



**DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY**  
**ANNUAL SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES REPORT**

**State Fiscal Year 2021**

Pursuant to [A.R.S. § 8-526\(E\)](#), the Department of Child Safety (DCS) is required to provide information on kinships caregivers, housing assistance program, and the education training voucher and independent living program. The supportive programs outlined in this report are critical to helping the Department achieve its mission to successfully engage children and families to ensure safety, strengthen families, and achieve permanency. These programs support youth, kinship caregivers and assist youth prepare for adulthood.

[A.R.S. § 8-526\(E\)](#) states that DCS shall make available the following information on an annual basis:

1. *The percentage of substantiations upheld by the office of administrative hearings (found in the [Semi-Annual Child Welfare Report](#)).*
2. The demographics and number of children placed with relative caregivers.
3. The demographics of kinship foster caregivers.
4. The number of relative children per kinship foster care family.
5. The department's success at maintaining kinship foster care placements.
6. The type and cost of services provided to kinship foster care families by licensed and unlicensed caregivers.
7. The cost of services provided to kinship foster caregivers compared to the cost of out-of-home placements.
8. The number of children and families, by district, receiving services through the housing assistance program during the previous fiscal year.
9. The total amount of money spent on the housing assistance program by region.
10. A programmatic and fiscal evaluation of the effectiveness of the housing assistance program that includes the amount of foster care expenditures avoided.
11. The number of children in the independent living program by age, county and education status.

**This report is divided into three sections:**

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**KINSHIP FOSTER CARE**

**Overview**

Pursuant to [Arizona Revised Statute § 8-526](#), the Department of Child Safety (DCS) is required to make available on an annual basis, information on the Kinship Foster Care Program including:

- The demographics and number of children placed with relative caregivers;
- The demographics of kinship foster caregivers;
- The number of relative children per kinship foster care family;
- The department's success at maintaining kinship foster care placements;
- The type and cost of services provided to kinship foster care families by licensed and unlicensed caregivers; and
- The cost of services provided to kinship foster caregivers compared to the cost of out-of-home placements.

This report is submitted in satisfaction of this requirement.

For generations, extended families have played significant roles in the rearing of children when parents otherwise cannot. Kinship caregivers provide love and nurturance in a familiar setting, allowing children to remain connected with their families. These children live with people they know and trust, thereby reinforcing the child's sense of cultural identity and well-being. Children living with kinship caregivers make and sustain extended family connections, promoting the continuation of lifelong family traditions and memories. The extended family provides opportunities that support the child in building healthy relationships within the family, ensures the child's safety and well-being, and creates a sense of stability in the child's life.

Arizona continues to utilize kinship foster care at a much greater rate than the national average of 32 percent<sup>1</sup>. As of June 30, 2021, the percentage of children and youth placed with a relative (licensed and unlicensed) was 52 percent, a one percentage point increase from 51 percent in SFY 2020<sup>2</sup>.

**Arizona Kinship Foster Care Program Description**<sup>3</sup>

Arizona's Kinship Foster Care Program prioritizes relatives as the first caregiver preference for children in the custody of DCS who require out-of-home care. Kinship care is the preferred living arrangement because they maintain and promote lifelong family connections. Compared to other living arrangements, kinship care is generally a less costly option for a child in the custody of the state.

Kinship Caregivers include relatives and adults with whom the child has a significant relationship. With the overall decrease in Arizona's foster care population from over 19,000 in 2016 to less than

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *The AFCARS Report*, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcarsreport27.pdf> (accessed 29 October 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Data was extracted on 11-4-21 from the DCS case management system based upon an Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) data run for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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15,000 in June 2021, the number of foster caregivers (licensed and unlicensed) providing a family like setting has decreased; however, the number of kinship caregivers have increased (licensed and unlicensed). The number of children less than eighteen years of age in out-of-home (OOH) care on June 30, 2021 was 13,725 compared to 13,161 on June 30, 2020, which is a four percent increase. The number of licensed foster homes in June 2021 was 3,450 compared to 3,730 in June 2020, which is a 7.5 percent decrease. It is also important to note that the Department continued its work to maximize available bed space and reduce costs by reviewing foster homes who become licensed but have chosen not to utilize their home to provide foster care. When appropriate, these licenses were allowed to expire.

***Licensed Kinship Care*** is when a child is placed with a relative/kin who becomes licensed as a foster care provider. As of June 30, 2021, there were 623 kinship caregivers licensed as foster parents. This is a fourteen percent increase from the 545 licensed kinship caregivers reported in the previous annual report (SFY 2020). The current 623 licensed kinship caregivers provide out-of-home care for 961 children in foster care.

***Unlicensed Kinship Care*** is when a child is placed with a relative/kin with court approval and the caregiver is not licensed as a foster care provider. As of June 30, 2021, there were 3,962 unlicensed kinship caregivers providing homes to children in foster care. This is an eight percent increase from the 3,661 unlicensed kinship caregivers reported in the SFY 2020 annual report. The current 3,962 unlicensed kinship caregivers provide out-of-home care to 6,334 children in foster care.

