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Webinar Series, Part 1:

# Understanding the Plight of Kinship Caregivers

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# How to Join the Webinar

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<https://global.gotowebinar.com/join/730854543543522818/795501384>

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# Who are our kinship families?



# Types of Kinship Care We Are Discussing

## Voluntary Kinship Care (informal)

- Child welfare system is/was involved, but **no formal foster care**
  - Child could be with relative through a Probate Court Guardianship or informal arrangement
  - Child welfare system is not involved in placement
  - May be caring for a child with or without legal custody or guardianship

## Kinship Foster Care (formal)

- Child placed in foster care with a relative either through **court removal or Voluntary Placement Agreement**

NOTE: We are NOT discussing **private** kinship care – when there is no child welfare involvement and parents/guardian arrange for care with kin directly

# Who is a relative?

For funding purposes, a relative is an adult related to the child by blood, adoption, or marriage within the fifth degree of kinship.

- Mother
- Father
- Stepparents
- Siblings
- Step-Siblings
- Grandparents (great, great-great, great-great- great)
- Aunts and Uncles (great, great-great)
- First cousins
- First cousins once-removed
- Nieces and nephews
- *Spouse of any relative on list (even if divorced or deceased)*
- For placement priority, only includes an adult who is a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or sibling of the child
- Non-Relative Extended Family Members are NOT relatives for funding but can request temporary placement

# Demographics of Kinship Caregivers – national data

- **Senior Citizens:** 15 – 20% of relative caregivers are over the age of 60
- **Fixed Incomes:** 39% of kinship households live below the federal poverty line
- **Disabled:** 38% of kinship caregivers have a limiting condition or disability
- **Limited advanced training:** Kinship foster parents receive little, if any, advanced preparation in assuming their role as caregivers.

# Grandparents Raising Grandchildren – Most Likely to be Among the Hidden Poor

- Federal Poverty Level is a poor measure of poverty – many more kinship caregivers are financially insecure
  - “Among households in which single older adults are the primary caregivers of their minor grandchildren, 35.3 percent of families had incomes below the FPL, but **72.8 percent had incomes below the Elder Index.**”
  - “incomes of older couples supporting minor grandchildren were below the FPL in 15.9 percent of families, while **26.7 percent of families had incomes above the FPL but below the Elder Index.**”

<http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/Documents/PDF/2015/HiddenPoor-brief-aug2015.pdf>

# Common Challenges for Kinship Families

## *Stepping Up for Kin* a 2012 Report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation finds:

- Kinship caregivers confront financial, health, and social challenges
  - Financial burdens even more severe when kin are already caring for other children, take in large sibling groups, are retired, or are living on a fixed income.
- Many grandparents and other relatives raising children also struggle with feelings of guilt and shame about the family circumstances that led to the caregiving arrangement.
- These challenges are all the more daunting when caring for children who have experienced trauma

# Why do kinship families matter?



# Kinship families are the backbone of our child welfare system

- Hidden in plain sight - kinship families are the largest child welfare system in America
  - Extended family members and close family friends care for more than **2.7 million** children in this country
  - Over the past decade **the number of children in kinship care grew six times faster** than the number of children in the general population
  - **287,996** children in California live in homes with grandparent householders where grandparents are responsible for them - of these children, **80,248** have no parents present in the home.
  - **In California, 19,635** of our state's 63,000 foster children are in kinship placements

# Relative Placement... It's the Law!



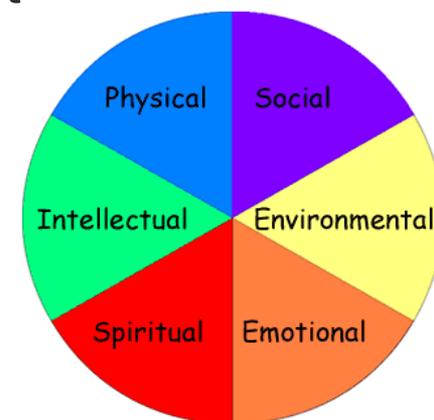
Federal law **requires** relatives to be given preference in the placement of foster children:

- States must “consider giving preference to an adult relative over a nonrelated caregiver when determining placement of a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all of the relevant state child protections standards.” **42 USC §671(a)(15)(A)**
- States must “within 30 days after the removal of a child from the custody of the parent or parents of the child, the State shall exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents)...” **42 USC §671(a)(29)**

# Relative Caregivers Support Child Well-Being

Research has shown that children in kinship care have:

- Fewer prior placements
- More frequent and consistent contact with birth parents and siblings,
- Felt fewer negative emotions about being placed in foster care than children placed with non-relatives
- More likely to graduate from high school
- Less likely to runaway



