



Strengthening New York’s Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program to Better Support Permanency for More Young People in Foster Care

The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program (KinGAP) provides an avenue out of foster care, and into permanency, for children who are in foster care with kin -- a relative or someone who plays the role of a relative in their life (godparent, close family friend etc). Children and their caregivers are eligible for KinGAP when neither returning to their parents nor adoption are an appropriate option.

Why is permanency so important?

Foster care is intended to be a temporary solution when children are unable to remain safely in their home. And when children enter care, the first goal is to facilitate a safe and successful return to their family. However, in the instances when return to family is not possible, the goal is to find children a safe, supportive and loving permanent home. All children thrive with the stability of supportive and caring adults in their lives.

How is KinGAP different from adoption?

KinGAP allows a relative or close family friend like a godparent to permanently welcome a child into their family, without assuming the title of parent. A grandparent, for example, may wish to care for a grandchild while still being “grandma.” Because parental rights do not need to be terminated in order for KinGAP to be finalized, existing familial ties can remain.

In other ways, however, KinGAP is similar to adoption. It is an avenue for children to leave foster care and find stability and permanency. It provides a stipend - roughly equivalent to the adoption subsidy - to caregivers to provide some financial support for the unplanned task of raising a relative’s child.

Nuts & bolts of KinGAP:

- KinGAP is a national program, and is available in every county across New York State
- In 2017, New York State expanded KinGAP to ensure that siblings stay together and so that “fictive kin” such as godparents and close family friends would be eligible as well.
- Families receive a stipend that is roughly equivalent to the reimbursement they received as a foster parent. This subsidy helps kin continue to provide for children in their care.

What needs to change?

KinGAP is currently funded as if it were foster care, instead of in a manner that reflects its purpose as a permanency option akin to the adoption subsidy. The funding for KinGAP is drawn from the Foster Care Block Grant, the funding source for foster care placements across

NYS. KinGAP is not a form of foster care, but is, rather, a permanency arrangement and should be funded in a way that reflects this. The state's adoption subsidy, for example, is funded through open-ended reimbursement, which encourages counties to pursue permanency through adoption for children whenever appropriate.

The current funding mechanism for KinGAP, however, discourages its use in many counties as it is seen as detracting resources that are needed to provide foster care services.

To address this, New York State should fund KinGAP like the permanency arrangement that it is: in an open-ended funding line outside of the Foster Care Block Grant. This new funding line should not reduce funding for the Foster Care Block Grant.

Greater use of KinGAP would save the State money across multiple systems

- In court costs & legal representation (paid for by the State): the termination of parental rights (TPR), which is associated with adoption and is not used for KinGAP, is a lengthy process, involving significant court and administration time by court staff. The process involves petitions, trials and, often, appeals. By increasing the number of KinGAP arrangements - when appropriate - statewide, NY would stand to see significant savings in terms of court costs.
- In Medicaid costs: long, drawn-out stays in foster care, without the security and stability of a permanent home, can lead to an increased need for mental health services for children.
- In longer-term outcomes: Permanency is linked to better long-term outcomes for children in foster care, including improved mental and physical health, as well as housing and employment stability. By enabling more young people to find permanency, the state can save on long-term costs related to public benefits.