**Services Available to Licensed and Unlicensed Kinship Caregivers**

There are many services available to kinship foster caregivers and the children for whom they provide care. These services include the following:

- *Case management services* - Regular contact and communication with the kinship caregiver occurs to assess and identify needs of the child and family and to assist in developing solutions.
- *Health care coverage* – An integrated medical, dental and behavioral health plan is provided to children through the Mercy Care DCS Comprehensive Health Plan (CHP), which is an AHCCCS (Title XIX Medicaid) health plan.
- *Parent aide services* – Training in family life skills is provided by contract agencies; parent aides may also provide transportation and/or supervise parenting time with birth parents and their children.
- *Parent skills training* - Training is provided for kinship foster caregivers to enhance their parenting knowledge and skills.
- *Mental health and other supportive intervention services* – Counseling and other services may be provided through referrals to agencies for kinship foster caregivers and children needing intervention.
- *Transportation services* - Transportation for children to and from medical appointments and other necessary services is available.
- *Child care subsidy* - Child care can be provided for children with local state-approved entities; payment for services is subsidized if these services are deemed necessary.
- *Respite care* - Six days or up to 144 hours annually of respite care is available for kinship foster caregivers.

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- *Referrals to other state programs* - Programs such as the Family Assistance Administration, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, Job Service, and community resources for children and kinship foster caregivers are available through the Department of Economic Security (DES) and community agencies.
- *Arizona Families Thrive E-newsletter* – This monthly e-newsletter replaced the Arizona Statewide newsletter and provides information about educational opportunities, services and other information that support kinship foster caregivers. Caregivers sign-up to receive the newsletter by enrolling directly on the DCS website or calling the Warm-line.
- *Kinship Information Sessions (KIS)* – Meetings are provided in Phoenix and Tucson to kinship foster caregivers, to inform them about the court system, resources, policies and foster care licensing.
- *Direct (1:1) assistance* – Support is provided to kinship caregivers through Central Office and region based staff to provide information, answer questions, provide guidance and general support, and to resolve payment and other issues. Caregivers who participate in the AZ Families Thrive conferences also receive education/training and the opportunity to meet with licensing agencies during this event.

**Costs of Care Provided by the Department of Child Safety (DCS)**

Financial assistance provided to kinship foster caregivers for the children in their care includes foster care maintenance payments (for licensed kinship foster caregivers), personal and clothing allowances (for both licensed and unlicensed relative caregivers), diaper allowances (for unlicensed kinship caregivers caring for children under the age of three), and the Kinship Stipend (for unlicensed kinship caregivers).

As shown in Table 1 below, the diaper allowance is \$62.50 per month/per eligible child and the Kinship Stipend is \$75.00 per month/ per child for unlicensed kinship caregivers. The amount allotted for personal allowances is \$20.49 per month for unlicensed kinship caregivers. The allotted amount for clothing allowances is \$22.75 per month. The total amount allotted is \$118.24 per child for kinship caregivers (\$180.74 per child if diapers are provided). This compares to an average monthly cost of family foster care (licensed kinship and licensed non-kinship) of \$684.73 per child. The average monthly cost of foster care for a child placed in a congregate care setting, such as a group home, is \$4,092 per child. These average monthly costs do not include expenditures related to DCS case management, childcare, or other services provided to support the care of children in out-of-home care.

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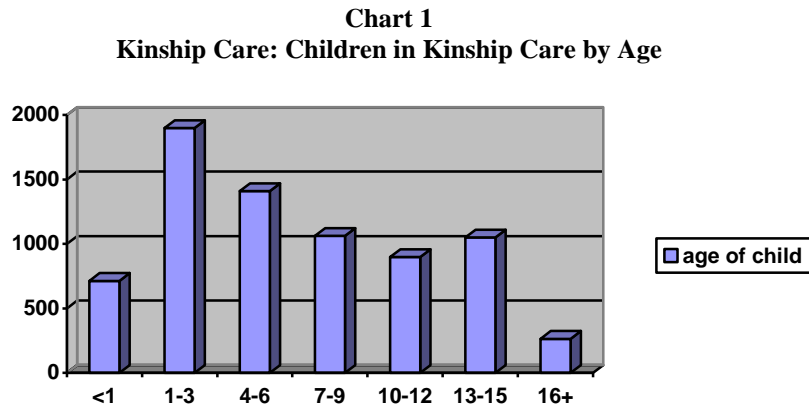
**Table 1 (Monthly Allotted Rates per Child)**

Service	Unlicensed Kinship	Licensed Kinship	Licensed Non-Kinship
Foster Care Maintenance Payments (0-17 year olds)	\$75.00 (Kinship Stipend)	\$641.49	\$641.49
Personal Allowance	\$20.49	\$20.49	\$20.49
Clothing Allowance	\$22.75	\$22.75	\$22.75
Foster Care/Stipend, Personal and Clothing Allowances combined	\$118.24	\$684.73	\$684.73
Diaper Allowance	\$62.50	\$62.50	\$62.50
Foster Care/Stipend, Diaper, Personal and Clothing Allowances combined	\$180.74	\$747.23	\$747.23

**Demographic Data about Children in Kinship Care**

As of June 30, 2021, there were 7,295 children in licensed and unlicensed kinship care, which was 52 percent of the total out-of-home care population of 14,148 children. The average age for children in kinship care was 7.1 years (unchanged from SFY 2020). The largest percentage of children in kinship care, 26 percent (1,898), are between ages one and three.

