

CONTINUUM OF CARE REFORM (CCR):

Focus on Supporting Youth in Family Settings



Today's Presenters

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Today's Presentation

- Introduction
- Overview of Supports for Relative Foster Parents in California
- Elder Index
- 50-State Survey: How Does California Compare to Other States?
- Questions

Acronyms

- **AAP:** Adoption Assistance Program
- **AFDC-FC:** Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (ie: state-only or federally funded “foster care benefits”)
- **CCR:** Continuum of Care Reform
- **CalWORKs:** CalWORKs is California’s TANF program
- **FFA:** Foster Family Agency
- **NREFM:** Non-Related Extended Family Member
- **Kin-GAP:** Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program
- **TANF:** Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
- **Title IV-E:** Federal foster care benefits

Introduction



CCR Legislative Mandate

The CCR Workgroup must consider how:

- Rate-setting systems can **better support a continuum of programs and services that promote positive outcomes for children and families**
- Provision of an integrated, comprehensive set of services including mental health and other critical services supports the achievement of well-being, permanency and safety outcomes
- **To ensure services in family-like settings including after-care**
- To provide outcome-based evaluations of foster care providers or other methods of measuring quality improvement
- Changes in the licensing, rate-setting and auditing processes can improve the quality of foster care providers, the quality of services and programs provided and enhance oversight

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CCR Theory of Change

Vision

1. **All children live with a committed, permanent nurturing family.**
2. Congregate Care is a short-term, high quality, intervention that is part of a continuum of care for children and youth.
3. **Services and supports are tailored to meet the needs of the individual child and family being served with the ultimate goal of transitioning to a permanent family and/or preparation for a successful transition into adulthood.**

CCR Theory of Change

Strategies

1. Create a framework for:
 - **Services & Supports that**
 - **Engage family/youth & respect voice/choice**
 - Coordinate care and services
 - Address trauma
 - Are culturally-sensitive
 - **Support aftercare**
 - **Assessment & Matching**
 - **Appropriate level of care**
 - Evidence based
2. **Create funding structure**
 - **Needed services/supports**
 - Maximizes federal funding
 - Flexible to individual needs
3. Create **Quality Assurance**
 - Performance-based
 - Fiscal accountability
 - Transparent
4. Reassess children in group homes 1 year or more.

System Capacity

1. **Step-down capacity**
2. Training
3. Data collection
4. Licensing

Short-Term System-Level Outcomes

- Reassess if in group home > 12 months
- **Children/families receive core set of culturally-based & trauma-informed services**
- Standards for provider performance are identified
- Increase transparency of provider performance
- **Funding supports level/array services**

Short-Term Child-Level Outcomes

- Increased family engagement
- **Improved family relationships**
- **Improved Supports**
- Improved care coordination
- Increased cultural connections
- Increased stabilizing behavior
- **Fewer children in congregate care**

Long Term Outcomes

- **Decrease in #/% children in foster care**
- Reduce length of stay
- Decrease in non-permanent exits
- Decrease in re-entry rate
- **Increase in placement with relative or Tribe**
- Increase reunification
- Decrease in disparity in achieving all outcomes above

Relative Foster Parents in California



Types of Kinship Care

Private Kinship Care

- Child never came to the attention of the child welfare system

Voluntary Kinship Care

- Child welfare system is/was involved, but no formal foster care case opened
 - Child could be with relative through a Voluntary Placement Agreement, Probate Court Guardianship, or informal arrangement

Kinship Foster Care

- Child placed in foster care with a relative

Relative Caregivers Are the Preferred Placement for Children in Foster Care

- Federal law requires states to “consider giving preference to an adult relative over a non-related caregiver when determining a placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant State child protection standards”
- Research has shown that children in kinship care have:
 - fewer prior placements
 - more frequent and consistent contact with birth parents and siblings,
 - felt fewer negative emotions about being placed in foster care than children placed with non-relatives

Demographics of Kinship Foster Parents

- **Senior Citizens:** 15 – 20% of relative caregivers are over the age of 60
 - Compared to only 9% of non-relative foster parents
- **Fixed Incomes:** 39% of kinship households live below the federal poverty line
 - Compared to 13% of children in non-relative foster homes
- **Disabled:** 38% of kinship caregivers have a limiting condition or disability
- **Limited advanced training:** Kinship foster parents receive little, if any, advanced preparation in assuming their role as caregivers. No training required by the state.