# Improving Child Welfare Outcomes Hinges on Supporting Kin

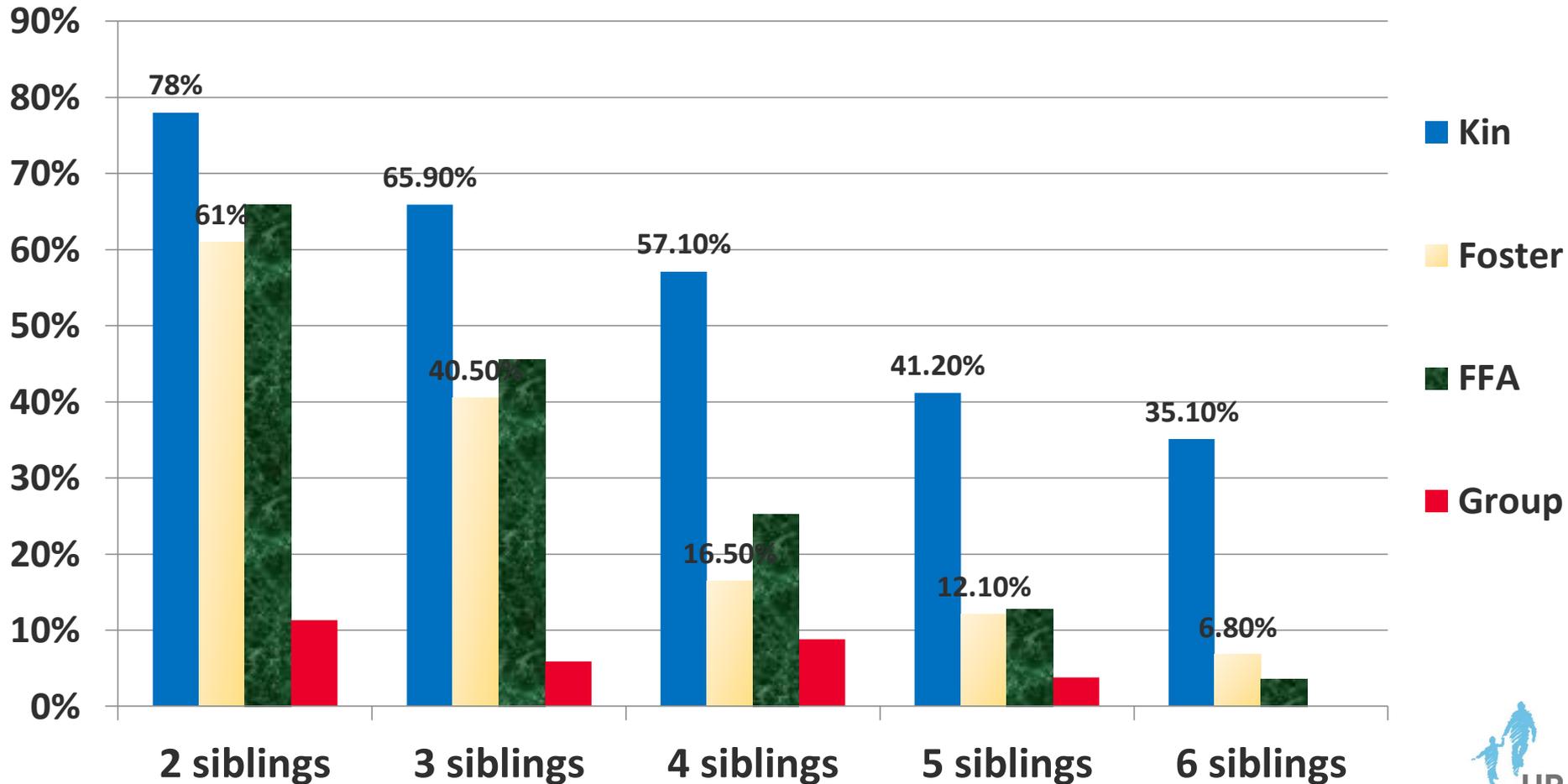


Lots of attention being paid to:

- Reducing the number of children raised in congregate settings
- Ensuring every child is raised in a family
- Moving children to permanency as quickly as possible
- Reducing the number of placement changes