Chart 1 displays the number of children in kinship care by age:



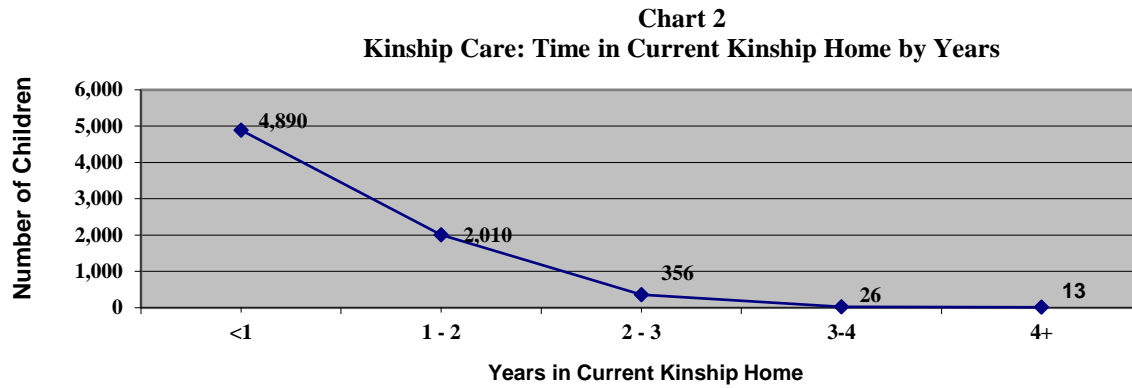
N= 7,295

Children residing in kinship care on June 30, 2021 spent 60 percent of their total time in out-of-home care with their kinship caregiver. This is a twelve percent decrease from the SFY 2020 data. Most children in kinship care, 67 percent, lived with their kinship caregiver for less than one year.

This represents a six percent decrease over SFY 2020 data for this category. The average number of children residing in the same kinship home is 1.6 children.

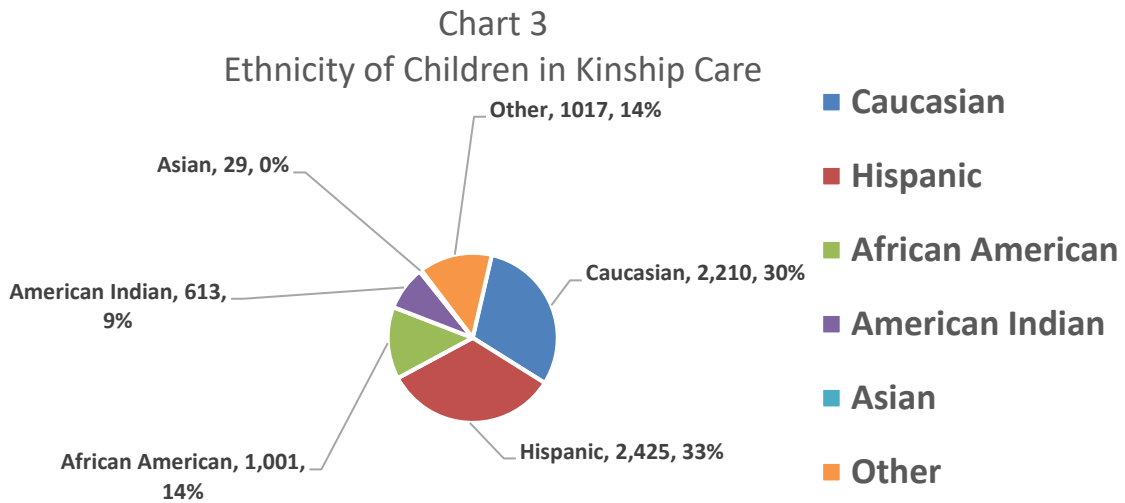
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Chart 2 displays time in current kinship home by years:



N = 7,295

Chart 3 displays the ethnicity of children in kinship care. Comparing SFY 2020 to SFY 2021, the ethnicity of children in kinship care remained consistent. Fifty-one percent of children in kinship care are female and forty-nine percent are male.



N = 7,295

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**Demographic Data of Kinship Caregivers**

As of June 30, 2021, there were 4,585 kinship caregivers. This is a nine percent increase over the 4,206 kinship caregivers in SFY 2020. Kinship caregivers over the age of 40 comprise 67 percent of all kinship foster caregivers.

