



Shared Prosperity, Thriving Ohioans

Kinship Family Security: State Budget Review

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Policy Matters Ohio priorities: *State lawmakers should provide children placed with kinship care the same level of financial support as children placed with foster care providers. Lawmakers should also provide more support to kinship families outside the child welfare system by providing kinship families \$600 a month through the Ohio Works First – child only program.¹*

Outcome: *Lawmakers did not provide the resources necessary to ensure equity of financial support for children placed with kin and children placed in a foster care setting. Lawmakers did not provide any additional support to kinship families outside the child welfare system.*

All children, no matter their family situation, need security and stability to flourish and thrive. When children are separated from their biological parents – even for their own well-being – they often experience trauma and need to be supported in a caring, nurturing home.

In Ohio, about 124,000 children live with relatives or trusted family friends, known as kinship caregivers.¹ Although the vast majority of children living in kinship families are not involved in the child welfare system, the county public children service agencies depend on kin to care for many children who have been abused or neglected. As of July 2021, 3,872 children were placed in a kinship care setting by a county children service agency.²

When a court rules to remove a child from their biological parent(s), the county agency prioritizes placing the child with a grandparent, other relative, or close family friend, because it's important for children to be connected to someone they know and trust after they've experienced family separation. Kinship care offers some stability and allows the child to maintain their identity, sense of belonging and familial culture.³ Research suggests that in most circumstances, children who are placed with kin have fewer placement changes, are better able to adjust to a new living environment and are less likely to experience behavioral challenges at school compared to children placed in a non-relative foster care setting.⁴

¹ Petrik, Will, "Budget Bite: Security for children & kinship families," Policy Matters Ohio, May 13, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3A8wixL>. "Ohio Kinship and Adoption Navigator Program: Subcommittee Updates," presentation, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Kinnect, May 2019, <https://bit.ly/36sSTZi>

² Ohio's Interactive Children Services Dashboard, Point in Time Count of Children in Care, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, filtered by month, July 2021, <https://bit.ly/2GKnaB8>

³ Blaine, Nicholas J., Sherrock, Ryan, "Greenbook: LBO Analysis of Enacted Budget, Department of Job and Family Services," Kinship Care, Ohio Legislative Service Commission, August 2021, <https://bit.ly/2VnwGdD>

⁴ "Stepping up for Kids: What Governments and Communities Should do to Support Kinship Families," Annie E. Casey Foundation, January 2012, <https://bit.ly/3ndvqXv>

State lawmakers haven't prioritized kinship families

The state of Ohio provides far more financial support to children placed with licensed foster care providers than for children placed with kin. A 2017 federal court ruling was supposed to change this for children placed in the custody of a county child welfare agency. The D.O. v. Glisson case ruled that children placed with approved kinship caregivers deserve the same level of financial support as children placed with licensed foster care providers.⁵ In November 2020, after years of inaction by state lawmakers, advocates filed a lawsuit to compel Ohio to comply with the ruling.⁶

State lawmakers responded by creating the Kinship Support Program as an amendment to Senate Bill 310. Gov. DeWine signed the legislation and an executive order at the end of 2020 to launch the Kinship Support Program in 2021.⁷ But the new program remains unfair and inequitable for children and kinship caregivers. The table below outlines how kids placed with kin continue to get less public financial support compared to kids placed in licensed foster care settings.

Kids placed with kin get less public financial support than kids placed in foster care

Monthly public financial support for children comparison

Number of Children	County	support for kin from Kinship Support Program	minimum support for licensed foster care provider	maximum support for licensed foster care provider
1	Cuyahoga	\$310	\$624	\$2,619
2	Cuyahoga	\$620	\$1,248	\$5,238
1	Scioto	\$310	\$836	\$4,258
2	Scioto	\$620	\$1,672	\$8,516

Source: Minimum and maximum monthly support for licensed foster care providers are estimates based on SFY 2020 foster care per diem rates, from Bret Crow, Office of Communications, ODJFS, <https://bit.ly/3wDWSi7>. Monthly support under the Kinship Support Program is based on a \$10.20 per diem rate, Kinship Support Program (KSP) Frequently Asked Questions, Updated 8/4/2021, ODJFS, <https://bit.ly/30epu65>.