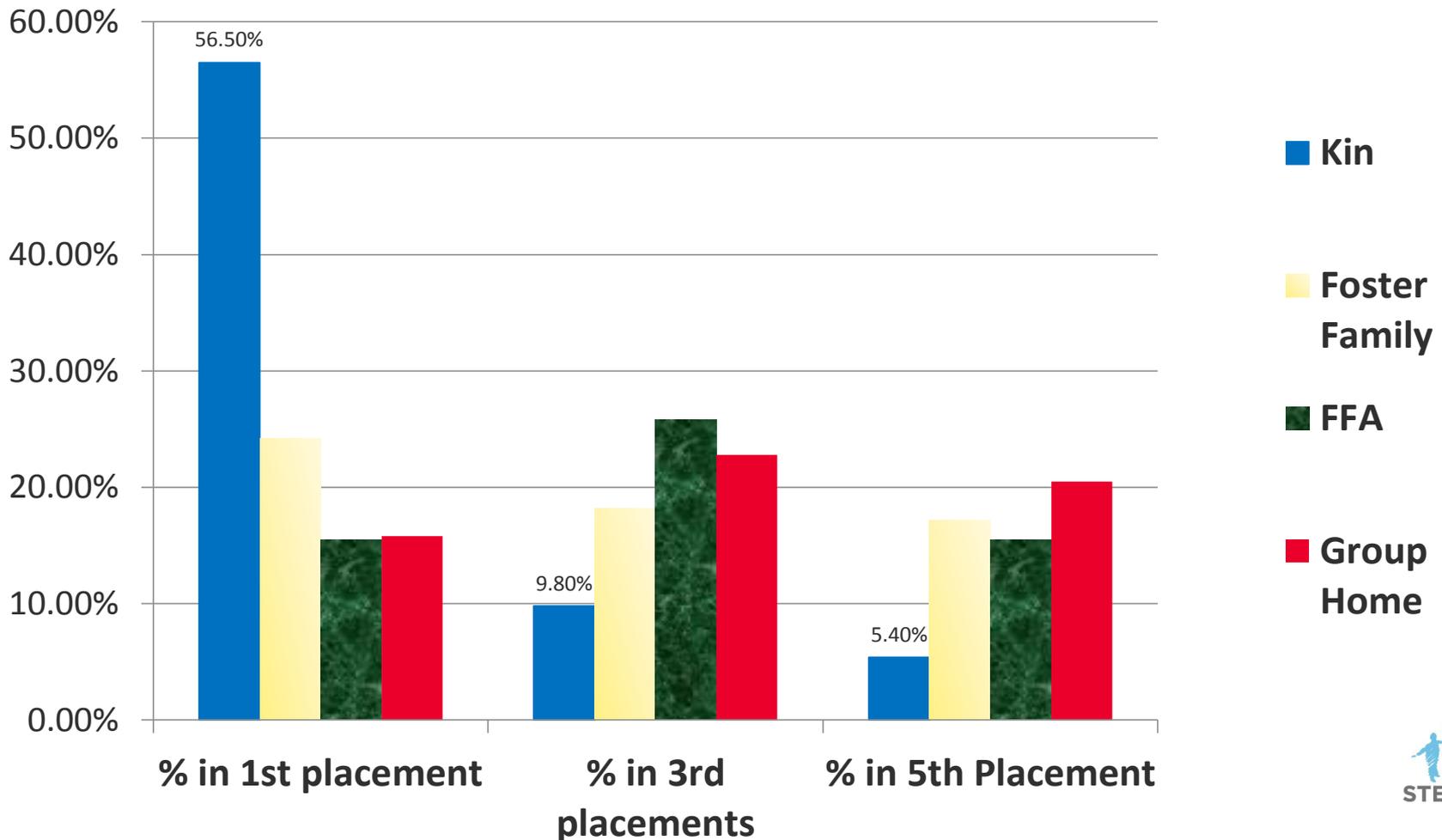
# Kin Caregivers Keep Sibling Groups Together