In Sum...

“Kinship caregivers are often required to provide the same nurturance and support for children in their care that non-kin foster parents provide, with fewer resources, greater stressors, and limited preparation. This situation suggests that kinship care policies and practices must be mindful of and attentive to the many challenges kin caregivers face.”

-- Rob Geen, “The Evolution of Kinship Care Policy and Practice”

Understanding Benefits for Kinship Foster Parents in California



Voices of Relative Caregivers

- “I’m 65 now, but because we needed more money at times, some form of employment and support related to employment would have been beneficial.”
- “I’m so disappointed that they aren’t helping these family members, and I willingly took my grandson in. This is not what I had in mind for my 60s”
- **“The money fluctuates. The highest was \$380 but then it dropped to \$350. Which is ridiculous because the cost of living keeps going up.”**

Benefits Children Receive When Placed with Relatives vs. Non-Relatives?

If the foster child(ren) **is federally eligible**: the kinship foster parent receives federal foster care benefits

	Foster Youth (age 17)	3 Siblings (ages 13, 15, 17)
Non-Relative Foster Parent	\$799 (federal foster care)	\$2,397 (federal foster care)
Relative Foster Parent	\$799 (federal foster care)	\$2,397 (federal foster care)

**The foster family home rates are based on a report from the Center for Public Policy Research at UC Davis that calculated the Minimum Adequate Care Rates for children in foster care

Benefits Children Receive When Placed with Relatives vs. Non-Relatives?

But, if the same foster child(ren) is not federally eligible: the kinship foster parent receives CalWORKs benefits

	Foster Youth (age 17)	3 Siblings (ages 13, 15, 17)
Non-Relative Foster Parent	\$799 (state-only AFDC-FC)	\$2,397 (state-only AFDC-FC)
Relative Foster Parent	\$351 (CalWORKs)	\$714 (CalWORKs)

Group Home vs. Foster Home Annual Costs

- Group Home Annual Costs
 - \$86,436/year for 1 youth at RCL 10
 - \$93,048/year for 1 youth at RCL 11
 - \$99,708/year for 1 youth at RCL 12 (**52% of youth in group homes placed in this level**)
 - \$113,028/year for 1 youth at RCL 14
- **BY CONTRAST** – it costs \$9,588/year for a youth to be supported at the basic foster care rate in a family home
 - **Relative foster parents caring for one non-federally eligible child receive a maximum of \$4,212/year**

Financial Eligibility: Federal Foster Care Benefits (AFDC-FC)

To receive **federal** foster care benefits, the youth must meet the 1996 AFDC criteria **in the home of removal** in the month of removal or one of the six months prior to removal

- In 1996, income limit for a family of 3 to qualify for AFDC was \$723
 - **BY CONTRAST:** The income limit for the same family to qualify for CalWORKs today is \$1,169

