

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

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Janet Napolitano
Governor

Tracy L. Wareing
Director

NOV 1 2006

The Honorable Ken Bennett
President of the Senate
Arizona State Senate
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Dear President Bennett:

Pursuant to Laws 2005, Chapter 220, the Department of Economic Security (DES) submits the attached 2006 Kinship Foster Care Program Report.

We are pleased to report that on June 30, 2006, 33 percent of the children in out-of-home care were placed with kinship caregivers, most with grandparents. This represents a 2.3 percent increase over 2005. During State Fiscal Year 2006, 2,044 children left kinship status. Of the children that left, 94.3 percent achieved permanency through return to their parents, permanent guardianship or adoption by their kinship caregivers.

This report includes recommendations for program improvements including increasing the number of children placed with kinship caregivers by using family engagement models to identify potential relative placements before a child comes into the care of Child Protective Services (CPS), and finding ways to increase support for all kinship foster caregivers.

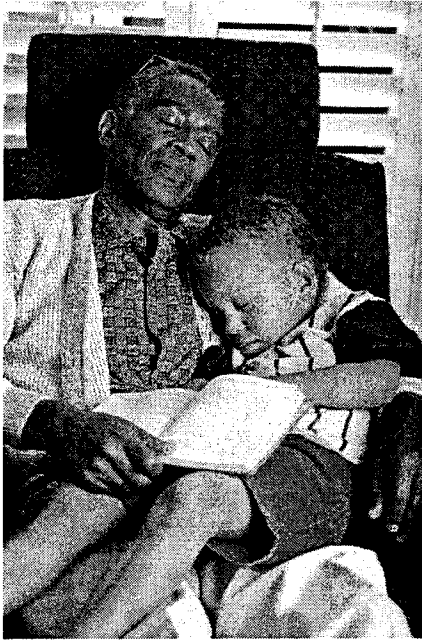
If you have any questions, please contact me at (602) 542-5757.

Sincerely,

Tracy L. Wareing
Director

Attachment

cc: Governor Janet Napolitano
Speaker James P. Weiers, Arizona State House of Representatives



The Arizona Kinship Foster Care 2006 Program Report



The Arizona Department of Economic Security
Division of Children, Youth and Families

Kinship Foster Care

Laws 2005, Chapter 220, requires the Department of Economic Security (Department) to submit annually on or before November 1, a report regarding the kinship foster care program, including demographic information, the type of services provided to kinship caregivers and recommendations for program improvement. This report is submitted in satisfaction of that requirement.

For generations, extended families have played significant roles in the rearing of children when parents, for various reasons, can not. Kinship caregivers provide love and nurturance in a familiar setting, provide parents with a sense of hope that children will remain connected to their families, enable children to live with people they know and trust, reinforce a child's sense of cultural identity and positive self-esteem, help a child make and sustain extended family connections, continue lifelong family traditions and memories, support the child in building healthy relationships within the family, support the child's need for safety and well-being, and create a sense of stability in the life of a child.

Arizona Kinship Foster Care Program Description

The Kinship Foster Care Program prioritizes relatives as the first placement preference for children in Child Protective Services (CPS) custody who require out-of-home care. There are two forms of Kinship Foster Care:

Licensed Kinship Foster Care: when a child is placed with a relative who becomes licensed as a foster care provider. As of June 30, 2006, there were 93 caregivers licensed as foster parents, caring for 180 children.

Unlicensed Kinship Foster Care: when a child is placed with a relative and the relative is not licensed as a foster care provider. As of June 30, 2006, there were 1,940 unlicensed kinship caregivers providing homes for 3,089 children.