% of Siblings ALL Placed Together



# Kin Provide Greater Stability – Especially for Older Foster Youth

Youth Ages 14 - 17 Still in Care at 12 Months

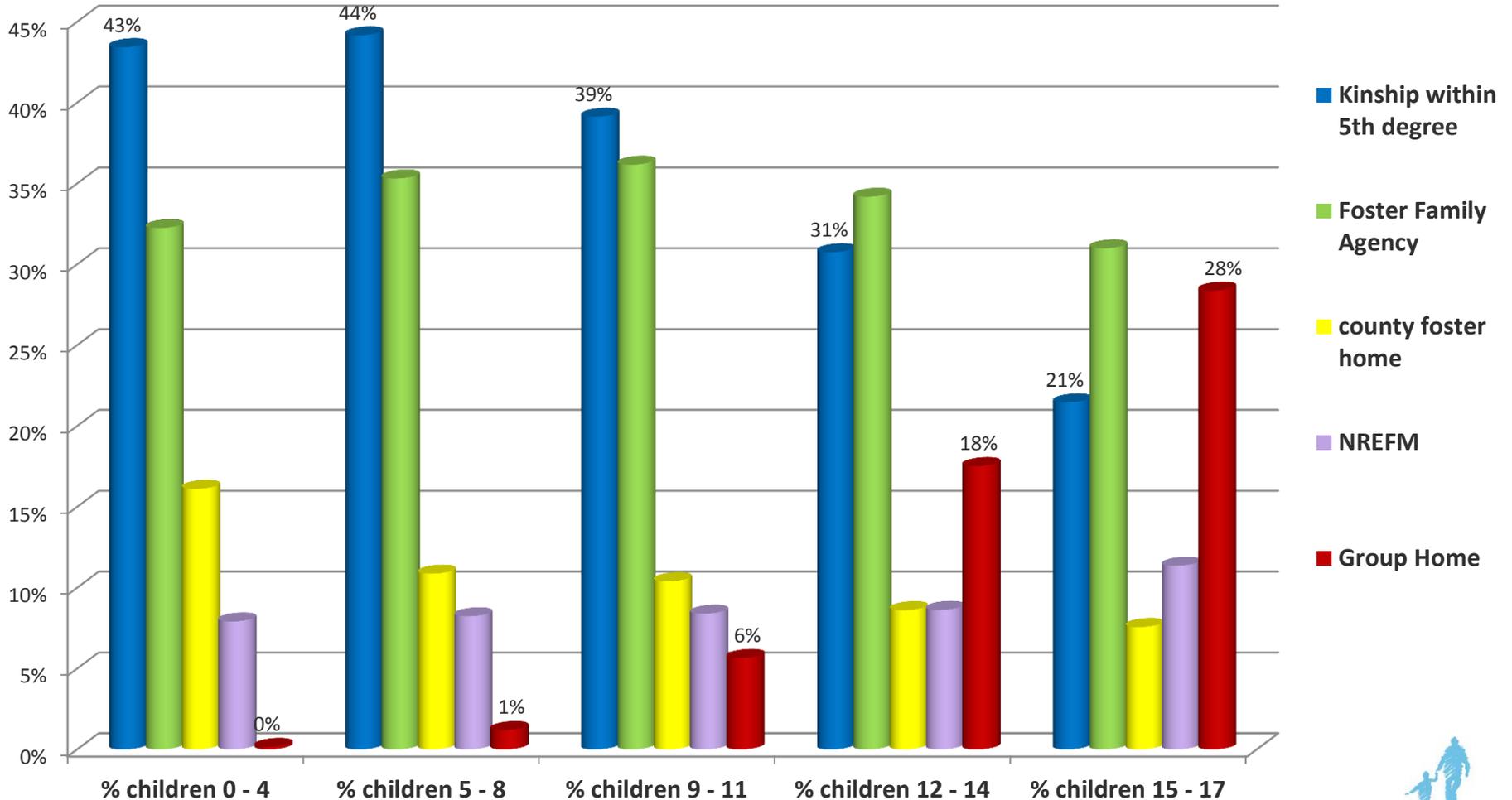


# Relatives are key to reducing California's reliance on congregate care

Group home placement is associated with **poor outcomes** for children and youth:

- Significantly increased risk of arrest (Hernandez, 2008)
- Higher rates of re-entry into foster care after reunification than children who are reunified from family-based care (Barth, 2002)
- Less likely to graduate and more likely to drop-out of school than children and youth in family-based care (Wiegmann et al, 2014)

# Children More Likely to Be Placed in Group Home and Less Likely With Kin the Older They Get



# How are our kinship families supported?



# The Story of Farrah, Anne and Naomi



**Farrah**

- Aspires to be a chef.
- Has experienced severe abuse and neglect. Multiple calls made to child protective services
- Removed from her home and formally **placed into foster care with her grandmother.**
- **Farrah is federally eligible**



**Anne**

- Aspires to be a chef.
- Has experienced severe abuse and neglect. Multiple calls made to child protective services
- Removed from her home and formally **placed into foster care with her grandmother.**
- **Anne is NOT federally eligible**



**Naomi**

- Aspires to be a chef.
- Has experienced severe abuse and neglect. Multiple calls made to child protective services
- **Naomi's grandmother has taken her at the urging of a social worker.**
- **There is no foster care placement and no VPA.**

# Fiscal Structure for Youth with Relatives

**Youth**

(Abused, Abandoned,  
or Neglected)