Chart 4 displays the percentages of kinship caregivers by age brackets:

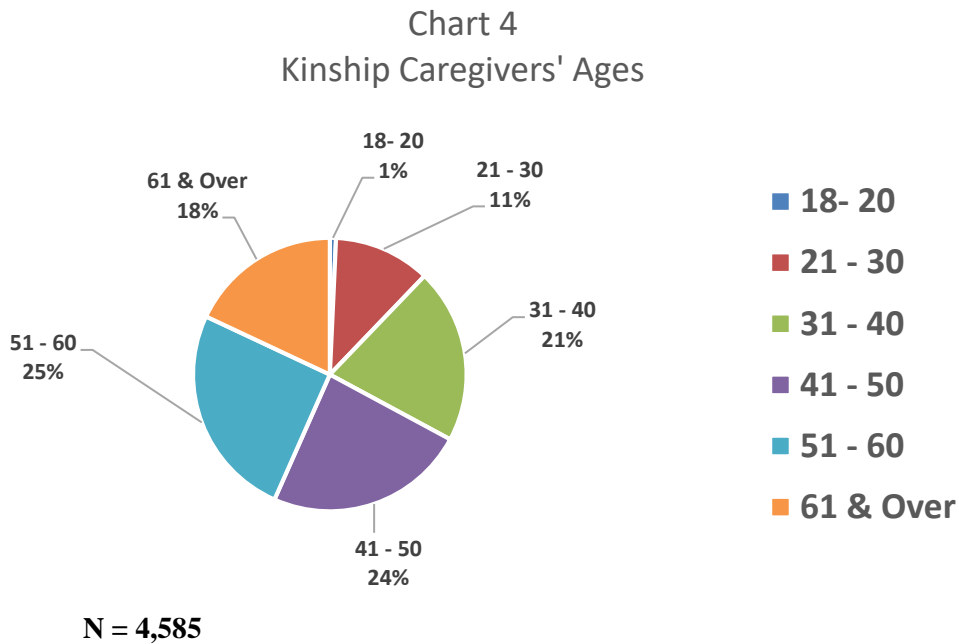
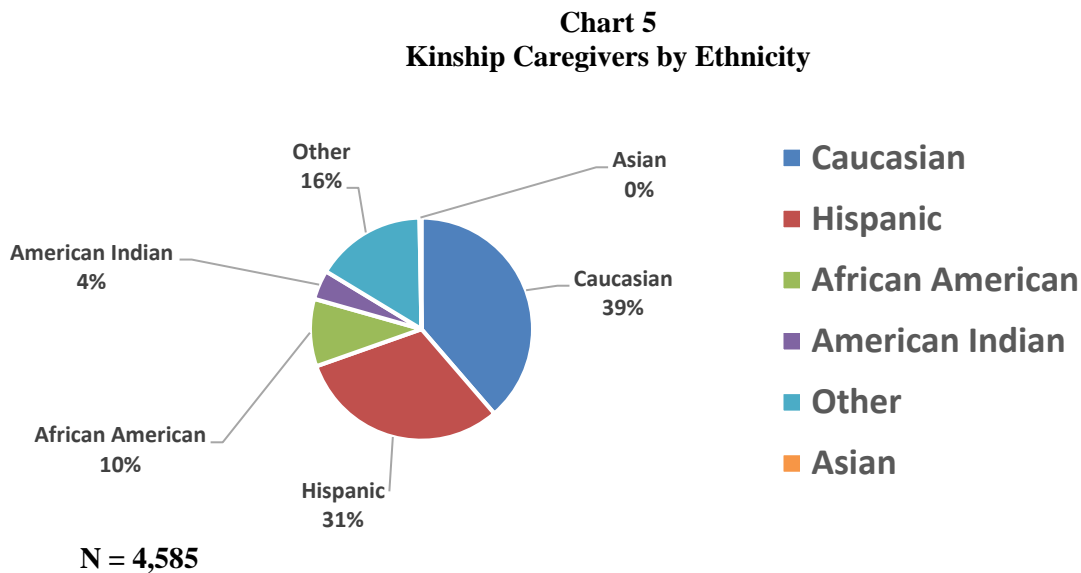


Chart 5 displays the ethnicity of kinship caregivers.



