



**TEXAS**  
Department of Family  
and Protective Services

**Relative and Other Designated Caregiver  
Placement Program Report  
Fiscal Year 2024**

September 2024

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## Introduction

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Pursuant to Family Code, Chapter 264, Section 762 added by House Bill (H.B.) 4, 85th Legislative, Regular Session, 2017, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) must publish a report on the Relative and Other Designated Caregiver Program (RODC) not later than September 1 of each year.

The report must include data on permanency outcomes for children placed with relatives or other designated caregivers, including the:

- Number of disruptions in a relative or other designated caregiver placement;
- Reasons for any disruptions in a relative or other designated caregiver placement;
- and
- Length of time before a relative or other designated caregiver who receives monetary assistance from the department under this subchapter obtains permanent managing conservatorship (PMC) of a child.

## Background

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Kinship care is the term used to describe care provided to a child in DFPS conservatorship by relatives or fictive kin who live outside of the child's home.

The RODC Program supports continuity and stability for children in DFPS conservatorship by providing financial assistance to eligible kinship caregivers. Prior to September 1, 2017, the RODC Program provided an initial, one-time cash payment, or integration payment, of \$1,000 for the first child and \$495 for each additional child in a sibling group to defray the costs incurred for essential childcare items at the time of placement. Eligible caregivers were also able to receive an annual reimbursement of \$500 per year, per child to be paid on the anniversary date of placement.

H.B. 4 made changes to the RODC Program, including replacing the integration payment and annual reimbursement with a monthly reimbursement payment. From September 1, 2017, until August 31, 2022, the rate was \$11.55 per day, per eligible child paid to the kinship family monthly. This rate increased to \$12.67 per day for each eligible child on September 1, 2022. Monthly reimbursement payments are time-limited and may be paid for up to 12 months. However, if DFPS determines there is good cause for an exception, payments may be made for up to an additional six months.

Good cause exceptions listed in the Texas Administrative Code, Section 700.1007 include:

- Identification, release, or location of a previously absent parent of the child;
- Awaiting the expiration of the timeline for an appeal of an order in a suit affecting the parent-child relationship;
- Allowing additional time for the caregiver to complete the approval process for adoption of the child;
- Waiting for approval of a child's placement from another state;
- Delayed determination of the child's Indian Child status, or awaiting the approval of the Indian Child's Tribe; and
- Any other circumstance surrounding the child or the caregiver DFPS deems to necessitate the extension.

An annual reimbursement of up to \$500 per year, per child for child-related expenses for up to 3 years or until the child turns 18 whichever occurs first may be provided, if DFPS transfers conservatorship of the child to the kinship caregiver, and the caregiver does not receive Permanency Care Assistance.

## Relative Placement Data Analysis

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As of May 31, 2024, a total of 6,5451 children were in a kinship placement. The data in this report represents state fiscal year 2024 year-to-date from September 2023 through May 2024, unless otherwise noted. As of fiscal year-to-date 2024, an average of 39.9 percent of children were placed with relatives or fictive kin (either verified or unverified). Comparatively, last fiscal year for the same timeframe, 41.5 percent of children were placed with relatives or fictive kin. The most recent national data (fiscal year 2022) indicates the national average for relative placement is 34 percent.<sup>2</sup>

### Kinship Caregiver Benefits

In Summer 2024, qualitative feedback about kinship caregivers' experiences with financial support was solicited from caseworkers serving families receiving payments. Caseworkers and caregivers felt strongly that financial support enabled caregivers to make the decision to serve as placement despite the economic burden of caring for additional children at short notice. Payments allowed caregivers to provide not only necessities to children but valuable childhood experiences as well.

