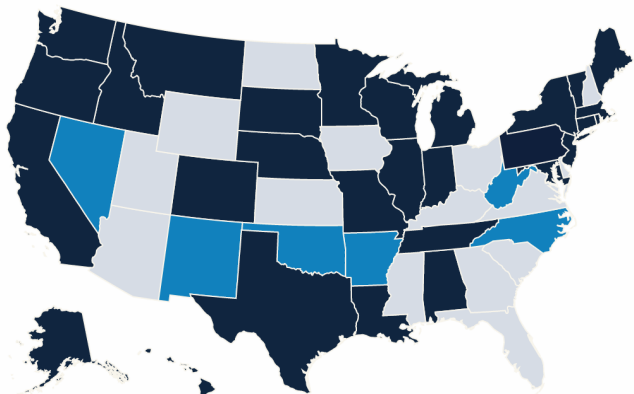


TITLE IV-E GAP PROGRAMS: A WORK IN PROGRESS

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 provided states with the option to operate guardianship assistance programs (GAP) as part of their child welfare permanency continuum under title IV-E of the Social Security Act. The first of these programs began operating in 2010, though some states had operated guardianship programs under title IV-E waiver demonstrations years earlier. GAP programs provide financial support for children exiting foster care to permanent guardianships with kin. This infographic illustrates key facts about the program's implementation status in 2017.

Most States Have Approved Gap Plans

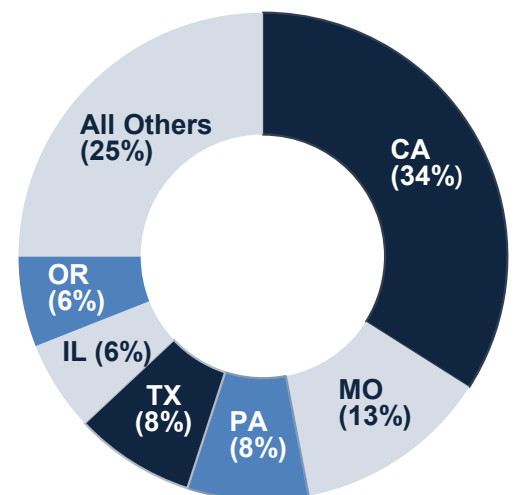


- State Operates a GAP Program
- State Has an Approved GAP Plan but Reported an Average Monthly Caseload of Zero Children in FY 2016
- State Has Not Applied to Operate a Gap Program

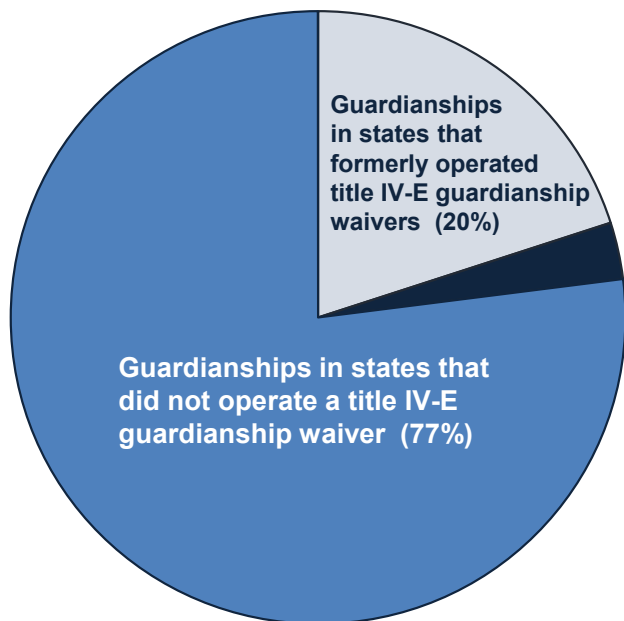
- As of September, 2017, 36 states and the District of Columbia, as well as 8 Indian tribes, had approved GAP Plans.
- However, 6 states with approved GAP plans reported no GAP caseload in FY 2016. Three of these states (Arkansas, Oklahoma, and West Virginia) have program effective dates of 2013 or earlier but have not placed any children into subsidized guardianships. The remaining three states (Nevada, New Mexico and North Carolina) have recent program effective dates and are expected to begin showing GAP caseloads in FY 2017.
- Approximately three-quarters of children in foster care nationally live in states with approved GAP plans.

