



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

**Relative and Other Designated Caregiver
Placement Program Report
Fiscal Year 2023**

September 2023

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Introduction

Pursuant to Family Code, Chapter 264, Section 762 added by House Bill (H.B.) 4, 85th Legislative, Regular Session, 2017, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) must publish a report on the Relative and Other Designated Caregiver Program (RODC) not later than September 1 of each year.

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

- Number of disruptions in a relative or other designated caregiver placement;
- Reasons for any disruptions in a relative or other designated caregiver placement; and
- Length of time before a relative or other designated caregiver who receives monetary assistance from the department under this subchapter obtains permanent managing conservatorship (PMC) 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 RODC Program supports continuity and stability for children in DFPS conservatorship 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 childcare 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.

H.B. 4 made changes to the RODC Program, including replacing the integration payment and annual reimbursement with a monthly reimbursement payment. From September 1, 2017, until August 31, 2022, the rate was \$11.55 per day, per eligible child paid to the kinship family monthly. This rate increased to \$12.67 per day for each eligible child on September 1, 2022. Monthly reimbursement payments are time-limited and may be paid for up to 12 months. However, if DFPS determines there is good cause for an exception, payments may be made for up to an additional six months.

Good cause exceptions listed in the Texas Administrative Code, Section 700.1007 include:

- 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;
- Delayed determination of the child's Indian Child status, or awaiting the approval of the Indian Child's Tribe; and
- Any other circumstance surrounding the child or the caregiver 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.

Relative Placement Data Analysis

As of May 31, 2023, a total of 7,281¹ children were in a kinship placement. The data in this report represents state fiscal year 2023 year-to-date from September 2022 through May 2023, unless otherwise noted. As of fiscal year-to-date 2023, an average of 41.5 percent² of children were placed with relatives or fictive kin (either verified or unverified).³ Comparatively, last fiscal year for the same timeframe, 44 percent⁴ of children were placed with relatives or fictive kin. The most recent national data (fiscal year 2021) indicates the national average for relative placement is 35 percent.⁵

Kinship Caregiver Benefits

In Summer 2023, qualitative feedback about kinship caregivers' experiences with financial support was solicited from caseworkers serving families receiving payments. Caseworkers and caregivers felt strongly that financial support enabled caregivers to provide not only for basic necessities, but also better care for youth.

"It helps pay for all the unforeseen costs for our kids, such as the added gas to daycare, Dr. visits, extra grocery store runs. It helps pay for clothes, diapers, wipes, bottles, cups, as well as toys and snacks, outings and entertainment for the kids." – Kinship Caregiver

"The Kinship Caregiver is caring for four children placed with her. The Kinship Caregiver was a single caregiver and did her best with juggling her full-time job, schooling, and ensuring the children's needs are met (appointments, activities, school, daycare, sick days, meals, etc.). The extra expenses incurred from instantly having four additional children added up, and the kinship benefits helped her catch up, and is helping with offsetting the expenses incurred by the department's requirements (3/30, Health Steps, CANS, visits with department and children's family). The benefits help

¹ DFPS data warehouse report SA_09. Based on children in substitute care on May 31, 2023, and kinship placements of verified or unverified.

² DFPS data warehouse report Executive Dashboard Fiscal Year 2018 forward - exd1_03.

³ This includes both those in kinship foster care (verified) and non-foster care kinship placements (unverified). Verified kinship foster care is defined as being licensed through a licensed child placing agency (CPA) regulated by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). Non-Foster Care Kinship Placement is defined as a DFPS-managed kinship placement which do not receive resources and oversight provided through HHSC or the licensed CPA.

⁴ Executive Dashboard Fiscal Year 2018 forward - exd1_03

⁵ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-report-29.pdf> (Newest available report as of June 28, 2022)

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ensure that the children's needs continue to be met, without undue heavy strain to the Kinship Caregiver finances." –Kinship Caseworker

"It has helped me tremendously. With two small kids I must buy two of everything and I'm grateful for the reimbursement payments and all the help kinship has given me." – Kinship Caregiver

"I am very appreciative in receiving the Kinship money due to increase in food and utility budget. I am also able to provide the entertainment at least one time a month." – Kinship Caregiver

"The Kinship Caregiver is an aunt, who is caring for her niece who is a teenager. The child, who has been in care without permanency for approximately 5 years, is able to have all her basic needs met at the placement. This is the longest placement she has been in for over 3 years and the Department and Court are looking to give PMC to the aunt in the coming months. The youth is thriving, happy, and will be able to find permanency with a family member." –Kinship Caseworker

"We have purchased their diapers, pull ups and wipes on a monthly basis. We have also used it towards some summer clothes, items to help with baby proofing the home and were able to take them to the zoo." –Kinship Caregiver

"The Kinship Caregivers are grandparents who have greatly benefitted from kinship funds. They have limited income, but with the help of payments, they are able to provide a placement for their two grandchildren while their daughter became licensed to adopt them. They have been very appreciative of the kinship money, and feel it helped them maintain placement." –Kinship Caseworker

