the custody of the child welfare agency, when reunification is not possible. In addition, 46 states allow non-kin to take permanent legal guardianship of children. When guardianship is considered, it is used as an alternative to reunification or adoption; however, these two permanency goals do not always have

to be ruled out in order for a kinship caregiver to assume guardianship. Forty states reported that reunification has to be ruled out before guardianship can be pursued and a smaller number of states (28) reported that adoption has to be ruled out before guardianship by a kinship caregiver can be pursued.

*Standards for Guardianship and Adoption.* About half of the states that allow guardianships do not use the same assessment standards when assessing kin for guardianship and adoption. Twenty-four states reported that they have standards for adoption that are not necessary for guardianships. In many instances, adoptions may require more stringent home physical environment standards, or home studies may be required for adoptions while not required for guardianships. Twenty-four states reported that they have the same standards for guardianship as they do for adoption.<sup>47</sup>

*Ongoing Financial Assistance.*<sup>48</sup> The states were asked about the ongoing financial assistance that is available for kin who pursue guardianship compared to the ongoing financial assistance available for adoption assistance and foster care. The ongoing financial assistance for guardianships is usually referred to as a “guardianship subsidy” or “subsidized guardianship”. When a guardianship subsidy is available,<sup>49</sup> the amount is usually comparable with adoption assistance and foster care payments.

<sup>46</sup> The term “permanent legal guardianship” was used in the survey. It was explained that states may use alternative language for permanent legal guardianship such as legal guardianship with the intent of caring for the child indefinitely, conservatorship, or other terms. For this report, the term “guardianship” is meant to be all encompassing of these terms.

<sup>47</sup> One state, Pennsylvania, reported that guardianships have to meet standards that adoption do not. In this state, guardianships have to meet foster home approval standards while this is not necessary for adoptions.

<sup>48</sup> The Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) recently conducted an analysis of state subsidized guardianship programs to determine which states provide ongoing financial assistance for guardianships, and the findings are not comparable with those detailed in this report. This is due to different interpretations of what a subsidized guardianship program entails. States that have authorized subsidized guardianship programs, but the programs are not currently operational, are not included in this analysis as having ongoing financial assistance for guardianships. Also, states that pay guardianship subsidies for children who were eligible in the past, but do not offer new subsidies for children currently eligible, are not included in this analysis.

<sup>49</sup> States that do have guardianship subsidies do not necessarily provide funds for all kin who pursue guardianship, as many states have guidelines that some relatives may not be able to meet.

About one-third (16) of the states that allow kin to assume guardianship do not have ongoing financial assistance for guardianships.<sup>50</sup> Seventeen states reported that the guardianship subsidy for kinship caregivers is the same as the adoption assistance payment, and 15 states reported that the guardianship subsidy is the same as the foster care payment. Ten states have guardianship subsidies that are less than adoption assistance and 11 states have guardianship subsidies that are less than foster care payments. One state reported that the guardianship subsidy is more than the adoption assistance payment. Five states reported that a comparison of guardianship and adoption assistance payments is not possible because the payment levels depend on the licensure status of the kinship caregiver or the needs of the child. Also, seven states reported that a comparison of the guardianship payment with foster care payments is not possible because the payment levels depend on the licensure status of the kinship caregiver or the needs of the child. For example, in North Da-

kota, the guardianship subsidy is based on a flat rate, but the foster care payments are determined by a tiered payment scale, which may be higher or lower than the flat guardianship rate, depending on each case. Table 2 shows the comparison of available ongoing financial assistance for guardianships with adoption assistance and foster care payments.

*Eligibility for Medicaid.*<sup>51</sup> Of the 49 states that allow kin to take guardianship of children in state custody, all reported that children who exit to guardianship may be eligible for Medicaid.<sup>52</sup> However, this eligibility is not always awarded automatically and, in many of the states, kin have to apply on their own. When kin apply individually, eligibility for the program is most likely determined by their family characteristics and income. Twenty-seven states<sup>53</sup> report that children in guardianship arrangements are categorically eligible for Medicaid,<sup>54</sup> while 22 states encourage

**Table 2. Comparison of Ongoing Financial Assistance Between Guardianships and Adoption Assistance Payments, and Guardianships and Foster Care Payments, N=49**

Comparison of Ongoing Financial Assistance	Adoption Payments	Foster Care Payments
Ongoing Financial Assistance for Guardianship is the Same	17 states	15 states
Ongoing Financial Assistance for Guardianship is Less	10 states	11 states
Ongoing Financial Assistance for Guardianship is More	1 state	0 states
Depends on Licensure Status of Kinship Caregiver or Need of Child	5 states	7 states
No ongoing financial assistance for guardianships; TANF child-only grants possibly available	16 states	16 states

<sup>50</sup> States that responded that only TANF assistance was available were not included in this analysis because this type of financial assistance was not considered to be *ongoing* financial assistance.

<sup>51</sup> States were asked the following question: “Are children who exit foster care to permanent legal guardianship eligible for Medicaid?” We assumed that if the respondent answered “yes” with no explanation then the eligibility was categorical, and if the state noted that the family would have to apply for Medicaid, then the eligibility is determined individually.

<sup>52</sup> Three states reported that Medicaid is only available if the kinship caregiver is receiving a subsidy and one state reported that Medicaid is only available if the kinship caregiver was licensed before they assumed guardianship.

<sup>53</sup> Tennessee is included in this analysis, but only children with medically rehabilitative needs are categorically eligible.

<sup>54</sup> One state, Hawaii, noted that children are eligible, but they must apply before the child reaches the age of 18.

kin to apply on their own.

*Post-Permanency Services.* Over half of the states that allow kin to pursue guardianship do not offer the same amount of post-permanency services that are offered for kin who pursue adoption. These services could include an array of supports to the family to bolster and maintain the permanency of the placements, such as crisis intervention, respite, support groups, day treatment, in-home services, post-finalization case management, and parent training. Nineteen of the 49 states which offer guardianship for kin provide the same amount of post-permanency services for guardianships and adoption. Twenty-nine states reported that there are fewer post-permanency services for guardianships than there are for adoption, and 14 of those 29 states reported that there are no post-permanency services for guardianships at all. One state reported that there are more post-permanency services for guardianships than there are for adoption.