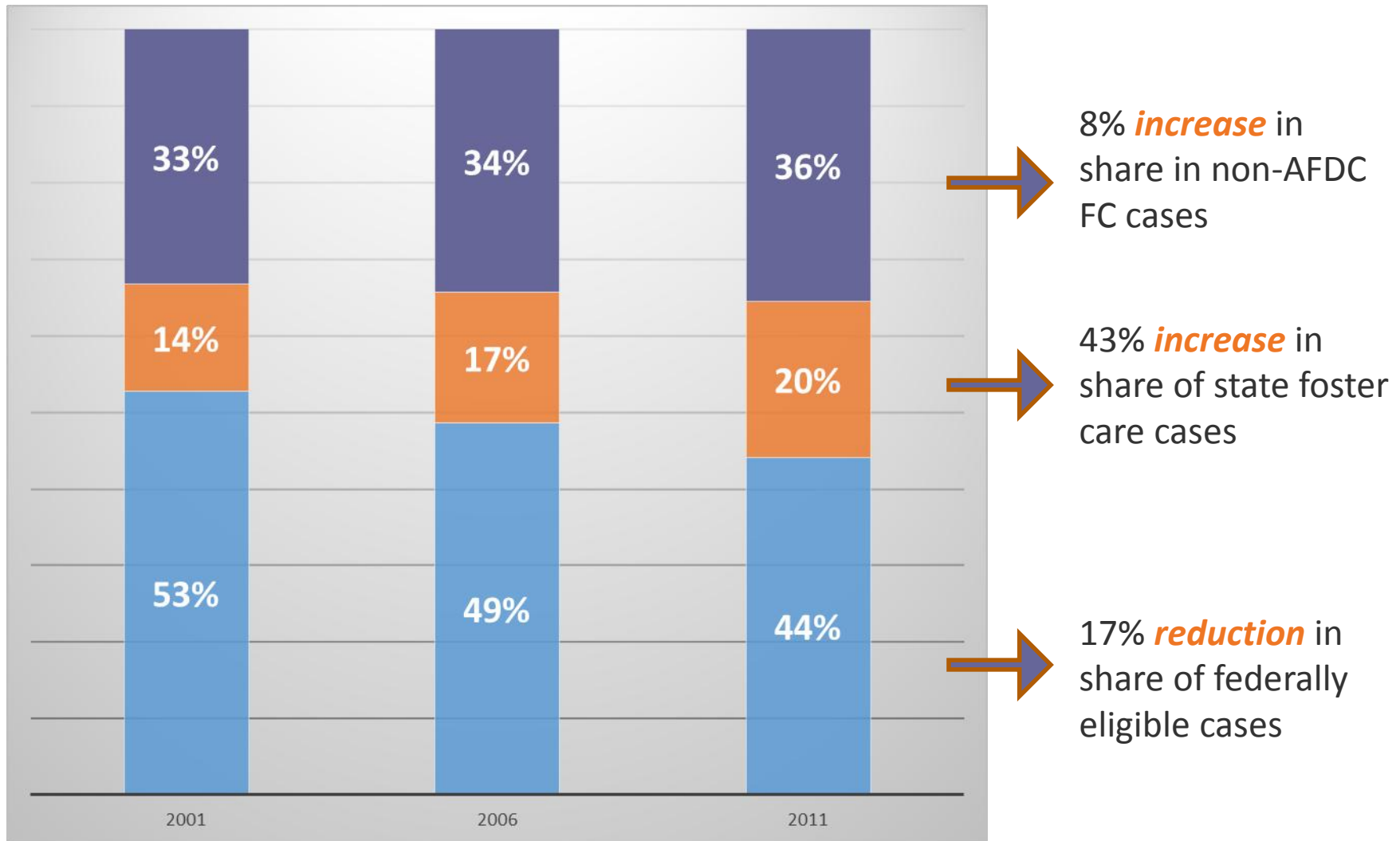
What that means: a child can be removed from a parent receiving CalWORKs and STILL not qualify for federal foster care benefits

IMPORTANT: The federal test has **nothing** to do with the needs of the child or the needs of the relative where the child is placed

Little Known Facts re Federal Eligibility

- Federal eligibility is a **one-time determination** done at removal
- Federal eligibility does not depend on the type of placement
 - A youth who is not federally eligible in a relative home, is also not federally eligible in a group home
- Federal eligibility is based on 1996 AFDC Rules
 - The income/resource rules have never been adjusted for inflation
- Eligibility for federal foster care benefits is distinct from meeting federal home approval standards
 - A relative in California who meets federal home approval standards is still denied foster care benefits when the child does not meet IV-E standards

Fewer Youth are Federally Eligible Every Year



Could we pay state-only foster care benefits when a child is placed with relative?

- YES! This is not a matter of federal law.
 - In fact -- it is federal law that requires California to pay federal foster care benefits to relatives. But, the feds have no say over how we expend our state-only foster care funds.
- California made a state policy decision to deny state-only benefits to foster children placed with relatives
 - **NOTE:** State-only foster care benefits are paid in every other type of placement (including NREFMs)

Do the relatives have to meet the same approval standards as non-relatives?