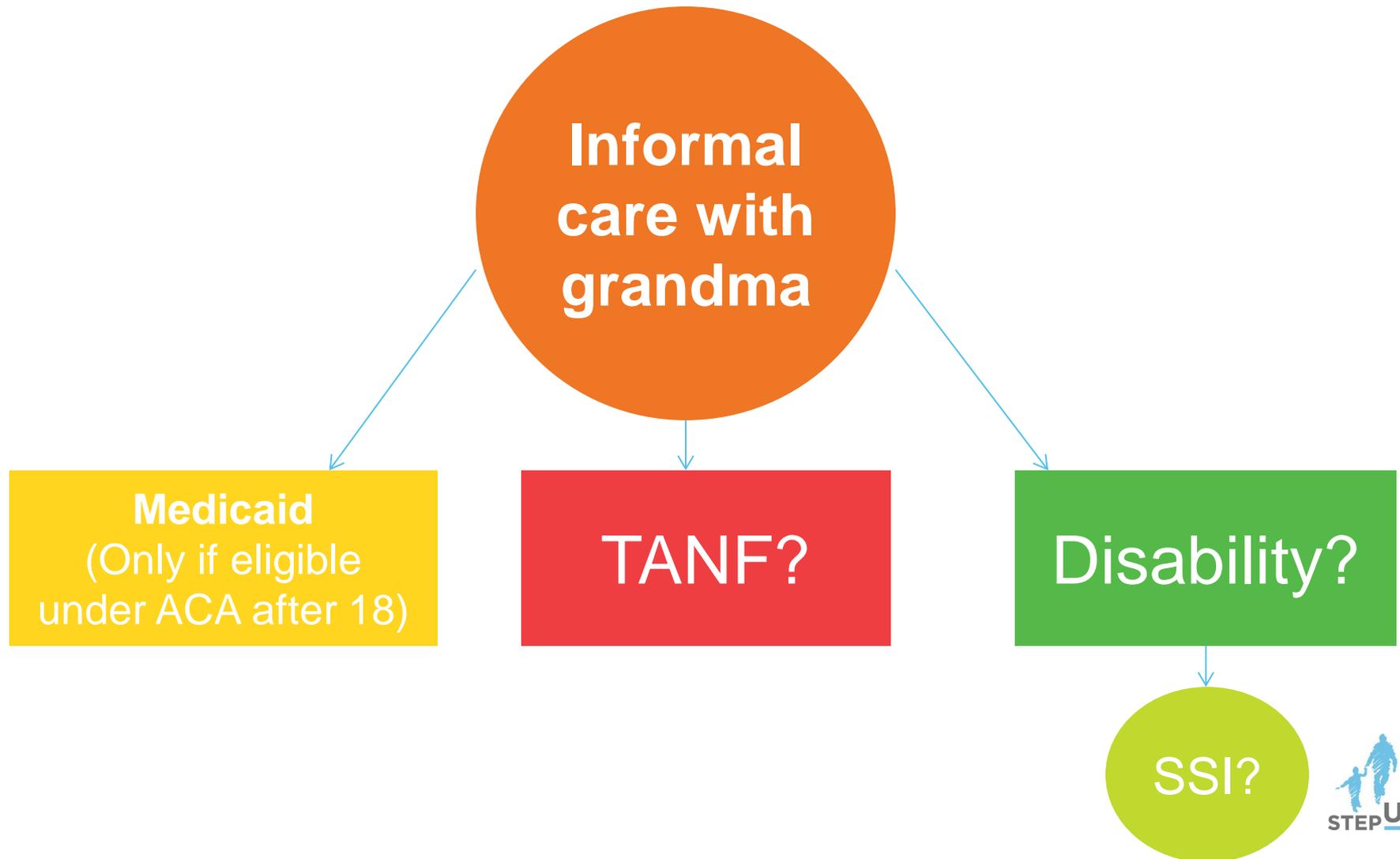


Formal  
care with  
grandma

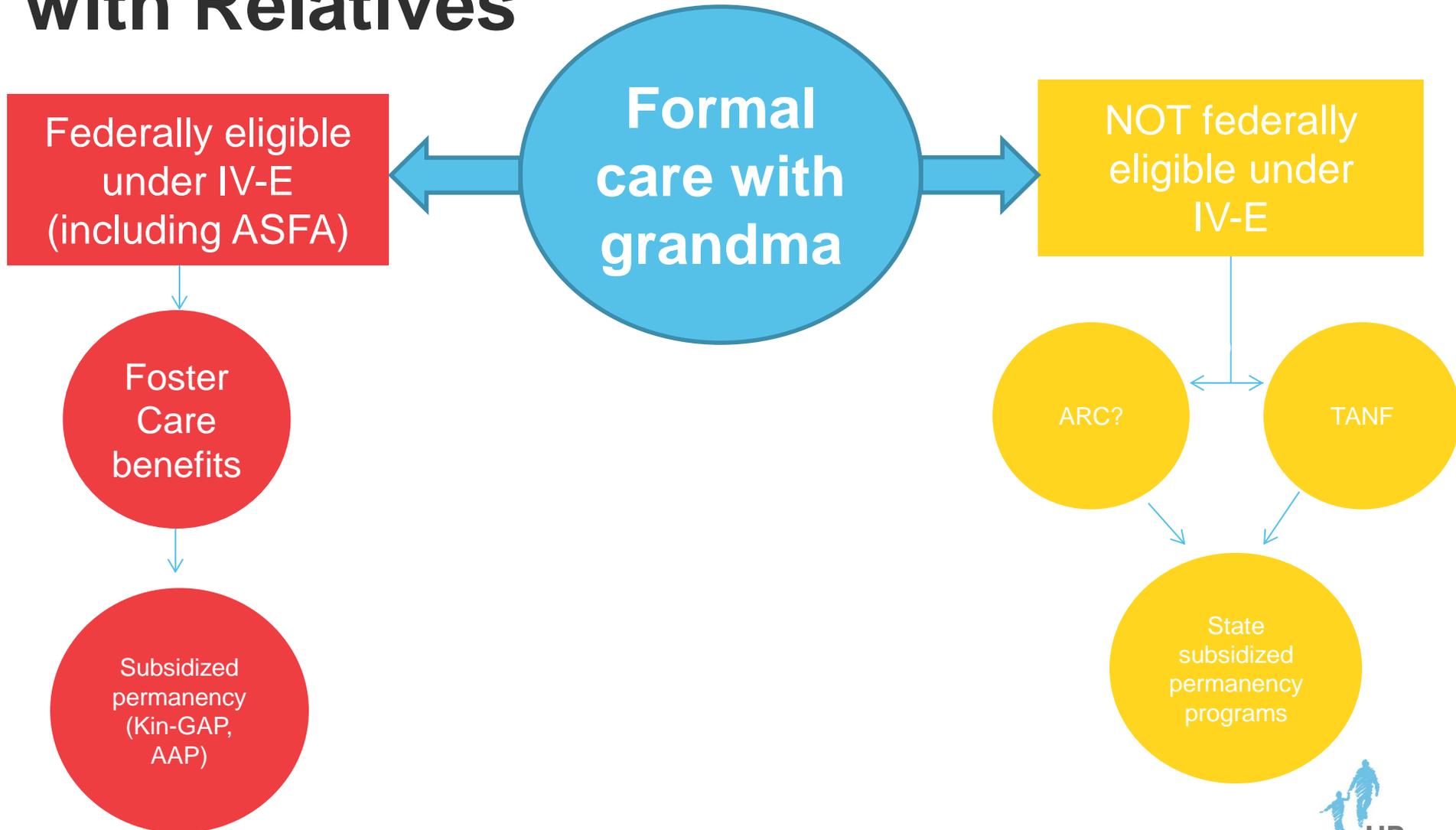


Informal  
care with  
grandma

# Fiscal Structure for Youth with Relatives



# Fiscal Structure of Supports for Youth with Relatives



# The Problem with Federal Foster Care Funding for Youth in Formal Care



# Federal Foster Care Benefits:

## Basic Eligibility

1. Categorical requirements of the child (age, residency, immigration status, deprivation)
2. Conditions of removal from the home and placement into approved/licensed facility (ASFA) - OR - **Voluntary Placement Agreement**
3. Financial eligibility

# Federal Foster Care Benefits: Financial Eligibility

To receive **federal** foster care benefits, the youth must meet the 1996 AFDC criteria **in the home of removal** in the month of removal or one of the six months prior to removal

