



Arizona Department of Child Safety

Janice K. Brewer
Governor

Charles Flanagan
Director

November 19, 2014

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: Kinship Foster Care Program Report

Dear Governor Brewer:

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 8-514.03, the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) submits the enclosed biannual report on the Kinship Foster Care Program. This report provides the following information:

- Demographics and number of children placed with relative caregivers;
- Demographics and number of kinship foster caregivers;
- Number of relative children per kinship foster care family;
- The Department's success at maintaining kinship foster care placements;
- Type of services provided to kinship foster care families;
- Cost of services provided to kinship foster care families compared to the cost of out-of-home placements; and
- Recommendations regarding program improvement.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (602) 542-5844.

Sincerely,

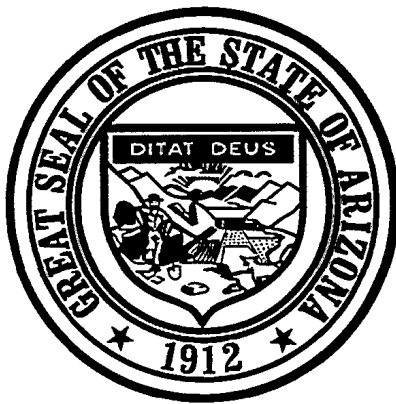
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Flanagan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles Flanagan
Director

Enclosure

cc: President Andy Biggs, Arizona State Senate
Speaker Andy Tobin, Arizona State House of Representatives
Secretary of State Ken Bennett
Joan Clark, Director, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records

Arizona Department of Child Safety



Arizona's Kinship Foster Care Program

Report for SFY 2014

Kinship Foster Care Report for SFY 2014

Overview

Arizona Revised Statute § 8-514.03(H) requires the Department of Child Safety (DCS) to submit a report regarding the Kinship Foster Care Program every two years. The report includes demographic information, the types of services provided to kinship foster caregivers, and recommendations for program improvement. 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, insures the child's safety and well-being, and creates a sense of stability in the child's life. Utilization of kinship foster caregivers reduces the financial impact to the State.

Arizona continues to utilize kinship foster care at a much greater rate than the national average of 28 percent. In SFY 2012 the rate was 36 percent and in SFY 2014 it had risen to an all-time high of 43 percent.

Arizona Kinship Foster Care Program Description¹

Arizona's Kinship Foster Care Program prioritizes relatives as the first placement preference for children in the custody of DCS who require out-of-home care. In general, kinship placement is the least costly option for a child who is in the custody of the State.

There are two forms of Kinship Foster Care:

Licensed Kinship Foster Care is when a child is placed with a relative who becomes licensed as a foster care provider. As of June 30, 2014, there were 542 kinship foster caregivers licensed as foster parents. This is an 89 percent increase as compared to the 287 licensed kinship foster caregivers reported in the previous biannual report (SFY 2012). The current 542 licensed kinship caregivers provide out-of-home care for 996 related foster children.

¹ Data was extracted on 08-07-14 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, 2014.

Unlicensed Kinship Foster Care is when a child is placed with a relative with court approval and the relative does not wish to become licensed as a foster care provider. As of June 30, 2014, there were 3,602 unlicensed kinship caregivers providing homes for 6,163 related foster children. This is a 35 percent increase in unlicensed kinship caregivers as compared to the 2,664 unlicensed kinship caregivers reported in the previous biannual report (SFY 2012).

Services Available to Kinship Foster 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 with the kinship caregiver to assess and identify needs of the child and family and to assist in developing solutions.
- *Health care coverage* – medical plan provided to children through Title XIX (Medicaid) and/or the Department of Child Safety (DCS) Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program (CMDP)
- *Parent aide services* – training in family life skills provided by contract agencies; parent aides may also provide transportation and/or supervise visitation with birth parents and their children.
- *Parent skills training* - training 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.
- *Child care subsidy* - child care provided for children with local state-approved entities; payment for services is subsidized if these services are deemed necessary and appropriate.
- *Respite care* - six days or up to 144 hours annually of respite care available for kinship foster caregivers.
- *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 Statewide newsletter* – a publication providing ongoing information about educational opportunities and services that support kinship foster caregivers.
- *Kinship Information Sessions (KIS)* – meetings provided in Phoenix and Tucson to kinship foster caregivers that inform them about the court system, resources, policies and foster care licensing.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Kinship foster caregivers are encouraged to apply for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Cash Assistance (CA) in order to receive financial assistance for children in their care.