In California, relative foster parents are required to be approved, but the home approval process utilizes the same requirements that are used to license non-relative foster homes, including:

- Background check
- Home approval requirements
- Monthly social worker visits
- Six-month reviews in court

This is true **regardless of the child's federal eligibility**

Lack of Support Makes Youth with Special Needs Harder to Place

When relative foster parents care for youth with special needs who are not federally eligible, the relatives do not receive:

- Specialized Care Increments
- Dual Agency Rates
- Infant Supplement

Lack of supports for relatives makes placements less stable

	IF federally eligible and placed with grandma	IF <u>not</u> federally eligible and placed with grandma
Youth with severe emotional disturbance who qualifies for Specialized Care Increment in LA County	\$1,220	\$351
Youth with autism who is a regional center consumer	\$2,106 - \$3,106	\$351
Youth who is parenting	\$1,210	\$577

What About Guardianships?

Youth placed in foster care with a relative who later obtains guardianship through juvenile court receive Kin-GAP once the dependency/delinquency case is closed

- Must be with relative in foster care for a **minimum** of 6 consecutive months before exiting to Kin-GAP
- Relative caregiver has no control over when the court is willing to order guardianship and close the dependency case

NOTE: Youth diverted from foster care into a relative's home through a probate guardianship are NEVER eligible for ADFC-FC or Kin-GAP.

- BUT, if that youth was diverted to a non-relative's home through a probate court guardianship, the non-relative would receive AFDC-FC

Relative vs. Non-Relative Guardianships

Relatives diverted to probate court guardianships get CalWORKs benefits

- They NEVER have access to Kin-GAP

Non-relatives who are diverted to probate court guardianships get **foster care benefits**

- These children were NEVER in foster care

	Never in foster care (ie: diversion)	Guardianship after foster care
Guardianship with a relative	CalWORKs (\$351)	Kin-GAP (\$799) Note: must be in foster care placement with relative for at least 6 consecutive months before exiting to Kin-GAP
Guardianship with a non-relative	AFDC-FC (\$799)	AFDC-FC (\$799) Note: no timelines for when the youth can exit and still be eligible for AFDC-FC

What About Adoptions?

- Youth who are diverted from foster care and adopted by relatives are often not eligible for AAP unless the youth meets an exception (e.g., meets SSI eligibility)
 - NOTE: AAP can be paid when child is “at risk” of foster care, but this standard is rarely utilized
- Relatives have no control over the timelines for adoption. Family reunification and termination of parental rights can take many months and even years.
- Even though relatives often provide long-term, stable care, they are less likely to adopt.

The Elder Index: The Real Cost of Raising a Grandchild

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: How Many?



What Seniors Need to Make Ends Meet

First-Ever Elder Index for Grandparents
& Updated California Data



- 300,000+ in California
- 65,000 over age 65
- About 40% don't have enough to get by

Current Poverty Measure: Outdated!

Federal Poverty Guidelines

- Developed in 1963-1964
- Based on 1955 Food Survey
- Poverty = USDA Thrifty Food Plan x 3
 - temporary/emergency use only
- No variation by age or where you live
- Used for:
 - Eligibility determinations
 - Prioritizing funding
 - Tracking trends over time