*Length of Time Case is Kept Open After Guardianship and Adoption Finalization.* While kin who wish to pursue guardianship may or may not be held to the same assessment standards as kin who pursue adoption, it is more likely that they will receive more supervision than kin who adopt, after a guardianship is finalized. States were asked the length of time that the child welfare agency or the court keeps the case open after the finalization of a guardianship or adoption. Twenty-two of the 49 states that allow kin to take guardianship reported that they close the case at guardianship finalization, while 31 close the case when the adoption finalizes.<sup>55, 56</sup> Eighteen states reported that the needs of the case dictate whether a case is closed at guardianship finalization, while a smaller number (10) of states reported that the

needs of the case will dictate whether a case is closed at adoption finalization. More than likely, a case may remain open after guardianship or adoption finalization in order to satisfy identified service needs in the home, or if the court requests that a case remain open. Two states reported that a case can remain open up to one year after guardianship finalization, while six states reported that cases can be kept open up to one year after adoption finalization. Four states reported that it depends on the court or county practice to determine when a case is closed after guardianship finalization, while one state noted that it varies by county or court practice to determine when a case is closed after adoption finalization. Table 3 compares the length of time that cases remain open once a kinship caregiver pursues guardianship or adoption.

### **IIIF. Placing Children With Kin Across State Lines**

#### ***Licensing Challenges Placing Children Across State Lines with Kin***

Differing licensing standards create challenges for states in placing children with kin across state lines. Twenty-eight states reported that the differences in licensing options from state-to-state often complicate and prolong placements. For example, when a state that requires kin to be licensed is sending a child to live with a kinship caregiver who resides in a state that does not require kin to be licensed to the same standard as non-kin foster parents, it presents a dilemma for the sending state that cannot place the child unless the kinship caregiver makes an attempt to become licensed based on the sending state's requirements. This also directly relates to the chal-

<sup>55</sup> Three states reported that a subsidy agreement or subsidy case remains open only to provide payment of subsidies.

<sup>56</sup> Even when a case is closed, there may be rare instances where the court or agency will keep the case open or re-open a case to prevent disruption of the placement.

**Table 3. Length of Time for Supervision of Cases After Guardianship or Adoption Finalization, N=49**

Length of Time	Guardianship	Adoption
Case closed at finalization	22 states	31 states
Case remains open up to 1 year	2 states	6 states
Case remains open until age 18 or 21	3 states	1 states
Depends on the needs of the case	18 states	10 states
Varies by court or county practice	4 states	1 state

length of providing financial assistance and support services to kin across state lines, as many states that are sending children to states where kin are not required to be fully licensed cannot pay these caregivers the foster care payment or provide certain services. Twenty-five states reported challenges with financial assistance, and the same number of states reported challenges with support services for out-of-state placements. Also, one state reported that many courts bypass the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and place the children directly with kin without background checks or home evaluations.

before, child welfare agencies are recognizing the value of seeking out noncustodial parents and including them in case planning. Child welfare agencies are also realizing that noncustodial parents can be a resource that can provide additional permanency options for children. In response to this trend, most states reported in the survey that they instruct caseworkers to seek out noncustodial parents as a placement resource. However, states are mixed on whether these parents are given preference over other kin when considered as a placement option. More states treat noncustodial parents differently than other kin when they are seeking to care for their child during an investigation of abuse and/or neglect by the alleged offending parent. After an investigation, when considering a placement to divert from state custody, more states treat noncustodial parents the same as other kin.<sup>57</sup>

*Identification and Preference.* All but one state reported that caseworkers are instructed to seek out noncustodial parents as a placement resource for children. Thirty-eight states reported that caseworkers are instructed to give preference to noncustodial parents over other kin, assuming they meet necessary state requirements. Six states reported that noncustodial parents may receive preferential treatment over other kin depending on the child’s needs and the assessment of the noncustodial parent’s involvement. Seven states reported that caseworkers are not instructed to

## SECTION IV: NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS

### IVA. Treatment of Noncustodial Parents Compared to Other Kin

#### *States Vary on Treatment of Noncustodial Parents*

Similar to the emergence of kinship care placements to serve as emotional and permanent connections for children involved with the child welfare system, the identification and inclusion of noncustodial parents has recently come to the forefront of child welfare practice. More than

<sup>57</sup> These questions were analyzed with the assumption that a custody order is not in place when the child welfare agency becomes involved.

give preference to noncustodial parents over other kin, assuming they meet necessary state requirements.<sup>58</sup>

*Treatment During an Investigation.* States are not in agreement about the precautions taken with noncustodial parents of children involved in the child welfare system. The states were asked if a noncustodial parent would be treated differently than other kin if this parent was identified as a placement resource while the custodial parent is being investigated for abuse and/or neglect. Of the 47 states that allow kin to care for a child while the alleged offending parent is being investigated, 25 states reported that noncustodial parents are treated differently than other kin and 22 states reported that noncustodial parents are treated the same as other kin.

Twelve of the 25 states that reported a difference in treatment noted that the main difference between the treatment of noncustodial parents and other kin is that assessments are not usually conducted with noncustodial parents unless there are safety concerns in the home. Five states reported that no reunification services would be provided to the child's custodial parent if the noncustodial parent is placed with the child, when they would be provided for kinship caregivers in this scenario. Eight states would give assistance or provide information about legal custody, when this would not be done with other kin. Only one state reported that there would be more assessments conducted for noncustodial parents than there would be for other kin. Finally, five states reported that noncustodial parents are treated differently, but it is not clear where the treatment is different. States were asked about the assessment process, assistance with legal custody, ongoing case supervision, reunification services, adjudication, and services provided. It is likely that the only difference in treatment of noncustodial par-

ents is preference for placement, yet it is difficult to make this determination given the limited information available in the survey.

*Treatment During Diversion of Custody.* As noted in the findings involving noncustodial parents' treatment during an investigation of abuse and/or neglect of their child, states are not uniform in their treatment of noncustodial parents compared to other kin when placing a child in order to divert the child from state custody. Of the 39 states that allow kinship placements to be used as a diversion from foster care, 17 states reported that noncustodial parents are treated differently than other kin, while 22 states reported that noncustodial parents are treated the same as other kin. Six of the 17 states that treat noncustodial parents differently reported that no assessments are done, when they would be conducted for kin in the same scenario. Four states reported that assistance with legal custody would be provided, when this would not be done with other kin and three states reported that no reunification services would be provided to the child's custodial parent when they would be provided if other kin were caring for that same child. Only one state reported that there would be more assessments conducted for noncustodial parents than there would be for other kin. Finally, four states reported that noncustodial parents are treated differently than other kin, but the major difference in treatment is not clear.