Three-Quarters of all Title IV-E Guardianships Are in Just 6 States

- In fiscal year 2016, states and tribes made title IV-E GAP claims on behalf of an average monthly caseload of 24,689 children nationally. Guardianship exits made up 7% of foster care exits in states with GAP programs.
- Six states together represent 75% of GAP guardianships. Those same states include about half (51%) of children in foster care.
- Some GAP states report paying guardianship subsidies on behalf of additional children outside the GAP program. These non-IV-E guardianships made up 46% of all guardianship subsidies reported by GAP states in FY 2016. These may include, for instance, children who do not meet GAP income eligibility rules or the statutory requirement that the child have lived with the relative in foster care for 6 months prior to being discharged to the guardianship.



GAP Has Moved Beyond Its Waiver Program Origins

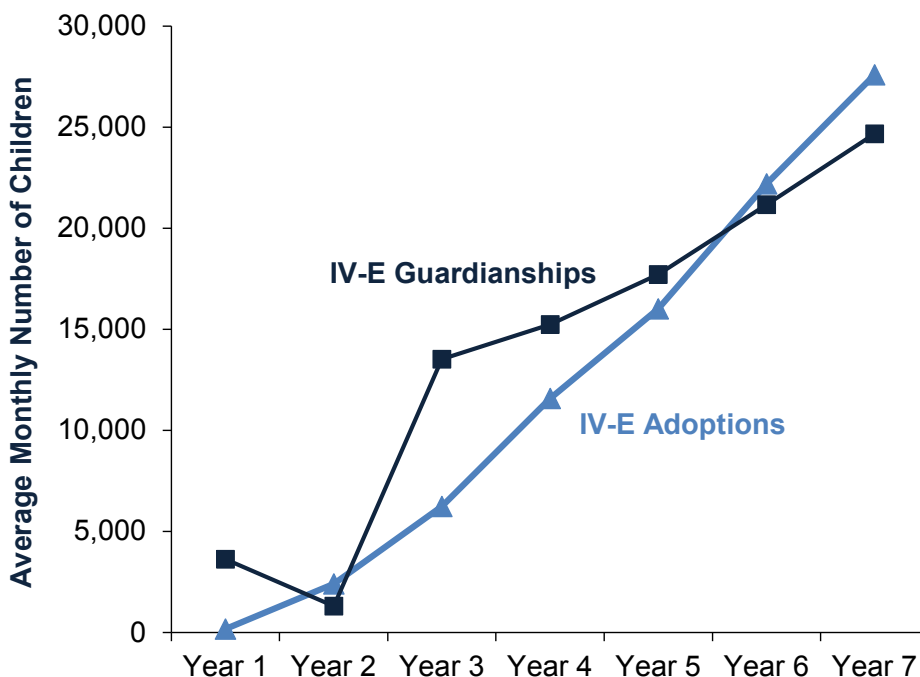


Guardianships established under former waivers (3%)

