

## Illinois Post-Permanency Profile

Updated: November 2024

### State Population (2023 Census estimate)

more than 11 million

### Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Caseload (2022)

more than 20,000

- Adoption assistance- 19,059
- Guardianship assistance- 2,526
- Total- 21,585

### State Administration Type

State administered

### Pre-Service Training

Parents fostering and adopting children and teens in Illinois foster care must complete 34 hours of Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE) training to become a licensed foster parent. Relative caregivers need to complete only six hours of training. PRIDE is provided in person or virtually.

Parents seeking to adopt or become guardians take an additional 10 hours of PRIDE Adoption/Guardianship Readiness training. Relative caregivers are offered the training but are not required to take the training for adoption or guardianship.

### Services Offered Through the State's Post-Permanency Support Program

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with multiple private providers to offer post-adoption and guardianship support across the state through the Illinois Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation (ASAP) Services program.

Also, families with Illinois subsidies are assigned a Regional Post-Adoption Support Worker to assist in navigating through the system and locating resources and referrals.

Each ASAP agency provides the following services:

- **Assessment** — Once it is determined that a family qualifies for ASAP services, a therapist will help a family identify their own strengths, complete a full family-based





assessment, and develop a family treatment plan within 30 days of the referral to the program. The assessment process, which includes a full mental health determination, typically takes three or four sessions with the family.

- **Case management services** — The agency will manage the case as needed. If services beyond therapy are needed, the manager will facilitate access to the needed services. There are no requirements for the frequency related to managing the case.
- **Counseling services** — A master's level therapist who has received training in adoption competency provides clinical services based on the family treatment plan. Services are typically provided in the home, but families can ask for office visits if they prefer. The amount and frequency of counseling varies depending on the needs of the family. Clinicians are trained in Attachment, Regulation, and Competency (ARC), Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®), Theraplay®, Mental Health First Aid, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and other evidence-based and evidence-informed interventions. Clinical services can be provided to any family member for adoption- or guardianship-related issues. If a child has significant mental health needs, the agency will provide or facilitate services.

ASAP agencies also offers Start Early, Trauma-informed, Attachment-focused, Resiliency-building, Therapeutic services (START), a customizable and flexible short-term prevention service to address the family's specific needs. START services, provided by either a bachelor's level caseworker or master's level therapist, are family-focused, provide interactive and meaningful activities with children and caregivers, and link families to experienced clinicians.

- **24-hour telephone support** — Current and former ASAP clients have access to 24-hour phone support for parent coaching and decision making. Clients are encouraged to call their own therapist or supervisor during business hours or the emergency phone line after hours for support as needed. Current clients receive follow-up in-home support from the assigned clinician or caseworker. Previous clients who call may be provided with a referral for a renewal of ASAP services or referral support for alternative supports and services they are eligible for.
- **Crisis intervention** — Crisis intervention is available when there is an immediate safety risk to the child, youth, or family that is involved with ASAP. ASAP staff will respond by phone within 24 business hours and make an in-home visit within three business days. The specific crisis intervention services vary depending on the family's situation but include assessment (including assessment of safety risks), emergency and ongoing counseling, and support with community referrals and building a system of support. The staff are trained in crisis management assessment skills and tools.





- **Support groups** — Each agency offers support groups for parents and children. Parent support groups are not limited to current clients. Youth groups are offered to current clients with treatment plans. Most groups are run by the ASAP agency staff serving the area, although some are provided virtually statewide. Each agency determines the types of groups based on local families' interests and needs. Groups can be in-person or virtual and ongoing or time-limited. Some time-limited groups have a psychoeducational theme and include training. Groups are facilitated by either bachelor's or master's level staff who are experienced and trained in group facilitation. Some in-person support groups are developed by adoptive and guardianship families who reach out agency staff to cofacilitate their groups.
- **Educational advocacy** — Educational advocacy services are provided by the staff of the ASAP agency, including training, consultation, attending school meetings, observing the child in the classroom and supporting the families with obtaining an IEP or 504 plan. More complicated advocacy can be referred to Greenlight Family Services, which is funded by the state to provide specialized educational advocacy and other legal supports to families who adopt or take guardianship of Illinois children in care.
- **Financial support** — If a family participating in the program experiences economic hardships or requires specialized services that cannot be obtained through other resources, a cash assistance payment (up to \$500 per family per fiscal year) may be provided.

