



Across the country, state and local child welfare agencies strive to ensure that children who are removed from their parents stay connected to their extended family networks. One way of maintaining family connections is placing children in kinship foster care. Kinship care can reduce the trauma of separation from one's parents, allow children to live with someone they know and with whom they have a familial bond, and increase the likelihood that siblings will be placed together.

To better understand whether kinship care practices are achieving positive outcomes for children, agencies should collect data on children living with kin families. Collecting kinship data helps agencies:

- Describe their current kinship continuum/system
- Track progress and trends over time for children in kinship care
- Set benchmarks for placing children in kinship care

This guide identifies the types of kinship data child welfare agencies should consider collecting.



The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private philanthropy that creates a brighter future for the nation's children by developing solutions to strengthen families, build paths to economic opportunity and transform struggling communities into safer and healthier places to live, work and grow. Additional kinship care resources can be found at www.aecf.org.

TYPES OF KINSHIP DATA

Through efforts to help several jurisdictions improve kinship care, the Annie E. Casey Foundation Child Welfare Strategy Group has identified several types of data that an agency seeking to understanding their kinship care system should collect.

Type	Description
Demographic data	For all indicators, jurisdictions should attempt to gather and analyze data on the demographics of children in kinship placements and compare that data to children in other placement types. This will help jurisdictions understand how these indicators vary by age of child, race, type of abuse/neglect, etc.
Comparison of kin to non-kin	Several indicators for kinship care can be compared to indicators for children living with non-kin. These comparisons put kinship care in perspective and can help a system evaluate similarities and differences in kinship and non-kin placement settings for key child welfare outcomes.
State vs. regional/county data	States should consider collecting regional/county data as well as statewide data on each indicator. Disaggregation of the data allows each local jurisdiction to compare itself to a statewide baseline, identify variations in how local agencies use kinship resources, and determine where to focus future improvements to the kinship system.
Benchmarks	Some indicators include a national statistic that can be a starting point for setting benchmarks. However, benchmarks are not a reflection of best practice. Kinship placement practices differ considerably from state to state, and many jurisdictions may exceed the national average. Additionally, some indicators do not have national data available. When designing a system for collecting and tracking kinship data, decide whether and how to set benchmarks above or below the jurisdiction's current baseline for each indicator.
Frequency	Quarterly data collection provides real-time feedback on how well a system is doing at meeting its goals for kinship families.
Additional indicators	Agencies may want to collect data on additional indicators, depending upon what they are trying to accomplish. Additional indicators may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # and types of waivers issued for non-safety licensing standards for kinship foster parents • Length of time to license kinship foster parents • # and % of children placed with kin after initial placement at specific intervals, including 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, through 1 year • Length of time to permanency for children living with kin as compared to non-kin • Disruption in kinship foster care, adoption and guardianship placements

KINSHIP DATA: ESSENTIAL INDICATORS

Indicator	Description
#/% children diverted to kin	This indicator refers to children placed with kin when the agency does not take custody of a child following a child protective services (CPS) report. State and local practices about opening a case and court oversight vary. Jurisdictions should define this category to ensure consistent data collection.
#/% diverted to kin that enter care within one year	This indicator refers to children who enter foster care less than a year after they are diverted from agency custody and placed with kin. Knowing how many children enter care following an initial diversion can inform a jurisdiction about the stability of kinship diversion placements.
#/% living with kin	Knowing the number and percent of children placed with kin as compared to other placement settings (non-kin foster care, residential treatment, group homes, etc.) can help jurisdictions understand whether or not they are prioritizing kin placements across the child welfare continuum. Nationally, 27% of children in foster care were placed with relatives on September 30, 2011.
#/% of children initially placed with kin	Research shows that kinship care can lead to stability for children in foster care, suggesting that an initial kinship care placement can contribute to fewer placement disruptions. Understanding the percentage of children initially placed with kin within any given quarter (or other interval) can help jurisdictions understand if they need to better promote front-end efforts to identify extended family for children entering state custody.
Average length of stay for children in kinship care vs. non-kin care	Tracking the average length of stay for children in kinship care as compared to those in non-kin care can help ensure that permanency remains a priority for children living with kin. Although kinship placements may be more stable because children are living with someone they know, providing the same level of oversight and permanency planning is essential.

Indicator	Description
<p>% kinship homes that are licensed vs. unlicensed within 90 days of placement</p>	<p>Licensing kin as foster parents in a timely manner helps to ensure equity, including access to a foster care subsidy, for children regardless of placement setting. This indicator helps states and jurisdictions understand if too many children are in unlicensed foster and therefore without the same benefits received by children in licensed care. Some jurisdictions are able to fully license kinship families within 60 or 90 days of placement. Jurisdictions that have large numbers of unlicensed kinship placements should explore barriers to licensing.</p>
<p>#/% of children initially placed with kin vs. non-kin with 1-2 placement moves</p>	<p>This indicator helps a jurisdiction compare stability for kinship foster care with stability for non-kin care by looking at differences in the number of placement moves. Instability in kinship foster care may point to a need for increased support for kinship families or challenges associated with assessing the appropriateness of kin placements.</p>
<p>#/% children placed with kin as last placement reunified with parents</p>	<p>Comparing rates of reunification for children living with kin compared to those living with non-kin (within 18 months or 2 years) can help jurisdictions understand if kinship care allows children to return home to their parents. Lower rates of reunification for children in kinship care may signal issues with services and supports for the kinship triad, particularly birth parents.</p>
<p>% of exits to adoption by a relative</p>	<p>Comparing rates of adoption for children living with kin to those living with non-kin can help jurisdictions understand if children who cannot return home are afforded the opportunity to achieve permanency through adoption. Nationally, 31% of the children adopted from foster care were adopted by relatives.</p>
<p>% of exits to guardianship</p>	<p>Comparing rates of guardianship for children in kinship care to those in non-kin care helps jurisdictions understand if children who can not return home or be adopted are afforded the opportunity to achieve permanency through guardianship. Here, guardianship refers to an option for children in state custody, not those who have never been in foster care. 6% of the children who exited foster care in 2011 entered into guardianship arrangements.</p>

KINSHIP DATA: ESSENTIAL INDICATORS

Continuum Phase	Indicator	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	YTD Goal	Annual Goal
Prevention	#/% children diverted to kin						
	#/% diverted to kin that enter care within one year						
In Care	#/% living with kin						
	#/% of children initially placed with kin						
	Average length of stay for children in kinship care vs. non-kin care						
Permanence	% kinship homes that are licensed vs. unlicensed within 90 days of placement						
	#/% of children initially placed with kin vs. non-kin with 1-2 placement moves						
	#/% children placed with kin as last placement reunified with parents						
	% of exits to adoption by a relative						
	% of exits to guardianship						