"Receiving kinship payments has helped us avoid many of the day-to-day costs. These payments have positively impacted us by putting our mind at ease knowing our child will always be taken care of due to the extra funds. Being that we had no children prior to this ALOT of our time was spent adjusting to a new schedule mentally, physically, and financially. At some point we had to take some time away from work to really prioritize having a child, which caused us to have shorter checks. Without the extra help from kinship, we would have been having a harder time transitioning over. Thank you so much!" – Kinship Caregiver

Kinship Home Disruptions

There were 14,016 unverified kinship placements which ended in fiscal year-to-date 2023. Of these, 1,275 (or 9.1 percent) kinship placements disrupted, meaning the placement ended and the child's next placement was in a non-kinship foster care living arrangement.⁶ This compares to 15,896 unverified kinship placements that ended in fiscal year-to-date 2022 with 1,441 (or 9.1 percent) subsequent placements disrupting.⁷

Disruption Reasons

Of the 1,275 disruptions noted above, 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 a change of verification or license type; therefore, most children did not encounter a physical placement change.⁸

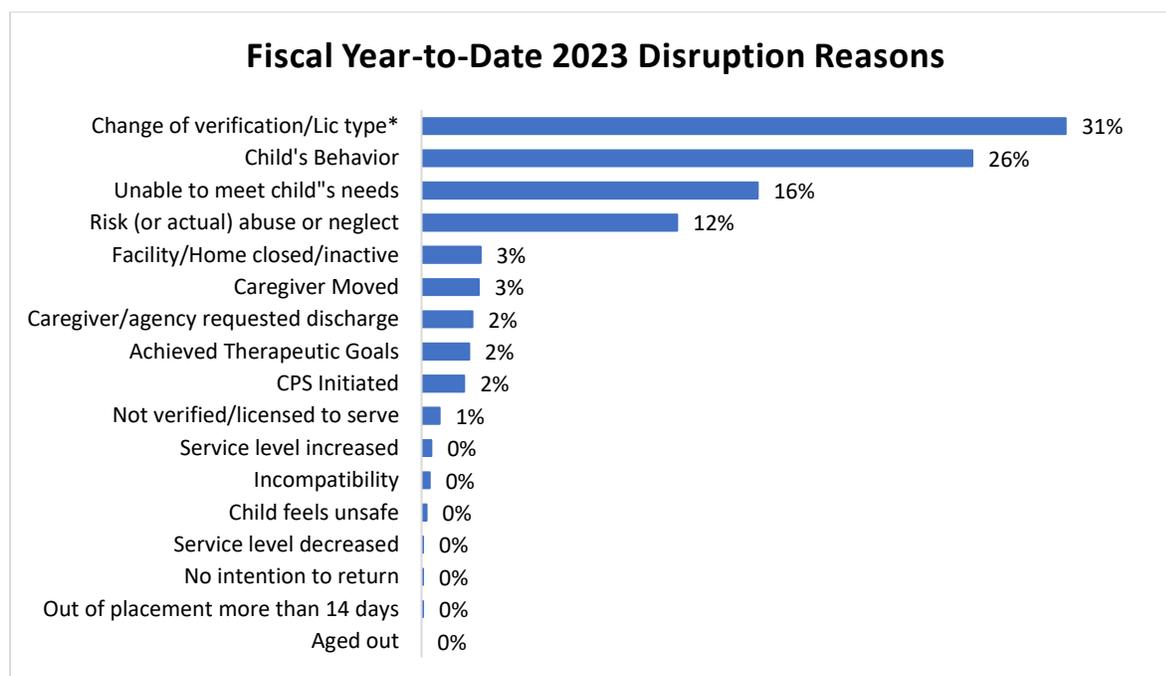
In fiscal year-to-date 2023, the top reasons for disruption following "change of verification/license type" (31 percent) include the child's behavior (26 percent), the caregiver being unable to meet the child's needs (16 percent) and risk or actual abuse or neglect (12 percent). These findings are similar to the top disruptions from a kinship home this same time last year with the top item being child's behavior followed by the change in license type/verification. See Table 1 below for the complete list of disruption reasons and the percentage of occurrences.

⁶ A move from one relative placement to another relative placement does not count as a disruption.

⁷ DFPS Management and Reporting Statistics report d106679.

⁸ In reviewing this subtype, it appears to be a data anomaly, as most children did not experience a physical change in placement location, only a change in verification of the kinship caregiver's placement licensure type.

Table 1: Fiscal Year-to-Date 2023 Disruption Reasons



** In reviewing this subtype, it appears to be a data anomaly, as most children did not experience a physical change in placement location, only a change in verification of the kinship caregiver's placement licensure type.*

Permanent Managing Conservatorship Timelines

During fiscal year-to-date 2023, the average time for a relative, who received a payment under H.B. 4, to be awarded PMC⁹ of a child was 15.6 months compared to 17 months for the same time period last year in 2022.¹⁰

For children in all placement types, the average time to achieve permanency is longer and has increased over the last three fiscal years when comparing the same time frames from September to May. Average time to permanency was 18.8 months in fiscal year-to-date 2021, 19.4 months in fiscal year-to-date 2022 and increased again to 20.9 months as of fiscal year-to-date 2023.¹¹

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, relative PMC means a relative or kin obtained PMC, but did not exit under the Permanency Care Assistance program.