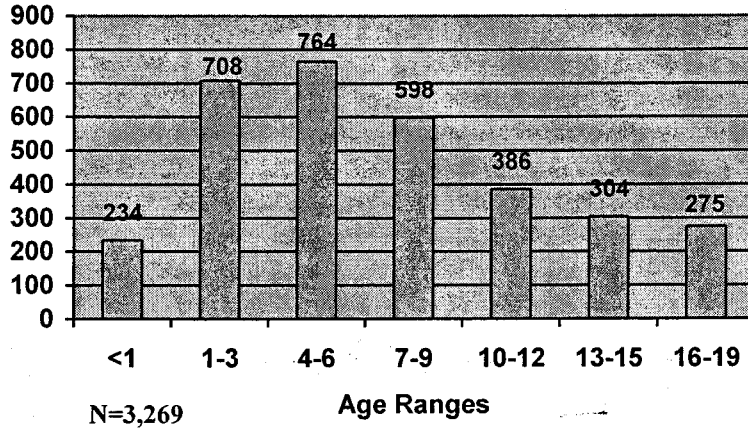
Demographic Data about Children in Kinship Foster Care

As of June 30, 2006, there were 3,269 or 33 percent of children placed in kinship foster care, compared to a total out-of-home care population of 9,978 children. Of the 3,269 children, 773 were placed with siblings.

The average age for children in kinship foster care was 6.8 years. The number of children by age ranges is presented in Chart 1:

Chart 1

Age Ranges of Children in Kinship Care

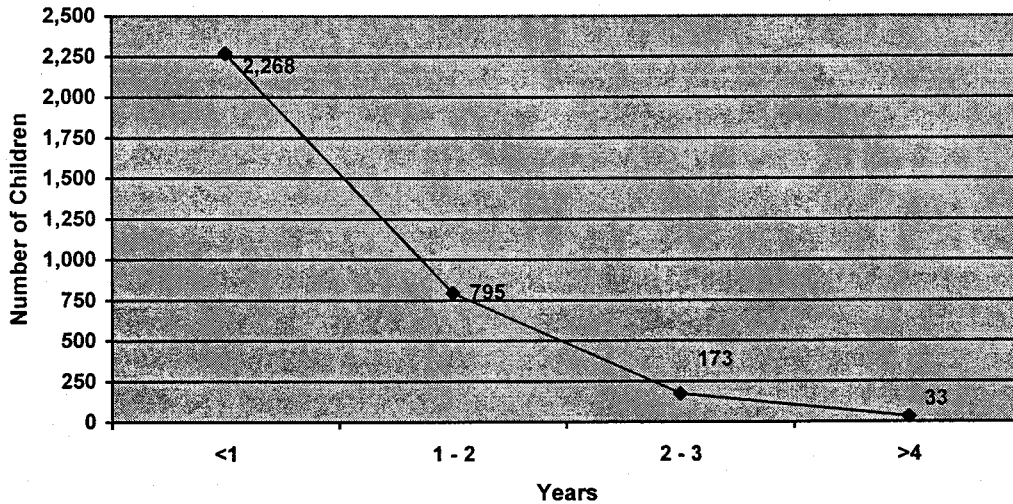


The largest percentage of children, 2,070 or 63.3 percent, fall within the one to nine year old age range. The largest increase from last year was experienced in young children under age one, from 74 to 234, an increase of 160 children or 216 percent.

Many children, 2,268 or 69.4 percent, lived with their kinship foster caregivers for less than a year, followed by 795 children or 24.3 percent, who lived with their kinship caregiver from one to two years. Chart 2 displays length of time in placement by years.

