



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

Relative and Other Designated Caregiver Placement Program Report

September 2019

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Introduction

Pursuant to Texas Family Code 264.762 added by House Bill 4 (85th Texas Legislative Regular Session), the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) shall, not later than September 1 of each year, publish a report on the Relative and Other Designated Caregiver Program.

The report must include data on permanency outcomes for children placed with relative or other designated caregivers, including:

- The number of disruptions in a relative or other designated caregiver placement;
- The reasons for any disruptions in a relative or other designated caregiver placement; and
- The length of time before a relative or other designated caregiver who receives monetary assistance from the department under this subchapter obtains permanent managing conservatorship of a child.

Background

Kinship care is the term used to describe care provided to a child in DFPS conservatorship by relatives or fictive kin who live outside of the child's home.

The Relative and Other Designated Caregiver (RODC) Program supports continuity and stability for children in the conservatorship of DFPS, by providing financial assistance to eligible kinship caregivers. Prior to September 1, 2017, the RODC Program provided an initial, one-time cash payment, or Integration Payment, of \$1,000 for the first child and \$495 for each additional child in a sibling group, to defray the costs incurred for essential child care items at the time of placement. Eligible caregivers were also able to receive an Annual Reimbursement of \$500 per year, per child, to be paid on the anniversary date of placement.

As a result of the passage of House Bill 4 (85th Texas Regular Legislative Session), there were changes to the RODC Program. The changes included replacing the Integration Payment and Annual Reimbursement with a monthly reimbursement payment. Currently, the rate is \$11.55 per day, per eligible child, and is paid to the kinship family monthly. Monthly reimbursement payments are time-limited and may be paid for up to twelve (12) months. However, if DFPS determines there is good cause for an exception, payments may be made for up to an additional six (6) months.

Good cause exceptions listed in the Texas Administrative Code Rule §700.1007 include:

- The identification, release, or location of a previously absent parent of the child.
- Awaiting the expiration of the timeline for an appeal of an order in a suit affecting the parent-child relationship.
- Allowing additional time for the caregiver to complete the approval process for adoption of the child.
- Waiting for approval of a child's placement from another state.
- A delayed determination of the child's Indian Child status, or awaiting the approval of the Indian Child's Tribe.
- Any other circumstance surrounding the child or the caregiver that DFPS deems to necessitate the extension.

An annual reimbursement of up to \$500 per year, per child for child-related expenses for up to 3 years or until the child turns 18, whichever occurs first may be provided if DFPS transfers conservatorship of the child to the kinship caregiver, and the caregiver does not receive Permanency Care Assistance.

Analysis of Data

The data in this report represents state fiscal year 2019 (FYTD 19) year to date through April 2019. In FYTD 19, ⁱ 45 percent of children (12,527 total childrenⁱⁱ) were placed with relatives or kin,ⁱⁱⁱ a slight decrease from 46 percent (13,750 total children) for the same period of time in state fiscal year 2018. However, this number is higher than the rate of children placed with relatives or kin prior to the implementation of HB 4.^{iv} The most recently available national data (FY 2017) indicates that the national average for relative placement is 32 percent.^v

Benefits to Kinship Caregivers

In spring 2019 qualitative feedback about kinship caregivers' experiences with financial support was solicited from caseworkers. Caseworkers and caregivers felt strongly that financial support enabled caregivers to provide better care for youth, thereby improving youths' quality of life:^{vi}

"A caregiver is caring for three children, one is a burn victim. The caregiver quit her job to care for the children and regularly travels to Galveston for her nephew to receive treatment services. The caregiver qualified for kinship funds which has helped to offset the cost of a one parent income home while she also works towards the Fostering Connections program. With the kinship assistance, she has been able to not only meet the children's basic needs but purchase items to accommodate them and make them feel more comfortable in the home."

"When a caregiver, who was 70 years old, received a call from CPS regarding her 4 nieces and nephew asking if she would be willing to consider having the children placed in her home she didn't hesitate. The caregiver is retired and receives \$957

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monthly from social security. Prior to the children being placed in her home, she was able to supplement her income by working a few hours a week. However, after the children were placed in her home, she had to quit her part-time job, leaving the family of 5 with an income of less than \$12,000 per year. Because the caregiver receives Kinship Reimbursement payments, she has been able to continue caring for the children and ensuring their needs are met. In addition, the siblings have been able to remain together, with family who are willing to care for them until they reach adulthood."