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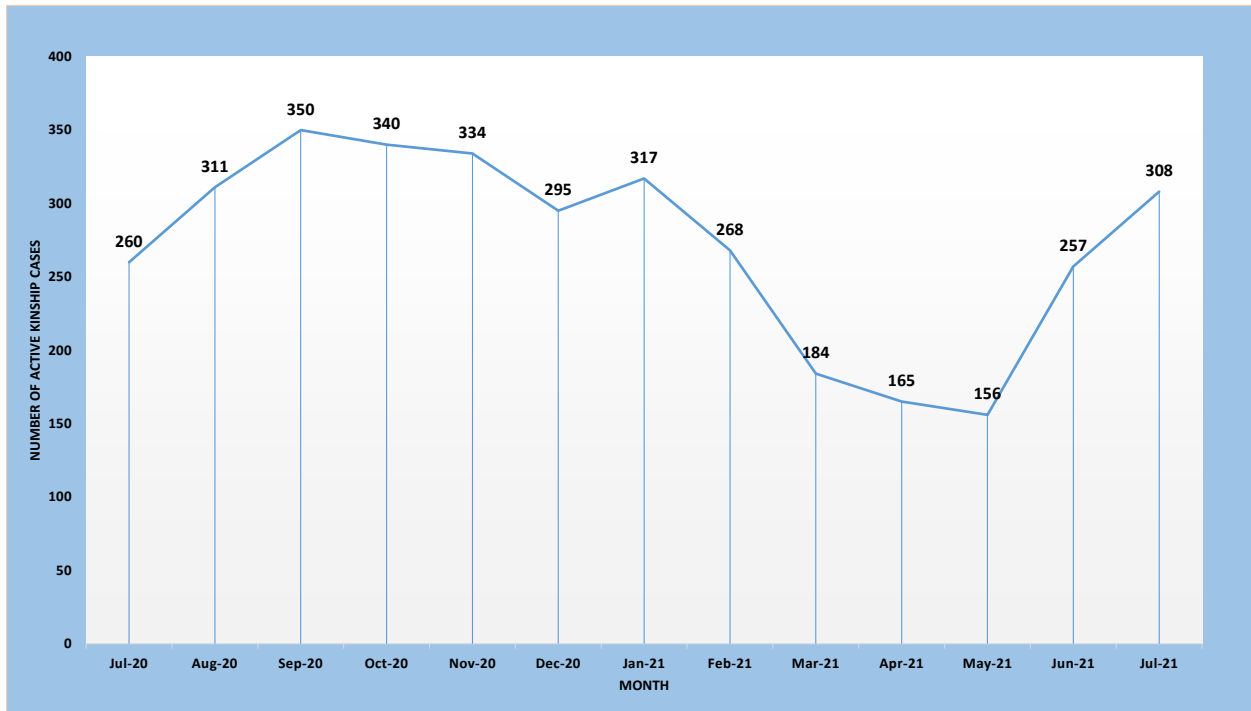
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**Efforts to Achieve Success at Maintaining Kinship Caregivers Placements**

The Department of Child Safety (DCS) values and supports our kinship caregivers. The Department has implemented or is in the process of implementing several initiatives and programmatic efforts.

During SFY 2021, the Kinship Program Coordinator and Kinship Support Specialists continued to support field staff to place children with kin and maintain kinship caregiver living arrangements. The Department engaged in 3,545 kinship cases statewide during SFY 2021. Chart 6 displays the monthly number of kinship case in which the Kinship Program Coordinator and Support Specialist engaged.

**Chart 6**  
**Total Active Kinship Engagement Cases Statewide**



The Statewide Placement Administration (SPA) was formed in 2017. This administration coordinates requests for licensed caregivers for children in out-of-home care; supports kinship caregivers by providing or directing kin to tangible resources including emergency food, clothing, beds, infant care items, etc.; and has provided assistance to struggling kinship caregivers to help resolve barriers to maintaining children in their homes. Under the SPA, Kinship Support Specialists (KSS) conduct outreach and support to kinship caregivers. Kinship Engagement Support Specialists (KESS) at the SPA support field staff in seeking connections and/or kinship caregivers for children and youth recently entering into care.



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There are two statewide KESS that find and engage potential relatives with children in care. Once relatives are engaged and inquire about being considered for a child's caregiver, the KESS completes several actions for field staff. The KESS completes criminal background checks, attends the TDM with field staff, assists with the kinship home assessment, and drafts the motion for change of physical custody (CPC). Once the CPC is ordered by the juvenile court, the KESS completes the placement and Kinship Support actions to include the 30, 50 and 80 day follow-up. KESS and KSS provided additional support including statewide kinship team meetings which are held quarterly to exchange resources, discuss issues, problem-solve and develop solutions to challenged faced by kinship caregivers throughout the state. They are also able to elevate these issues to DCS leadership as needed.

During calendar year 2020, the Kinship Program Coordinator (KPC) facilitated 12 presentations to DCS units around the state to share information about financial and non-financial resources available to support kinship caregivers, and encouraged the use of the KPC as a resource when the DCS Specialists need support to meet the needs of kinship caregivers. KSS Supervisor facilitates monthly presentations with field staff in Maricopa East, Maricopa West and South Regions. These meetings provide critical information regarding KSS, TANF applications for kinship and other kinship resources. In November 2020, Kinship Team (statewide) began addressing unpaid claims for kinship caregivers to help ensure they had financial resources.

DCS has also made efforts to strengthen relationships with community organizations that support kinship caregivers to ensure they have the most accurate and up to date information about the DCS Kinship Program. KSS Supervisor and KPC attend a collaborative monthly meeting with Maricopa and South community organizations to ensure there is up to date information about new and changing resources for kinship caregivers. This meeting is also utilized to remain informed about community actions related to kinship caregivers. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the KSS Supervisors attended a Southern Region Kinship Collaboration comprised of DCS staff and several community organizations with a common goal to support kinship caregivers. Through networking, the group is able to meet the needs of kinship caregivers more timely and efficiently. Kinship Supervisors and Specialists attend the collaborative meeting, which is facilitated by AVIVA. The management of this collaboration changes every 30 days.

Additionally, two community resource lists for kinship caregivers were created; one for the Phoenix area and one for the southern portion of the state. Each resource list includes both regional and statewide resources available to caregivers. A community resource contact list was finalized during SFY 2021 for northern Arizona.