In 1996, income limit for a family of 3 to qualify for AFDC was \$723\*\*

**BY CONTRAST:** The income limit for the **same** family to qualify for cash assistance today is \$1,169\*\*

**What that means:** a child can be removed from a parent receiving welfare benefits and **STILL** not qualify for federal foster care benefits

. **IMPORTANT:** Federal test has **nothing** to do with the needs of the child or the needs of the relative where the child is placed

\*\* California income eligibility limits

# Little Known Facts re Federal Eligibility

- Federal eligibility is a **one-time determination** done at removal
- Federal eligibility does not depend on the type of placement
  - A youth who is not federally eligible in a relative home, is also not federally eligible in a group home
- Eligibility for federal foster care benefits is distinct from meeting federal home approval standard
  - A relative in California who meets federal home approval standards is still denied foster care benefits when the child does not meet the 1996 welfare standards
- Only about 40% of youth nationwide are eligible for federal foster care benefits (in FY2011), down from 54% in the mid-1990s.

# Approved Relative Caregiver Funding Option Program



# Eligibility for ARC



## Criteria for relatives to receive assistance:

1. Child must be placed through a **county that has opted into** ARC (once a county opts in, participation in ARC is continuous until county opts out or funding for ARC is reduced)
2. Home must **meet approval standards**
3. Child placed with approved relative **in California** (NOTE: ARC can be paid when youth placed out of county)
4. Child must have been removed from the home and under **CWS or Probation jurisdiction**. Includes:
  - Youth with suitable placement orders through probation
  - Non-minor dependents
  - Youth placed through a Voluntary Placement Agreement
  - Undocumented youth
5. Child is **not eligible for federal financial participation**.

# ARC Application: Relatives Must Opt Into ARC



- An ARC Program application must be completed for each child.
- ARC application contains questions related to CalWORKs eligibility to determine the county share of cost. The CalWORKs questions **do NOT factor into the child's eligibility for ARC.**
- Approved relatives applying for ARC **do NOT have to complete:**
  - Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System
  - Face-to-face interview
  - Photo-image

# General Overview & Program Detail

## Benefit Details:

- Rate is equal to the AFDC-FC basic rate paid to licensed foster families which varies by age of the child.
  - Annual adjustments are made to the basic rate January 1 each year based on changes to CNI (on a calendar year basis)
- Relatives **may** receive educational travel reimbursement.
  - Calculated separately on a per-child basis, pursuant to current state guidelines.
- **Not** eligible for:
  - County supplementary clothing allowances
  - Specialized care increments (SCI)
  - Infant supplements.



# General Overview & Program Detail

## Additional program elements:

- Relative is not eligible to receive additional CalWORKs payments on behalf of a child receiving funding under the new program
- Payment under this program is exempt as income in determining eligibility for other benefits, subject to federal law.
- Allows for the suspension of child support collections, consistent with the treatment of AFDC-FC eligible caregivers.
- Out-of-County Placements: Children placed out of county are eligible for ARC if the county of jurisdiction opted in
- Out-of-State Placements: The child must reside in CA to receive payments under the new program

# Federal Foster Care Benefits vs. ARC vs. Child-Only TANF

Benefits for Farah and Naomi vary greatly depending on if the child receives foster care funding vs. child-only TANF