<sup>58</sup> It is not clear from the survey responses whether these states do not instruct caseworkers to give preference to noncustodial parents over other kin or if policy simply does not give any instruction on this matter.

## SECTION V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### VA. Discussion

The results from the survey highlighted in this report show that states have continued to rely on and give preference to relatives and other kinship caregivers when children cannot safely remain in their parents' homes. In half of the states, however, child welfare agencies are unlikely to become involved with private kinship care arrangements, even if they occurred as the result of abuse or neglect and the current risk of maltreatment is low. At the same time, it appears from this survey that states are much more willing than previously reported to use kinship care to divert children from foster care. When children are taken into state custody, most states provide some flexibility for kin in meeting foster care licensing standards. However, accepting this flexibility may mean that kin find themselves ineligible for ongoing financial assistance in the form of foster care payments. Similarly, almost all states allow relatives to assume guardianship of children in foster care instead of adopting them and states' standards for guardianship are often less stringent than those for adoption. Yet the services and financial support available for relatives who take guardianship are often not comparable to those available if a relative adopts a child from state custody.

#### *How and When are Child Welfare Agencies Responsible for Children in Kinship Care?*

There has been much debate as to the proper role of child welfare agencies in kinship care, particularly how to intervene when extended family members are available and willing to care for a child who has suffered, or is at risk of ongoing

abuse or neglect. The survey findings show that in half of the states, child welfare agencies play an extremely limited role in addressing the needs of children in private kinship care arrangements. Thirty-eight states reported that they would not involve Child Protective Services (CPS) staff in private kin arrangements, even if the arrangements resulted from alleged abuse and/or neglect by the child's birth parent in the past. In addition, the survey shows that states are increasingly using (or more willing to acknowledge) kinship placements to divert children from foster care, avoiding state custody when they are removed from their homes. In previous surveys, many states acknowledged these types of placements but suggested that child welfare agencies would use kinship care as diversion from foster care only in cases of low risk or when it seemed that the child would not be otherwise removed from the home. The current survey finds that states are using kinship care to divert children from foster care even when there is a greater risk to the child. It is striking that not only do 39 states *allow* case-workers to seek out kin to avoid taking children into state custody, 29 states *require* this practice.

How should child welfare agencies respond when private kinship caregivers seek assistance? On the one hand, agencies could conclude that children in these families are not at imminent risk of harm, and thus do not require CPS intervention. On the other hand, one could question why kinship caregivers should be penalized for stepping in and helping children before CPS is involved – if they began caring for the children after CPS involvement they would receive services and possibly ongoing financial assistance. Similarly, there are questions about the role of child welfare agencies in using kin to divert children from foster care. Some experts view such “voluntary” placements as a form of family preservation and argue that child welfare agencies should not further intrude in the private lives of families. Other experts question whether child welfare agencies are abdicating their responsibility for vulnerable

children by diverting them from the foster care system. Are such placements really in the best interests of children or merely in the best interests of states' budgets and child welfare agency workloads?

Informing this debate is the survey finding that states, when using kinship care as a diversion from foster care, do generally conduct assessments of relative caregivers to ensure that the placement is appropriate. However, the assessments conducted are typically less extensive than those that would be conducted if the child was taken into state custody. In addition, diversion from foster care, for better or for worse, generally means diversion from child welfare services generally. It is apparent that in most of these cases, an ongoing case does not remain open, and reunification services are not provided. Therefore, there is no ongoing supervision by the agency, which would include permanency planning for the child, ongoing training for the relative caregiver, and guidance and assistance with adjusting to their new role. Moreover, the ongoing financial assistance available to kin in these arrangements is minimal.

#### *Are Licensing Standards Really About Safety?*

The debate continues about whether relatives should be held to the same licensing standards as non-kin foster parents, given that the nature of their involvement with the system is often drastically different. In order for states to receive federal reimbursement for a child placed in kinship foster care, relatives must be licensed by the same standards that are used to license the homes of non-kin. The recent Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act codified federal regulations that allow states to waive licensing standards for kin "on a case-by-case basis". Other legislation introduced in Congress would have allowed states to create separate licensing standards for kin and non-kin foster homes, but this legislation failed to garner enough support. It is important to keep in mind that fos-

ter care licensing standards are developed and monitored individually by each state. As a result, there can be far more difference in licensing standards across states than between the kin and non-kin licensing standards within a state that offers a kin-specific licensing standard. Thus, federal payments are not limited to any specific minimal licensing standard.

Lost in this debate is the simple fact that the federal government does not prohibit states from using kinship foster care placements that fail to meet the states' licensing standard, it only refuses to reimburse states for such placements. If these placements are safe, why does the federal government deny reimbursement? If these placements are unsafe, why does the federal government permit states to use them?

The debate about licensing standards appears to be more about financial cost than safety. Allowing states to have different licensing standards would likely increase the number of kin eligible for foster care payments (though states have a fiscal incentive themselves to deny kin access to foster care payments). While we do not know how many kin caring for children in state custody currently receive foster care payments, data from the National Survey of America's Families suggest that most do not (Macomber, Geen, & Main, 2003). While providing foster care payments to all kin caring for children in state custody would obviously entail significant cost, there does not appear to be a "best interest of children" reason for denying kin foster care payments. If foster care payments assist foster parents in caring for children (and are not used only as an inducement for them to take on the responsibility), then why should some children be supported by a foster care payment and others not?

#### *How Should Guardianship be Treated Differently than Adoption?*

In many ways, the differences between guardianship and adoption are similar to and affected by

the different licensing standards for kin and non-kin foster care in many states. Almost all states give relatives the option of taking guardianship of a related child in state custody. However, the level of benefits associated with guardianships is often not comparable with those available for adoption. Many states do not have ongoing financial assistance for guardianships, relatives may or may not be categorically eligible for Medicaid assistance, most states have fewer post-permanency services for guardianship or they have none at all, and ongoing supervision for these cases vary. In addition, states' assessment standards for guardianship are often less stringent than those for adoption.

With passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, states will now receive federal reimbursements for guardianship payments made to kin "who have assumed legal guardianship of the children for whom they have cared as foster parents and for whom they have committed to care on a permanent basis". However, "a kinship guardianship assistance payment on behalf of a child shall not exceed the foster care maintenance payment which would have been paid on behalf of the child if the child had remained in a foster family home". This means that children who were cared for by kin who did not receive foster care payments will not be eligible to receive federally-reimbursed payments. Thus, until and unless changes are made to kinship foster care licensing standards for kin, many kinship caregivers will continue to be ineligible for guardianship subsidies. As we noted above in terms of foster care payments, there does not appear to be a "best interest of children" reason for denying guardianship payments. If subsidies assist parents in caring for children (and are not used only as an inducement for them to take on the responsibility), then why should some children be supported by an ongoing subsidy and others not?

## VB. Conclusion

In sum, the 2007 Casey Kinship Care Survey identified a number of changes in states' kinship care policies since 2001 when states were last surveyed.

- More states are defining "kin" broadly to include persons who are not related to a child but have an established relationship with the child (30 compared to 22 in 2001).
- Most states seek out kin as a way to divert children from foster care. In 39 states, caseworkers are allowed to seek out kin to avoid taking children into state custody after an investigation has determined that a child cannot return home. In 29 states, caseworkers are required to seek out relatives who can care for children to avoid state custody. In 2001, 31 states reported that such "voluntary placements" were permitted, but most respondents noted that such placements occurred infrequently.
- More states require kin to meet the same standards as non-kin when caring for children in state custody (18 compared to 15 in 2001); however, more states also have developed a separate approval process for kin (23 compared to 20 in 2001). These foster care placements are typically referred to as "unlicensed placements."

In addition, the survey collected considerable new information about states' kinship care policies.

- In about half of the states, CPS does not become involved with children living with kin in private arrangements even when the arrangements resulted from abuse and/or neglect by the birth parent and the kinship caregivers are seeking assistance.
- Most states (40) require that reunification be

ruled out before guardianship can be pursued as a permanency option. Fewer states (28) require that adoption be ruled out.

- About half of the states that allow guardianships do not use the same assessment standards when assessing kin for guardianship and adoption.
- In more than one quarter of states, non-custodial parents do not receive preference for placement over other kinship caregivers.

The findings from this survey reveal that states are often not in agreement and endure a constant struggle in attempting to determine the appropriate level of financial assistance, support services, and supervision to give to children in the care of kin. Recent federal legislation has reinforced that kin are valuable resources to child welfare agencies, and the legislation has attempted to provide guidance to states in how to build a better service infrastructure for kinship caregivers. However, if kin are truly viewed as a valuable resource, more federal guidance and assistance is needed for states to ensure that kinship caregivers receive the same level of access and support as all other non-kin caregivers.

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## VD. Appendix

### *Methodology*

This report is a summary and analysis of state responses to the Casey Kinship Foster Care Policy survey. When answering each question in the survey, the survey respondents were asked to report on kinship care policies, not actual practice with kinship care families, because it is difficult to completely capture the variance in practice across each state in the survey.

*Survey Development.* Child Trends developed a survey instrument for the 2007 Casey Kinship Foster Care Policy Survey based on the previous three rounds of data collection conducted by the Urban Institute. The survey was developed in consultation with staff from Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation in a vetting process that lasted several months. Despite attempts to maintain some consistency with previous versions of the survey, this version is slightly different. There were additional questions added, including information about the treatment of noncustodial parents compared to other kin, resources available for conducting diligent search for kin, and the Medicaid eligibility of foster children who exit care to a guardianship. Survey responses were received from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For the purpose of this survey, DC is counted as a state, so the sample size is 51 states. A paper version of the survey was pilot tested by child welfare agency staff in two states. The final instrument was converted into a portable document format (PDF) electronic document and made available for download and completion on Child Trends' website. States were able to complete the survey in an electronic format and email their completed instruments directly to Child Trends' research staff.

*Survey Dissemination.* In October 2007, a packet of information and instructions for the survey was

mailed to each state child welfare administrator. This information was obtained from the most updated list of state child welfare administrators available from the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA). The introductory letter, addressed from Doug Nelson, President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and William C. Bell, President and CEO of Casey Family Programs, was accompanied by instructions to access, download, and submit the survey electronically. After each survey package was mailed to the states, we conducted extensive phone and email follow-up with the child welfare administrators' office in each state to confirm receipt of the materials, answer any questions about the procedures or timelines for the survey, and identify the designated individual(s) to whom the survey was assigned. Although we requested that states assign the survey to appropriate staff for completion within the first month of receiving the mailing, data collection continued through September 2008.

After receiving responses from each state, we conducted extensive follow-up by phone, email, and mail with an individual that the state identified as the contact person for the survey. A Child Trends staff member reviewed the submitted data with the contact person, usually by phone, to ensure that the information was correct. Only one state could not be reached to conduct a follow-up discussion. After the initial follow-up calls and emails, a narrative summarizing the major headings in the survey and an updated copy of the survey was sent back to the state child welfare administrator and the contact person for a final review. If necessary, further follow-up by phone or email was conducted after this to ensure that the final information was correct.

### *Data Limitations*

Despite the amount of time that Child Trends staff spent confirming the accuracy of the information presented in this report, the data still con-

tain several limitations. Therefore, readers should be cautious in interpreting the results based on the following:

1. In disseminating the survey, we asked each child welfare administrator to designate a single contact person that we would be able to contact to assist him or her during the completion of the survey and to conduct additional follow-up to confirm the accuracy of the data that were submitted. This contact person was usually a senior person in the foster care or kinship care division, if such a division existed in the agency. The topics in the survey, however, span several different aspects of the child welfare system and do not only address areas involving foster care services.

For example, respondents were asked to explain the state's response to a kinship caregiver in a private kin arrangement who approaches the agency for additional assistance. This situation would typically involve the intake division of a child welfare agency, which may or may not have much interaction with the foster care division. Due to this, it is very likely that a team of persons was commissioned to complete designated sections of the survey which pertained to their area of expertise.

It is also very likely that if a team was used, that each person only focused on the section that most pertained to their area of expertise and did not have an opportunity to read the caveats that were provided in the beginning pages of the survey document.

The caveats requested that the respondents only consider policy or other regulations when answering the questions, and stressed that if policies would be different for relatives versus other kin, that the respondents note this difference. Child Trends staff sought diligently to overcome this limitation by comprehensively walking through the survey with each state contact person to try to capture all pertinent information related to kinship care

but it is possible that other persons may not have responded only according to policy, or omitted particular information about differences between relatives and other kin.