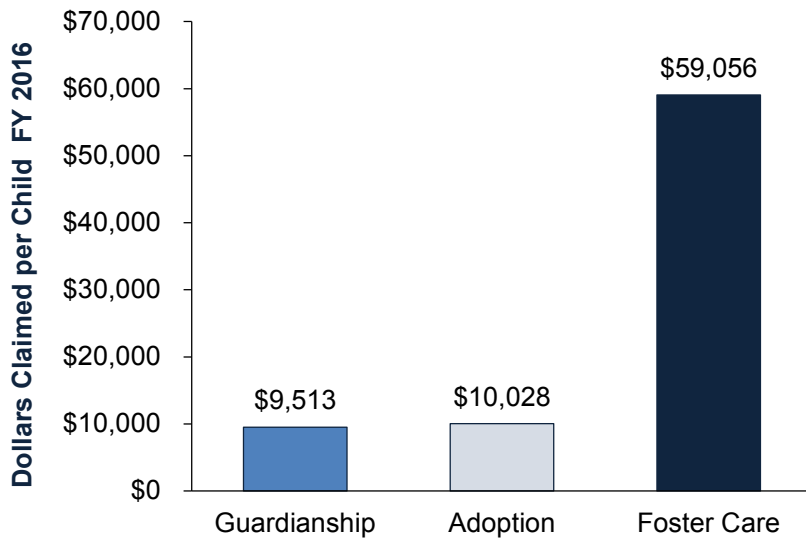
- Of 11 states that operated subsidized guardianship programs under title IV-E demonstration waivers prior to the authorization of the GAP program, as of September 2017, 9 had opted into the GAP program.
- In FY 2016 just 3 percent of GAP subsidies nationally were grandfathered from waiver demonstrations. The rest were established under the current GAP program.
- Of the 6 states that represent the bulk of GAP claims, only Illinois and Oregon operated a guardianship program under a title IV-E demonstration program prior to the initiation of GAP.

Growth in the GAP Caseload Looks Similar to the Early Years of the Adoption Assistance Program

- Despite the fact that adoption assistance is mandatory while guardianship assistance is optional, the average monthly number of children receiving subsidies during the first 7 years of each program was quite similar.
- In the 7th year of the Guardianship Assistance Program (FY 2016) states were paying subsidies on behalf of an average monthly caseload of 24,689 children per month as compared to 27,588 children per month receiving Adoption Assistance in FY 1987, the 7th year in which that program operated.



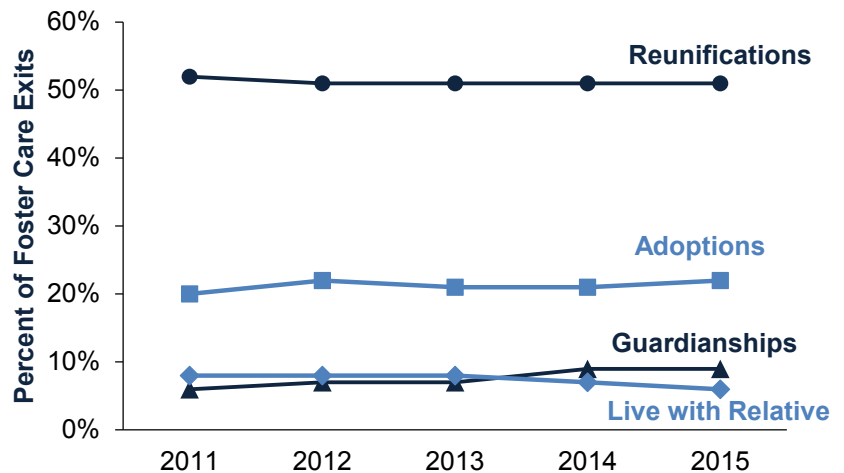
Annual Costs per Child in the GAP Program Resemble Those in the Adoption Assistance Program



- In states with GAP programs, adoptions and guardianships each cost about \$10,000 per child per year, compared to nearly \$60,000 per child per year for a child in foster care. These figures include both maintenance payments and the various categories of administrative and training costs.

GAP Subsidies Have Not Displaced Reunifications or Adoptions

- When guardianships began under title IV-E waiver demonstrations, some feared that guardianships would displace other exits, particularly reunifications or adoptions. Studies in waiver states did not find significant displacement and experience under the GAP program similarly does not show the new option crowding out reunification or adoption exits.
- Guardianships may be displacing unsubsidized exits to live with relatives.



The Bottom Line: While the majority of states have opted into the title IV-E Guardianship Assistance Program since its inception, utilization is uneven and many states with approved guardianship plans infrequently place children in subsidized guardianships. However, program growth resembles that in the early years of the Adoption Assistance Program and it may simply take time for child welfare agencies to begin using guardianships effectively. Alternatively, low utilization in some states may signal barriers to the program's use that need to be identified and addressed.

Data sources:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, compiled data from states' Title IV-E Program Quarterly Financial Reports. Data on foster care exits is from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS).