*"My husband and I are placement for our 4 nieces. The kinship funds have helped with day-to-day expenses and the extra cost of food due to going from a household of 2 to household of 6 overnight. Recently the Kinship funds helped me provide a surprise birthday party for one of my nieces. She turned 9 and had never had a birthday party or even a birthday cake. The look on her face was priceless. Thank you for helping me take care of these precious children." – Kinship Caregiver*

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<sup>1</sup> DFPS data warehouse report SA\_09. Based on children in substitute care on May 31, 2024, and kinship placements of verified or unverified.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-report-30.pdf> (Newest available report as of May 9, 2023)

*“RODC payments have helped most of my caregivers during the time children were placed with them. Some of my families have 1-4 children placed with them overnight and that obviously increases expenses. The money they get for being a Kinship Caregiver assists them with startup costs and puts them at ease when they find out they will be receiving some extra money to help raise a child in their home.” – Kinship Caseworker*

*“Kinship payments were a huge help when disability payments and food stamps for children had not been processed or approved yet.” –Kinship Caregiver*

*“The kinship reimbursement is a tremendous help to the kinship caregivers who step in to take on the role of a parent for however long it is,” –Kinship Caseworker*

*“Helped provide beds and helped me keep my job as I would have been fired if y’all weren’t able to assist as we waited for CCS to kick in for the child care transfer.” – Kinship Caregiver*

*“The RODC reimbursements from our caregivers are more than helpful and are a continued need for Kinship to be the successful program that it is. The reimbursements have aided in keeping placements from breaking down many times in the last few years. Prior to the monthly reimbursements, the one time and annual payments, though helpful, did not make as big of a difference and impact as these do. Caregivers are deserving of what we can provide for them financially because the reality is, raising children unexpectedly is not cheap or free and sometimes money is a make or break in a caregivers decision to be placement.” –Kinship Caseworker*

*“Without benefits we were struggling to make ends meet. They help us afford to send the kids to school events, and make sure they have what they need.” –Kinship Caregiver*

*“Having a cushion of any kind in the current economy is a blessing.” – Kinship Caregiver*

## Kinship Home Disruptions

There were 12,650 unverified kinship placements which ended in fiscal year-to-date 2024. Of these, 1,202 (or 9.5 percent) kinship placements disrupted, meaning the placement ended and the child's next placement was in a non-kinship foster care living arrangement.<sup>3</sup> This compares to 14,573 unverified kinship placements that ended in fiscal year-to-date 2023 with 1,217 (or 8.4 percent) placements disrupting.<sup>4</sup>

## Disruption Reasons

Of the 1,202 disruptions noted above, disruptions reasons data was obtained for all children placed in a kinship home who had a subsequent move into a non-kinship paid foster care living arrangement.

In fiscal year-to-date 2024, the top reasons for disruption were the child's behavior (26 percent), the caregiver being unable to meet the child's needs (24 percent), and risk or actual abuse or neglect (20 percent). There was no change in the top three reasons for disruption from fiscal year-to-date 2023<sup>5</sup>.

This year, child's behavior accounted for a smaller percentage of all disruptions while risk or actual abuse or neglect accounted for a larger percentage. Notably, a much larger percentage of the disruptions in fiscal year-to-date 2024 were due to achieving therapeutic goals (12 percent compared to 3 percent in 2023 year-to-date)<sup>6</sup>. Figure one contains details on the top ten disruption reasons for non-verified kinship placements in fiscal year-to-date 2024 compared to the corresponding disruption reason in fiscal year-to-date 2023.