The Kinship Support Program provides kinship caregivers with \$10.20 per child per day, or roughly \$310 per month per child. On the other hand, the minimum financial support for a licensed foster care provider caring for one child in Scioto County is \$836 a month and the maximum is over \$4,200 a month.

Kin caregivers nurture and support children in their care the same way non-relative foster parents do but with fewer resources, less training, more stress, and limited preparation. The lack of support means that many kinship caregivers, often grandparents on a fixed income, struggle to pay for basic needs of the child in their care.

What's in the state budget for kinship families?

State lawmakers failed to allocate the necessary resources to provide children and kinship families the basic security and stability they deserve. Lawmakers funded the Kinship Support Program at \$64.5 million over two years in the state budget through General Revenue Funds

⁵ "D.O. v. Glisson, No. 16-6561 (6th Cir. 2017)," JUSTIA US Law, <https://bit.ly/3lu4JZ8>

⁶ Welsh-Huggins, Andrew, "Ohio sued over lower payments to relatives caring for kids," AP News, November 19, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3kWQVzq>

⁷ "Governor DeWine Signs Executive Order," Mike DeWine, Governor of Ohio, News Releases, December 30, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3hap8Ta>

(GRF).⁸ However, the program is time-limited and provides far less financial support than foster care providers receive.

Lawmakers maintained support for the Kinship Care Navigator Program (\$8.5 million per year) and the Kinship Permanency Incentive Program (\$1 million per year). The navigator program connects kinship caregivers with resources and available services in the community. The Kinship Permanency Incentive Program helps kin who commit to permanently care for a child with resources to defray the costs of the initial placement.

The governor proposed totally cutting the Kinship Caregiver Program which helps kin pay for short-term child care support and one-time stabilization expenses, such as cribs or beds for children. The General Assembly partially restored funding for the Kinship Caregiver Program in the final budget to \$10 million per year through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Ultimately, this was a cut from \$15 million per year in the previous two-year budget.

Lawmakers included language in the budget that directs state officials to seek federal kinship guardianship assistance to assist relative caregivers who become legal guardians. The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program is scheduled to take effect in the state fiscal year 2023. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) estimates it could spend \$5 million, with spending matched with Title IV-E federal funds.⁹

Finally, state lawmakers did nothing to provide additional support to the over 124,000 children living in kinship families outside of the child welfare system. In August 2021, 71,503 children participated in Ohio Works First child-only, the cash assistance program in Ohio, receiving an average of \$218 a month, far less financial support than kids placed in a licensed foster care setting.¹⁰ Ohio has an estimated surplus of over \$620 million in SFY 2020 in the TANF program, which was intended to provide security for children from families with very low incomes.¹¹ While Policy Matters Ohio advocated to increase the child-only payment to \$600 a month per child, state lawmakers didn't do anything to address this issue.

All families deserve stability and security

Ohio policymakers must do much more to support children and the friends or family members caring for them after experiencing the trauma of being removed from their family of origin. State lawmakers must comply with the Glisson lawsuit by providing the same level of financial support for children placed with approved relative caregivers as children placed with foster parents.

Lawmakers must also do more to prioritize financial stability and security for all kinship families, since the Glisson decision only applies to children involved in the child welfare system. State lawmakers must consult with kinship families inside and outside the system in future reform efforts.

⁸ Email from Scott Britton, Assistant Director of Public Children Services Association of Ohio, regarding the Family and Children Services line item (600523) within the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

⁹ Blaine, Nicholas J., Sherron, Ryan, "Greenbook: LBO Analysis of Enacted Budget, Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)," Kinship Care, Ohio Legislative Service Commission, August 2021, <https://bit.ly/2VnwGdD>

¹⁰ "Caseload Summary Statistics Report - August 2021," ODJFS, accessed on November 1, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3w3MHTZ>

¹¹ "Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program Services Framework for SFY 2022-2023, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, updated on February 18, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3pSrMSJ>