Of the 7,159 children in kinship foster care on June 30, 2014, 1,405 or 20 percent² were CA recipients in 893 households, averaging 1.57 eligible children per household. This represents a 2 percent increase over SFY 2012.

In fiscal year 2014, the average monthly *household* TANF cash assistance payment was \$203.82, which is a \$0.16 decrease over last year's average monthly household Cash Assistance payment of \$203.98. An additional 292 children were members of eligible households but the children were determined *not eligible* for benefits. Of those children, 227 children or 78 percent were benefit-capped³. Benefit-capped children are not eligible for TANF cash assistance regardless of the household in which they reside. An additional 18 children or 6.2 percent were denied benefits due to their receipt of Social Security benefits. The remaining children were denied benefits for other reasons.

For fiscal year 2014, approximately 48 percent of TANF cash assistance households in the kinship foster care program were headed by grandparents, 22 percent by aunts or uncles, and 30 percent by other relatives. This compares to approximately 53 percent of TANF cash assistance households headed by grandparents, 24 percent by aunts or uncles, and 23 percent headed by other relatives in SFY 2013 and 55 percent for fiscal year 2012 headed by grandparents, 27 percent headed by aunts and uncles, and 18 percent by other relatives.

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

Financial assistance provided to kinship foster caregivers for the children in their care include foster care maintenance payments (for licensed kinship foster caregivers) and personal and clothing allowances (for both licensed and unlicensed relative caregivers).

For the 4,769 children placed in kinship foster care (unlicensed), the average monthly cost of foster care per child is \$45.60. This compares to an average monthly cost of family foster care (licensed kinship and licensed non-kinship) of \$656.58 per child. The average monthly cost of foster care for a child placed in a congregate care setting, such as a group home, is \$3,756.56 per child. These average monthly costs do not include expenditures related to DCS case management, child care, or other services provided to support the care of children in out-of-home placement.

Demographic Data about Children in Kinship Foster Care

As of June 30, 2014, there were 7,159 children in kinship foster care, which is 43 percent of the total out-of-home care population of 16,596 children. In SFY 2012, there were 4,826 children in kinship foster care, which was 36 percent of the total out-of-home population of 13,385 children.

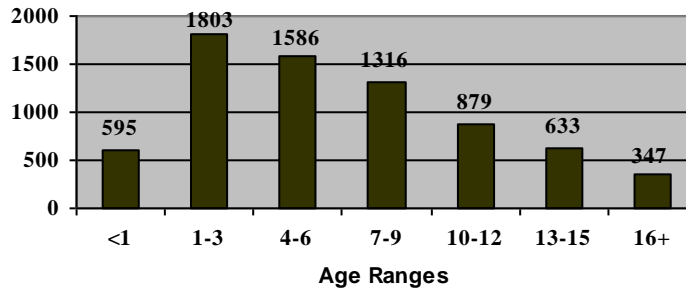
² Data sources are Arizona Technical Eligibility Computer System (AZTECS) and Children's Information Library and Data Source (CHILDS).

³ Benefit-capped children (Family Benefit Cap): There is no increase in cash assistance for the birth of additional children after the family begins to receive cash assistance, with some limited exceptions.