2013 FPL

1 person = \$11,490

4 people = \$23,550

Cost of Meeting Basic Needs: Grandparents Raising a Grandchild

Elder Index: Basic Expenses

Senior Renter Raising a Grandchild | CA Average

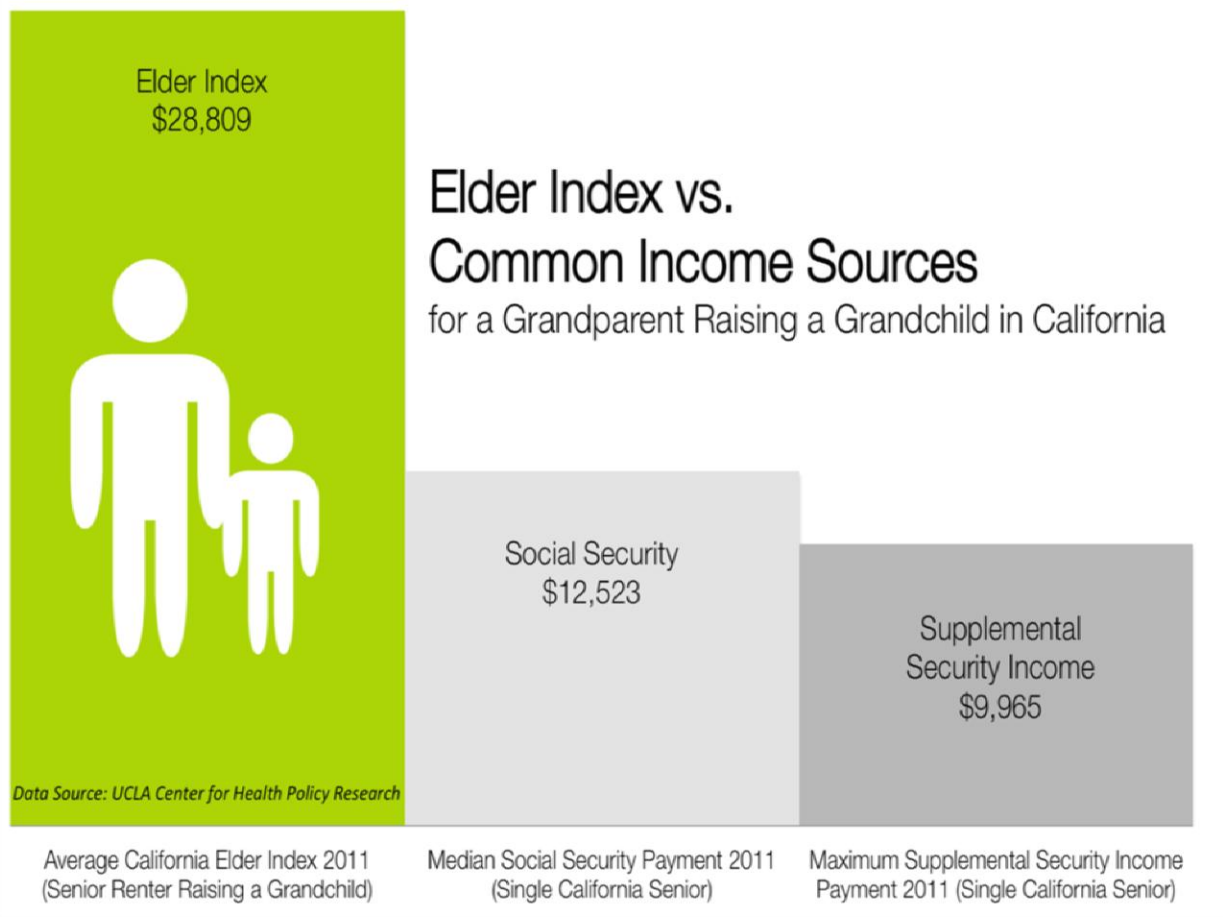
The California Elder Index is a county-specific measure of the minimum income necessary to cover all of a senior's basic needs.

Rent (one bedroom apt.)	\$864
Food	\$474
Healthcare	\$334
Transportation	\$368
Miscellaneous	\$361