Chart 2

Kinship Care: Time in Current Placement by Years

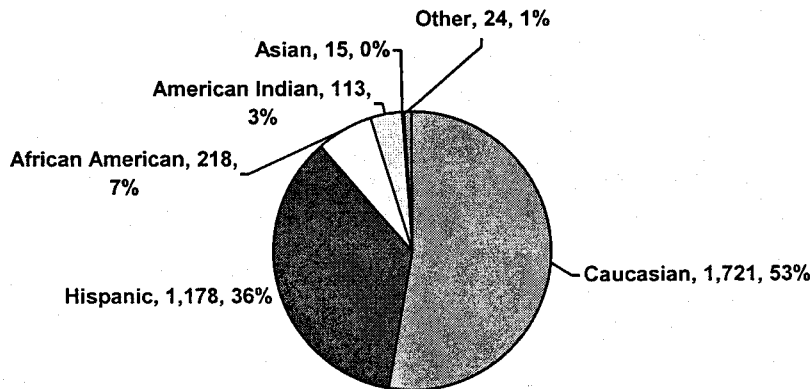


Forty-seven percent of children are placed with kinship caregivers at the time of removal from their homes and an additional 15 percent are placed within 30 days of removal. Children placed in kinship care spend 72 percent of their out-of-home placement experience with their kinship care providers. The average number of children residing in the same kinship caretaker home is 1.6 children.

As displayed in Chart 3, the majority of children in kinship care are Caucasian (53 percent); followed by Hispanic (36 percent) and African American (7 percent). Compared to last year, this reflects a 12 percent increase in Caucasian children in kinship foster care, a decrease of 4 percent in Hispanic children, and a 3 percent decrease in African American children.

Chart 3

Ethnicity of Children in Kinship Care



Almost 76 percent of the children reside with their kinship foster caregivers in urban areas (51 percent in Maricopa County and 25 percent in Pima County). The remaining children, 24 percent, reside in rural areas.

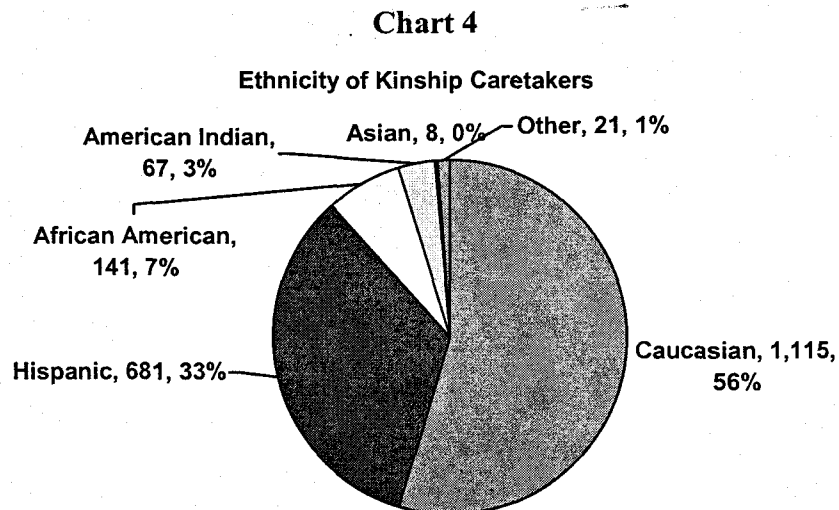
During state fiscal year 2006, 2,044 children left kinship foster care status, an increase of 455 children or 28.6 percent from the prior year. Of the 2,044 children exiting care, 94.3 percent or 1,928 achieved permanency. Of those children achieving permanency, 676 or 35.1 percent were reunited with their parents, 733 or 38 percent achieved permanent guardianship, and 519 or 26.9 percent were adopted.

Demographic Data of Kinship Foster Caregivers

As of June 30, 2006, there were 2,033 kinship foster caregivers. The majority of these kinship foster caregivers were grandparents or great grandparents (54 percent) or aunts and uncles (21 percent). The remaining 25 percent were other specified relatives. The percent of kinship caregivers that are grandparents increased by 10 percent and by 7 percent for aunts and uncles, as compared to last year.

About 51 percent of the kinship foster caregivers are married and 40 percent are single, widowed or divorced. The marital status of the remaining 9 percent was not indicated in the automated case management system.

The majority of these kinship foster caregivers, 56 percent, are Caucasian, followed by 33 percent Hispanic and 7 percent African American (Chart 4).