KSS and KESS conduct outreach activities through phone calls, mailings, and in-person information sessions to inform kin about their role as a foster caregiver, and provide critical information on meeting the needs of the children in their care. The DCS Mercy Care Comprehensive Health Plan (CHP) continues its outreach to caregivers when children are placed in their homes, which includes assistance with appointment scheduling, follow up with specialty health care providers, referrals to other community/agency resources, and care coordination with caregivers and health providers for children/youth with special health care needs. Caregivers receive contact information so they may contact DCS Mercy Care CHP Member Services should any issues or concerns arise or simply need to know what their rights are in accessing services for

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the children in their care. In addition, DCS Mercy Care CHP Liaisons refer kinship caregivers directly to Kinship Support depending on their needs.

The Kinship Foster Care booklet continues to be distributed and is available in English and Spanish. The booklet was revised in 2017 and provides extensive information for kinship caregivers, including DCS expectations for the care and supervision of children in DCS care, benefits and services available to children in their care, licensing process and waivers, and information about other pertinent subjects.

The Statewide Kinship Support Supervisors monitor regional efforts and provides support through technical assistance and training, statewide. Examples of current efforts include the following:

- Rural areas in the South Region continue to support kinship caregivers by having a designated case aide in each field office visit each new kinship home to offer information on resources, available assistance, and the dependency process.
- In Maricopa East and Maricopa West Regions, Living Word Bible Church provided food boxes, girl scout cookies and gift cards for kinship caregivers.
- The KSS and KESS provide support to unlicensed kinship caregivers through the delivery of needed goods, explanation of DCS and child welfare processes, address payment concerns and services for children. The support centers inform caregivers what resources are available and how to access them.
- KSS assist arranging fingerprinting appointments to complete the fingerprint clearance card requirement. The assigned KSS makes contact with the family to schedule an initial visit within five (5) days of receiving the referral and conducts three follow ups visits or phone calls or combination of both (preference of the family).
- Kinship Support provides training to DCS staff during monthly regional meetings throughout the year. This training provides an overview of the activities required to secure and finalize a kinship caregiver, and the delivery of support services; emphasizes the importance of understanding the kinship perspective; and builds sensitivity regarding the involvement of child welfare with the family and other issues. From July 1, 2020 through June 20, 2021, 22 trainings were delivered to staff statewide.
- Training is also offered to community partners working with kinship caregivers. This training provides an overview of the DCS Kinship Program, which includes an overview of collaborating with DCS, financial supports, and non-financial supports. From July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, 11 trainings were delivered to four different community agencies.
- Participation in collaborative efforts with stakeholders to identify kinship caregiver needs and offer supports. Community groups and partnerships include the Central Arizona

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Kinship Coalition, Southern Arizona Community Programs and Supports group, and the Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors.

DCS developed standard work and a statewide screening tool to be used by the Statewide Placement Team to aid in the living arrangement decision making process for children requiring out-of-home care. The screening tool takes many factors into account, including if a kin caregiver is available to care for the child, the child's behaviors and special needs, if the child is part of a sibling group, and if a previous out-of-home caregiver is available to care for the child. The use of this tool, and the combination of various tracking systems related to living arrangement decisions into this tool, has reduced data entry time and increased the ability to systematically identify the best living arrangement for children. DCS policy outlines the importance of diligent efforts to identify and notify all adult relatives and adults with significant relationships to the child of their option to become the living arrangement for the child in out-of-home care, within 30 days of the child's removal. DCS continues to conduct searches for relatives prior to key decision points in the case. State policy directs staff to conduct searches at least once every six months.

The Department created a Practice Guideline for assessing and supporting kinship caregivers. The Practice Guideline assists field staff through the initial assessment process to increase the number of children placed in kinship homes.

DCS continues to provide kinship caregivers with necessary information and resources to ensure that the child(ren) placed with them are properly cared for and kin are supported, reducing the trauma to children entering out-of-home care and avoiding more costly living arrangements. Kinship home studies are conducted by Southwest Human Development (SWHD), Casa de Los Ninos, and Arizona's Children's Association through a contract with the Department. Staff visit the kinship homes early in the placement process to conduct the home studies and provide information on resources available through DCS and community based agencies (including licensing, financial, social and educational resources).

The Fostering Sustainable Connections (FSC) program began serving children statewide in October 2019. Family Engagement Specialists identify and locate relatives and kin important to children for emotional support and possible placement utilizing Lexus Nexus, Seneca, social media, case mining and engagement activities during their visits with children. FSC uses the TDM process to create plans and transition children/youth who are placed in a congregate care setting into a family like setting. The process allows for the increase in the availability of in-home, behavioral health, and other community services to assist with transitioning the children to less restrictive placements and support any kinship placements identified.

The Arizona Council of Human Service Providers entered into a three-year partnership with Dr. Bruce Perry from the Child Trauma Academy to create a webinar series and an online resource library for foster parents and kinship families based on the Neurosequential Model in Caregiving. This program provides monthly webinars for caregivers such as foster parents, kinship, and adoptive families to train them to parent children who have experienced trauma. The webinars are archived for viewing at any time. The program is also training 35 child welfare and behavioral health staff who will become trainers in the Neurosequential Model. These trainers will be available to train foster parents and kinship families in this model in the future.

