



*Subsidized Guardianship:
Testing the Generalizability of an Idea
Whose Time Has Finally Come*

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*Tennessee Subsidized Guardianship
Waiver Demonstration Project*

In October of 2005, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) received HHS approval to operate a five-year demonstration of permanent guardianship as a federally subsidized permanency option under title IV-E.



Tennessee Subsidized Guardianship Waiver

Waiver demonstrations should demonstrate that a policy change would be in the best interest of children:

The goal of Tennessee's Subsidized Permanent Guardianship Demonstration is to improve permanency and safety outcomes for children and families in approved relative and kin settings. The state is using the waiver authority to test whether the introduction of a subsidized permanent guardianship benefit will result in an increase of permanence and safety for children and an improvement in a range of child outcomes such as reduced length of stay in foster care and improved stability of substitute care.

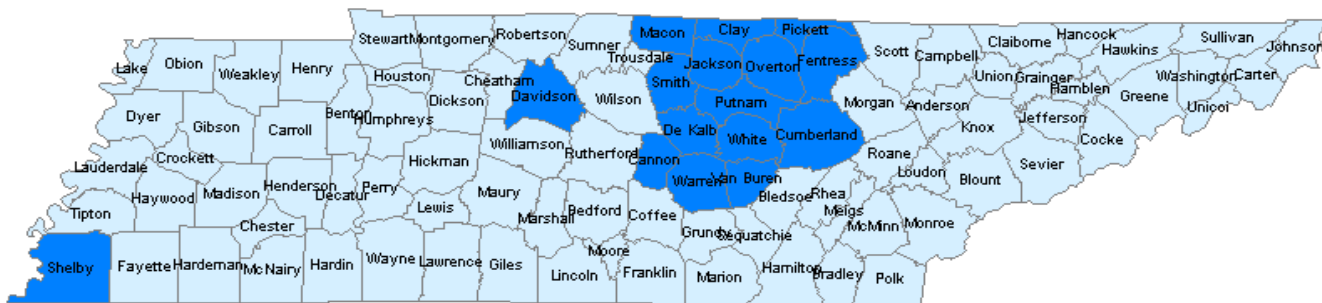


Target Population

- The target population consists of all title IV-E eligible and non-IV-E eligible children in Tennessee, aged 0 to 18 years old, who meet the following criteria: have been in foster care for at least nine (9) months (of the latest 12 months); live in a approved relative setting or resided with the same kin caregiver continuously for at least six (6) months (allowing for temporary absences from the home); and for whom reunification and adoption are not viable permanency options.

Target Population

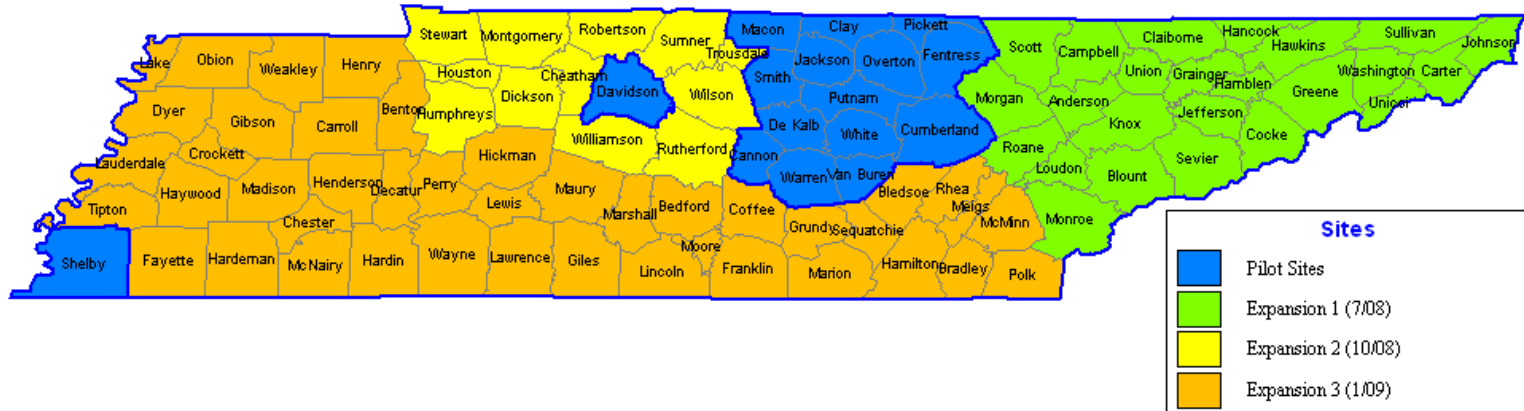
Tennessee Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Initial 16 Implementation Counties



Implementation of the demonstration began in December of 2006 and occurred in 16 counties (see Map 1). In addition, the State made eligible for assignment all children statewide who have a goal of planned permanent living arrangement (PPLA) and meet other program Guardianship Program will initially occur in 16 counties throughout the State.