Services Available to Kinship Foster Caregivers

A variety of services are available to kinship foster caregivers and the children for whom they care. These include:

- Case Management Services that include regular contact with the kinship caregiver to assess and identify problems and develop solutions;
- Health care coverage through Title XIX (Medicaid) and/or the Division of Children, Youth and Families' Comprehensive Medical and Dental Program;
- Parent Aide Services provided through contracted and state employed parent aides who offer training in "family life skills," provide transportation and supervise visitation with birth parents and their children;
- Parent Skills Training to enhance parenting knowledge and skills;
- Referral to mental health and other supportive intervention services;

- Transportation Services to access medical and other services for a child;
- Childcare;
- Referrals to interdepartmental programs such as the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation, Job Service Programs, and community resources; and
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) child-only cash assistance benefits for children in their care. Of the 3,269 children in kinship foster care on June 30, 2006, 1,456 or 44.5 percent were TANF recipients in 835 households with an average monthly cash assistance benefit of \$254.30.

Costs of Services

Examples of 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 the children.

The average monthly cost of foster care maintenance reimbursement was \$665.28 for a child age 0-11 and \$734.03 for a child age 12 and over. The estimated monthly foster care maintenance reimbursement cost is \$715.14 per child, resulting in a monthly expenditure of about \$128,725 to serve the 180 children placed in kinship foster care. If the currently unlicensed kinship caregivers were licensed as foster parents caring for the 3,089 children in their homes, the estimated monthly foster care expenditure to serve this population would be about \$2,209,067.

Both licensed and unlicensed kinship caregivers receive personal and clothing allowances for each child in their care, at a monthly average of \$80 for a child under age one, \$45 for a child age 1-2, \$19 for a child age 3-5, \$34 for a child age 6-11, and \$53 for a child ages 12 and older. Other financial assistance includes emergency clothing allowances, funding for summer camp and graduation expenses, and housing assistance.

Other costs of services include case management, child care, and other services provided to support kinship foster caregivers in providing for children in their homes.

Kinship foster caregivers are also eligible to apply for financial assistance for the children in their care when the children achieve permanency through either legal guardianship or adoption.

Subsidized Guardianship

Many kinship foster caregivers obtain legal guardianship for the children in their care and receive subsidized guardianship payments. During state fiscal year 2006, 706 children achieved permanency through guardianship. The majority, 85 percent, of the relative guardians are grandparents. Most of the relative guardians receive TANF cash assistance for children in their care plus an average monthly subsidized guardianship payment of about \$293 per child.

Subsidized Adoption

Many kinship foster caregivers adopt the children in their care and receive an adoption subsidy. During state fiscal year 2006, 500 children were adopted by their relatives. Most relatives receive an average monthly adoption subsidy maintenance payment of about \$573 per child.

Evaluation of the Kinship Foster Care Program

Evaluation activities related to the kinship foster care program have occurred through both surveys of kinship caregivers and through case record review. In this manner, information captured reflects both the perceptions and needs of kinship caregivers, and also reveals a measure of the effectiveness of the agency in identifying, engaging, and providing services to kinship foster caregivers.

Casey Family Programs “Breakthrough Series Collaborative” on Supporting Kinship Care

Arizona was selected in November 2004 by Casey Family Programs to participate in the “Breakthrough Series Collaborative” on Supporting Kinship Care. The Department selected District II (Pima County) as the pilot site for this initiative, and from there, the initiative has begun to spread throughout Arizona.

The goals for this initiative include: (1) exploring family relationships with kin as a resource to help meet the needs of children and families; (2) supporting permanency; (3) supporting connections between children and their kin; (4) implementing kin-competent services; (5) collaborating with community partners; and (6) training child welfare staff in the specific skills and competencies required to effectively work with children and their kin.

Over the past 12 months, the Division began to spread the learnings from the pilot, including effective practices and training. District III (See District Chart below) was the first District identified to expand the best practices. District III held regular meetings with their pilot site team, including kinship caregivers, and implemented procedures to provide kinship caregivers with information regarding services and opportunities for emotional support. A kinship foster caregiver survey will be given to kinship foster caregivers throughout the entire district prior to December 2006. Results will then be made available to further inform improvement efforts. Initial meetings for expansion occurred in Districts V and VI, and implementation teams are in the process of development. By the end of calendar year 2007, the Division will implement kinship care support initiatives in the remaining two districts.