Arizona Kinship Foster Care Program Report
SFY 2014

The average age for children in kinship foster care was 6.9 years, a slight increase from the SFY 2012 average of 6.8 years. The number of children by age ranges is presented in Chart 1:

Chart 1
Age Ranges of Children in Kinship Care

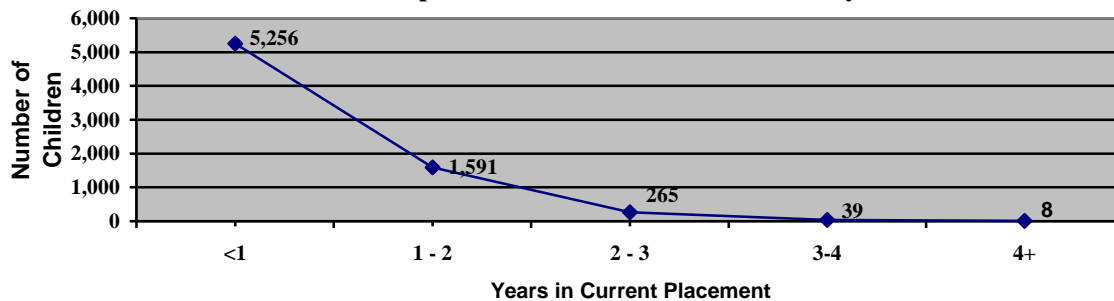


N = 7,159

The largest percentage of children in kinship foster care, 1,803 or 25 percent, are between ages one to three. Most children in kinship foster care, 73 percent, lived with their kinship foster caregiver for less than one year. This represents a five percent decrease over SFY 2012 data for this category.

Chart 2 displays time in placement by years:

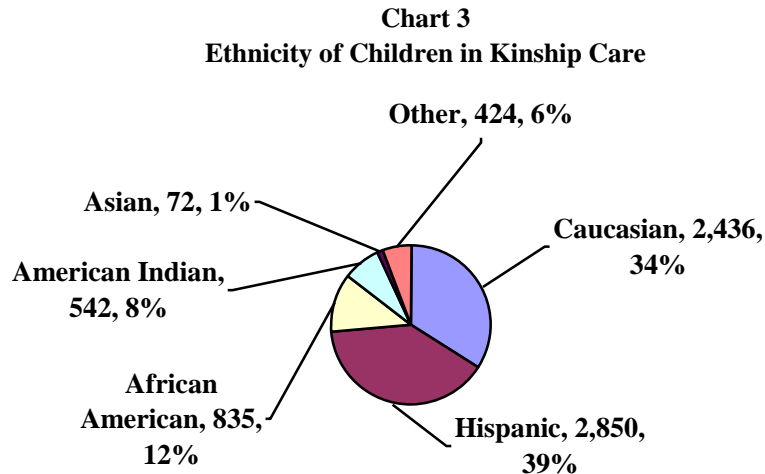
Chart 2
Kinship Care: Time in Current Placement by Years



N = 7,159

Children placed in kinship foster care spend 78 percent of their total time in out-of-home placement with their kinship foster care providers. This is a three percent decrease over SFY 2012 data. The average number of children residing in the same kinship caretaker home is 1.7 children.

The ethnicity of children in kinship foster care is displayed in Chart 3. The percentage of Hispanic children in kinship foster care decreased by two percent over SFY 2012 and the percentage of Caucasian children in kinship foster care decreased by two percent as compared to SFY 2012. The number of African American children in kinship foster care increased by nearly two percent.



N = 7,159

Approximately fifty percent of children in kinship foster care are female and fifty percent are male.

Demographic Data of Kinship Foster Caregivers

As of June 30, 2014, there were 4,144 kinship foster caregivers. This represents a 40 percent increase over the 2,951 kinship foster caregivers in SFY 2012. Kinship foster caregivers age 41 and older comprise 73 percent of all the kinship foster caregivers.

