



Five Key Questions to Assess the Fiscal Impact of the Guardianship Assistance Program

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States are obligated to achieve permanence for children in foster care who cannot return home or be adopted. The new federal Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) can help states achieve permanence, particularly for those children living with relatives.

In these challenging economic times, assessing the fiscal impact of GAP is a critical first step.

Based on research on the experience of states that have subsidized guardianship programs, and those that have also applied to take the GAP option, there are at least five critical questions that states should ask in evaluating the fiscal impact of GAP:

- 1. How many children does your state have who could be eligible for the federal Guardianship Assistance Program?**
 - Has your state assessed how many of the children in foster care in your state meet the eligibility requirements for GAP? And if so, how?
 - How many children in foster care in your state currently meet the eligibility requirements for GAP?
 - How many children are in foster care in licensed relative homes?
 - How does the state define relative? Do you want to expand the definition?
 - What percentage of these children are in Title IV-E eligible homes?
 - How many children are in foster care with relatives who could become licensed?
 - How many children have already left foster care to live with relative guardians who could meet all of the GAP eligibility requirements?
 - How many children do you expect would benefit from GAP, including those already in guardianship, where relevant?
 - To what extent will you provide guardianship assistance payments to children in foster care with relatives who do not qualify for federal assistance?

- 2. Does your state currently operate a state-funded subsidized guardianship program?**
 - How closely do the eligibility requirements for your program follow the eligibility requirements for the federal GAP?
 - How many children currently are in the program?
 - How much of the cost of your existing state-funded subsidized guardianship program could be offset with GAP funds?
 - If you take the GAP option, will you reinvest state funds no longer needed for your subsidized guardianship program to support other children being raised by relative guardians? What proportion of the funds will be used for this purpose?

3. **At what level will you set your GAP payments? Federal law says they cannot exceed foster care payments.**
 - At the same level as foster care payments?
 - At the same level as adoption assistance payments?

4. **What administrative savings can you expect when you move children from foster care to guardianship in GAP?**
 - What requirements for case plan, case reviews, caseworker visits and ongoing oversight of the case will no longer be required once a child is in guardianship with a relative?
 - What court costs will no longer be incurred?
 - What other costs will you no longer incur for these cases?
 - What similar administrative savings can you expect from moving children in foster care with relatives who are not eligible for GAP to state supported guardianship?

5. **What impact will the availability of GAP have on the number of children in foster care with relatives?**
 - Have you accounted for the fact that reunification and adoption must be determined to be inappropriate for a child before guardianship can be approved? In some states, adoptions by relatives increased as discussions got underway about permanence and the differences between guardianship and adoption.
 - Do you currently divert large numbers of children to placements with relatives outside of foster care?
 - As a result of the identification and notice requirements in Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, do you expect more relatives will express interest in becoming licensed foster parents when information about GAP is available? Federal law requires that the notice to a child's relatives after the child is removed from the custody of his or her parents must explain the options the relative has to participate in the care of the child, the requirements for becoming a foster parent, and, where applicable, the opportunity to benefit from the GAP.

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