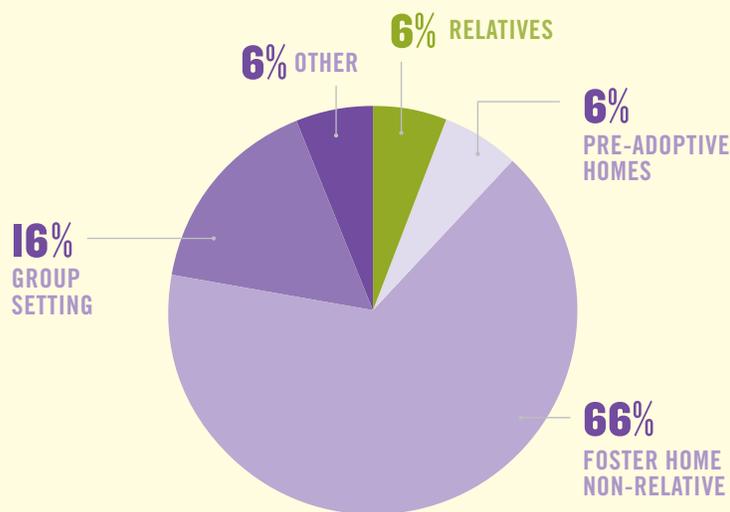


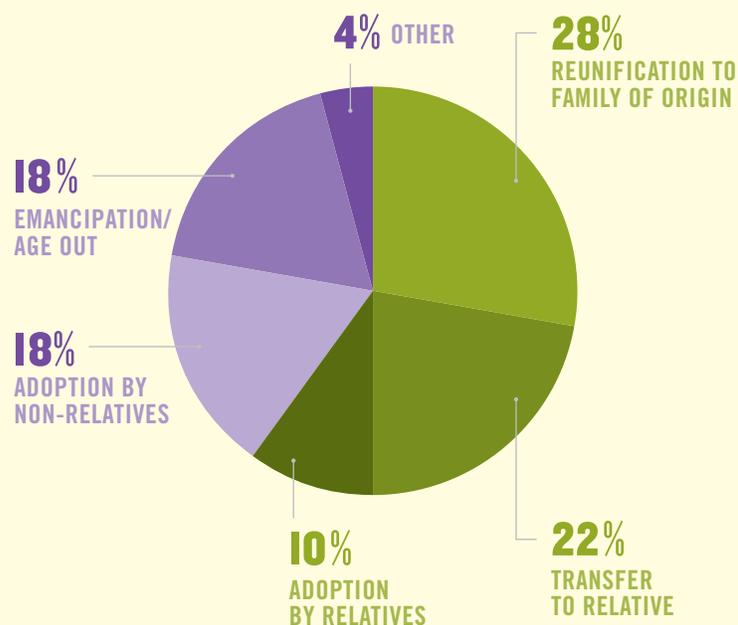
Success for kids in foster care relies on strengthening families

The majority of children leave care to live with their families

THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE ARE PLACED IN NON-RELATIVE HOMES



3 OUT OF EVERY 5 KIDS WHO EXIT FOSTER CARE GO TO LIVE WITH FAMILY



Relative placement (Green) Non-relative placement (Purple)

WHEN CHILDREN EXIT FOSTER CARE TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES, THEY HAVE A BETTER SENSE OF BELONGING AND STAY CONNECTED TO THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR CULTURE

Research shows children who exit to family have better outcomes, but continue to face challenges

Families need assistance with:

- Financial support when they take in relative children
- Coordinated health and mental health services for children who experienced trauma
- Educational stability for kids transitioning to new environments
- Ability to connect to community resources

NOT ALL CHILDREN WHO EXIT THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM HAVE PERMANENT FAMILY CONNECTIONS

To help support youth who turn 18 while in foster care, Virginia has started the Fostering Futures program

In this program youth 18 to 21 years old receive:

- Case management
- Housing
- Financial aid for education
- Job training
- Health insurance

* All sources available at vakids.org/kids-count-data/virginia-data

Provide Financial Support for Kinship Care

When parents are not able to take care of their children, grandparents or other relatives often step in to take on this responsibility. Children can be removed from their home and placed into foster care for various reasons, including parental substance use disorder, physical or mental abuse, and/or neglect.

Often, children enter into foster care in Virginia having experienced a great deal of trauma, and the additional experience of being removed from their family is traumatic in and of itself. Placements with kin have important benefits for children and help to buffer the trauma of removal, including having a continued sense of family, the opportunity to retain their family heritage, and a sense of belonging and cultural roots.^[1] A kinship care program often results in a permanent arrangement that can be as emotionally secure as adoption and keeps children from remaining in foster care until they reach adulthood.^[2]

Kinship assistance includes support services that foster protective factors—such as parental resilience, parenting skills, and social connections—to ensure the safety of children. Relatives caring for children placed in kinship care currently have little or no access to the financial support and services that licensed relative foster parents receive. They often lack information about how to access services for the children. A kinship guardian assistance program (KinGAP) provides a way for children to exit the foster care system with a permanent placement even when adoption is not an option. KinGAP offers the same financial support as adoption or continued foster care placement.

Title IV-e of the federal Social Security Act provides approximately 50 percent of the funding for KinGAP for each child eligible for such placement. As in adoption and foster care, the additional funding is the responsibility of the state or locality.

Call to Action

During the 2018 General Assembly session, please encourage policymakers to support these efforts to improve Virginia's foster care system:

- ✓ **Establish a kinship guardianship assistance program in the commonwealth of Virginia:** Voices will advocate for Virginia to adopt a kinship guardianship assistance program that will facilitate child placements with relatives and ensure permanency for children for whom adoption or being returned home are not appropriate permanency options. We will advocate for regulations to ensure the use of best practices for kinship diversion throughout the state.

To find out more about opportunities to promote resilience and address childhood trauma, sign up for legislative updates from Voices for Virginia's Children at www.vakids.org.

^[1] Bissell, M. & Miller, J., 2004, "Achieving Permanency through Subsidized Guardianship," A New America, www.newamerica.net.

^[2] *ibid.*