There are contracts beyond ASAP that support the provision of post-permanency supports including respite, older caregiver support, and educational advocacy. Some ASAP providers have multiple contracts that allow them to provide services that are not a part of the ASAP contract. Other post-permanency services include:

- **Pre-permanency supports** — Prior to permanency, adoption workers will refer the family to a training conducted by the ASAP agencies on the resources and services provided locally. Workers can also reach out to the local ASAP agency to conduct a warm handoff and refer the family for post-permanency support. Families can often begin attending support groups and trainings before finalization of their adoption or guardianship. Some families who have not yet finalized the permanency arrangement can access Maintaining Adoption Connections Services (see description below).
- **Respite care** — Adoptive families, regardless of whether they qualify for a subsidy, and subsidized guardianship families can receive reimbursement for respite childcare expenses, be matched with agency staff to serve as mentor providers in the home or community and participate in respite events such as day or overnight camps. Respite services vary significantly from agency to agency.
- **Support groups** — Support groups are available to families through the ASAP providers and other contracted agencies.





- **Educational advocacy** — In addition to the support provided by the ASAP agencies, families who are receiving subsidies can get additional support with educational advocacy.
- **Legal services** — Families who receive adoption or guardianship subsidies can receive legal support for standby adoptions, transference of guardianship for parents who have become incapacitated or are deceased, and adult guardianships of children with disabilities who are turning 18.
- **Information and referral** — Regional DCFS Post Adoption workers can help families find local services in the community, make a referral to the local ASAP program, answer questions about subsidy, locate a support group, seek respite services and family therapy, and more.
- **Financial support** — The state may pay for or reimburse adoptive and guardianship families who are receiving a subsidy for specialty services such as equine therapy, ABA therapy and other services identified in their subsidy. These payments are administered by the regional Post Adoption Program Team.
- **Family First Services** — Families may be referred to evidence-based services (such as Child Parent Psychotherapy, Nurturing Parenting Program, Positive Parenting Program, Multi-Systemic Therapy, and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) covered under Title IV-prevention services.
- **Search and reunion support** — Any individual adopted in Illinois and birth family members can receive search and reunification support and counseling. Those who were in foster care can receive support connecting with family members and accessing their foster care file.
- **Maintaining Adoption Connections (MAC)** — The MAC programs provide an additional range of services to adoption/guardianship families, including crisis intervention, assessment, respite, counseling, support groups, case management, and various forms of advocacy. The Department's MAC program has been able to meet many service needs that are not covered through the traditional subsidy-related services. Services through MAC are case management focused and are geared towards connecting families to resources. Families referred to MAC tend to have lower levels of need than those referred to ASAP.
- **Older Caregiver Services** — The Department provides services through a private contracted agency, Metropolitan Family Services, to caregivers 55 years and older who are raising children through adoption or guardianship or who are working toward these two goals. The program's goal is to establish a stronger support system that will help older caregivers continue to provide for children in their care. In cases where this is not





possible, program staff assist families in making new and more appropriate arrangements that ensure the safety, well-being, and permanency of the children. The Older Caregivers Services program serves Cook County and surrounding collar counties. These services include full assessments, physical and mental health recommendations, linkage to the Illinois Department on Aging, recommendations to court and other monitoring agencies, short-term resource assessment, support, and back-up planning

For more information, visit <https://pathbeyondadoption.illinois.gov/>

In 2023, 1,080 families received ASAP services, and an additional 2,017 families received respite care only. More typically, Illinois serves 1,300 families ASAP in a given year.

### **Geographic Area Covered**

Illinois contracts with eight agencies to provide adoption and guardianship support services in an effort to cover every region of the state and, in general, all services are available across the state. Some areas have multiple providers, such as the regions around Cook and Peoria Counties to meet the needs of that local population. In areas where there has not been a consistent provider, other ASAP provider agencies covering nearby counties have stepped in as needed to serve individual families. DCFS can also contract with local private counseling providers to support families in such situations.

### **Eligible Population for the Overall Post-Permanency Program**

- All families who adopted from the state's foster care system
- All families who adopted from foster care in other states, territories, or tribes
- All families who adopted through intercountry adoption
- All families who adopted through private adoption
- Only families receiving guardianship assistance

### **Variations in Eligibility for the Post-Permanency Program**

Services are provided to families through the age of 18 for families without a subsidy, such as those adopted through private domestic or intercounty adoptions. Families with adoption and guardianship subsidies can continue to access services through the end of their child's subsidy, which is typically 18 or 21.

Some services contracted by the state are limited to adoption and guardianship families with subsidies. These include services offered outside of the ASAP and respite program such as the specialty educational advocacy and legal services.