Monthly Total **\$2,401**

ANNUAL TOTAL **\$28,809***

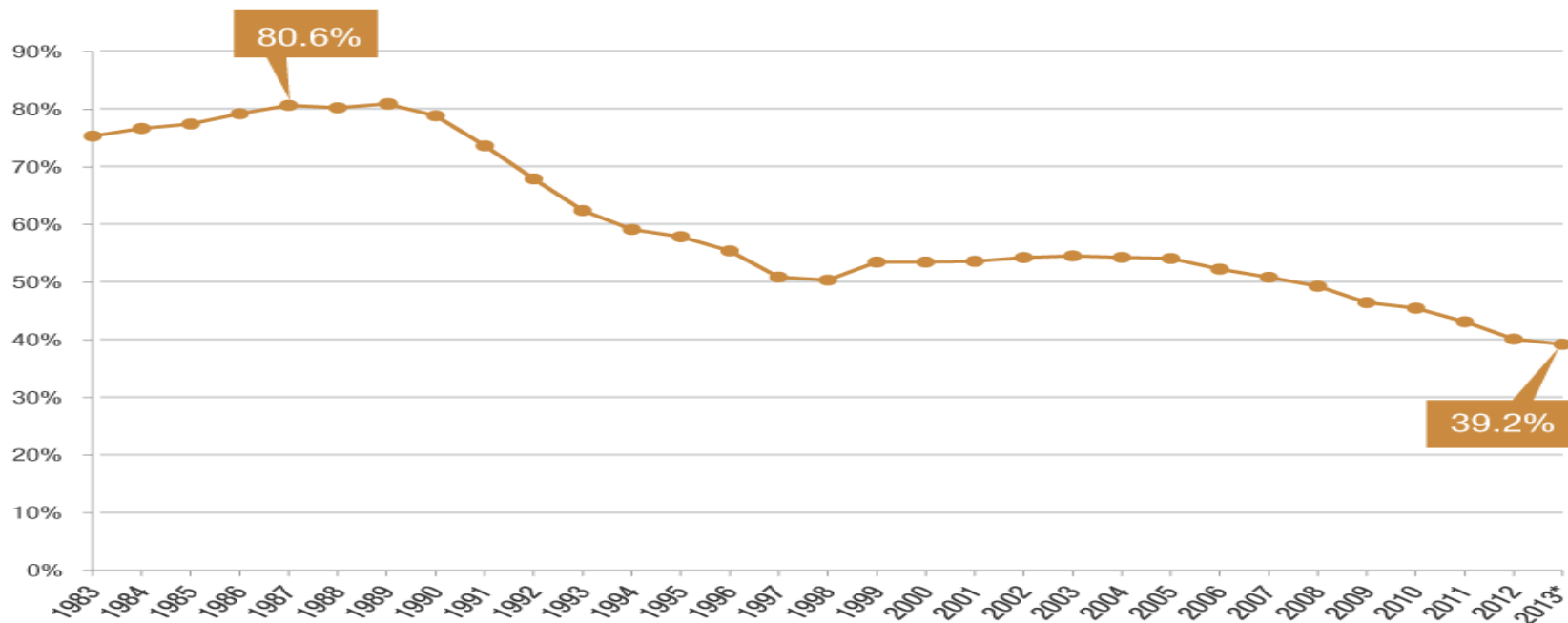
*Annual total may not equal the sum of monthly totals due to rounding.



With CalWORKs: Kinship Foster Parents Struggle to Meet Basic Needs of Children

The Maximum CalWORKs Grant Has Declined by More Than Half as a Share of the Federal Poverty Line Since the Late 1980s

Annualized Maximum AFDC/CalWORKs Grant for a Family of Three as a Percentage of the Federal Poverty Line



* Projected

Note: Maximum grant is for high-cost counties beginning in 1996.
Source: California Budget Project analysis of Department of Social Services and US Social Security Administration data

Amount of Funding to Kinship Foster Parents Impacts Child Outcomes

- Children who grow up in poverty are likely to have
 - Lower earnings
 - Less education
 - Poorer health as adults
- These risks are compounded for children who experienced abuse or neglect
- The current CalWORKs grant for a family of 3 is equal to 39% of the poverty line
 - Put another way – **today's cash grant is the same, in actual dollars, as the maximum grant in 1987**

50 State Survey: Providing State-Funded Benefits to Kinship Caregivers



Kinship Caregiver Payment Options:

Full Licensure/Approval

- **National Trend:**
 - 48 states and the District of Columbia provide state-funded foster care benefits to Kinship Foster Parents when they meet the same licensing/approval standards imposed on non-kin foster parents
- **California's approach does not conform to the majority standard (*Oregon is the only other exception*)**
 - California “approves” (as opposed to licenses) Kinship caregivers. BUT - the approval process imposes the **same assessments, home visits, background checks**, etc., that are required of licensed non-kin caregivers
 - **In California, despite the fact that approved Kinship Foster Parents must meet the same standards as non-relative caregivers, they only receive foster care benefits if the child is federally-eligible**

