

Child Welfare Interim Committee; Foster Source Presentation



July 18, 2023

Presented by: Jody Britton, MSW, SWC & Renee Bernhard



Understanding the problem

Kin

We're heavily reliant on them but providing them with little to no support.

- Multiple layers/pockets of kin
- If they're safe enough to place, they're safe enough to pay
- Kinship care doesn't end at APR

Foster Parents

We're losing them faster than we are gaining them.

- Targeted Recruitment (LGBTQIA+, families of color, & therapeutic)
- Retention Plans
- Support for high needs youth

Policy Making

We need those with lived experience having the loudest voice when creating policy.

- Family Advisory Council/Task Force
- Pendulum Swing
- Avoid the extremes & confirmation bias

About Us

Jody Britton, MSW, SWC:

- Kinship parent for 6 years
- Allocation of Parental Responsibilities (APR)
- Director of Family Services @ Foster Source (primary role: Serving kin)

Renee Bernhard, Founder & Executive Director of Foster Source:

- Former Foster Parent
- Adoptive mother
- Supported thousands of foster & kin to foster longer and better!!!

Colorado Child Counts (Jan 2023 - March 2023)

	Out-of-home care	3729	
	• Congregate Care	370	9.9 %
	• In a family-like setting	3254	87.3%
	Foster Homes	3163	84.8%
	• Kinship (paid)	588	15.8%
**	• Kinship (non-paid)	766	20.5%
	• Certified foster homes	1809	48.5%
**	Kin-Kin (on 6/30/23) (Not considered out-of-home)	1106	2020-2022: 35,000 children living in kinship care

36.3%

** Approx 5000 children in unpaid placements in 2023 SFY

Sources: Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). 2023. <https://colorado.rom.socwel.ku.edu/reports/250>. CDHS. July 14, 2023. data request
 The Annie E. Casey Foundation, <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/10455-children-in-kinship-care?loc=7&loct=2#detailed/2/7/false/2479,2097,1985,1757/any/20160,20161>

CO Grandparents responsible for Grandchildren (no parent present)

	Total	Median Income
Statewide	34,172	\$52,931
Adams	4641	\$74,702
Arapahoe	3044	\$79,778
Denver	4432	\$14,902
El Paso	4557	\$66,299
Larimer	3938	\$65,417
Pueblo	2287	\$31,736
Weld	1929	\$40,831



Sources: US Census. 2021. 5-year estimate.

https://data.census.gov/table?q=grandparents+raising+grandchildren&g=040XX00US08_050XX00US08001,08031,08041,08069,08101,08123&tid=ACSDT5YSPT2021.B10050

https://data.census.gov/table?q=grandparents+raising+grandchildren&g=040XX00US08_050XX00US08001,08031,08041,08069,08101,08123&tid=ACSDT5Y2021.B10010

2021

CO Grandparents responsible for Grandchildren (no parent present)

	Black Alone	Hispanic/Latino	American Indian/Alaska Native	White Alone
Statewide	1951	12,979	940	16,823
Adams	110	2,407	51	1,817
Arapahoe	436	852	36	1,163
Denver	909	2,650	217	524
El Paso	348	1,293	123	2,523
Larimer	44	765	27	754
Pueblo	28	1,196	108	1,016
Weld	0	711	6	1,069

Sources: US Census. 2021. 5-year estimate. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=grandparents+raising+grandchildren> (B10051B, C, H, I)

Foster Care Stipend : foster parents are provided a stipend from the State of Colorado to help support the basic needs of the child including food, clothing, and childcare.

Child Only TANF : Non-certified and informal kinship families may apply for Colorado Works, the state's TANF program. Kinship caregivers have the option of applying for a child-only grant on behalf of the child or youth in their care. (approx. \$130/month)

	Foster Parents	Unpaid kinship caregivers
0 - 8 years old	Approx. \$1,260/month	\$130/month
9 - 13 years old	Approx. \$1,608/month	\$130/month
14 & Up	Approx. \$1,954/month	\$130/month

Data Summary

The many layers of foster and kinship care in child welfare show the disproportionate rates of support that children and families receive.

Data Implications:

- Thousands of children are going without the foster care reimbursement.
- Kin-kin are not considered “out-of-home” placements. These families are lost in the data. Are they lost in the policies?
- Data can tell whatever story we want — it to. You’ve been fed a lot of data.

Foster and Kin:

are asked to take on the hardest parts of the child welfare solution. They bear the physical, mental, emotional, and financial impact.

Yet:

they are not valued or supported in the ways they need to be.

4 Legislative Changes Kin and Children Need

Change 1

- If they're safe enough to place, they're safe enough to pay.

Change 2

- Easier path to certification (reduce barriers, Spanish classes, etc.)

Change 3

- More transparency with permanency (APR vs adoption) *Kinship care doesn't end at APR!*

Change 4

- Consistent data tracking across the 64 counties.

4 Legislative Changes Foster Parents & Children Need

Change 1

- Targeted recruitment (LGBTQ+, BIPOC)

Change 2

- Retention Plans (50% quit in year one, another 25% in year two)

Change 3

- Integrate foster parents into the team (they don't quit because of the children)

Change 4

- Services for high needs youth & stability in transition

The Pendulum Swing

“With each high profile tragedy and crisis, the state’s child welfare system swings widely between placing the safety of children as paramount or preserving families at all costs. This pendulum swing is made more difficult with a system that is both private and public, local and statewide, and lacks research on best practices. The result is a system that struggles to find balance and a firm foundation, leading to systemic confusion and problems”.

Source: American Children’s Campaign. <https://iamforkids.org/child-welfare-reform-4/>

4 Legislative Changes The System Needs

Change 1

- TIME for Child Welfare Family Advisory Council OR Task Force

Change 2

- Consistent and transparent requirement for data tracking across all counties (kinship types, demographics, etc.)

Change 3

- Avoid the extremes

Change 4

- Avoid confirmation bias (see attached document: Discontinuity and Disruption in Adoptions and Guardianships)

Thank you for your time



July 18, 2023

Presented by: Jody Britton, MSW, SWC & Renee Bernhard