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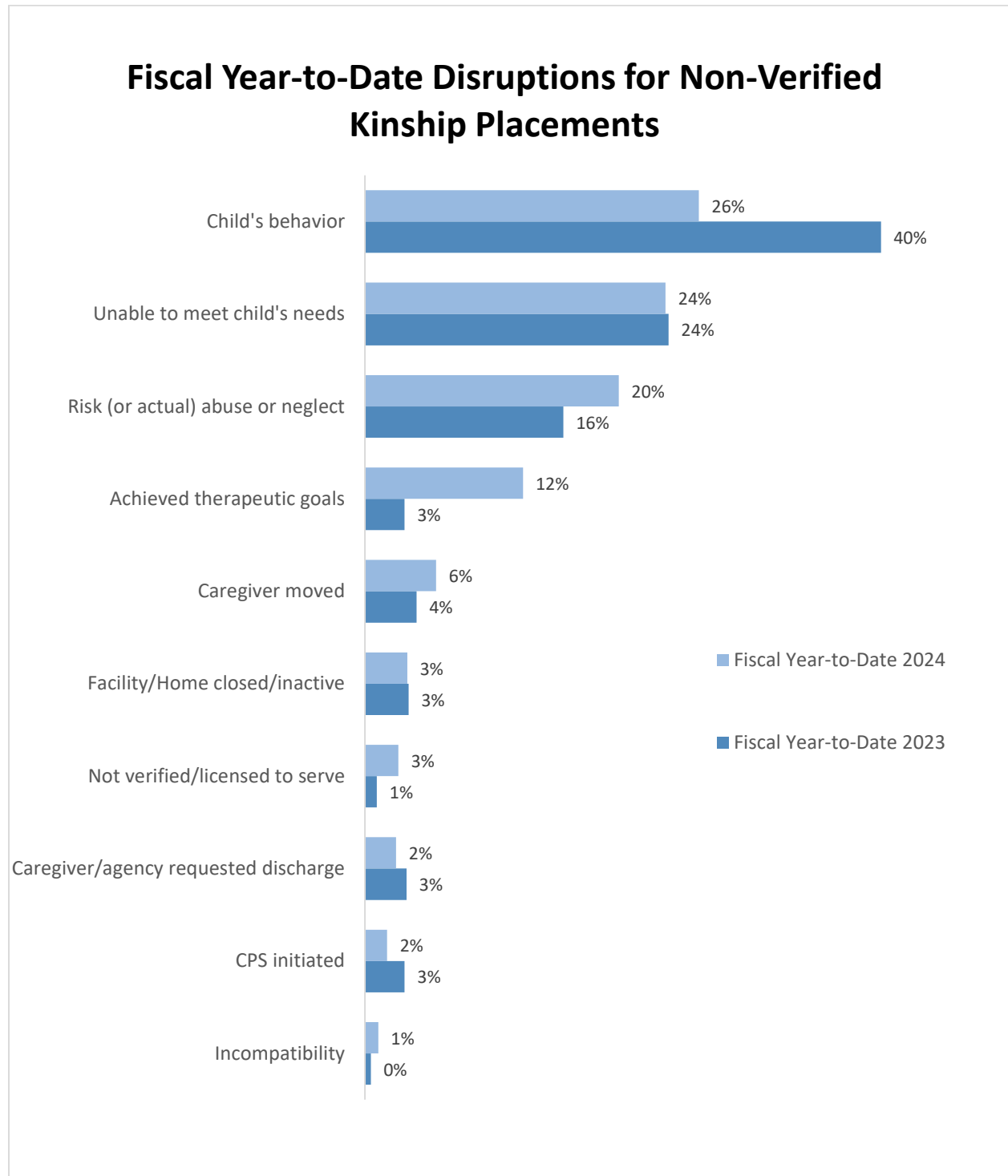
<sup>3</sup> A move from one relative placement to another relative placement does not count as a disruption.

<sup>4</sup> DFPS Management and Reporting Statistics report d110450.

<sup>5</sup> Note disruptions exclude "change of verification/license type," as most children did not experience a physical change in placement location, only a change in verification of the kinship caregiver's placement licensure type.

<sup>6</sup> All disruption reasons are selected based on the caseworker's judgement. Achieving therapeutic goals may include aging out of care or other reasons detailed in the caseworker's notes.