Expansion Sites

Tennessee Subsidized Guardianship Waiver Demonstration Implementation Roll-Out



On July 1, 2008, the State rolled-out the demonstration to an additional 24 counties. An additional 12 counties will be brought in on October 1, 2008, and the remainder of the State will be included in 2009.

Approximately 1,500 children will be a part of the five year waiver demonstration.



Ten Objectives

Evaluate the impact of the subsidized permanent guardianship waiver on:

- children's safety.
- the number of children in PPLA.
- permanence for children with relatives and kin.
- the length of stay in foster care.
- the rates of reunification and adoption.
- the rate of re-entry into foster care.



Ten Objectives (cont'd)

In addition, the evaluation will:

- Track the number and proportion of guardianships that are disrupted or dissolved and the reasons for the displacement.
- Assess the implementation of the subsidized guardianship waiver.
- Estimate the overall savings accrued from a greater level of permanence achieved by the treatment group.
- Determine generalizability of SG program by comparing findings to those from Illinois and Wisconsin.



Experimental Design

- The classic experimental design used in this study is the best way to determine causal connections between interventions and outcomes.
- The control group will receive the “regular services” and full range of permanency options in effect in Tennessee prior to October 2006 for which they are eligible—including reunification, subsidized adoption, and PPLA. Those in the treatment group will be offered the additional option of subsidized permanent guardianship. This is a value added program because nothing is taken away from the control group.
- Thus, we will study the effects of the treatment services relative to services that would have been provided in the absence of the subsidized guardianship option.



Group Assignment Criteria

Group Assignment occurs when:

- the child has been in the custody of the State for 9 out of the last 12 months immediately prior to establishing subsidized permanent guardianship and is likely to remain in care.
- the child has lived with a relative or kin caregiver for at least six months immediately prior to establishing subsidized permanent guardianship.
- The child's committed county must be Shelby, Davidson, or an Upper Cumberland County.



Group Assignment Criteria

Relative vs. Kin

Relative:

The child and the caregiver must be related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Kin:

A person with whom the child has a significant relationship that pre-exists placement such as godparent, friend, neighbor, church member, minister, teacher

or

One that develops over time after placement has been made.

Group Assignment



A child between the ages of 0 and 17.75 is eligible for group assignment when he or she:

- is in the foster care system for 9 out of the last 12 months
- is living with an approved relative caregiver or kin for 6 months
- has a committed county of Shelby, Upper Cumberland, or Davidson

When eligibility is met the child will be randomly assigned to the experimental group or control group at a 1:1 ratio.

Control Group

Not eligible for subsidized perm. guardianship.

Eligible for all traditional permanency alternatives including permanent guardianship .

Experimental Group

Eligible for subsidized perm. guardianship and eligible for all traditional permanency alternatives



Randomization

Randomization was successful in balancing (within the bounds of chance variation) the characteristics of children and their caregivers who were assigned to the demonstration and cost neutrality groups. Because the two groups look statistically similar at the start of the waiver, any differences that later emerge with respect to permanency outcomes and days spent in foster care can reasonably be attributed to the offer of subsidized guardianship to the demonstration group.

Randomization



	Demonstration	Cost Neutrality	Difference
Child age at assignment	11.0 yrs.	11.2 yrs.	-0.2
Age at removal	7.2 yrs.	7.6 yrs.	-0.3
Female	49.0%	49.8%	-0.8%
White	32.6%	31.7%	0.9%
Black	66.1%	64.6%	1.5%
Caregiver age at interview	47.4 yrs.	48.7 yrs.	-1.3
White	32.2%	33.6%	-1.4%
Black	65.8%	65.7%	-0.1%
Grandparent-grandchild	21.5%	26.6%	-5.1%
Aunt/Uncle-niece/nephew	25.8%	21.8%	4.0%
Other Relatives	13.8%	11.7%	2.1%
Non-biological kin	38.9%	39.9%	-1.0%
Sample N	298	271	

