



For Immediate Release

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KINSHIP PERMANENCY INCENTIVE PROGRAM PROPOSED FOR ELIMINATION IN STATE BUDGET

The 2012-13 budget proposes to eliminate the Kinship Permanency Incentive program, currently funded at \$5 Million/year.

A key element of Ohio's success in safely reducing the number of children in foster / group care – an expensive and traumatic intervention in a child's life – is identifying and supporting safe familiar relative and other kin caregivers for Ohio's children when out of home placement is needed. While sometimes a temporary placement for children due to safety concerns, when birth parents cannot repair their lives in order to have their child(ren) reunified in a timely manner, these kin caregivers often become permanent custodians for the child.

The Kinship Permanency Incentive (KPI) program was first created in 2005, as a cost effective alternative to kin caregivers that do the right thing – step up to care for their own extended family's children needing a permanent home - and do it with minimal governmental intervention. It has been an important element in managing budgets and improving child outcomes.

Today, with the \$5 Million investment, the KPI program supports over 8,000 children being cared for by safe, familiar faces – grandparents, aunts and uncles or other close adults for whom a judge has seen fit to award legal custody or guardianship. Research shows that children cared for by kin have improved school attendance, academic performance and get into fewer community problems than children placed in unfamiliar paid foster care. Yet, **the same investment of \$5 Million / year in foster care, would serve only 685 children in family foster care** – a much more traumatic intervention.

A 2007 ODJFS profile of the children and kin caregiver families being served by the KPI program is below.

- Parents' substance abuse and mental health issues are the most frequently cited reasons, with abandonment/dependency and parental incarceration reasons close behind.
- 50% of the children had been in agency custody prior to the kin caregiver receiving custody, 50% of the placements were an initial diversion from foster care.
- 36% of the kids are part of a sibling group; 54% are children of color.
- 40% preschoolers, 30% ages 5-9, 20% ages 10-14, 10% ages 15+.
- 84% caregivers are legal custodians (thru juvenile court), 16% legal guardians (thru probate court).
- Caregivers are primarily female (88%); equally Caucasian and minority; 32% are under age 40, 56% ages 40 – 59, 12% age 60+; 44% are grandparents and 25% aunts/uncles.
- Less than 5% receive child support as their primary source of income, while 56% have earnings as their primary source of income, 35% have SSI, Social Security, Vet benefits, retirement benefits or other set income as the primary source.
- Safety outcomes are as good or better than for foster care; stability for children in kin caregiver homes is excellent.

The General Assembly has strongly supported this program in the past. **PCSAO looks to the General Assembly to stand with grandparents and other caregivers to maintain this cost effective program that supports good outcomes for children.** Line 541 is critical as a safe, stable diversion to more costly and traumatic foster care.

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PCSAO is a membership driven association serving Ohio's 88 County Public Children Services Agencies through the support of program excellence and sound public policy for safe children, stable families and supportive communities.

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