

A collage of images showing children and families. At the top, a young boy is seen from behind, walking away. Next to him is a close-up of a young girl's face with yellow flower decorations in her hair. To the right, two young boys are smiling broadly. Further right, a close-up of a young girl's face is visible. At the bottom right, a young boy and girl are shown in profile, looking at each other.

Children and Family
Research Center

10th Anniversary

Delinquency in Child Welfare: Investigating Kinship Care Effects

2009 Annual Conference of the Society for
Social Work and Research (SSWR)
New Orleans, LA
January 17, 2009



School of Social Work
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

60th Anniversary

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Increase in Kinship Care Use

- Children placed in foster care due to:
 - Abuse/neglect
 - Voluntary placement
 - Person in need of supervision (PINS)

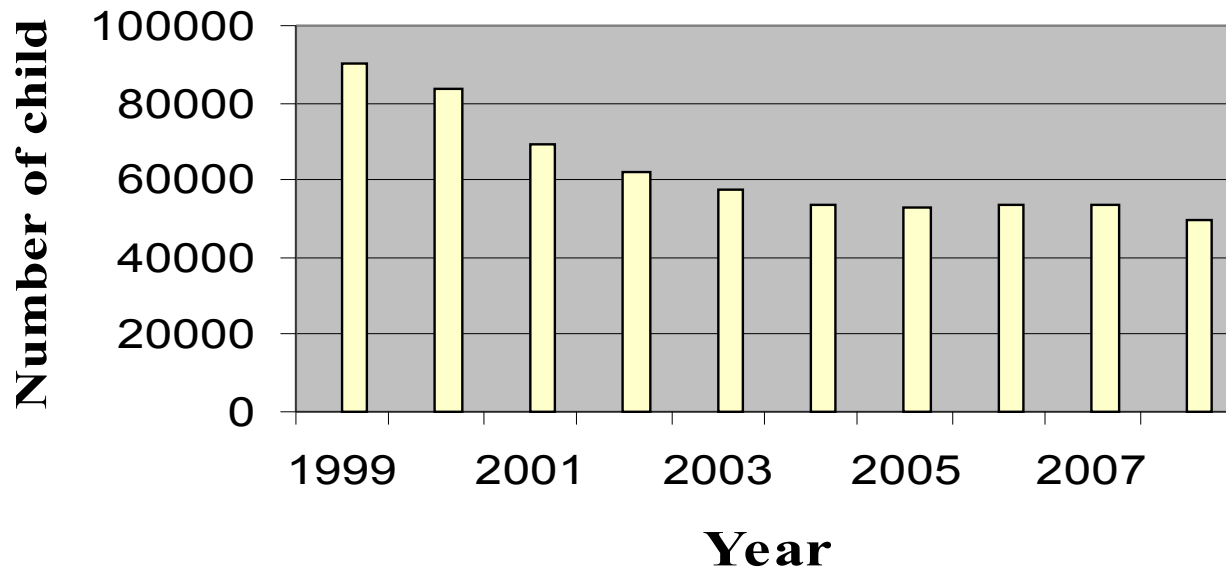


Increase in Kinship Care Use

- Since 1982, reported cases of child abuse and neglect increased **333%**.
- A number of children entering out-of-home care increased (Hegar & Scannapieco, 1995)
- However, according to the Calif. Dept. of Social Services, the number of children entering kinship care in Calif. and L.A. County decreased from 1999 – 2008.

