



## Kentucky can...



Prioritize investments for children who have experienced abuse and neglect by supporting kinship caregivers

Kentucky was one of the first states to adopt and implement the federal Family First Prevention Services Act in 2018. This initiative aimed to keep kids in family-based placements when possible while in the state's custody or to prevent children from entering it. When children cannot remain safely with their parents, relatives and close family friends often step up to help raise them. This family-based placement is commonly known as kinship care—or in the case of a close family friend raising children, fictive kin care.

**DCBS reports** that there are over 1,000 children in relative or fictive kin placements in Kentucky with an additional 436 in relative foster care.

Placing children with relatives or family friends can:

- Maintain connections to culture, traditions, and siblings
- Help to reduce the trauma and stress associated with being placed in foster care
- Lead to fewer behavioral and mental health challenges and educational disruptions

Kentucky provides financial assistance to relative or fictive kin caregivers who choose to become certified foster parents through DCBS.

**However, after it is clear that permanency with a relative is the end goal, there is little to no support available after custody is granted to a relative foster parent and they continue to raise the children in their homes, often until age 18.**

**Federal funding allows relative and fictive kin foster parents to take custody and ensure permanency for children in their care by providing funds for:**

- Children and youth who have been in foster care with a relative who is a licensed foster parent for at least six months
- Those whom reunification with their parents or adoption are not appropriate permanency options

In 41 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and 11 tribes, a "Guardianship Assistance Program" is approved to distribute financial supports to those who choose to accept custody of their relative child after 6 months of stepping in as a relative or fictive kin foster caregiver. **Kentucky has yet to follow.**

Adopting a similar assistance program would provide increased financial assistance to Kentucky kinship families. It would help promote families remaining together while decreasing the number of children in foster care, further assisting the state in its ongoing implementation of the federal Family First Act.

### Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:

**Invest in children being raised by their relatives or fictive kin by dedicating funds to support subsidized permanent custody.**



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