2. Several questions in the survey required open-ended responses in which the respondent had an opportunity to provide additional detail related to the topic addressed in the question. For example, the states were asked to list the resources available to provide diligent searches for kin. The amount of detail provided in the answers to the open-ended questions varied significantly by state. However, it is not safe to assume that the omission of certain details meant that the resources were not available in the state. It is very likely that the respondent was not aware of all of the available resources in the state and could not provide all of the relevant responses to this question. To address this limitation, during follow-up correspondence with each state, Child Trends staff probed when necessary and asked for further clarification of questions that may have required further detail.

3. During the development of the survey, we attempted to use common terminology to describe the main topics that were presented in the survey. This was done to accommodate data collection from 51 states with varying policies and state administrative structures. Despite our attempts to have consistent data collection and to be as general as possible when phrasing questions, the terminology that was used or scenarios that were presented in the survey did not always relate well to certain state child welfare agencies' policies. For example, the term "provisional licensing" is not consistently used from state to state, though in theory states may employ the same pre-approval process for kin who wish to care for a child before they are fully approved as a licensed foster parent. Some states may call

this process probationary licensing, or an emergency placement option. Some respondents may not have realized that the survey was inquiring about the concept of a pre-approval placement process other than a process that is strictly termed “provisional licensing”. To address this limitation, we provided additional text boxes so that the state could provide additional information about similar processes. In addition, during follow-up correspondence with the states, Child Trends staff probed when necessary and asked for clarification for processes that did not exactly fit the terminology that described the topics in the survey.

4. The comparability of data is limited in this version of the survey because of the change in wording of key questions in the survey. It is difficult to draw comparisons between the current and previous data because the format of the questions have changed slightly. Notably, the question which asks about the definition of kin changed considerably in this version of the survey. In previous versions of the survey, the states were asked if their definition of kin includes those not related by blood, marriage, or adoption. In the 2007 version of the survey, the states were specifically asked if their treatment of relatives and other kin were different or the same. It is likely that the definition of kin could be broad, yet there is still a distinction between the treatment of relatives and other kin, in which this round of the survey, the definition would be considered “narrow”. For this reason, readers should be cautious when using the data in this report to compare to past data reported in previous surveys.

5. Child welfare practice is largely guided by human subjectivity. Though respondents were asked to answer the questions based on child welfare policy in their state, the answers provided may not necessarily rep-

resent what would be done in every situation. Each case is unique and has several different variations that need to be taken into account, and each response made by a state child welfare agency may not be identical. In order to account for this limitation, we made the assumption that the answers in the survey are based on the *typical* responses of the agency, and do not necessarily represent the actions of the child welfare agency in every occurrence.

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that studies children at every stage of development. Its mission is to improve outcomes for children by providing research, data, and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children. For additional information on Child Trends, including a complete set of available Research Briefs, visit our Web site at [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org). For the latest information on more than 100 key indicators of child and youth well-being, visit the Child Trends Data-Bank at [www.childtrends.databank.org](http://www.childtrends.databank.org). For summaries of over 300 experimental evaluations of social interventions for children, visit [www.childtrends.org/LINKS](http://www.childtrends.org/LINKS).



## Casey Kinship Foster Care Policy Survey

We are interested in understanding the policies that guide your work with relatives and other “kin” of children that come to the attention of the child welfare system. In some states, policies do not treat relatives any differently than non-kin foster parents. However, many states use relatives in unique ways to help care for children that have come to the attention of child welfare authorities.

Below we ask about how your agency responds under a variety of different circumstances in which relatives may be involved **before or without an investigation of abuse or neglect, during an investigation (or through an alternative response system), and following an investigation.** We ask about:

- The identification, notification, and assessment of noncustodial parents and other relatives, before, during and following an investigation of abuse and neglect. We also would like to know of any preferences given to certain relatives.
- The different ways that you may assess relatives who want to care for children in state custody.
- The existence of separate licensing standards for children with relatives and children in non-relative foster homes.
- The services and supports provided to children with relatives compared to those for children in non-relative foster homes.
- The permanency options for relatives who want to permanently care for children in state (or county) custody.

In considering the policies that your state has in place, please consider policies that exist in law, agency regulations, and other written policy guidance. Because states' policies vary considerably, it is difficult to design a single survey that captures the variety and complexity of the approaches states take in using relatives to help care for children needing protection. While we have done our best to anticipate differences among state policies, we strongly encourage you to use the space provided for additional comments to note features of your state's approach that the survey may fail to capture. We would be happy to answer any questions you have on this survey; please do not hesitate to contact Rob Geen at 202-572-6004 or at [rgeen@childtrends.org](mailto:rgeen@childtrends.org). Thank you in advance for your time.



Before we ask about state policies related to kinship foster care, we would like to know whether **county or local agencies** have the authority to implement different policies in the following areas (check all that apply):

- Identification and Preference Given to Relatives
- Relative Foster Parent Assessment Standards
- Provisional Licensing/Approval
- Services and Supervision
- Permanency Options for Relatives

### State Definition of Kinship Care

1. Do your state child welfare policies treat “kin” (persons not related by blood, marriage, or adoption but who have an existing relationship to a child in need of protection) the same as “relatives” (persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption)?

- Yes (skip to question 2)
- No
- Sometimes (please explain below)

a. Do state child welfare policies treat “kin” the same as persons who do not have an existing relationship with the child?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes (please explain below)

*Please note: Throughout the rest of the survey, we ask about your state policies regarding the use of “relatives” to care for children in need of protection. In the sections that follow, please explain in the space for comments if your answers would be different for “kin” than those you provided for relatives.*

## Relatives Caring for Children not in State/County Custody

Please indicate how your state policies instruct caseworkers to respond in the circumstances described below when relatives are already caring for children not in state custody.

2. *Before or without conducting an investigation of alleged abuse or neglect, your agency becomes aware of a child already living with a relative:*
- a. If a relative reports that they became the caregiver of a child due to prior abuse or neglect (including parental abandonment of child) and that the relative now needs additional assistance in caring for that child, does agency policy instruct the caseworker to:

- i. Open a child protective services case on the child?

- Yes  
 No  
 It depends (please explain below)

- ii. Assess the relative's ability to care for the child?

