



Montana Post-Permanency Profile

Updated: November 2024

State Population (2023 Census estimate)

1 – 1,999,999 million

Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Caseload (2022)

3,000 – 5,999

- Adoption assistance caseload — 3,255
- Guardianship assistance caseload — 1,292
- Total — 4,547

State Administration Type

State administered

Pre-Service Training

All prospective foster and adoptive parents, including relatives, must attend the 18-hour Keeping Children Safe (KCS) training prior to foster care licensure or to be approved for adoption or guardianship, unless a specific exception has been granted in writing by the regional administrator.

All prospective adoptive parents and guardians who will be receiving a subsidy also need to attend an additional six-hour preservice training called Creating a Lifelong Family. Families transitioning to adoption or guardianship will be required to participate in Creating a Lifelong Family unless a written exception is granted.

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

Post-permanency services are provided by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services – Child and Family Services Division (CFSD). The Post-Permanency Services Program offers the following services:

- **Pre-permanency supports** — Post-Permanency Services Program staff are available to provide one-on-one consultation about children's and families' needs and how they will be met after permanency.





- **Assessment** — After a family contacts the Post-Permanency Services Program, staff will conduct an informal assessment of the family’s situation to determine the most appropriate post-permanency services.
- **Information, referral, and navigation** — The Post-Permanency Services Program provides referrals to local service agencies or therapists, mentoring programs or support groups, local respite resources, and ongoing training and support. They help families find and coordinate needed services, including any available crisis intervention services when necessary. They refer relative adoptive and guardianship families to the kinship navigator program for kinship specific support. Staff also work with families who are seeking adoption or guardianship assistance renegotiation.
- **Financial support** — The Post-Permanency Services Program can provide time-limited funding to support adoptive and families to access the following services from community providers:
 - Respite care when the family is at risk of disruption or dissolution
 - Counseling or other therapeutic interventions to help stabilize the family
 - Room and board costs for a time-limited out-of-home placement for the adopted child or child in guardianship

The funds can only be used when the plan is for the adopted child or child living in guardianship to return to the adoptive or guardianship home or to maintain placement in the home.

- **Education advocacy** — Staff can help children and families address education and school-related issues, including attending meetings at school and helping support transitions to new schools.
- **Community partnerships** — The Post-Adoption Services Program collaborates closely with Medicaid Children’s Mental Health Program staff to raise awareness about the needs of adoptive and guardianship families and to ensure effective referrals, especially when an out-of-home placement is needed.
- **Other services** — The program can provide Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM) meetings for adoptive and guardianship families and can also support communication between the adoptive and birth families. The FGDM meetings are often used for older adolescents whose families are struggling, and they help the family address family dynamics from a youth-focused, strengths-based perspective.

In fiscal year 2023, the program served 560 families, including families whose subsidies were renegotiated.





Geographic Area Covered

Post-permanency services in Montana are offered statewide. Some communities have fewer adoption-competent providers to offer services, although telehealth has made services more accessible.

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
- All families who have guardianship of a child from foster care

Variations in Eligibility for the Post-Permanency Program

None

Accessibility

Montana provides five hours of cultural competency training for all Child and Family Services Division staff to increase cultural awareness and to develop skills towards more effectively understanding, communicating with, and interacting with people across cultures. Interpreters are available if needed.

The state partners with tribal nations to effectively serve children and families connected to each tribe.

Montana offers a kinship navigator program to support kinship caregivers, including adoptive and guardianship families.

Outreach and Engagement

After they complete subsidy negotiations, CFSD provides a letter to families that explains the post-permanency services. The department will soon launch a more formal outreach program that will likely include sending families a questionnaire and information about support 60 days after finalization and again within a year.

How the Post-Permanency Program Is Operated

- By specialized state post-permanency support workers





Notes About Who Provides Which Service(s)

Post-permanency services are provided by two CFSD staff members.

Adoption/Guardianship Assistance/Subsidy Review and Changes

Montana does not conduct reviews of existing adoption/guardianship agreements with families. Instead, adoptive parents or guardians are required to inform the Child and Family Services Division of circumstances that would make them ineligible to continue to receive subsidy payments or eligible to receive those payments in a different amount.

Adoptive parents and guardians or the Montana Child and Family Services Division can request a change in the adoption/guardianship assistance agreement any time there is a change in the child's needs or family's circumstance or an increase in the foster care rate the child would have received in foster care. Families who want to modify an agreement can call the post-permanency program to make the request.

Tracking Adoption/Guardianship Discontinuity

CFSD has just begun tracking in its child welfare database youth who were adopted or placed in guardianship from Montana care who return to care. They also ask regional administrators to report if other adopted children have entered care. As they review the data, state staff will examine the reasons for entry and the family's needs.

CFSD is also tracking families who are experiencing instability, especially those entering residential care. They check in with these families to offer support and are considering efforts to enhance coordination with children's mental health.

The state is also developing a process so that the child welfare hotline will connect with post-permanency staff when adoptive or guardianship families are referred.

Post-Permanency Program Spending (FY 2023)

under \$500,000

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

- Title IV-E funds (including Prevention Services Grant Program/PSGP or IV-E training dollars)
- Adoption/Guardianship Incentive Program Payments (AGIPP)