The following chart provides the counties within each Division of Children, Youth and Families District.

District Chart

District I	District II	District III	District IV	District V	District VI
Maricopa	Pima	Coconino	Yuma	Gila	Cochise
		Apache	Mohave	Pinal	Graham
		Navajo	La Paz		Greenlee
		Yavapai			Santa Cruz

Case Record Reviews

Each of Arizona's six districts participates in an annual review of randomly selected cases, using an instrument based closely on the federal Child and Family Services On-Site Review Instrument (CFSR). One hundred ten cases of children in out-of-home care were reviewed, including 15 in Arizona's four smallest districts; 30 in District I and 20 in District II. The cases were reviewed in a variety of areas that reflect a child's permanency, safety, or well-being; this includes inquiry into the subject of kinship placements.

Kinship care questions covered in this review include:

- Is the child currently placed with relatives, or was the child placed with relatives just prior to reunification or discharge from out-of-home care to another permanency outcome? If no, state the reason.
- Upon the child's most recent entry into out-of-home care and throughout the child's current removal episode, did the agency determine that the child's needs required residential treatment services, detention, or incarceration and that a relative placement would be inappropriate?
- For children not placed with relatives, were all relatives whose identity was known considered for placement of the child?
- Were both maternal and paternal relatives identified and considered as placement resources?
- Describe the efforts made to identify, locate and consider relatives (include the relationship to the child, date of contact, reason for lack of contact, reason child not placed, and source/location of information).

Based upon the review, kinship care for a specific child is rated as a strength, an area needing improvement, or not applicable. Case review data indicated that the majority of cases reviewed for kinship care were rated a strength (94 cases). Only 11 cases reviewed indicated a need for improvement in kinship care. Deficits identified in the statewide review were most prevalent in the review area requiring the inclusion of both maternal and paternal relatives in consideration as placement resources. Strategies and policies are being developed to improve practice in this area. It should be noted that in District II, where the original Casey Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Supporting Kinship Care

was initiated, the review identified no need for improvement in the kinship areas assessed by this instrument.

Supporting kinship care is extremely important. In addition to being good for children, these kinship foster caregivers also contribute to the capacity of the Department to serve children needing care and protection. Kinship foster caregivers should be respected as important team members and involved in case decisions. Through the Casey Breakthrough Series Collaborative and other efforts, Arizona is improving services and supports for kinship caregivers and the children for whom they provide care.

Recommendations for Program Improvements

During state fiscal year 2007, the Division will:

- Increase the placement of children with kinship foster caregivers through early identification of potential kinship placements and through use of Team Decision-Making and Family Group Decision Making processes. These decision-making processes are used to bring family members, CPS staff, service delivery professionals, community members and others together to assist the family in determining what plan of action is in the best interests of their children. Team Decision-Making focuses on placement decisions and Family Group Decision Making most often focuses on achieving a permanent plan for a child.
- Increase the number of kinship foster caregiver households who receive TANF through increased training of Department staff, improved integration of services across Department divisions, and increased efforts to inform and educate kinship caregivers.
- Increase CPS staff understanding of and appreciation for the difficult role of kinship foster caregivers through increased training of CPS staff that includes kinship foster caregivers as trainers and presenters.
- Increase kinship foster caregivers' understanding of the system, courts and permanency planning through training, written information, and discussions with other kinship caregivers.
- Identify barriers to foster home licensing of kinship foster caregivers and explore options to resolve identified barriers.
- Explore the feasibility of providing respite services for kinship foster caregivers.
- Continue the expansion of the Casey Breakthrough Series on Supporting Kinship Care throughout Arizona.
- Improve reporting through review and revision of system generated reports, including improving data collection and data entry.