Kinship Caregiver Payment Options: Licensure With A Modification Or Waiver

- **National Trend:**
 - The majority of states that waive standards or offer less stringent standards for kin still provide state-funded foster care benefits to those Kinship Foster Parents
- **California's approach does not conform to the majority**
 - In **California**, if a relative is licensed through a waiver or modification of one or more standards and caring for a non-federally eligible child, they only receive CalWORKs
 - **California** offers no additional state-funded foster care payments

Kinship Caregiver Payment Options:

Separate Approval Process for Kin

Approximately 20 States have a kin-specific approval process that is totally distinct from the non-kin licensing requirements

- At least 8 of those states, relatives still receive funding in excess of the TANF child-only grant

Alaska

Arizona

Florida

Georgia

Illinois

Indiana

Iowa

Kansas

Kentucky

Louisiana

Maine

Michigan

Missouri

Montana

Nebraska

New Hampshire

North Carolina

North Dakota

Ohio

South Dakota

Rhode Island

Texas

Washington

Wisconsin

Kinship Caregiver Payment Options:

How California Compares

	CALIFORNIA	MAJORITY OF OTHER STATES
Relative foster parent licensed/approved (approval process uses same standards as licensure)	Non-Federally Eligible Youth Receives CalWORKs	Non-Federally Eligible Youth Receives Foster Care Benefit
Relative foster parent licensed/approved with a waiver of a licensing rules	Non-Federally Eligible Youth Receives CalWORKs	Non-Federally Eligible Youth Receives Foster Care Benefit
Completely separate approval process for relative foster parents (distinct from licensure)	Not available in California	Non-federally Eligible Youth Receives child-only TANF grant NOTE: In at least 8 states, the relative foster parent receives MORE THAN the child-only TANF grant

Conclusions



Los Angeles Times

Tuesday, September 3, 2013

OP-ED

Families who foster deserve parity

Relatives who care for a child deserve the same benefits as non-related foster parents



Federal financial support for children placed in foster care is based on antiquated rules that have not been updated since 1996, and the bulk of children in foster care in California don't qualify for this federal support. (Wes Bausmith / Los Angeles Times / August 30, 2013)

By Janis Spire, CEO of the Alliance for Children's Rights

September 3, 2013

Los Angeles County's child welfare system, as noted recently by this newspaper, is facing a critical shortage of foster homes. But a simple policy shift could go a long way toward eliminating this crisis. We need to provide better support for relatives who step up and become foster parents.

Relatives are the backbone of the county's child welfare system. They care for children with the highest needs at a moment's notice, and they provide stability in an otherwise chaotic system. Relatives can help children in county care remain connected to their families and provide them with a sense of community.

Unfortunately, the system as presently constituted fails to adequately support relatives who take in vulnerable young people.

Federal financial support for children placed in foster care is based on antiquated rules that have not been updated since 1996, and the bulk of children in foster care in California don't qualify for this federal support. The state takes care of those foster children who are ineligible, but only if they live with a non-related foster parent. California refuses to pay the same benefits for children placed with relatives.

What that means is that a relative in California caring for a child receives \$351 a month while a non-related foster parent caring for that same child receives at least \$799 a month, and more if the child has special needs.

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/commentary/la-oe-spire-foster-care-relatives-20130903,0,417380.story>

Voices from Caregivers

- “My child is now out of the foster care system, so we no longer receive money for her, but we continue to support her financially and she stays with us about 4 days a week.”
- “I love helping my children but it feels like you have to fight for everything. This get very taxing over time.”
- **"It's been tough. We've had employment issues, and home issues. Its been really tough. [We] have relationship with the local food bank, and sometimes I get food box about once a month. Its been helpful. Also, when we've been in a really tight spot, I've gotten gas cards, or groceries cards."**

Investing in Relatives Promotes CCR Goals and Saves \$\$

- There are lots of ways to support relatives to ensure better outcomes for youth and decrease utilization of group homes
 - Certifying relatives through an FFA and paying foster care benefits to certified families
 - Paying state-only foster care benefits to relative caregivers
 - Paying a increased child-only TANF grant to relatives caring for foster youth or those diverted from foster care

Questions