Randomization

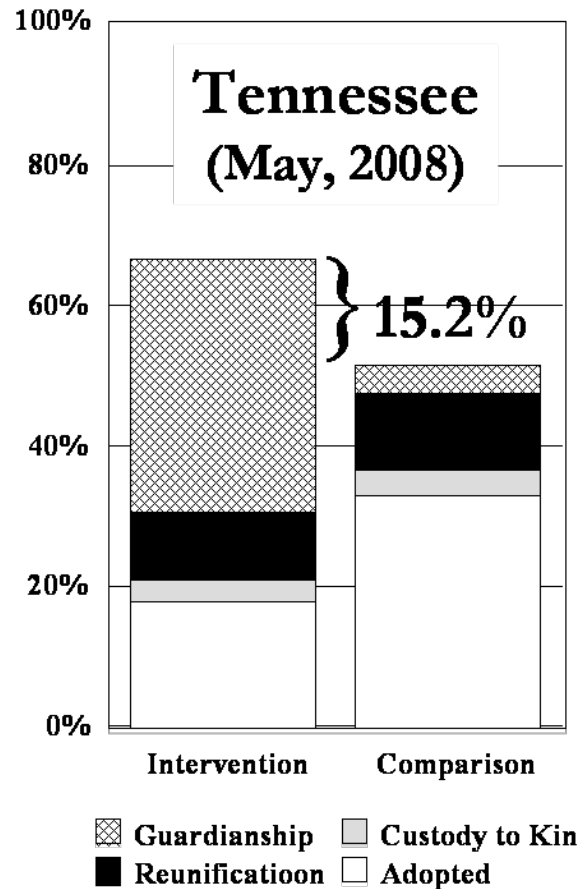


Site at Assignment	Demonstration	Cost-neutrality	Difference
Davidson	37.9%	36.2%	1.7%
Shelby	39.9%	39.5%	0.4%
Upper Cumberland	21.1%	24.0%	-1.9%
Sample N	298	271	

The demonstration and cost neutrality groups are well balanced with respect to geographical distribution: nearly equivalent proportions of children were assigned in the principal demonstration sites of Davidson, Shelby, and Upper Cumberland.

Outcomes

The June 2008 data extract for Tennessee shows a 15.2 percentage point higher rate of discharge to permanent homes from foster care in the demonstration group compared to the cost neutrality group. This is an important and statistically significant difference that replicates similar results previously reported for Illinois and currently for Milwaukee, Wisconsin-- the two jurisdictions that also operate a IV-E waiver program similar to Tennessee's program.





Outcomes

Despite equivalences with respect to geographical distribution, there are substantial differences among demonstration sites with respect to how the offer of subsidized guardianship has impacted permanency outcomes

❑ **Davidson- 39.8%** of assigned children were discharged to permanent guardianship, which boasted the net permanency gain over the cost neutrality group to **24.9%**.

❑ **Shelby- 36.1%** of assigned children were discharged to permanent guardianship, which boasted the net permanency gain over the cost neutrality group to **19.5%**.

❑ **Upper Cumberland- 27.3%** of assigned children were discharged to permanent guardianship, which resulted in a statistically insignificant difference of **-0.9%** between the two groups



Outcomes

Replicates findings in Illinois showing that relatives are more likely than non-related caregivers

- 1) to adopt when presented with the option (39.9% relatives v. 16.9% kin), and**
- 2) more likely to afford permanence to children than non-relative caregivers, when given multiple permanency options.**



Outcomes: Permanency Rates

The combined permanency rates for children in the homes of relatives exceeds the rates for children in the home of non-related kin. The combined permanency rate in the intervention group is significantly higher than the comparison group.

Intervention v. comparison: Combined permanency rates

Relatives	73.6% v. 60.1%
Kin	44.8% v. 25.9%



Outcomes: Permanency Rates

**Adoptions are supplanted for relatives,
but not for kin.**

Intervention v. comparison: Adoption rates

Relatives 16.5% v. 44.8%

Kin 19.0% v. 14.8%

Outcomes: Stability

Improved permanency outcomes has not significantly impacted placement stability of children in relative homes. In contrast, both permanence and stability rates improved for children in the home of non-biological kin with the availability of subsidized guardianship.

Outcomes		Relative Home		Kin Home	
		Intervention	Comparison	Intervention	Comparison
Group size	Count	182	163	116	108
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Moved from caregiver's home	Count	16	16	19	35
	%	8.8%	9.8%	16.4%	32.4%