- Yes  
 No  
 It depends (please explain below)

If yes or it depends, what would the assessment consist of (check all that apply):

- Local criminal background check
- State criminal background check
- Federal criminal background check
- State child abuse and neglect registry check
- Check with other states' child abuse and neglect registries
- Home study
- Verification that income is sufficient to meet the child's needs
- Other (specify below):

iii. Assist the relative with obtaining legal custody of the child?

- Yes (please describe assistance provided below)
- No
- It depends (please describe assistance provided below)

iv. Provide any of the following assistance to the relative and/or child:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

v. Refer the relative and/or child to any of the following services:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

Please use the space below to make any additional comments about state policies addressing these situations:

b. *Before or without conducting an investigation of alleged abuse or neglect, your agency becomes aware of a child already living with a relative: If the relative reports that they are unwilling/unable to care for the child without assistance, does agency policy instruct the caseworker to (if your state policies for this scenario are exactly the same as the previous scenario, please skip to question 3):*

i. Open a child protective services case on the child?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below)

ii. Assess the relative's ability to care for the child?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below)

If yes or it depends, what would the assessment consist of (check all that apply):

- Local criminal background check
- State criminal background check
- Federal criminal background check
- State child abuse and neglect registry check
- Check with other states' child abuse and neglect registries
- Home study
- Verification that income is sufficient to meet the child's needs
- Other (specify below):

iii. Assist the relative with obtaining legal custody of the child?

- Yes (please describe assistance provided below)
- No
- It depends (please describe assistance provided below)

iv. Provide any of the following assistance to the relative and/or child:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

v. Refer the relative and/or child to any of the following services:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

Please use the space below to make any additional comments about state policies addressing these situations:



For the next set of questions, please indicate how your state policies instruct caseworkers to respond in the circumstances described below when relatives may be identified **during** an investigation of abuse and neglect (or through an alternative response).

3. *During an investigation* of abuse or neglect (or through an alternative response system):

- a. If the alleged perpetrator agrees to allow a relative to care for the alleged victim, does agency policy require the caseworker to complete the investigation (or an alternative response) before allowing a relative to care for the child?

- Yes (skip to question 4)
- No
- It depends (please explain below)

The next set of questions is meant to capture any differences in states' policies regarding the identification of and preference given to noncustodial parents compared to other relatives. In some states, noncustodial parents are given preference over other relatives, and thus are subject to different policies regarding identification, assessment, and the type of services provided. Other states may include noncustodial parents in their definitions of relatives, which means noncustodial parents and relatives are given equal treatment when a caseworker is attempting to determine where a child will be placed. Please answer the following questions about your state child welfare policies regarding noncustodial parents:

- b. If the alleged perpetrator identifies the noncustodial parent as the relative who will care for the child, do you treat this parent the same as other relatives?

- Yes (skip to question 3d)
- No

c. If noncustodial parents are treated differently than relatives, are caseworkers instructed to:

i. Assess the noncustodial parent's ability to care for the child?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

If yes or it depends, what would the assessment consist of (check all that apply):

- Local criminal background check
- State criminal background check
- Federal criminal background check
- State child abuse and neglect registry check
- Check with other states' child abuse and neglect registries
- Home study
- Verification that income is sufficient to meet the child's needs
- Other (specify below):

ii. Assist the noncustodial parent with obtaining legal custody of the child?

- Yes (please describe assistance provided below)
- No
- It depends (please explain and describe assistance provided below)

iii. Open an ongoing case

- Yes
- No (Skip to 3c, section v)
- It depends (please explain below):

iv. Provide in-home/reunification services to the child's birth parent (or guardian from whom the child was removed)?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

v. Seek adjudication of the child as abused or neglected?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

vi. Provide any of the following assistance to the noncustodial parent and/or children:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

vii. Refer the noncustodial parent and/or child to any of the following services:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

d. *During an investigation* of abuse or neglect (or through an alternative response system): If the alleged perpetrator identifies a relative who will care for the child

i. Are caseworkers required to assess the relative prior to caring for the child

Yes

No

It depends (please explain below):

ii. Would your response be any different if the alleged victim was already living with the relative or if the abuse and neglect report came from a relative?

Yes (please explain below):

No

iii. What would your agency's assessment of the relative consist of (check all that apply):

- Local criminal background check
- State criminal background check
- Federal criminal background check
- State child abuse and neglect registry check
- Check with other states' child abuse and neglect registries
- Home study
- Verification that income is sufficient to meet the child's needs
- Other (specify below):

iv. Does agency policy instruct the caseworker to assist the relative with obtaining legal custody of the child?

- Yes (please describe assistance provided below):
- No
- It depends (please explain and describe assistance provided below):

v. If the relative assumes custody of the child, does the agency still complete the investigation (or an alternative response)?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

vi. Does agency policy instruct the caseworker to close the case following transfer of custody of the child?

- Yes (Skip to 3d, section viii)
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

vii. Does agency policy instruct the caseworker to provide in-home/reunification services to the child's birth parent (or guardian from whom the child was removed)?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

viii. Does agency policy instruct the caseworker to provide any of the following assistance to the relative and/or child:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

ix. Does agency policy instruct the caseworker to refer the relative and/or child to any of the following services:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):



For the next set of questions, please indicate how your state policies instruct caseworkers to respond in the circumstances described below when relatives may be identified **following** an investigation of abuse and neglect (or through an alternative response).

4. *Following an investigation*, if a caseworker determines that a child cannot remain safely at home, does agency policy *allow* caseworkers to identify relatives who can care for the child to avoid taking, or without having to take, the child into state/county custody?

- Yes
- No (skip to question 5)
- It depends (please explain below):

Does agency policy *require* caseworkers to seek out relatives who can care for the child to avoid taking, or without having to take, the child into state/county custody?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

The next set of questions is meant to capture any differences in states' policies regarding the identification of and preference given to noncustodial parents compared to other relatives. In some states, noncustodial parents are given preference over other relatives, and thus are subject to different policies regarding identification, assessment, and the type of services provided. Other states may include noncustodial parents in their definitions of relatives, which means noncustodial parents and relatives are given equal treatment when a caseworker is attempting to determine where a child will be placed. Please answer the following questions about your state child welfare policies regarding noncustodial parents:

a. If the non-custodial parent of the child is identified as a potential resource, do you treat this parent the same as relatives?

Yes (skip to question 4c)

No

b. If non-custodial parents are treated differently than relatives, are caseworkers instructed to:

i. Assess the noncustodial parent's ability to care for the child?