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DCS Specialists are encouraged to discuss the importance of foster home licensure with relative caregivers at the time of placement and subsequent to placement. On a case-by-case basis, the Department works with the Office of Licensing and Regulation (OLR) and contracted licensing agencies to grant waivers of non-safety related licensing standards that would prevent kinship caregivers from becoming licensed. The waivers most often relate to some aspect of the sleeping arrangements to accommodate sibling groups. A smaller number relate to income requirements or certain flexibilities needed to complete necessary training.

The Department continues to partner with the Department of Economic Security's Family Assistance Administration (FAA) to troubleshoot TANF Cash Assistance applications. DCS and FAA maintain designated staff that coordinate and assist with applications, and the process for kinship families to apply for benefits has been improved to decrease errors and delays. A centralized eligibility determination process developed in 2016 continues and includes a unique e-mail address for applications. State legislation was passed to lift the TANF "benefit cap" that previously prevented a child from receiving TANF if his or her mother was receiving cash assistance at the time she gave birth to a child. This new law, which became effective August 6, 2016, removed the TANF cap for dependent children residing in the home of a qualified relative.

The Care Portal connects DCS families to local churches who want to serve their communities by providing basic goods and services in an effort to keep families together, reunify families, and support kinship caregivers. This is a secondary and tertiary prevention program, in as much as it serves all DCS families as well as young adults who reach adulthood in foster care. The Care Portal addresses a large range of needs, such as cribs, beds, furniture, home or car repairs, and assistance eliminating lice. The Care Portal program currently provides services and goods to families in Pima, Maricopa, and Yuma Counties.

In 2018, the Department expanded the DCS Warmline support to be available to all Kinship families. This assists with easier access to getting questions answered and receiving assistance with setting up benefits such as TANF, DES daycare and any questions with the Kinship Stipend Program.

The Department is continuing active efforts to support kinship caregivers so foster children placed in their care thrive. The Arizona Legislature has expanded the "Kinship Stipend" to include all unlicensed kinship caregivers regardless of income. There is no longer an application process. Caregivers receive the funds automatically. As of July 1, 2019, this monthly stipend (\$75 per child) was being provided to kinship caregivers caring for 2,773 children.

### **Conclusion**

Kinship care accounts for 52 percent of the children in out-of-home care in Arizona. This percentage continues to exceed the national rate of 32 percent and is reflective of Arizona's commitment to prioritize kin as the first preference for children who require out-of-home care. As the Department continues to expand its services and supports available to kinship caregivers, it emphasizes the most critical role family and fictive kin have in a child's life. These are life-long sustainable and loving relationships. If you ask a youth in out-of-home care who they may want to spend Thanksgiving with in ten years, most would identify a family member or significant person in their life with whom they want a lifetime relationship.

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**INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM / EDUCATION**

[A.R.S. § 8-521](#) establishes Arizona's Independent Living Program and the supporting Educational Case Management Unit within the Department of Child Safety.

The Independent Living Program and the Educational Case Management Unit provide important services that assist foster youth in setting and meeting educational and life skills goals and outcomes. These services are available to both teens that are currently in foster care as well as young adults aged 18-20 years old who were in foster care when they were teenagers. Services include individualized assistance to remove barriers to high school graduation (such as interventions for credit recovery, expediting enrollment, etc.) and to identify and enroll in post-secondary programs, including accessing scholarship and grant opportunities. Young adults over 17 years of age in the Independent Living Program may be continuing enrollment in a traditional or alternative secondary education program, enrolled in postsecondary education, or have completed graduation or attained a general equivalency diploma and chosen to work full-time rather than pursue secondary education.

As required by [A.R.S. § 8-521\(J\)](#), the following information is provided for school year 2020-21:

*The number of youth in the Independent Living Program:* As of January 12, 2021, there were 1,680 youth in the Independent Living Program. The population of youth represented in this annual report are youth in out-of-home care age 16 and older with a primary or concurrent permanency goal of Independent Living.

*The number of youth in the program by age:*

Age	Number of Youth
16	177
17	484
18	437
19	351
20	231
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,680</b>

*The number of youth in the program by grade:*

Grade	Number of Youth
Below 9	0
9	0
10	177
11	484
12	437
Secondary Programs <sup>1</sup>	184
Post-Secondary <sup>2</sup>	178
Not in School <sup>3</sup>	220
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,680</b>

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*The number of youth in the program by county of residence:*

<b>County</b>	<b>Number of Youth</b>
Apache	3
Cochise	14
Coconino	10
Gila	3
Graham	26
Greenlee	0
La Paz	0
Maricopa	1,132
Mohave	117
Navajo	3
Pima	210
Pinal	124
Santa Cruz	5
Yavapai	8
Yuma	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,680</b>

<b>Educational Outcome</b>	<b>Number of Youth</b>
<i>Youth in the program who graduated from high school in 2020-21</i>	153
<i>Youth in the program who received a general equivalency diploma in 2020-21</i>	35
<i>Youth in the program that are enrolled in post-secondary education in 2020-21</i>	178
<i>Youth participating in the Education Training Voucher (ETV) Program in 2020-21</i>	467

<sup>1</sup> *Secondary Programs* includes 19 and 20 year olds enrolled in secondary level alternative, credit recovery, charter schools and GED Programs.