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

Chart 4
Kinship Caregivers' Ages

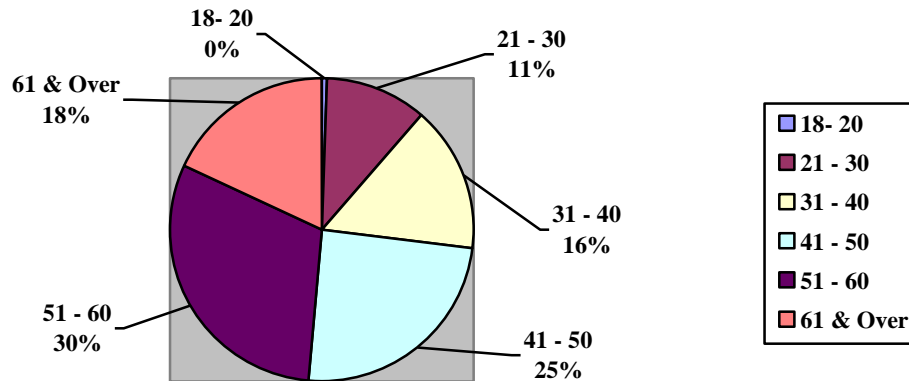
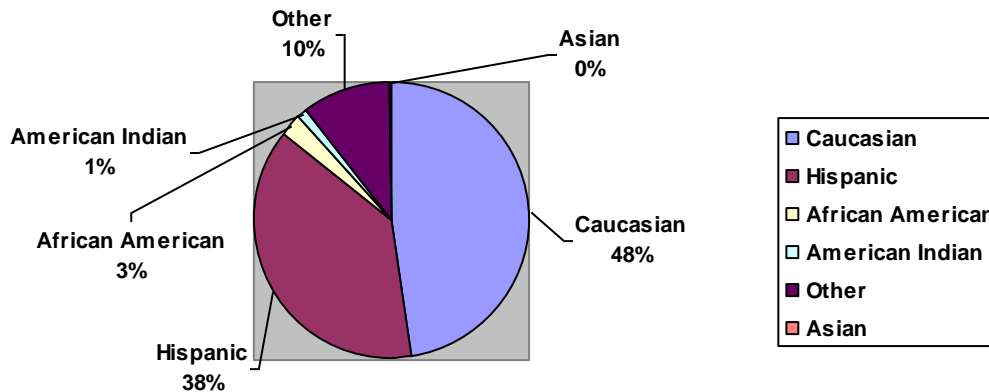


Chart 5 displays the ethnicity of kinship foster caregivers.

Chart 5
Ethnicity of Kinship Caregivers



Recommendations for Program Improvement and Report of Progress

The Department of Child Safety (DCS) values and supports our kinship foster caregivers. The Department has implemented or is in the process of implementing the following:

- Collaborating with Arizona State University to explore the development and provision of a training curriculum for kinship foster caregivers which is specific to their needs and

also exploring developing kinship training for newly hired DCS Specialists and DCS Supervisors.

- Providing kinship foster care families with appropriate and available resources in order to ensure that the child can be cared for in the kinship foster home and avoid more costly placements.
- DCS Specialists 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 DCS and the Office of Licensing and Regulation (OLR) will continue to review any non-safety foster home licensing standard that a kinship foster caregiver cannot meet and assess if waiving this non-safety licensing standard will enable the kinship foster caregiver to become licensed to provide foster care to a related child. This waiver provision is consistent with federal regulations for relatives requesting licensure.
- During this reporting period, DCS' Office of Licensure and Regulation and contracted licensing agencies have continued to utilize kinship waivers to support kinship foster caregivers in completing the foster home licensure process. A total of 268 waivers were granted during this period (this is a duplicated count as some kinship foster caregivers required more than one waiver).
- Kinship foster caregivers are included in the distribution of the *Arizona Statewide*, a newsletter to foster, adoptive, and now kinship parents. Since the issuance of the SFY 2012 Kinship Report, kinship foster caregivers have received the *Arizona Statewide*.
- DCS and the Department of Economic Security's Division of Benefits and Medical Eligibility will continue to advocate for a streamlined eligibility process for kinship caregivers applying for cash assistance for related children in their care.
- DCS Central Office staff will continue to visit a number of kinship homes to assess kinship caregiver needs and provide support. This is in addition to the monthly visits from DCS case managers. A total of 15 such visits occurred during this period.
- Kinship training was provided to new DCS Specialists. This consisted of 11 sessions which were each 90 minutes in length in Phoenix and Tucson.
- Beginning in January 2014, kinship training was also conducted with field staff in local DCS offices. A total of 196 DCS staff received this training.
- In January 2014, the Grandparent Stipend Program for eligible grandparents and great-grandparents that have children placed with them by DCS was initiated. By June 30, 2014, the Department retroactively provided the stipend payment to eligible grandparents and great-grandparents that were caring for their grandchildren as of July 1, 2013. The benefit is \$75 per month per child. This program is funded on an annual basis based upon legislative appropriation. During this period, 741 grandparents or great-