## Accessibility

ASAP staff are required to take the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training (NTI) to support cultural responsiveness, and language translation services are required within the ASAP contracts for situations where there is a language barrier. All providers are also required to take ARC training, and many agencies require staff to take additional training to support cultural responsiveness.

Providers that cannot meet the linguistic or Americans with Disability Act (ADA) needs of families must refer the family to an alternative service provider who can meet the family's specific needs.

## Outreach and Engagement

Illinois DCFS produces a variety of outreach and engagement materials including business cards, magnets, a Post Adoption and Guardianship Services handbook listing available services, and a website, <https://pathbeyondadoption.illinois.gov/resources.html>. DCFS also reaches out to families once per year to verify subsidy eligibility and to let the families know they can reach out for services. These letters include reminders that there are resources and services available to them as well as the toll-free line through which they can reach their worker.

The handbook is provided to every family as they achieve permanency and is posted on the Path Beyond Adoption website. The ASAP agencies also provide a quarterly regional Adoption Support webinar for families reaching permanency to review available services. The family also receives a welcome letter at the time of adoption or guardianship with the name and contact number of their assigned Post Adoption worker.

ASAP agencies also produce their own outreach materials to use with regional adoption and child welfare agencies. Some agencies provide TBRI® training for foster and adoptive families in their area, which can encourage clients to access services.

## How the Post-Permanency Program Is Operated

- Through contracts or grants with multiple private agencies that offer mostly the same set of services, each operating in a different region
- Through contracts or grants with multiple private agencies offering different services
- By specialized state post-permanency support workers
- By other state staff



## Notes About Who Provides Which Service(s)

The following agencies provide ASAP services across the state in specific regions that are delineated in the terms of the contracts:

- The Baby Fold
- Brightpoint
- Catholic Charities (through 2024)
- Metropolitan Family Services
- Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
- Cornerstone
- Family Core (MAC only)
- Ada S. McKinley Community Services (MAC only)

Greenlight Family Services provides statewide educational advocacy and legal services.

Midwest Adoption Center provides services to any individual adopted within Illinois and birth family members for search and reunification support and counseling.

The services provided by state staff are noted above, but State Subsidy Support Specialists help families navigate the system including referrals to services, advocacy support, and payment issues.

## Adoption/Guardianship Assistance/Subsidy Review and Changes

Every year, Illinois sends a letter to families receiving a subsidy asking the family to contact DCFS requesting confirmation that the child is still in their care. The letter contains a toll-free number that the family can use to contact the Department. Per the guardianship and adoption agreement, the family is supposed to contact the Department for a number of specific occurrences including the death of the child, a family move out of state, or other circumstances that would affect the provision of the subsidy.

Adoption/guardianship families may contact their post-adoption worker at any time with a request for an amendment to their adoption or guardianship subsidy agreement or to request a review of their subsidy by the Post Adoption Guardianship Support Services Review Committee.

## Tracking Adoption/Guardianship Discontinuity

In Illinois, discontinuity is being tracked by ASAP providers and the post adoption subsidy unit. The ASAP agencies and the subsidy staff each have their own tracking sheet. When a family that





the agency is working with disrupts, the agency enters the information on their quarterly tracking form, which is sent to the DCFS Program team for tracking.

The Subsidy Support Specialists receive information in various ways. They may receive a call from the family directly stating that the child has been displaced, they may receive information from the child abuse/neglect hotline, or the DCP investigator may let them know that a child on their caseload has returned to care. The specialist puts that information on their tracking sheet on a weekly basis. The data from the agencies and the Subsidy Support Specialist is pulled together to track the disruptions/displacements known to Illinois across the state. They are later compared to the number of opened adoption/guardianship cases for that fiscal year, which helps to determine the disruption rate.

Just as they would for other cases, the support service providers report international and private domestic adoption disruptions. If a family is not involved with a program, the state has no way to capture the data.

The state tracking forms submitted by both agency and Subsidy Support Specialists track the reasons that are reported for disruptions, such as child's behavior. It also tracks the child's age, as well as how long they were in the home.

Instability tracking for issues such as hospitalization relies on self-report from the family.

### **Post-Permanency Program Spending (FY 2023)**

more than \$9 million

### **Funding Sources for the Post-Permanency Program (FY 2023)**

1. State funds
2. Adoption savings (reported on CB 496 Part 4 – Annual Adoption Savings Report)
3. Title IV-B, Part 2 (Promoting Safe and Stable Families/PSSF)
4. Title IV-B, Part 1 (Child Welfare Services/CWS)