<sup>2</sup> *Post- secondary* education includes youth enrolled in colleges, universities, community colleges, and trade/technical schools.

<sup>3</sup> *Not in school* includes youth who have completed HS graduation, attained a general equivalency diploma, or chose to work full-time rather than pursue post- secondary education.

During the 2020-21 school year, the Department identified virtual learning, and school disruptions due to COVID-19 preventing access to certain post-secondary programs that best fit student needs directly impacting youth's decision to attend or enroll in these programs. COVID-19 impacted student's progress toward earning required credits for high school diploma and additionally due to GED programs being closed or having limited enrollment numbers also impacted educational attainment for youth in care.

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**HOUSING ASSISTANCE**

[A.R.S. § 8-526\(E\)](#) requires the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) to make the following information regarding the Housing Assistance Program available to the public upon request and available on the Department’s website:

- The number of children and families, by Region, receiving services through this program during the previous fiscal year.
- The total amount of monies spent on the program by Region.
- A programmatic and fiscal evaluation of the effectiveness of this program, which includes the amount of monies saved by reducing foster care expenditures.

To be eligible for the Housing Assistance Program, the following criteria must be met:

- At least one child is a participant in an open Department of Child Safety (DCS) case;
- Housing assistance is needed to expedite a permanent placement for the child;
- Lack of safe and adequate housing is a significant barrier to family preservation, family reunification or achievement of the permanency plan for at least one child;
- Family income, including entitlements, is insufficient to cover housing expenses;
- The family is willing to develop and participate in a time-oriented plan to maintain housing obtained through this program; and
- All other sources of assistance have been fully explored and used before considering this program.

**Number Served**

In SFY 2021, the Housing Assistance Program served 432 children in 177 families.

<b>REGION</b>	<b>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</b>	<b>NUMBER OF FAMILIES</b>
Maricopa East ( <i>East Maricopa County</i> )	116	58
South ( <i>Pima, Yuma, Santa Cruz and Cochise Counties</i> )	69	25
Northeast ( <i>Pinal, Gila, Apache, Navajo, Graham and Greenlee Counties</i> )	13	8
Northwest ( <i>Mohave, Yavapai, La Paz, and Coconino Counties</i> )	30	10
Maricopa West ( <i>West Maricopa County</i> )	209	76
STATEWIDE TOTAL (duplicated)*	437	177
<b>STATEWIDE TOTAL (unduplicated)</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>177</b>

\* Some children may be duplicated having received services in more than one region.

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**Cost of Service**

The total amount expended statewide for the Housing Assistance Program in SFY 2020 was \$489,646.

<b>REGION</b>	<b>TOTAL MONIES EXPENDED</b>
Maricopa East <i>(East Maricopa County)</i>	\$136,417
South <i>(Pima, Yuma, Santa Cruz and Cochise Counties)</i>	\$34,896
Northeast <i>(Pinal, Gila, Apache, Navajo, Graham and Greenlee Counties)</i>	\$12,920
Northwest <i>(Mohave, Yavapai, La Paz, and Coconino Counties)</i>	\$16,424
Maricopa West <i>(West Maricopa County)</i>	\$121,389
<b>STATEWIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>\$322,045</b>

**Results of Service**

The Housing Assistance Program improves the ability of DCS to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for children who are the subject of a DCS report and investigation, or participants in an ongoing services case.

In a cost-effective manner, the Housing Assistance Program provides families who have open DCS cases with needed housing and utility assistance to meet their health, safety, and shelter needs, when such assistance is not available through other programs.

In SFY 2021, the average length of stay in out-of-home placement prior to reunification was 384 days (12.60 months). An estimated \$3,727,122 would have been expended by DCS for foster care maintenance payments (licensed foster home, personal and clothing allowance) at an average cost of \$684.73 per month/per child if the 432 children who benefited from the Housing Assistance Program during SFY 2021 had entered or remained in foster care for the average length of stay of 12.60 months. Based on the SFY 2021 Housing Assistance Program expenditures of \$322,045, there is potential cost avoidance of \$3,405,077.



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Table 2 displays the number of children who benefitted from the Housing Assistance Program and the average monthly cost of licensed foster care, which includes maintenance payment, and personal and clothing allowances.

**Table 2: Number of Children and Average Monthly Cost**

Total Number of Unduplicated Children Benefited	432
Licensed Foster Home Monthly Average	\$684.73

Table 3 displays the estimated expenditures DCS would have expended on foster care payments if the children benefitting from the program had been in foster for 12.60 months. It also displays the total expenditures for SFY21 for the Housing Assistance Program and the potential cost avoidance.

**Table 3: Cost Avoidance**

Estimated DCS Expenditures for 12.10 Months	\$3,727,122
Housing Assistance Program Expenditures	\$322,045
Program Potential Cost Avoidance	\$3,405,077