Yes

No

It depends (please explain below):

If yes or it depends, what would the assessment consist of (check all that apply):

- Local criminal background check
- State criminal background check
- Federal criminal background check
- State child abuse and neglect registry check
- Check with other states' child abuse and neglect registries
- Home study
- Verification that income is sufficient to meet the child's needs
- Other (specify below):

ii. Assist the noncustodial parent with obtaining legal custody of the child?

- Yes (please describe assistance provided below):
- No
- It depends (please explain and describe assistance provided below):

iii. Open an ongoing case

- Yes
- No (Skip to 4b, section v)
- It depends (please explain below):

iv. Provide in-home/reunification services to the child's birth parent (or guardian from whom the child was removed)?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

v. Seek adjudication of the child as abused or neglected?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

vi. Provide any of the following assistance to the noncustodial parent and/or children:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds):

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

vii. Refer the noncustodial parent and/or child to any of the following services:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds)

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

c. In cases where a relative is allowed to care for the child to avoid taking, or without having to take the child into state/county custody, are caseworkers instructed to:

i. Assess the relative's ability to care for the child?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

If yes or it depends, what would the assessment consist of (check all that apply):

- Local criminal background check
- State criminal background check
- Federal criminal background check
- State child abuse and neglect registry check
- Check with other states' child abuse and neglect registries
- Home study
- Verification that income is sufficient to meet the child's needs
- Other (specify below):

ii. Assist the relative with obtaining legal custody of the child?

- Yes (please describe assistance provided below):
- No
- It depends (please explain and describe assistance provided below):

iii. Open an ongoing case

- Yes
- No (Skip to 4c, section v)
- It depends (please explain below):

iv. Provide in-home/reunification services to the child's birth parent (or guardian from whom the child was removed)?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

v. Seek adjudication of the child as abused or neglected?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

vi. Provide any of the following assistance to the relative and/or children:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds):

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):

vii. Refer the relative and/or child to any of the following services:

- Information and referral
- Financial assistance (please specify amount and source of funds):

- Medicaid health insurance
- Legal services
- Respite care
- Child care
- Clothing allowance
- Mental health services
- Transportation
- Independent living/life skills programs
- Transitional housing services
- Chafee funding supports
- Education and training vouchers
- Support groups/peer groups
- Other (specify below):



## Relative Identification and Preference

The next set of questions address your state child welfare policies for identifying and giving preference to relatives and non-custodial parents

5. If, following an investigation a caseworker determines that a child cannot remain safely at home and the court grants custody of the child to the state/county child welfare agency:

a. Are caseworkers instructed to seek out relatives who can care for the child?

Yes

No

It depends (please explain below):

b. What resources are available to caseworkers to allow them to conduct a diligent search for relatives?

c. Are caseworkers instructed to give preference to relatives who come forward to care for the child assuming they meet necessary state requirements?

Yes

No

It depends (please explain below):

d. Are caseworkers instructed to identify and contact the child's non-custodial parent?

Yes

No

It depends (please explain below):

e. If the child's non-custodial parent is identified as a potential resource, are caseworkers instructed to give preference to this parent (over other relatives) in determining who will care for the child?

Yes

No

It depends (please explain below):

## Relative Foster Parent Assessment Standards

The next set of questions ask about the policies in place in your state regarding the assessment of relatives who would like to act as foster parents for children taken into state (or county) custody. While some states have only one approach to assessing relatives who want to act as foster parents, other states have multiple approaches, depending upon the desires of the relative, the needs of the child, or other factors. Please read the following questions carefully and report on all the approaches your state may take to assess a relative wanting to act as a foster parent.

6. If a relative wants to care for a *child who is taken into state custody*, must the relative meet all of the same licensing/approval standards as non-kin foster parents - no standards are modified or waived for relatives that cannot be modified or waived for non-kin foster parents?

Yes

No

- a. If relatives wish to become foster parents, do they receive the same trainings as other foster parents?

Yes (Skip to 6b)

No

It depends (please explain below):

- i. Please describe how the trainings for relatives differ from the trainings for non-relative foster parents:

b. What types of ongoing financial assistance are relatives eligible to receive when they become foster parents **for a child who is Title IV-E eligible** based on the same standards as non-kin foster parents?

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other ongoing financial assistance (specify below):

- It depends (please explain below):

c. What types of ongoing financial assistance are relatives eligible to receive when they become foster parents **for a child who is not Title IV-E eligible** based on the same standards as non-kin foster parents?

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other ongoing financial assistance (specify below):

- It depends (please explain below):

{If you answered yes to Question 6, skip to question 9}

7. If a relative wants to care for a child who is taken into state custody, does agency policy allow some licensing/approval standards to be waived or modified for relatives, on an individualized basis, that cannot be modified or waived for non-kin foster parents?

- Yes
- No (Skip to 8)

a. What standards may be waived or modified?

- Space
- Age
- Income
- Other (specify below):

b. Do relatives receive the same trainings as other foster parents?

- Yes (Skip to 7c)
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

i. Please describe how the trainings for relatives differ from the trainings for non-relative foster parents:

c. What types of ongoing financial assistance are relatives eligible to receive when they become foster parents **for a child who is Title IV-E eligible** based on the same standards as non-kin foster parents?

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other ongoing financial assistance (specify below):

- It depends (please explain below):

d. What types of ongoing financial assistance are relatives eligible to receive when they become foster parents **for a child who is not Title IV-E eligible** based on the same standards as non-kin foster parents?

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other ongoing financial assistance (specify below):

- It depends (please explain below):

8. If a relative wants to care for a child who is taken into state custody, does agency policy allow them to be assessed based on different standards than those used for non-kin foster parents?

- Yes
- No (Skip to 9)

a. Do relatives receive the same trainings as other foster parents?

- Yes (Skip to 8b)
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

i. Please describe how the trainings for relatives differ from the trainings for non-relative foster parents:

b. Please describe how other assessment standards are different for relatives:

c. What types of ongoing financial assistance are relatives eligible to receive when they become foster parents **for a child who is Title IV-E eligible** based on the same standards as non-kin foster parents?

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other ongoing financial assistance (specify below):

- It depends (please explain below):

d. What types of ongoing financial assistance are relatives eligible to receive when they become foster parents **for a child who is not Title IV-E eligible** based on the same standards as non-kin foster parents?

