



KIDS ARE WAITING
Fix Foster Care Now

Child Welfare National Leadership Group Recommendations re: Subsidized Guardianship

On March 16 & 17, 2007, a small but diverse and well respected group of child welfare administrators from across the nation convened to consider child welfare finance reform details, to ensure advocates, policymakers and everyone in the debate consider feasible financing strategies in order to meet our jointly held goals of safe children, stable families and supportive communities. Details pertaining to policy development around creation of Title IV-E Guardianship Subsidies are provided below.

The Leadership group strongly supported the creation of Title IV-E Guardianship Subsidies to support permanency for children unable to be raised by their birth family, but lucky enough to have a relative or other kin caregiver accept judicial guardianship, and commit to providing a permanent home for that child. Creating this alternative use of Title IV-E is an essential permanency strategy to move children out of foster care, based on:

- the success of the Illinois IV-E Guardianship Waiver, demonstrating a significant increase in permanency for foster children
- research that children experience greater stability, school and community success with safe relatives than unrelated foster caregivers
- casework experience that the termination of parental rights process, leading to making a child available for adoption, is not always welcomed in kinship arrangements, yet children deserve permanent families.

Guardianship subsidies support one the three ASFA permanency strategies for children in foster care – reunification, relatives, or adoption. **All details should be framed within the Adoption and Safe Families Act, and modeled after Adoption Assistance.** This will support consistency in policy that has already proven successful in achieving permanency for tens of thousands of children nationwide.

Recommendations for IV-E Guardianship eligibility, process and other parameters

- Mirror Title IV-E eligibility rules, as for Foster Care Maintenance and Adoption Assistance
- Establish an alternate relative / kinship caregiver certification process
- Require a judicial award of guardianship (vs. temporary custody) to the relative/kinship caregiver, based on the “best interest” of the child; a termination of parental rights should not be required.
- Mirror eligibility for a Guardianship Subsidy with existing requirements and timelines for judicial decisions re: reasonable efforts. Apply current ASFA permanency timeframes for children in out of home care (bypass reasonable efforts, 12 month permanency hearing, or permanency decision by 15 of 22 months)
- Mirror Guardianship Subsidy negotiation rate processes according to existing rules for Adoption Assistance
- Mirror Medicaid eligibility linkage, just as with Adoption Assistance
- Mirror eligibility for post permanency services, just as adoptive families.
- Mirror eligibility for Chafee Independent Living services, just as for youth adopted as adolescents.
- Ensure ongoing, grandfathered eligibility for families receiving a Guardianship Subsidy in any state with a current Title IV-E Waiver, irregardless of differing eligibility rules or processes.
- Ensure eligibility for any children / kinship caregivers that are receiving state kinship subsidy program, if they are IV-E Guardianship eligible.

We support alternate certification standards for relatives and other non-related kinship caregivers that have an established, substantial relationship with the child. We know from experience and research:

- Children experience greater stability with kin caregivers than with non-related foster caregivers
- Children’s academic performance and school attendance is better when placed with kinship caregivers
- Children are involved in fewer community problems when placed with kinship caregivers

Summarized by Crystal Ward Allen, crystal@pcsao.org
Public Children Services Association of Ohio, March 2007



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Alternative Kinship Certification Processes should include:

- Basic health and safety assessment of the environment
- Criminal background checks and disqualifiers consistent with foster care regulations
- Child maltreatment history background check
- Assessment of caregivers' understanding of the child's needs, capacity and willingness to care for that child
- Allow states to design training requirements
- Allow immediate placement of child with temporary approval status, with defined timeframe to fully complete the alternative certification process.

The Kinship Navigator Program and Relative Notification Requirements are fully supported, and will support best practice to identify and engage relatives early on, and provide strong support for them.

Leadership Participants

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