¹⁰ DFPS Management and Reporting Statistics report 110088. Methodology for this metric was updated in fiscal year 2021 to reflect changes in available financial data. This metric calculates permanency for all caregivers who obtained PMC in fiscal year-to-date 2022 and 2023 and received H.B. 4 payments at any point in their time as caregiver.

¹¹ DFPS data warehouse report Executive Dashboard Fiscal Year 2018 forward - exd1_03.

88th Legislative Funding and Initiatives

Kinship Support Appropriations

In DFPS appropriation Exceptional Item 02.E, \$6.9 million was funded to assist kinship caregivers with immediate concrete needs, license verification process, and enhanced Permanency Care Assistance.

A portion of this exceptional item will assist kinship caregivers in providing for the immediate financial needs of children in foster care when suddenly placed in their care. It also provides up to \$1,000 for families. Many of these caregivers are retired or living on limited fixed incomes, which makes it difficult for them to purchase items such as beds, car seats, clothing, diapers, and other immediate needs required for the children to be placed with them.

Another portion of the exceptional item will reimbursement kinship caregivers related to expenses associated with the foster care licensing process, as becoming a verified foster home enables caregivers to access more financial resources.

In addition, Exceptional Item 02.E will allow kinship caregivers who provide care for children with increased needs to receive increased payments through Enhanced Permanency Care Assistance.

Also, Exceptional Items 01.I was funded for \$3 million for the biennium to assist in increasing Single Source Continuum Contractors' mental health capacity for kinship. This funding aims to ensure placement stability and provide appropriate behavioral health resources and support for youth in kinship care while potentially increasing kinship placements and stability.

Senate Bill 135

Senate Bill (S.B.) 135, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, requires DFPS to develop statewide electronic tracking to track the status of kinship home assessment requests. This system will enable DFPS to assess how quickly home assessments are being completed and approved. This tracking will allow DFPS to identify gaps in timely home studies completion to ensure foster children can be safely and quickly placed with relatives and identify factors on which home studies may be denied.

Senate Bill 593

Per S.B. 593, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, DFPS and HHSC must contract with a vendor to provide an assessment of foster care and adoption rules and regulations and provide recommendations for how the state may streamline regulations while both prioritizing child safety and reducing barriers to entry for potential CPAs, residential child-care facilities, foster families, kinship families, and adoptive families.

In line with S.B. 593, DFPS and HHS submitted comments regarding the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Separate Licensing Standards for Relative and Kinship Foster Family published by the Federal Register (45 CFR Parts 1335 and 1356) for the Administration for Children and Family Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Comments were for clarification purposes and to communicate support of efforts that assist in expanding capacity for foster care children that allow them to reside in a safe placement with relatives. Comments submitted were for clarification purposes.

Texas Child-Centered Care System

The Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C) System represents a complete transformation of the foster care system that includes an evidence-informed universal assessment of child needs, clearly defined service packages tailored to meet the specific needs of children, and a whole new foster care rate methodology that aligns payment with the cost of care.

One of the changes inherent in T3C is an “add-on” rate for CPAs who are working with and supporting verified kinship caregivers. This new add-on rate is intended to acknowledge, compensate, and hopefully incentivize more CPAs taking on this important work with kinship families.

Additionally, the 88th Legislature offered support for unverified kinship families by increasing the daily payment to eligible families, so that it coincides with the implementation of the T3C System by raising the amount to 50 percent of the Basic foster family pass-through amount under the new foster care rate structure. This will raise the rate from \$12.57 to \$23.45 per day beginning in January 2025.

Conclusion

In terms of kinship placements, Texas outperforms the most current national rate of children placed with a relative or other designated caregiver at 41.5 percent and 35 percent, respectively. The last three fiscal years of available data shows this gap has narrowed as the national rate has seen a slight improvement in placements with kinship caregivers while Texas’ rate has declined.

Disruptions from kinship placements has remained consistent between last year and this fiscal year-to-date at 9 percent with the top reasons for disruption being a change of verification or license type,¹² the child’s behavior, and the caregiver being unable to meet the child’s needs.

Modification to the RODC payment program was initiated September 1, 2017, via H.B. 4. These modifications allowed for an increase in the daily reimbursement rate paid to kinship caregivers beginning September 1, 2022.

¹² In reviewing this subtype, it appears to be a data anomaly, as most children did not experience a physical change in placement location, only a change in verification of the kinship caregiver’s placement licensure type.

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Data regarding Time to Permanency indicates that children whose initial placement with a kinship caregiver who received RODC payments achieve permanency five months earlier than those in all other placement types during fiscal year-to-date 2023.

The 88th Legislature initiatives are assisting DFPS in working toward better outcomes to foster children and the families who care for them.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
CPA	Child Placing Agency
DFPS	Department of Family and Protective Services
H.B.	House Bill
HHSC	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
PMC	Permanent Managing Conservatorship
RODC	Relative and Other Designated Caregiver
S.B.	Senate Bill
T3C	Texas Child-Centered Care System