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other ongoing financial assistance (specify below):

- It depends (please explain below):

## Provisional Licensing/Approval

In some states, relatives who want to act as foster parents of children taken into state (or county) custody can begin caring for a child before they meet all of the assessment standards required to become a foster parent. This is often referred to as provisional licensing/approval. Please answer the questions below that relate to how and when relatives may be provisionally licensed/approved to care for a child in state (or county) custody.

9. Must relatives meet all foster care licensing/approval standards before they begin caring for a child, or can they be *provisionally licensed/approved* and then start caring for a child?

- Must meet all standards before caring for a child (Skip to 10)
- May be provisionally licensed/approved
- It depends (please explain below):

a. Can non-relatives also be provisionally licensed or approved to act as foster parents?

- Yes
- No

b. What standards are required for licensing/approval that do not need to be met for provisional licensing/approval?

- Local criminal background check
- State criminal background check
- Federal criminal background check
- State child abuse and neglect registry check
- Check with other states' child abuse and neglect registries
- Home study
- Verification that income is sufficient to meet the child's needs
- Training
- Space requirements
- Other (specify below):

It depends (please explain below):

c. If relatives are provisionally licensed/approved, how long do they have to complete the full licensing/approval process?

Days

It depends (please explain below):

- i. If relatives do not complete the full licensing/approval process within required time constraints, what are the next steps that are required by agency policy?

- d. What types of financial assistance, if any, are relatives who are provisionally licensed/approved eligible to receive, if any, when they become foster parents **for a child who is Title IV-E eligible?**

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other monthly financial assistance (specify below)

- Other non-monthly financial assistance (specify below)

- It depends (please explain below):

e. What types of financial assistance, if any, are relatives who are provisionally licensed/approved eligible to receive, if any, when they become foster parents **for a child who is not Title IV-E eligible?**

- Monthly foster care payments
- Monthly TANF child-only payments
- Other monthly financial assistance (specify below):

- Other non-monthly financial assistance (specify below):

- It depends (please explain below):

## Services and Supervision

The next set of questions seeks to determine whether the services and supervision you provide to relative foster parents (and the foster children in their care) are different than that provided to non-relative foster parents. In thinking about differences in services, please consider the entire range of supports that may be available, including Medicaid coverage, respite care, child care, clothing allowances and other vouchers, mental health services, transportation assistance, and educational support.

10. Are there any *services* that non-relative foster parents are eligible to receive that relative foster parents are not eligible to receive?

- Yes (please explain below):
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

11. Are there any *services* that relative foster parents are eligible to receive that non-kin foster parents are not eligible to receive?

- Yes (please explain below):
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

12. Does agency policy instruct caseworkers to provide the same *level of supervision* to children placed with relatives as to children placed with non-kin foster parents?

- Yes, the level of supervision required is the same
- No, caseworkers are instructed to provide less supervision to children placed with relatives
- No, caseworkers are instructed to provide more supervision to children placed with relatives
- It depends (please explain below):

### Permanency Options

The following questions seek to understand the differences in state policies regarding permanent legal guardianship and adoption of foster children. States may use alternative language for permanent legal guardianship such as legal guardianship with the intent of caring for the child indefinitely, conservatorship, or other terms.

13. After it has been determined that a foster child cannot return home, if the child does not already have a permanency resource:

a. Are caseworkers instructed to seek out relatives who can care for the child permanently?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

- b. What resources are available to caseworkers to allow them to conduct a diligent search for relatives?

14. If a relative wants to permanently care for a child in state custody but does not want to adopt that child (a child for which reunification is not possible), does state policy allow them to take permanent legal guardianship of that child?

- Yes  
 No (Skip to 23)  
 It depends (please explain below):

- a. Do non-relatives have the option of taking permanent legal guardianship?

- Yes  
 No  
 It depends (please explain below):

b. Must the option of returning home or reunification be “ruled out” before guardianship care can be considered as a permanency option?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

c. Must adoption be “ruled out” before guardianship care can be considered as a permanency option?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

15. Are relatives who assume legal guardianship of a child from foster care eligible for ongoing financial assistance on behalf of the child?

- Yes
- No (Skip to 17)
- It depends (please explain below):

16. Compare the level of ongoing financial assistance available for relatives who assume permanent legal guardianship to the assistance available to relatives who adopt a child from state custody:

- Less assistance than what would be available if the relative adopted the child
- Same level of assistance as would be available if the relative adopted the child
- More assistance than what would be available if the relative adopted the child
- It depends (please explain below):

17. Compare the level of ongoing financial assistance available for relatives who assume permanent legal guardianship to the assistance available to relatives who continue to provide foster care for a child in state custody:

- Less assistance than what would be available if the relative continued to provide foster care for the child
- Same level of assistance as would be available if the relative continued to provide foster care for the child
- More assistance than what would be available if the relative continued to provide foster care for the child
- It depends (please explain below):

18. Are children who exit foster care to permanent legal guardianship eligible for Medicaid?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain below):

19. Compare the post-permanency services available for relatives who assume permanent legal guardianship to the services available to relatives who adopt a child in state custody:

- No post-permanency services are available to relatives who assume permanent legal guardianship
- Fewer services than what would be available if the relative adopted the child (please explain below):
- Same services as would be available if the relative adopted the child
- More services than what would be available if the relative adopted the child (please explain below):
- It depends (please explain below):

20. Compare the standards used to assess whether a relative can be a permanent legal guardian of a child in state custody to those used to assess whether a relative can adopt that same child:

- Same standards
- There are standards for assuming permanent legal guardianship that are not required for adoption (please explain below):
- There are standards for adopting a child that are not required for assuming permanent legal guardianship (please explain below):

21. How long after a guardianship is finalized, if at all, does the child welfare agency or the court keep the child's case open?

Months

- It depends (please explain below):

22. How long after an adoption is finalized, if at all, does the child welfare agency or the court keep the child's case open?

Months

- It depends (please explain below):

23. Do you experience challenges in placing children with relatives in other states that are different than the challenges you face generally in placing foster children across state lines (with non-relatives)?

No

Yes (Please select one or more below):

Differences in licensing standards

Differences in financial assistance provided to relatives

Differences in provision of support services to relatives

Other (please explain below):



**Staff Contact for Kinship Care Policy Information**

Name

Title

Address

Phone

Fax

Email

Please provide any additional information you believe is necessary for us to understand kinship care policies in your state.