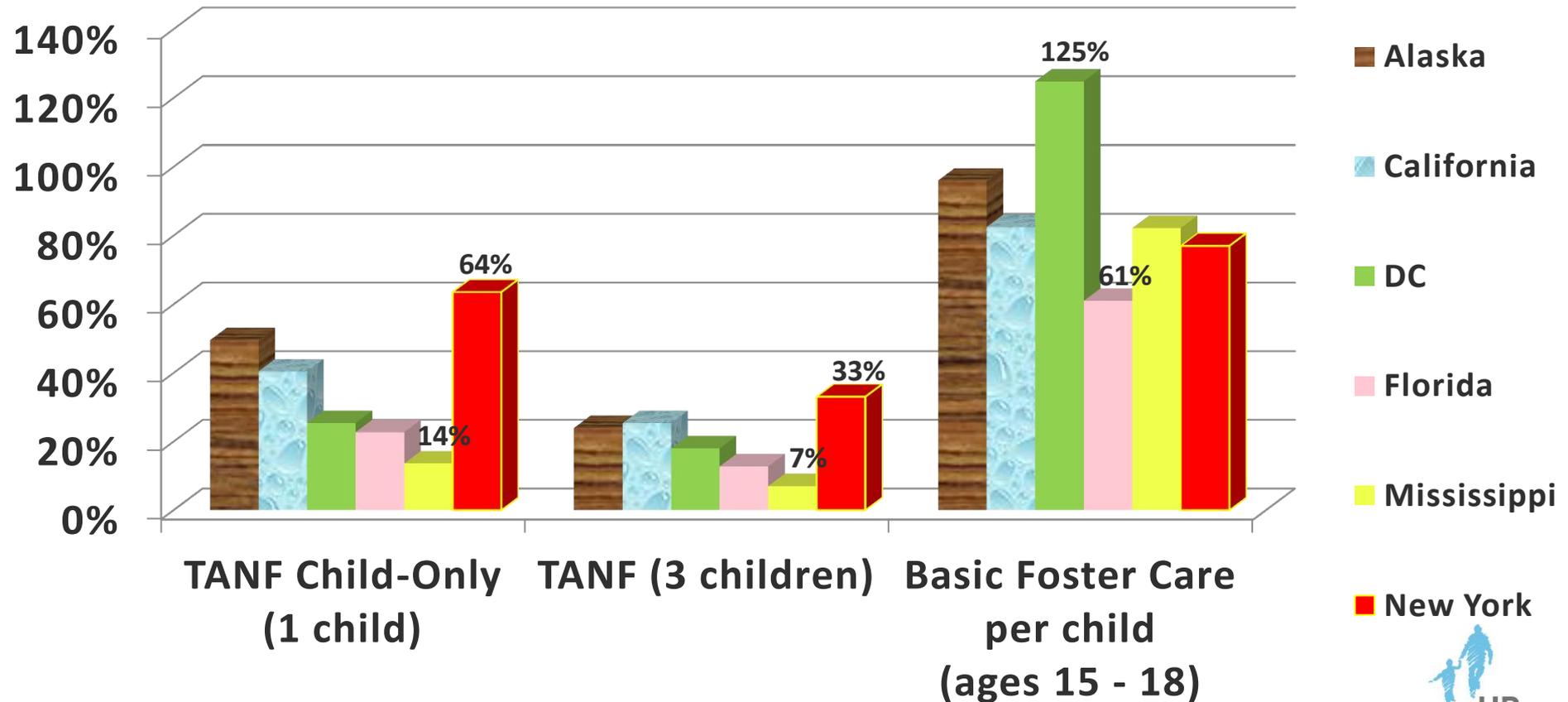
<b>Farrah:</b> if federally eligible and placed in foster care with a fully approved relative	<b>Minimum of \$859 (CA foster care benefit)</b>
<b>Anne:</b> <u>not</u> federally eligible and placed in foster care with a fully approved relative	<b>\$859 (ARC benefit – if county opted into ARC)</b> <b>\$387 (CalWORKS if county has not opted into ARC)</b>
<b>Naomi:</b> living with relative outside foster care	<b>\$387 (CalWORKS aka TANF)</b>

# What if Farrah, Anne and Naomi have special needs?

	<b>Farrah - federally eligible and placed with grandma</b>	<b>Anne– NOT federally eligible placed thru ARC County with grandma</b>	<b>Anne– NOT federally eligible and placed thru County that did NOT opt into ARC with grandma</b>	<b>Naomi – NOT in foster care with grandma</b>
<b>Child with severe emotional disturbance and qualifies for Specialized Care Increment</b>	\$1,400 (LA County rate)	\$859	\$387	\$387
<b>Child with autism who is a regional center consumer</b>	\$2,265 - \$3,265	\$859	\$387	\$387
<b>Youth who is parenting</b>	\$1,270	\$1,246	\$636	\$636

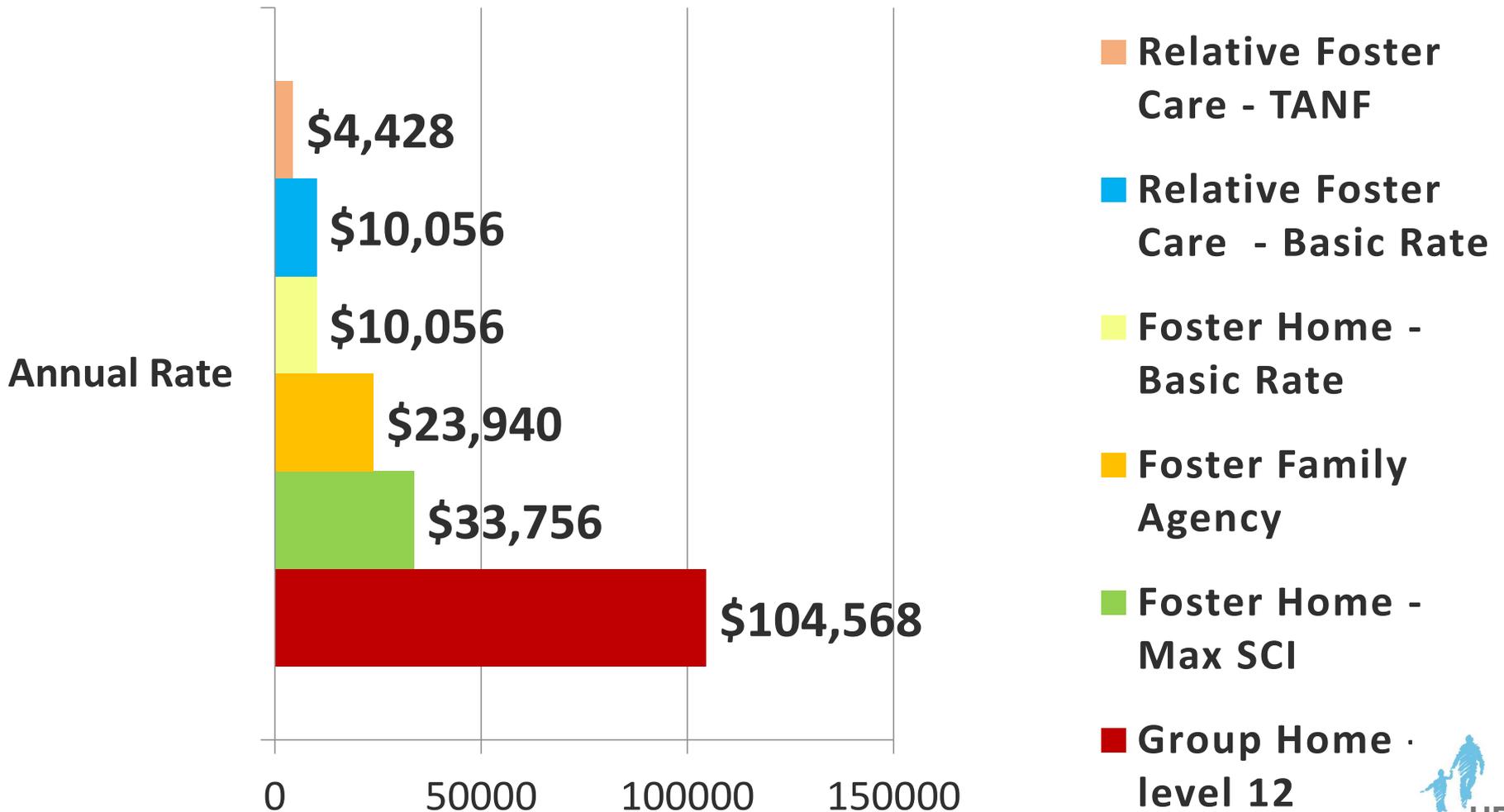
# Reliance on TANF to Support Kinship Families Sets Families Up to Fail