**Figure 1: Top Ten Fiscal Year-to-Date Disruption Reasons for Non-Verified Kinship Placements**



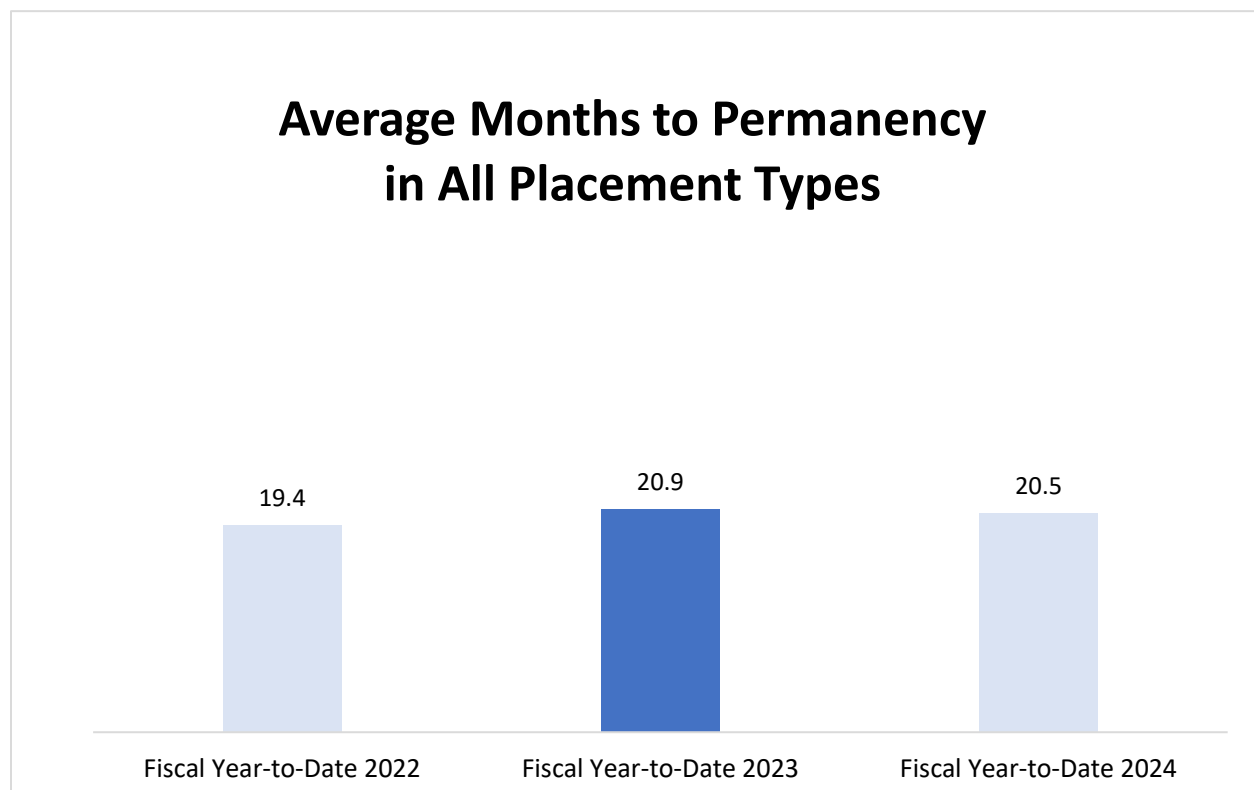


## Permanent Managing Conservatorship Timelines

During fiscal year-to-date 2024, the average time for a relative, who received a payment under H.B. 4, to be awarded PMC<sup>7</sup> of a child was 14.6 months compared to 16.8 months for the same period last year in 2023.<sup>8</sup>

Children in kinship care with relatives who received RODC assistance achieved permanency an average of 5.9 months sooner during the current fiscal year (data available: September 2023 through May 2024), when compared to children in all placement types for the same period. Children in all placement types have a time to permanency of 20.5 months compared to 14.6 months for those placed with relatives who receive RODC assistance for the fiscal year-to-date 2024. Figure two displays the average number of months to achieve permanency for children in all placement types for the past three fiscal years-to-date.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 2. Average Months to Permanency for Children in All Placement Types for Fiscal Years-to-Date 2022-24**



<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise noted, relative PMC means a relative or kin obtained PMC, but did not exit under the Permanency Care Assistance program.

<sup>8</sup> DFPS Management and Reporting Statistics report 110439. Methodology for this metric was updated in fiscal year 2021 to reflect changes in available financial data. This metric calculates permanency for all caregivers who obtained PMC in fiscal year-to-date 2024 and received H.B. 4 payments at any point in their time as caregiver.

<sup>9</sup> DFPS data warehouse report Executive Dashboard Fiscal Year 2018 forward - exd1\_03.

## 88th Legislative Funding and Initiatives

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### Kinship Support Appropriations

In DFPS appropriation Exceptional Item 02.E, \$6.9 million was funded to assist kinship caregivers with immediate concrete needs, license verification process, and enhanced Permanency Care Assistance.