"Two children, a 1 year old girl and 4 year old boy, were placed with paternal grandparents. This placement was the best placement for the children because they were able to stay in a familiar home and stay together. The children continued to participate in family gatherings and were able to continue to see their cousins, aunts, and uncles. The grandparents wouldn't have been able to financially support the children's expenses without daycare assistance and kinship funds, even when the grandparents were employed. The paternal grandparents observed parent child visits in their home. Throughout the process the caregivers kept encouraging the children's mother to continue working on her services. Once the department approved for the children to return home with their mother the grandparents continued to help by babysitting the children on the weekends while the mother worked."

In addition, there is qualitative evidence that financial support removed barriers to kinship caregivers who wished to become verified or adopt youth:

"The monthly kinship reimbursement has assisted the caregiver in managing her three younger sibling's basic needs. This young relative could not have managed such a heavy burden on her own. With the financial assistance the caregiver was able to rent a larger apartment and purchase a reliable used vehicle to transport the children to their appointments. This determined relative also took action in completing the Fostering Connection program as the agency was not recommending the children return to their mother. The kinship reimbursement helped the caregiver complete fostering connection requirements such as FBI fingerprint check, CPR and 1st Aid and TB test. The success of this family was obtained through the assistance of the monthly kinship reimbursement."

"I have a caregiver that is caring for his grandson. His income was retirement and what he made driving for Uber. He agreed to care for his grandson thinking the situation would be temporary. As time went by it became more apparent that his grandson would need to stay longer than expected or even permanently. The caregiver did not hesitate to lease a larger apartment so that he could complete all requirements to become a Licensed Foster home for his grandson."

The Number of Disruptions in Kinship Homes

The rate of disruptions is determined by the total number of non-foster kinship placements which ended in FYTD 19 and, of those, the number where the child's next placement was in some type of non-kinship foster care.^{vii} In FYTD 19, there were 7.5% (1,681) disruptions. This number is slightly lower than the 8.0% (1,991) disruptions that occurred in FYTD 18.^{viii}

The Reasons for Disruptions

Disruptions reasons data was obtained for all children placed in a kinship home who had a subsequent move into a non-kinship paid foster care living arrangement. The most common reason caseworkers identified for a disruption in a kinship home was the child's behavior.^{ix}

The qualitative data collected across the state indicates that the kinship reimbursement payments has reduced stress and offered financial relief for many kinship caregivers. Relieving caregivers of their financial stress enables them to focus more attention on meeting the emotional and behavioral needs of the children they are caring for. This reduction in stress may be contributing to the slight decrease in kinship disruptions seen in FYTD 19.

The Length of Time to Obtain Permanent Managing Conservatorship

The average time it takes for a relative to be awarded Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC)^x of a child in FYTD 19 for caregivers who received a payment under HB 4 was 12 months, a decrease from 14 months in FYTD 18.^{xi}

Conclusion

The new payment program started September 1, 2017. Data analyzed in FYTD 19 represents the first full year of available data. Analysis of the permanency outcomes highlights encouraging initial trends: qualitative data on kinship caregivers' ability to increase quality of life for youth in their care, increased placements with kinship compared to the FY prior to implementation of payments, and a decrease in the number of placement disruptions.

ⁱ Unless otherwise noted, all reference to FY 18 refer to the time period of September 1, 2018, through April 30, 2019.

ⁱⁱ DFPS data warehouse report SA_09. Based on children in substitute care on April 30, 2019.

ⁱⁱⁱ This includes both those in kinship foster care and non-foster care kinship placements.

^{iv} DFPS data warehouse report Executive Dashboard. Based on children in substitute care on April 30, 2019.

^v <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/foster.pdf>

^{vi} Quotes came directly from field staff but some content was modified for purposes of brevity and flow.

^{vii} A move from one relative placement to another relative placement does not count as a disruption.

^{viii} DFPS Management and Reporting Statistics report d93951

^{ix} DFPS Management and Reporting Statistics report d93951

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^x Unless otherwise noted, relative PMC means a relative or kin obtained PMC but did not exit under the Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) program.

^{xi} DFPS Management and Reporting Statistics report d94261