

Kinship in Demand (KIND) Act FY2025 Annual Report

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December 2025

Prepared for:

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Background and Purpose of the Report

In February 2025, the state passed legislation known as the Kinship in Demand (KIND) Act (the Act) to strengthen and promote the use of relative foster care for youth placed in substitute care.¹ The Act, which went into effect on July 1, 2025, requires the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS, the Department) to implement numerous policy and practice changes, including establishing a new approval process for certifying relative caregivers, expanding relative support programming, and ensuring that payments made to certified relative caregivers are equal to those received by licensed foster caregivers. Additionally, the Act requires the development of a relative reconsideration review process to review decisions related to the denial of relative caregiver certification, denial of placement with a relative, or denial of visitation with a relative.

Following implementation of the Act, the Department anticipates an increase in the number of children achieving permanence through subsidized guardianship along with a decrease in the length of stay in care. By treating guardianship and adoption equally when considering children's permanency goals, the Act is expected to increase use of guardianship as a permanency goal. In response to diligent efforts to recruit and support relative placements, a higher number of youth in care are expected to be placed and maintained in relative caregiver homes.

To monitor the impact of the legislation and required policy changes and provide transparency and accountability, the Act requires the Department to publish annual reports on several permanency-related outcomes:

1. The number of children in care who exited to adoption and guardianship and their length of stay in substitute care prior to achieving permanence. The number of guardianships reported should examine both subsidized and unsubsidized guardianships.
2. The number of children with a permanency goal of adoption or guardianship.
3. The number of children who move from a non-relative placement to a relative placement.
4. The number of foster homes that were successfully certified in accordance with Section 3.4 of the Child Care Act of 1969.
5. The number of reconsideration reviews of the Department's decisions not to place a child with a relative, and for each reconsideration review, a description of the child's placement at the time of the review, the reason(s) for the denial of the placement with a relative, and the outcome associated with the reconsideration review.

The Department asked the Children and Family Research Center (CFRC) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to produce the annual KIND Act Report. This inaugural report uses child welfare administrative data from fiscal year (FY) 2025 to establish baseline measures of these permanency outcomes prior to the implementation of the KIND Act.

¹ <https://trackbill.com/bill/illinois-house-bill-4781-dcfs-kinship-in-demand/2507924/>

Data and Measures

Data for the report were sourced from the Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW), a newly implemented database system developed as part of the broader IllinoisConnect initiative. Child welfare administrative data on adoptions, guardianships, permanency goals, relative and non-relative placements, and lengths of stay during FY2025 were extracted on October 4, 2025. Because the certification process was not yet implemented during FY2025, data on certifications and reconsideration reviews are not available for analysis. Definitions for each indicator are described below.

Indicator 1: Children Exiting to Adoption or Guardianship and Median Length of Stay in Substitute Care

Definition: the number of children who were adopted or taken into guardianship during the fiscal year and their median length of stay in substitute care. The median represents the amount of time in months that it took half of the children who were adopted or taken into guardianship in a fiscal year to exit care.

Exclusions:

- Youth who were adopted or taken into guardianship at age 18 or older.
- Children whose legal spells were seven days or fewer.

Indicator 2: Children Exiting to Subsidized and Unsubsidized Guardianships and Median Length of Stay in Substitute Care

Definition: The number of children who were taken into subsidized or unsubsidized guardianship during the fiscal year and their median length of stay in substitute care. Unsubsidized guardianship includes arrangements in private guardianship homes. The median represents the amount of time in months that it took half of the children who were taken into subsidized guardianship or unsubsidized guardianship in a fiscal year to exit care.

Exclusions:

- Youth who were taken into subsidized or unsubsidized guardianship at age 18 or older.
- Children whose legal spells were seven days or fewer.

Indicator 3: Children with Permanency Goal of Adoption

Definition: Of all children in substitute care during the fiscal year, the number that had a last permanency goal of adoption.

Numerator: The number of children who were assigned adoption as their last permanency goal by the end of the fiscal year.

Denominator: The number of children in substitute care during the fiscal year.

Exclusions:

- Youth aged 18 or older.
- Children whose legal spells were seven days or fewer.

Indicator 4: Children with Permanency Goal of Guardianship

Definition: Of all children in substitute care during the fiscal year, the number that had a last permanency goal of guardianship.

Numerator: The number of children who were assigned guardianship as their last permanency goal by the end of the fiscal year.

Denominator: The number of children in substitute care during the fiscal year.

Exclusions:

- Youth aged 18 or older.
- Children whose legal spells were seven days or fewer.

Indicator 5: Children Transitioning to a Relative Placement

Definition: Of all children in substitute care during the fiscal year, the number that moved from a non-relative placement to a relative placement.

Numerator: The number of children who moved from a non-relative placement to a relative placement. Relative placements include Home of Relative (HMR) and Home of Fictive Kin (HFK). Non-relative placements include most other placement types, including home of parents, traditional foster homes, specialized foster homes, group homes, and institutions.

Denominator: The number of children in substitute care during the fiscal year.

Exclusions:

- Youth aged 21 or older.
- Children whose legal spells were seven days or fewer.

Results**Table 1. Children Exiting to Adoption or Guardianship and Median Length of Stay in Substitute Care**

Adoptions		Guardianships	
Number Exiting	Median Months	Number Exiting	Median Months
2,491	46.1	607	49.8

Table 2. Children Exiting to Subsidized and Unsubsidized Guardianships and Median Length of Stay in Substitute Care

Subsidized Guardianships		Unsubsidized Guardianships	
Number Exiting	Median Months	Number Exiting	Median Months
582	50.9	25	19.5

Table 3. Children with Permanency Goal of Adoption

Children in Care	Last Permanency Goal = Adoption (N)
22,127	4,892

Table 4. Children With Permanency Goal of Guardianship

Children in Care	Last Permanency Goal = Guardianship (N)
22,127	1,892

Table 5. Children Transitioning to a Relative Placement

Children in Care	Moved to a Relative Placement (N)
23,604	1,455

Note: The number of children in care during the fiscal year is different in this table because the population includes youth in care until age 21, whereas the other indicators exclude children 18 and older.