A portion of this exceptional item assists kinship caregivers in providing for the immediate financial needs of children in foster care when suddenly placed in their care. It can provide up to \$1,000 for families. Many of these caregivers are retired or living on limited fixed incomes, which makes it difficult for them to purchase items such as beds, car seats, clothing, diapers, and other immediate needs required for the children to be placed with them.

Another portion of the exceptional item reimburses kinship caregivers related to expenses associated with the foster care licensing process, as becoming a verified foster home enables caregivers to access more financial resources.

In addition, Exceptional Item 02.E allows kinship caregivers who provide care for children with increased needs to receive increased payments through Enhanced Permanency Care Assistance.

Additionally, Exceptional Item 01.I was funded for \$3 million for the biennium to assist in increasing Single Source Continuum Contractors' mental health capacity for kinship. This funding aims to ensure placement stability and provide appropriate behavioral health resources and support for youth in kinship care while potentially increasing kinship placements and stability.

### Senate Bill 135

Senate Bill (S.B.) 135, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, requires DFPS to develop statewide electronic tracking to track the status of kinship home assessment requests. This system will enable DFPS to assess how quickly home assessments are being completed and approved. This tracking will allow DFPS to identify gaps in timely home studies completion to ensure foster children can be safely and quickly placed with relatives and identify factors on which home studies may be denied.

## Senate Bill 593

Per S.B. 593, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, DFPS and HHSC must contract with a vendor to provide an assessment of foster care and adoption rules and regulations and provide recommendations for how the state may streamline regulations while both prioritizing child safety and reducing barriers to entry for potential CPAs, residential child-care facilities, foster families, kinship families, and adoptive families.

In line with S.B. 593, DFPS and HHS submitted comments regarding the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Separate Licensing Standards for Relative and Kinship Foster Family published by the Federal Register (45 CFR Parts 1335 and 1356) for the Administration for Children and Family Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Comments were for clarification purposes and to communicate support of efforts that assist in expanding capacity for foster care children that allow them to reside in a safe placement with relatives. Comments submitted were for clarification purposes.

## Texas Child-Centered Care System

The Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C) System represents a complete transformation of the foster care system that includes an evidence-informed universal assessment of child needs, clearly defined service packages tailored to meet the specific needs of children, and a new foster care rate methodology that aligns payment with the cost of care.

One of the changes inherent in T3C is an “add-on” rate for CPAs who are working with and supporting verified kinship caregivers. This new add-on rate is intended to acknowledge, compensate, and incentivize more CPAs taking on work with kinship families.

Additionally, the 88th Legislature offered support for unverified kinship families by increasing the daily payment to eligible families, so that it coincides with the implementation of the T3C System by raising the amount to 50 percent of the Basic foster family pass-through amount under the new foster care rate structure. This will raise the rate from \$12.57 to \$23.45 per day beginning in January 2025.

## Conclusion

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The Texas kinship placement rate of 39.9 percent outperforms the most current national rate of children placed with a relative or other designated caregivers of 34 percent. The last three fiscal years of available data shows this gap has narrowed as the national rate has seen a slight improvement in placements with kinship caregivers while Texas' rate has declined.

Disruptions from kinship placements have increased from 8.4 percent to 9.5 percent between last fiscal year-to-date and this fiscal year-to-date. The top three reasons for disruption continue to be the child's behavior, the caregiver being unable to meet the child's needs, and risk or actual abuse or neglect.

Modification to the RODC payment program was initiated on September 1, 2017, via H.B. 4. These modifications allowed for an increase in the daily reimbursement rate paid to kinship caregivers beginning September 1, 2022.

Data regarding Time to Permanency indicates that children in kinship care with relatives who received RODC assistance achieved permanency 5.9 months earlier than those in all other placement types during fiscal year-to-date 2024.

The 88th Legislature initiatives are assisting DFPS in working toward better outcomes to foster children and the families who care for them.

## List of Acronyms

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<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Name</b>
CPA	Child Placing Agency
DFPS	Department of Family and Protective Services
H.B.	House Bill
HHSC	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
PMC	Permanent Managing Conservatorship
RODC	Relative and Other Designated Caregiver
S.B.	Senate Bill
T3C	Texas Child-Centered Care System