TANF child-only vs. TANF 3-child grant vs. Basic Foster Care Rate as a % of the Estimated Cost of Providing for the Needs of a 15 – 18 Year Old



# Huge Expense to States if Family Placements Fail and Children Are Placed in Group Care

(California Example)



# Beyond Monthly Assistance



# Relatives Caring for Foster Children Receive Fewer Services and Supports than Non-Relatives

- Mental health and drug treatment services
- Transportation?
- Respite
- Child care
- Training
- Case management
- Educational supports/tutors
- Assistance in navigating bureaucracy – and they often have to secure their own funding and assistance (as opposed to the non-relatives)
- Less likely to be involved with organized peer support groups.

# What the research says

- Kinship caregivers are “substantially less likely than foster caregivers to receive financial support, parent training, peer support groups, and respite care”
  - **Less than 12% receive TANF (even though nearly 100% are eligible)**
  - Only **42% receive SNAP** benefits
  - Only **42% receive Medicaid** (nearly 100% are eligible)
  - Only **17%** of low-income working kinship families receive **child care assistance**
  - Only **15%** of low-income kinship families receive **housing assistance**

# Informal Caregivers Have Even Less Support

- Relatives who are taking care of children in informal care settings receive almost no support other than TANF / CalWORKs.
- No eligibility for AFDC-FC (foster care), Kin-GAP, or AAP benefits.
- Have to navigate bureaucracy to obtain own funding and assistance.
- Frequently but erroneously denied support because relationship with child is not clear (e.g., denied CalWORKs because mother is still being aided, denied attempt to enroll in school, etc.).

# Informal Caregivers Cannot Access Any of the Protections of the Child Welfare System

- No family reunification services
- No access to the foster youth education rights
  - Immediate enrollment
  - Right to remain in school of origin
  - Foster Youth Services
  - Partial credits
  - Graduation rules
- No attorney, social worker, or judge
- No access to wraparound services
- Less support as youth transition to adulthood – no extended foster care, independent living services, Chafee grants, priority enrollment at community colleges

# Looking Ahead



*“Kinship caregivers are often required to provide the same nurturance and support for children in their care that non-kin foster parents provide, with fewer resources, greater stressors, and limited preparation. This situation suggests that kinship care policies and practices must be mindful of and attentive to the many challenges kin caregivers face.”*

-- Rob Geen, “The Evolution of Kinship Care Policy and Practice”

# Adequately Supporting Relatives Strengthens Our Child Welfare System

- Relatives are the backbone of our child welfare system – both in supporting children that come into care and enabling children to avoid foster care
- Adequately supporting relatives is critical to the health of our system:
  - Improves child well-being
  - Increases placement stability
  - Reduces reliance on restrictive congregate care settings
  - Enhances permanency
  - Improves child safety

# Change is on the horizon

- But we have to make sure that relatives are accounted for in these reforms in concrete and meaningful ways
  - Continuum of Care Reform (AB 403) and implementation activities
  - Child-Centered Foster Care rate (AB 878)
  - Foster Parent and Relative Recruitment, Retention and Support Program (\$17.4 million in 2015 state budget)
  - Waiver counties
  - Realignment growth funds
  - Creating parity for 602 foster youth

# In-Depth Analysis of These Opportunities and Look at Certain Populations in Kinship Series

**October 21, 10 a.m.:**

[Recruiting, Retaining and Supporting Kinship Caregivers](#)

**November 18, 10 a.m.:**

[Continuum of Care Reform and What it Means for Kinship Families](#)

**December 9, 10 a.m.:** [Probation Youth and Kinship Care](#)

**January 20, 10 a.m.:** [Kinship Diversion](#)

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# Sharing & Questions?

89.3 KPCC

“ Mondays, I have therapy with Jose. Wednesday, I have to take him to a program in the police station. Thursday, I have to go with Pablo to the therapy. That's my life.”

#IamSouthLA