

Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) Expanded Eligibility

2023-25 Agency Request Legislation

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$2,609,000 General Fund-State in the 2023-25 biennium to support kinship caregivers and foster parents to become legal guardians for children in foster care by expanding eligibility for GAP. This proposal will support more children in exiting the foster care system to nurturing placements with relatives through legal guardianship.



OVERVIEW:

- ✓ GAP provides financial assistance payments to licensed caregivers who decide to become long-term guardians to children in foster care. Guardianship allows children to leave foster care while staying connected to their family of origin over the long term.
- ✓ Unfortunately, relative caregivers are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-relative caregivers. Without financial support, many caregivers face significant barriers to being a long-term or permanent placement for children and youth.

DCYF is proposing a state-funded GAP program in order to:

- Expand eligibility to guardians not eligible for federal reimbursement because of the household income at the time the child was removed.
- Expand eligibility to “suitable persons” like family friends, godparents, and other non-relative “kin.”
- Expand eligibility to guardianships established by the tribal court of a federally recognized tribe located in Washington.

DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity
- Safely reduce the number/rate of children in out-of-home care

COST:

\$2.609M

Contact:

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