Estimates in Formal Kinship Care Use

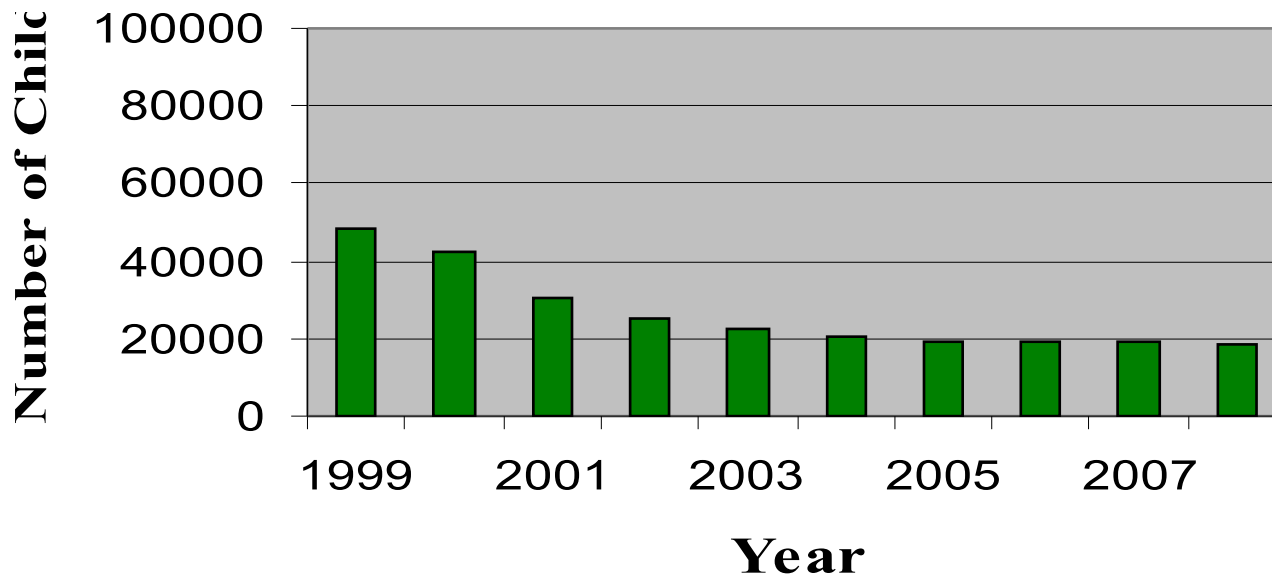
Estimates of Children in Kinship Care in California



Estimates in Formal Kinship Care Use



Estimates of Children in Kinship Care in Los Angeles County





Why has Kinship Care Increased?

- Relatives considered in foster care placement by many child welfare agencies (Geen)
- Rationale: Relatives can afford to care for the child. Little need for intervention by child welfare agencies or government (Iglehart, 1994)



Why has Kinship Care Increased?

- **Policies**: In 1979, the Supreme Court ruled that kin caregivers cannot be excluded from receiving benefits - *Youakim v. Miller* (Berrick & Barth, 1994; Berrick et al., 1994; Gleeson & Craig, 1994; Iglehart; Jantz, 2002; Shore et al., 2002).
 - States must now make the same foster care maintenance payments to kin caregivers for Title IV-E-eligible children.



Benefits of Kinship Care

Key to family preservation and support (Freundlich et al., 2003)

Continuity and connectedness to children (Geen, 2004)

Alleviate trauma that results from family
separation (Dubowitz et al., 1994; Freundlich et al.; Johnson-Garner & Meers, 2003)



Benefits of Kinship Care

Less placement instability than non-kinship

(Webster et al., 2000)

- ✓ Kinship youths have only one placement; non-kinship have more than one (Iglehart, 1994)
- ✓ Lower levels of behavioral problems at home (Shore et al., 2002)



Limitations of Kinship Care

Economic Hardship (Ehrle et al., 2001)

- ✓ Poverty and food insecurity
- ✓ Caregivers unmarried, no high school degree, and unemployed

Health Risks

- ✓ Unmet health care needs (Dubowitz et al., 1994)
- ✓ High-risk sexual behavior (Carpenter et al., 2001)



Limitations of Kinship Care

Mental/Emotional Health Risks

Adults in kinship care as children reported

- ✓ depression
- ✓ marital unhappiness
- ✓ intimate-parental relationships less likely
- ✓ social isolation (Cook & Fong, 2000)



Limitations of Kinship Care

- School-Related Risks
 - mental health problems at school (Iglehart, 1994)
 - lower educational performance
 - poorer study habits and attention (Dubowitz et al., 1994)



Limitations of Kinship Care

Risks to Kinship Guardians:

Familial stressors undermine permanent placement

Barriers to permanency:

- ✓ Contact with biological parents
- ✓ Child's rejection of structured environments
- ✓ Special needs children
- ✓ Health limitations of kinship guardians



Current Study

- Longitudinal research on kinship foster care children is needed.
- However, there have not been any longitudinal studies on kinship foster care children from official data sources.
- The purpose of this study is to assess whether the outcomes of children placed in kinship foster care are more positive than for those in traditional foster care.