grandparents received this stipend to help them with the cost of providing 24/7 care to 1,336 children. A total of \$782,743 was expended during SFY 2014 through this program to support kinship foster caregivers and the children placed with them.

- DCS has strengthened our involvement with the Central Arizona Kinship Coalition so that community agencies can be better informed about the needs of kinship foster caregivers. DCS has been successful during this period of enjoining the home study contractor in Maricopa County to provide TANF Cash Assistance applications and information to the kinship foster caregivers they visit, the Kinship Information Session schedule, and the DCS kinship pamphlet. Furthermore, this contractor and the kinship-specific licensing units at two licensing agencies cooperated to distribute over 1,000 vouchers for shoes (provided by the faith community in Maricopa County) to kinship foster caregivers (grant staff in all four counties covered by the grant participated in this distribution also).
- DCS is continuing to identify, locate and engage family members by conducting relative searches. This includes the identification of maternal and paternal relatives through communication with the parents, guardians, the child, the child's tribe, relatives, previous foster parents, guardian ad litem and other professionals that have past or current experience with the family. The Department's Family Locate Unit is a great asset to locating family members for children in out-of-home placement.
- DCS is making diligent efforts to identify and notify all adult relatives of a child in out-of-home placement of the option to become a placement resource for the child within 30 days of the child's removal from their home.
- DCS is continuing to conduct searches for relatives prior to key decision points in the case and no less frequently than once every six months.
- DCS is utilizing Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings as a mechanism to identify prospective relative placements. Family members and others interested in the child's well-being are invited to attend the TDM meetings.

Federal Kinship Navigator Grant

During this reporting period, DCS collaborated with Arizona Children's Association in their receipt of a federal Kinship Navigator grant. This partnership greatly assisted kinship foster caregivers with the development and provision of Kinship Information Sessions in Phoenix. (Kinship Information Sessions had been provided for a number of years in Tucson through the KARE Center.)

DCS's Kinship Specialist worked with the subject matter experts to write the training curriculum for the Phoenix Kinship Information Sessions which began in January of 2014. During this period, 144 kinship foster caregivers attended one of nine sessions held in Phoenix and 73

kinship foster caregivers attended one of fourteen sessions held in Tucson. Written comments by some of the kinship foster caregivers who attended the sessions include:

- "My husband and I were completely lost regard procedures and so on. Things are a lot more clear, and now I feel we can move forward with the process. Thank you."
- "I wish I would have had this information 15 months ago. Thank you for doing this."

Kinship Navigator Grant staff mailed letters (flyers) about the Kinship Information Sessions to kinship foster caregivers who had children placed with them within the past 30 days by DCS. Grant staff followed-up with personal telephone phone calls for those families who had three or more children placed with them. Grant staff identified the location for the sessions and coordinated the registration. Snacks and free child care were also provided. DCS and representatives from the public assistance administration worked closely to trouble shoot cases where barriers arose as kinship foster caregivers were unable to expeditiously apply for TANF Cash Assistance for the children placed with them.

Conclusion

Kinship foster care accounts for 43 percent of the children in out-of-home care in Arizona. This increase (from 36 percent in 2012) continues to exceed the national average of 28 percent and is reflective of Arizona's commitment to prioritize kin as the first placement preference for children who require out-of-home placement. Along with this growth in utilization, there has been an accompanying growth in the supports available, such as the Kinship Information Sessions expanded to the Phoenix area and the Grandparent Stipend Program which is available to eligible kin state-wide. The Department will continue to expand efforts to support kinship foster placement through partnerships with local community agencies as well as other state agencies that provide support to kinship providers.